

2023

FEDERAL
**HUMAN
TRAFFICKING** REPORT



A PUBLICATION OF

HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
INSTITUTE



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The 2023 Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR) would not be possible without the tremendous support of numerous individuals who each played an essential role in preparing the FHTR for publication. The Human Trafficking Institute (HTI) would like to extend special appreciation to those who identified cases, entered case data, advised on content, made edits and recommendations, and provided overall support in the production of the FHTR. HTI extends special thanks to:

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WELCOME LETTER

DEAR READER,

This year marks the seventh publication of the Human Trafficking Institute's (HTI) Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR). With twenty-four years of data, over 3,100 federal criminal human trafficking cases, and a plethora of data points collected, the FHTR remains the single most exhaustive and comprehensive resource of data on the federal response to human trafficking in the United States.

The data presented in the FHTR is uniquely valuable. It allows us to see inside actual human trafficking cases and learn how traffickers operate, without speculation. Using the FHTR, we can see the latest trends and changes in trafficking schemes, and adjust our investigative and prosecutorial techniques accordingly. It also helps us better understand how trafficking impacts victims.

As you review the 2023 FHTR, we encourage you to look beyond the numbers and percentages and focus on the impact that each represents on the lives of those affected by trafficking. Many of the data points are a reflection of a real person who was exploited at the hands of their trafficker. For this reason, the data featured in the FHTR also represents a beacon of hope for victims, in that it shows how we have successfully interrupted and prosecuted human trafficking cases. The more we learn about trafficking in the United States, the better we can protect victims. This narrative underscores the significance of the data we report annually in the FHTR.



We celebrate the lives protected by the cases represented in the 2023 FHTR, but also recognize the need to do more. We hope that you find the 2023 FHTR insightful and that you, too, are inspired to continue the fight against human trafficking.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Lane
Director of Strategic Engagement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

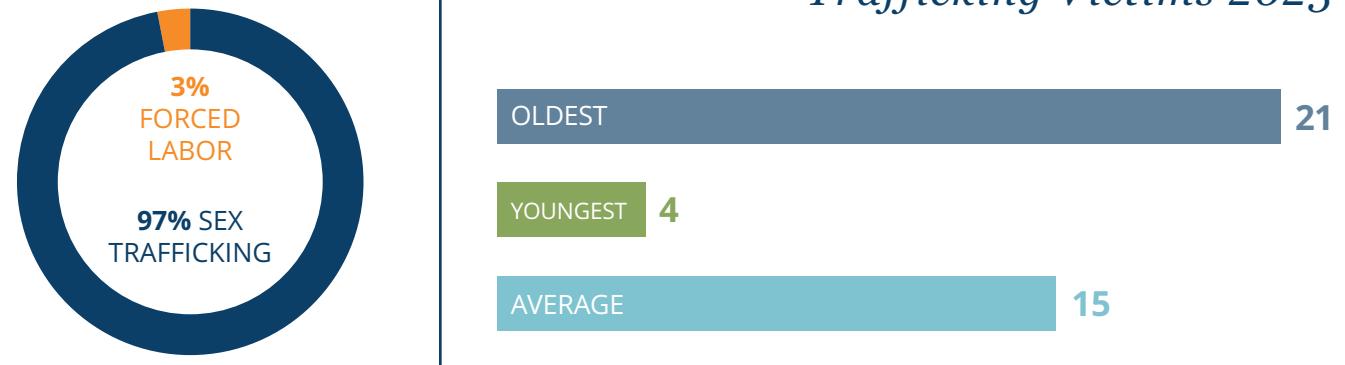


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Cases



Defendants 2023



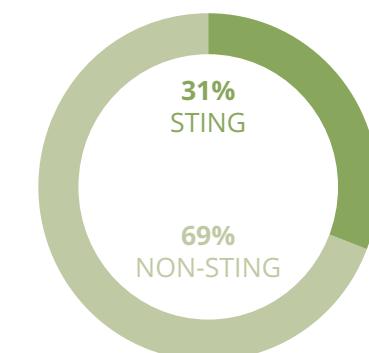
THE MOST COMMON VICTIM VULNERABILITY OF VICTIMS IN 2023 CASES WAS DRUG OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

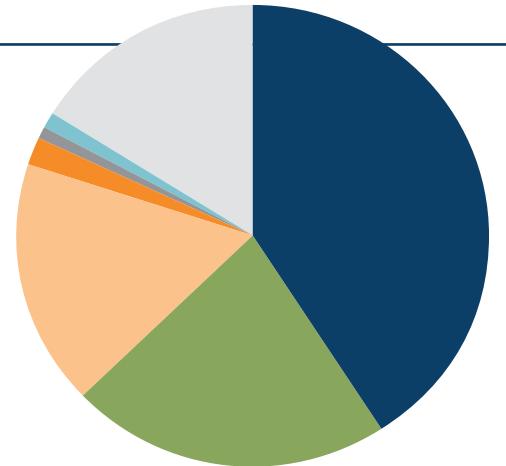
SINCE 2019, 128 VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING SELF REPORTED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

THE TOP THREE PLATFORMS IDENTIFIED TO RECRUIT VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING IN 2023 WERE SNAPCHAT, FACEBOOK, AND INSTAGRAM

