

Does Human Trafficking Exist in Your Community? Examining Reports and Reviewing Facts

Human trafficking is a diverse and hidden crime, and currently there is no estimate of how many victims there are in the United States. The National Human Trafficking Hotline created this resource in response to requests from community actors who want to understand the extent to which human trafficking happens in their community. This reference tool suggests resources to guide you in finding reliable information on instances of human trafficking in your area.

Introduction

Since the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, the anti-trafficking field has made great strides in recognizing and responding to human trafficking in the United States. Yet, human trafficking remains largely underreported to the authorities, often due to the methods of force, fraud, or coercion employed by traffickers. Even when reported, cases involving human trafficking might be charged as another crime or pled down to a lesser crime.

These issues lead to the question, “how do I know if human trafficking exists in my community?” The answer to this question may be critical when building capacity and community support for combating human trafficking.

Human trafficking adapts to the economic and environmental landscape of a location, so identifying regionally specific information on human trafficking and vulnerable industries can be helpful in order to:

- Convince policy makers that human trafficking is an issue worth addressing;
- Make a case that law enforcement should invest resources into investigating and prosecuting this crime;
- Inform a Board of Directors why funds should be appropriated for trafficking-specific services;
- Raise awareness about the existence of human trafficking for community members who then can report instances of human trafficking.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery where people profit from the control and exploitation of others. This crime occurs when a trafficker uses **force, fraud, or coercion** to control another person for the purposes of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor services against their will.¹

Traffickers use violence, threats, blackmail, false promises, deception, manipulation, and debt bondage to trap vulnerable individuals in horrific situations. **Sex trafficking** has been found in a wide variety of venues within the commercial sex industry, including residential brothels, online escort services, fake massage businesses, strip clubs, and street prostitution. **Labor**

¹ The presence of force, fraud, or coercion need not be proved in instances of sex trafficking of minors

trafficking has been found in diverse labor settings including domestic work, small businesses, large farms, and factories. For more information about human trafficking, visit www.humantraffickinghotline.org.

Federal Law:

Human Trafficking became a federal crime with the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protections Act (TVPA). Both labor trafficking and sex trafficking are covered under the TVPA:

- **Labor Trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, (22 USC § 7102).
- **Sex Trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, soliciting, or advertising of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 USC § 7102; 8 CFR § 214.11(a)).

State Law:

As of 2014, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws against human trafficking. Visit www.polarisproject.org/state-laws-issue-briefs or consult your state's statutes for more information as state and local laws differ by jurisdiction.

Where Can I Find Statistics and Reports on Human Trafficking?

The below sources include reported investigations and/or prosecutions, government reports, news reports, and hotline reports. *Please note, this is not an exhaustive list. In addition to national reports on crime statistics and prosecutorial actions, you may consult your state and local offices for more regionally-specific information.*

Reported Cases of Human Trafficking

In order to recognize trends in vulnerable industries or populations, it is helpful to review previously identified human trafficking cases in your region. Information regarding investigations or prosecutions may be found from the following sources:

- Department of Justice Criminal Section [Human Trafficking Case Summaries](#)
- Official Press Releases
 - Federal cases are investigated by a number of entities, including [USAO](#), [FBI](#), and [HSI](#).
 - Press releases for cases charged on the state and local level are generally released by the local prosecutor's office or the lead law enforcement departments.
- News Sources
 - o A useful tool for filtering news articles to human trafficking in your location is [Google Alert](#). You may enter your state, county, or city along with relevant key terms to review news articles as they are published.
- Legal Databases
 - o Reviewing prosecuted cases in your jurisdiction may provide unique information on prosecutorial trends as well as insight into common industries in which

human trafficking exists. Searchable legal databases provide the opportunity to narrow prosecutions by jurisdiction and crime for both criminal and civil cases.

- o Examples of these legal databases include: [Lexis Nexis](#), [Pacer](#), [University of Michigan Human Trafficking Law Clinic](#).

Government Reports

Federal reports offer data collected from federally funded trafficking initiatives. These sources may publish topical or aggregate data on human trafficking-related occurrences.

- [Uniform Crime Report](#) – Human trafficking was introduced as major crime in 2013.
 - o State Uniform Crime Reports (example: [Michigan Uniform Crime Reports](#))
- [Trafficking in Persons Reports](#) (Department of State)
- [Attorney General Report on Human Trafficking \(AG\)](#)
- [Trafficking in Persons Reports by Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) (BJS)
- [Human Trafficking Information by National Criminal Justice Reference Service](#) (NCJRS)
- [Human Trafficking Studies by National Institute of Justice](#) (NIJ)
- [Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#) (OJJDP)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#) (NCMEC)

National Human Trafficking Hotline State-Based Reports

The National Human Trafficking Hotline generates state-based reports documenting the calls, texts, emails, and web forms from and about that state to the Hotline. These reports reflect only what information is received by the National Hotline. You can find annual and five-year reports for your state at www.humantraffickinghotline.org. Hotline statistics provide the following information:

- Total number of calls from a given state;
- Total number of calls that reference potential situations of human trafficking;
- Type of trafficking referenced.

Human Trafficking Task Forces

Whether you are compiling information on human trafficking to build community support, develop an interagency action plan, or demonstrate a need for legislative action, it is vital to connect to others working on human trafficking issues. Many of these task forces already conduct data collection and publish reports on human trafficking in their jurisdictions.

Human trafficking task forces are collaborative interagency initiatives to combat and respond to regionally-based human trafficking and often include:

- Office of the U.S. Attorney
- District Attorney Offices
- Local Law Enforcement
- State Law Enforcement
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Homeland Security Investigation
- Office of the Attorney General
- Local Social Services Providers
- Pro Bono Legal Networks

Where Can You Find Help?

The National Human Trafficking Hotline maintains a database of service providers and resources throughout the United States, along with extensive training resources on a variety of human trafficking topics.

Report Online or Access Resources & Referrals: www.humantraffickinghotline.org
Call: 1-888-373-7888 (24/7) **Email:** help@humantraffickinghotline.org