

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/human-trafficking-still-with-us-150-years-after-emancipation-proclamation>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

We are approaching the end of January, which is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. But we are not seeing the end of modern-day slavery. Human trafficking is a hidden but growing phenomenon both outside and within U.S. borders. Many victims of trafficking, particularly women and children, are exploited for purposes of prostitution and pornography. However, trafficking also takes place in diverse labor contexts, such as domestic servitude, small businesses, factories, and agricultural work. Considered the fastest growing organized crime second only to drug trafficking, it is believed to be a \$32 billion a year global industry according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Yet, far fewer resources are employed to combat human trafficking, to identify and serve victims and to bring traffickers to justice. On the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, it is time to consider what evidence and actions are still needed.

In a [Presidential Proclamation](#) issued on the last day of 2012, President Barack Obama reiterated his administration's commitment to combating human trafficking. He said, We have strengthened protections so all workers know their rights, expanded efforts to identify and serve domestic victims, devoted new resources to dismantling trafficking networks, and put more traffickers behind bars than ever before. In the months ahead, we will continue to take action by empowering investigators and law enforcement with the training they need, and by engaging businesses, advocates, and students in developing cutting-edge tools people can use to stay safe.

The Vera Institute of Justice is playing an important role in these national efforts. Our study, [Improving Trafficking Victim Identification: Evaluation and Dissemination of a Screening Tool](#), which is funded by the [National Institute of Justice](#), is currently testing a set of indicators with potential trafficking victims who are seen by community service providers in New York, California, and Texas. When the study is completed at the end of 2013, we anticipate having a cutting-edge tool that can be used by service providers and law enforcement to identify victims and bring them out of the shadows.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

Vera Institute of Justice. All rights reserved.