SINCE 2019, CASH APP HAS BEEN THE MOST COMMONLY IDENTIFIED PAYMENT PLATFORM USED IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES

Sting Operations in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023





Primary Investigative Agencies 2023

10
SEX TRAFFICKING
DEFENDANTS RECEIVED
SENTENCES OF
LIFE IN PRISON
IN 2023

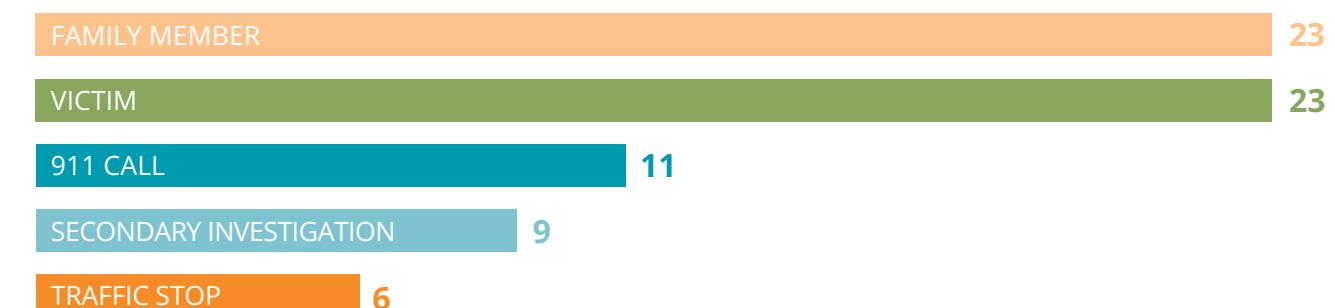
THE
CONVICTION RATE
FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING
DEFENDANTS CONVICTED
IN 2023 WAS
96%

IN 2023, THE AVERAGE
TERM OF IMPRISONMENT
FOR DEFENDANTS SENTENCED IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES WAS
147 MONTHS

A TOTAL OF
\$27,392,163.45
IN NON-JOINT AND
SEVERAL VICTIM
RESTITUTION
WAS ORDERED IN 2023

THE AVERAGE
**LENGTH OF
DISPOSITION**
FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING
CASES IN 2023 WAS
570 DAYS
(19 MONTHS)

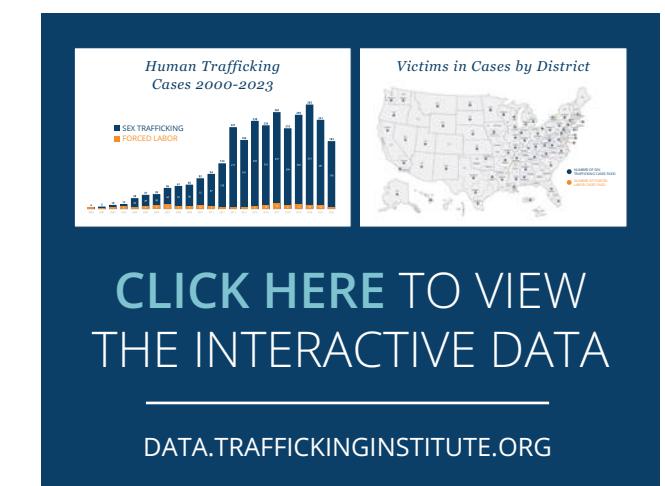
Top 5 Referrals to Law Enforcement 2023



INTERACTIVE DATA WEBSITE

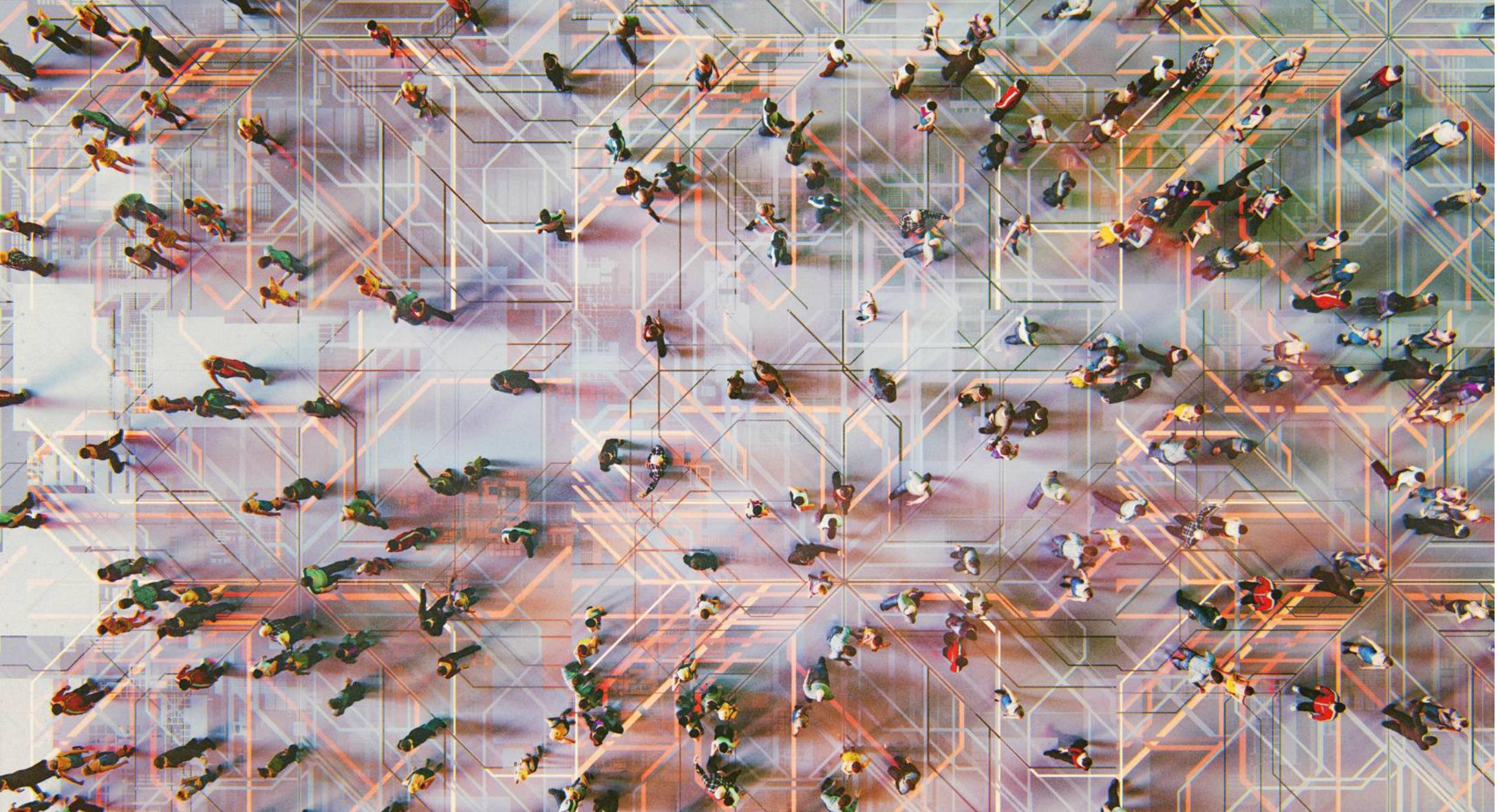
The data published in the FHTTR each year is only a small representation of the amount of data stored within the HTI database. Since 2021, additional data has been made available through the FHTTR data subsites located on the HTI website. These interactive features allow readers to explore data within our database beyond the information provided in the published FHTTR. Readers can now manipulate filters to review more information on:

- Prosecution of Human Trafficking Cases
- Victims in Cases by District
- Recruiters in Human Trafficking Cases
- Industries Identified in Forced Labor Cases



INTRODUCTION





INTRODUCTION

The methods used by traffickers to recruit, coerce, and exploit victims of trafficking are ever-changing. For this reason, we turn to data to help us better understand how traffickers operate and to create informed and targeted solutions to protect victims and stop traffickers.

The Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTTR) provides objective, quantifiable information to guide practitioners as they develop impactful responses to combat human trafficking. By examining specific data points year-over-year, the

FHTTR helps practitioners better recognize emerging trends, patterns, and relationships that may not be immediately recognizable in a crime that often occurs behind closed doors. The data provided in the FHTTR is intended to serve as a resource and a tool for prosecutors, investigators, and practitioners in their efforts to combat human trafficking. **The FHTTR is neither an indicator of the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States nor a reflection of the investigations and prosecutions that take place at the state level, outside the federal court system.**

“The FHTTR is neither an indicator of the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States nor a reflection of the investigations and prosecutions that take place at the state level, outside the federal court system.”



SECTIONS

Data in the FHTTR is organized into nine sections: Cases, Defendants, Victims, Human Trafficking Schemes, Investigations, Charges, Disposition & Sentencing, Appeals, and Country Programs, followed by the FHTTR's Methodology & Terminology and Appendix. The organization of the data points is intended to allow readers to quickly reference and locate particular data points within the FHTTR using the detailed table of contents.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES

The FHTTR database boasts twenty-four years of data, extracted from over 3,100 criminal human trafficking cases filed since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was enacted in 2000. The data featured in the FHTTR highlights key findings and emerging trends extracted from new cases filed during each calendar year. Where possible, data is provided for year-over-year comparison and analysis in five and ten-year periods.

NEW DATA FIELDS

The 2023 FHTTR features several new data points, some of which include: the use of 911 to make a referral of human trafficking to law enforcement, the rental car company used in a trafficking scheme, traffickers in a position of trust, websites used for child sexual exploitation materials in trafficking cases, death of the victim during exploitation, designation of a victim as a “bottom,” victim interaction with health care, victim involvement in the juvenile justice system, victim quotas, cases reaching disposition through a bench trial, and common issues raised on appeal.

Section 1

CASES

SECTION 1 HIGHLIGHTS

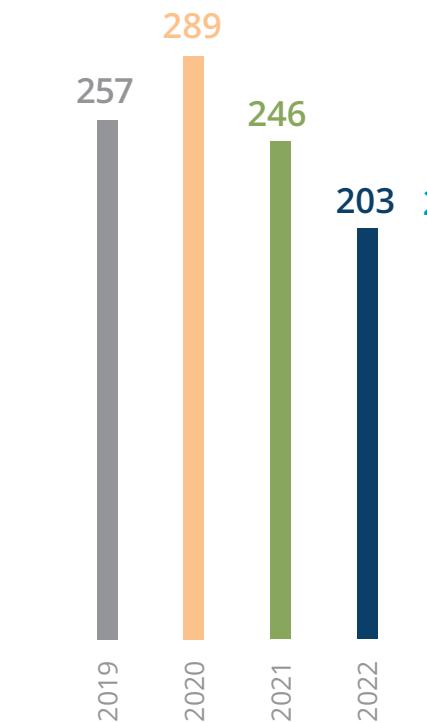
New Cases

5
FORCED LABOR
CASES

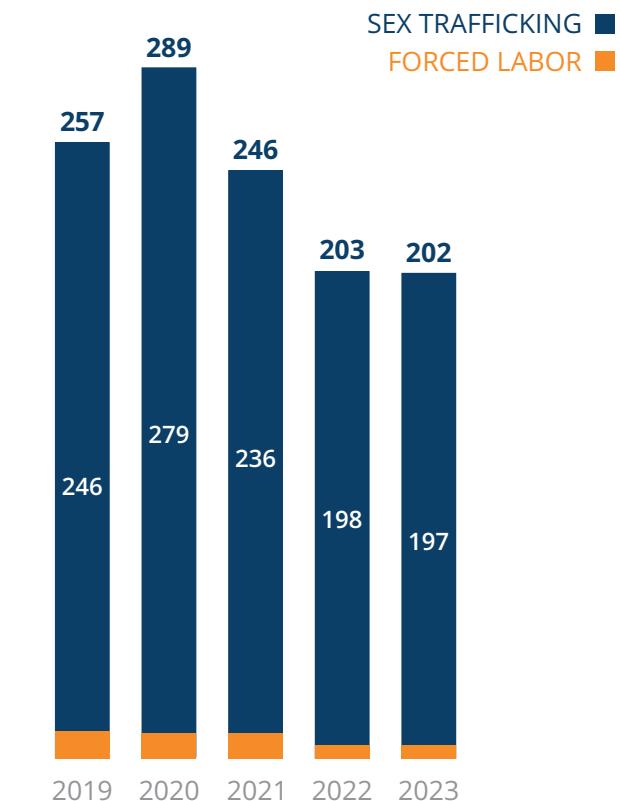


197
SEX TRAFFICKING
CASES

Human Trafficking Cases 2019-2023



Case Type 2019-2023





Section 1

CASES

Cases Filed 2022-2023



Identifying the number and type of human trafficking cases filed in the federal court system each year is important to help measure the United States' federal response to combat trafficking. This data can also help diagnose gaps in the federal response and support the development of evidence-based solutions to improve how cases are investigated and prosecuted across the country.

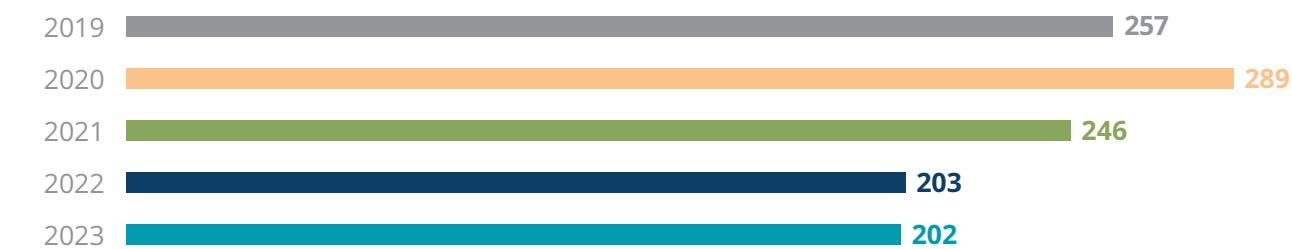
This section includes information on the number of criminal human trafficking cases filed in the federal court system in 2023 and breaks down those prosecutions by case type and district.

1.1 NEW CASES

In 2023, there were 202 criminal cases of human trafficking filed in the federal court system. This number was a <1% decrease from 2022 when prosecutors filed 203 cases.¹

Most human trafficking cases filed in the federal court system do not reach disposition within the same calendar year in which they were filed. Human trafficking investigations and prosecutions can span over several months and even years. Cases that have not yet reached disposition in the court system are considered "pending." The Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR) considers a case to be pending in 2023 if the government filed charges in a federal court in any year and the case is still open with at least one defendant awaiting trial or sentencing, or at least one defendant has time remaining to file a direct appeal in the case. Of the 202 cases filed in 2023, 13 (6%) received disposition within the same year. The remaining 189 (94%) cases were pending in the court system at the end of the 2023 calendar year.² Of the 13 cases that were both filed and disposed of within the calendar year of 2023, 12 cases were disposed of by plea agreement, and 1 case was dismissed by the Court.

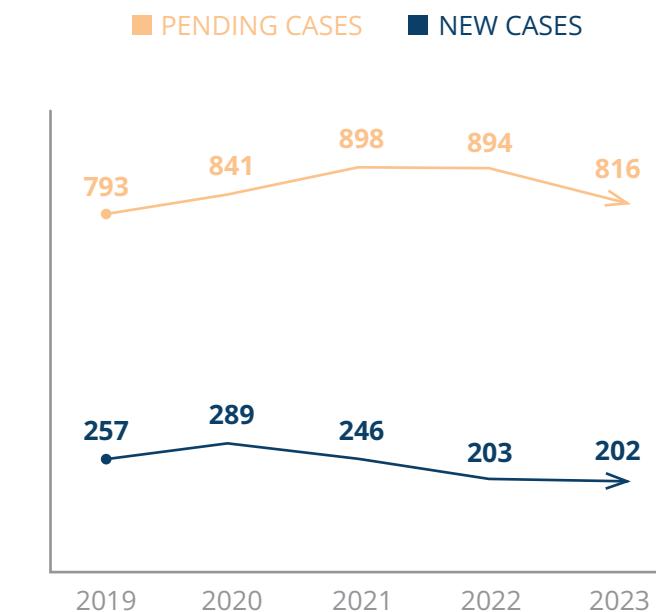
Human Trafficking Cases 2019-2023



1.2 PENDING CASES

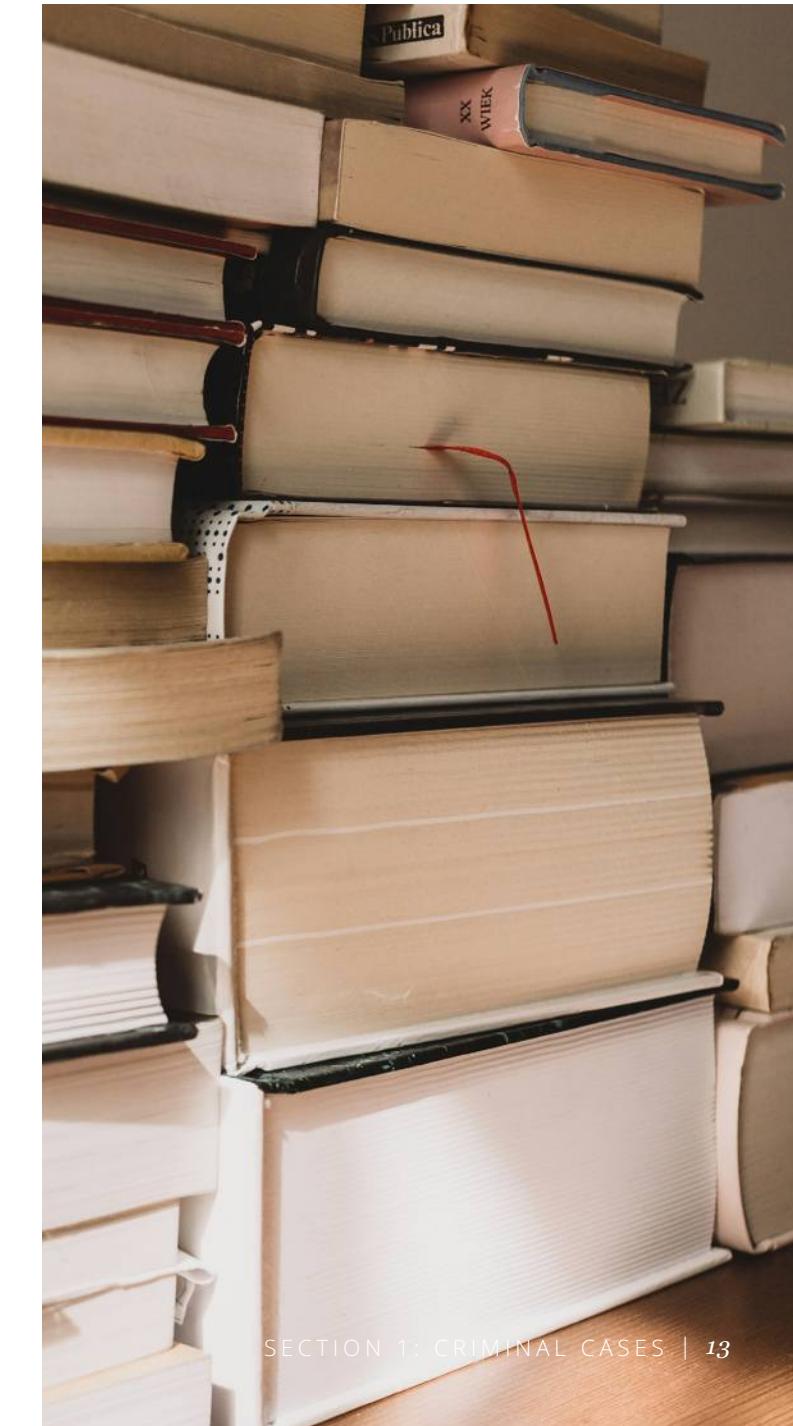
A consistent correlation between the number of new cases filed and the number of cases pending indicates that cases move steadily through the federal judicial system. The year 2023 concluded with 816 human trafficking cases pending in the federal court system. This number is lower than the 894 pending trafficking cases in 2022.

Pending & New Cases 2019-2023



¹ Based on the decrease from 203 cases in 2022 to 202 cases in 2023.

² See Section 2.5 for further information on the length of disposition.





Human Trafficking Cases 2023



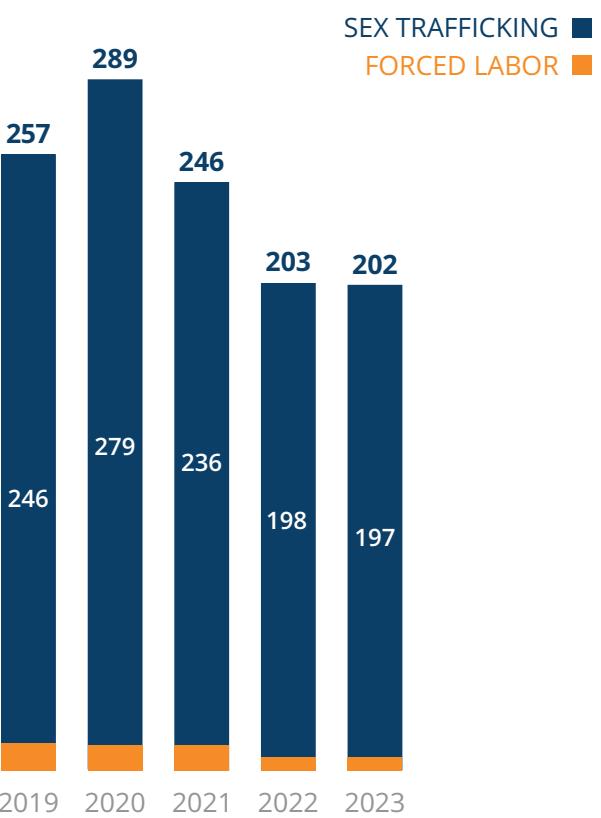
1.3 CASE TYPE

In 2023, 98% (197) of the 202 criminal cases filed included at least one charge for sex trafficking. The remaining 2% (5) of cases filed involved at least one charge of forced labor.³ While some cases can involve both sex trafficking and forced labor, there were 2 cases identified in 2023 containing both types of charges. The total number of new sex trafficking cases decreased in 2023 by <1%⁴ and forced labor cases remained the same.⁵

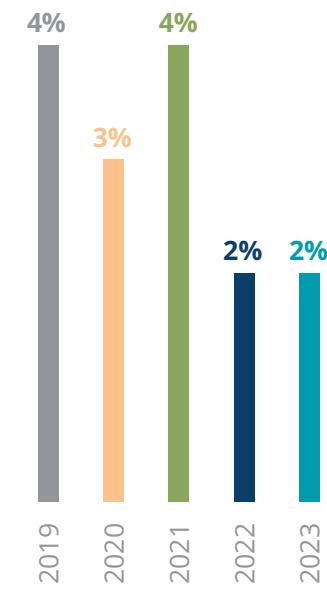
Historically, the number of sex trafficking prosecutions has significantly surpassed the number of forced labor cases filed. Over the past 5 years, 3% of new criminal cases filed were forced labor, 97% were sex trafficking.⁶ Since the enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, 5% of the cases filed were for forced labor.⁷

“Over the past 5 years, 3% of new criminal cases filed were forced labor, 97% were sex trafficking.”

Case Type 2019-2023



Percentage of Forced Labor Cases 2019-2023



³ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

⁴ Based on the decrease from 198 sex trafficking cases in 2022 to 197 in 2023.

⁵ Based on 5 forced labor cases in 2022 and 5 in 2023.

⁶ Based on 41 forced labor cases and 1,156 sex trafficking cases of 1,197 cases filed between 2019 and 2023.

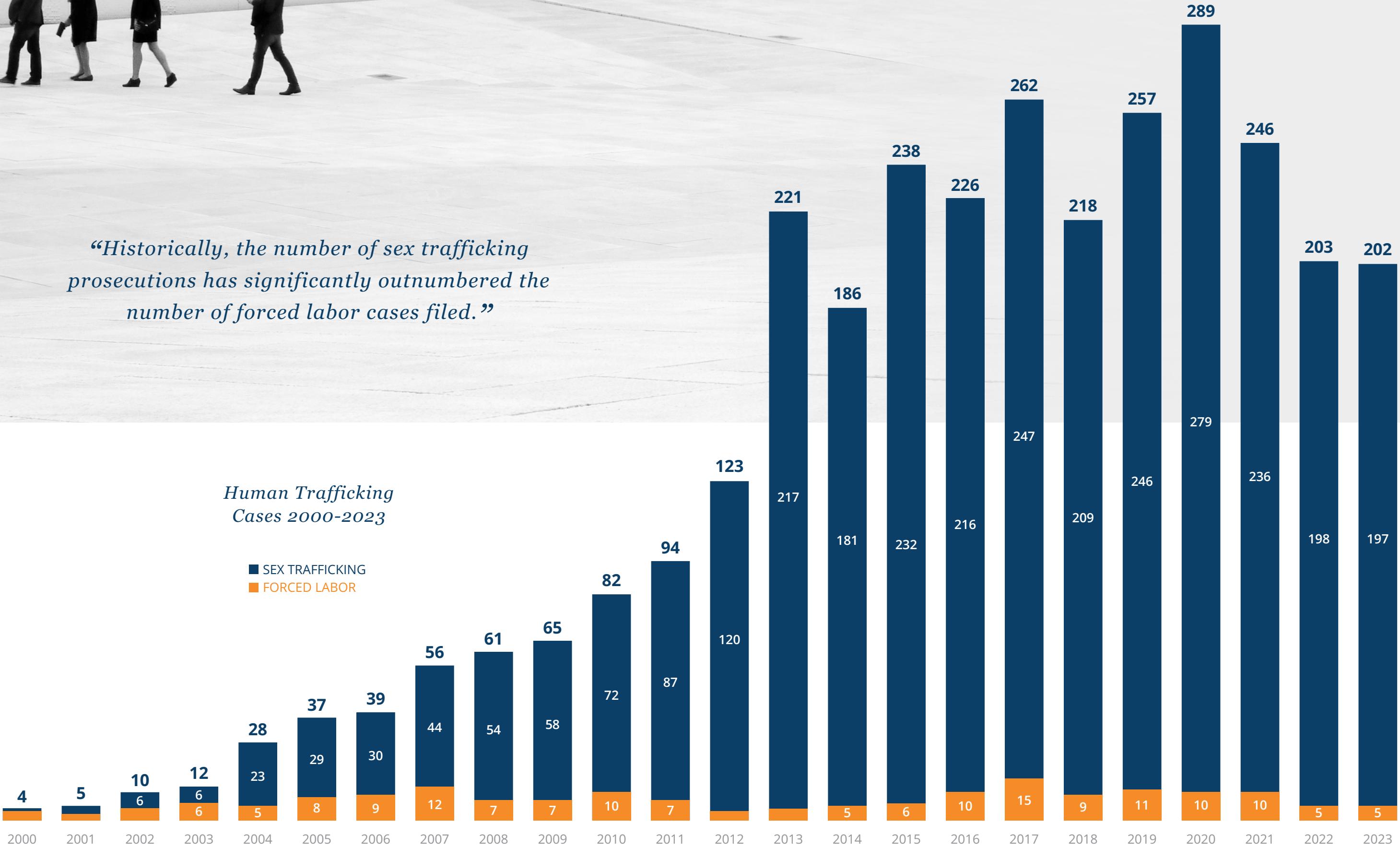
⁷ Based on 173 of 3,164 cases filed since 2000.





“Historically, the number of sex trafficking prosecutions has significantly outnumbered the number of forced labor cases filed.”

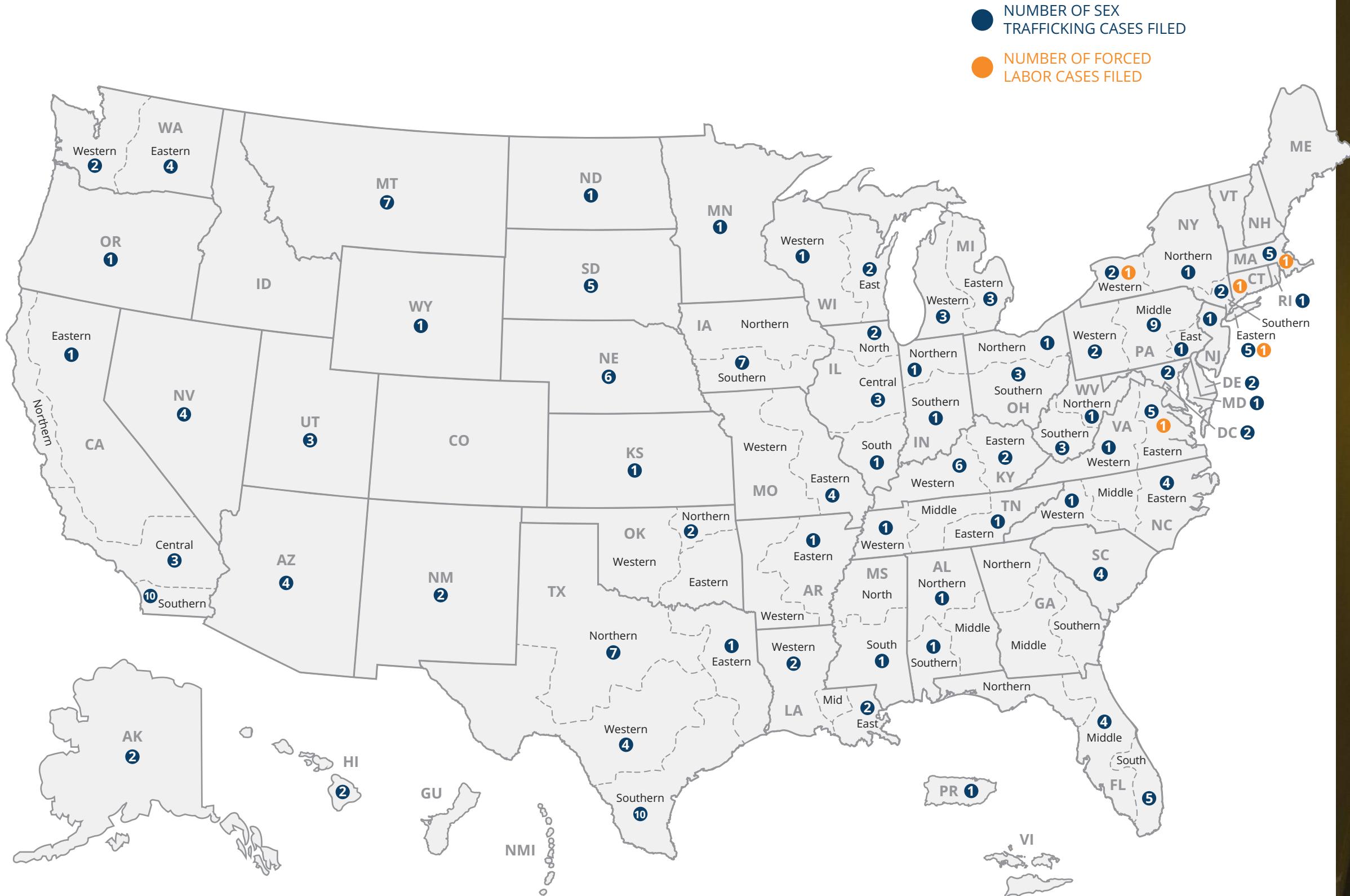
Human Trafficking Cases 2000-2023



1.4 CASE TYPE BY DISTRICT

In 2023, 71 of the 94 U.S. federal districts initiated at least one human trafficking case. This is an 8% increase from 2022 when 66 districts filed human trafficking cases. There were 197 sex trafficking cases initiated across 70 of the 94 federal districts, and 5 forced labor cases initiated across 5 of the 94 federal districts. The map below provides a visual representation of cases filed in each U.S. District Court in 2023.

*Cases Filed by
Federal District 2023*



DEFENDANTS

Section 2

SECTION 2 HIGHLIGHTS

Defendants 2023

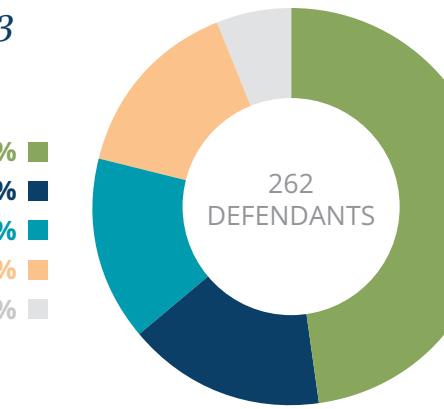


Number of Cases Filed & Defendants Charged 2019-2023

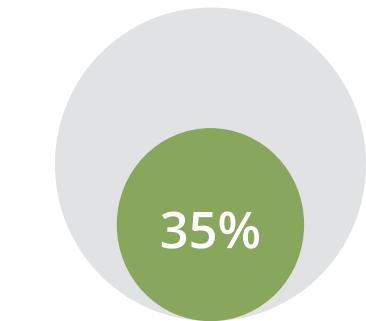


Sex Trafficking Defendants by Victim Type 2023

MINOR VICTIMS 48% ■
ADULT VICTIMS 16% ■
MINOR & ADULT VICTIMS 15% ■
FICTIONAL VICTIMS 15% ■
UNKNOWN VICTIM AGE 6% ■



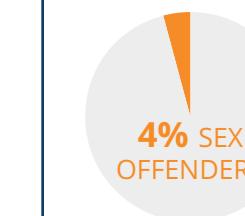
Percentage of Buyer-Defendants 2023



Average Age of Defendants 2023

SEX TRAFFICKING	37
BUYER	44
FORCED LABOR	47

Registered Sex Offender Defendants 2023



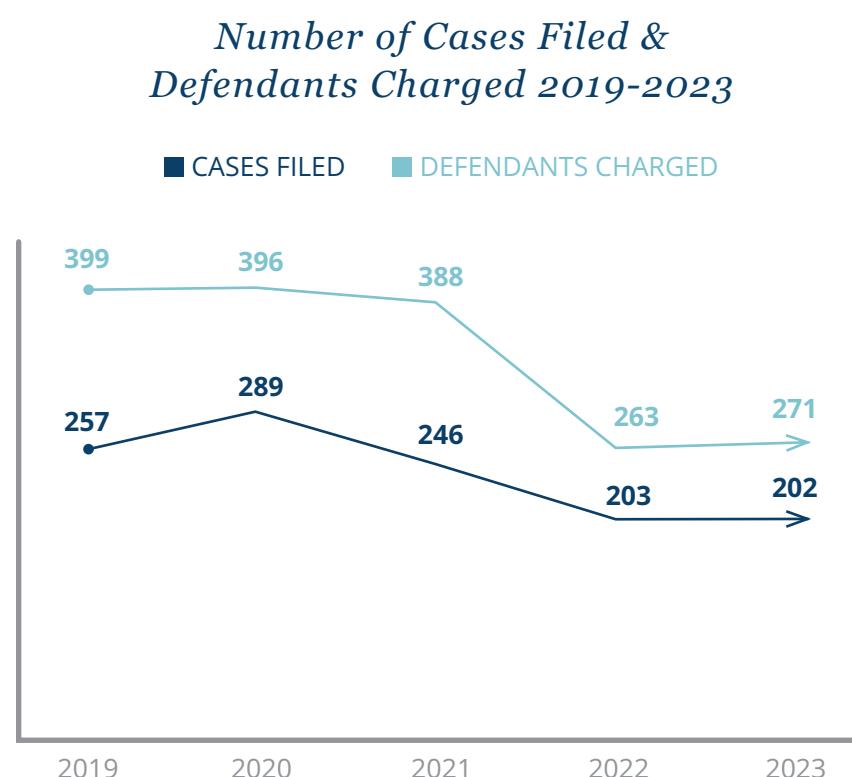
Section 2

DEFENDANTS

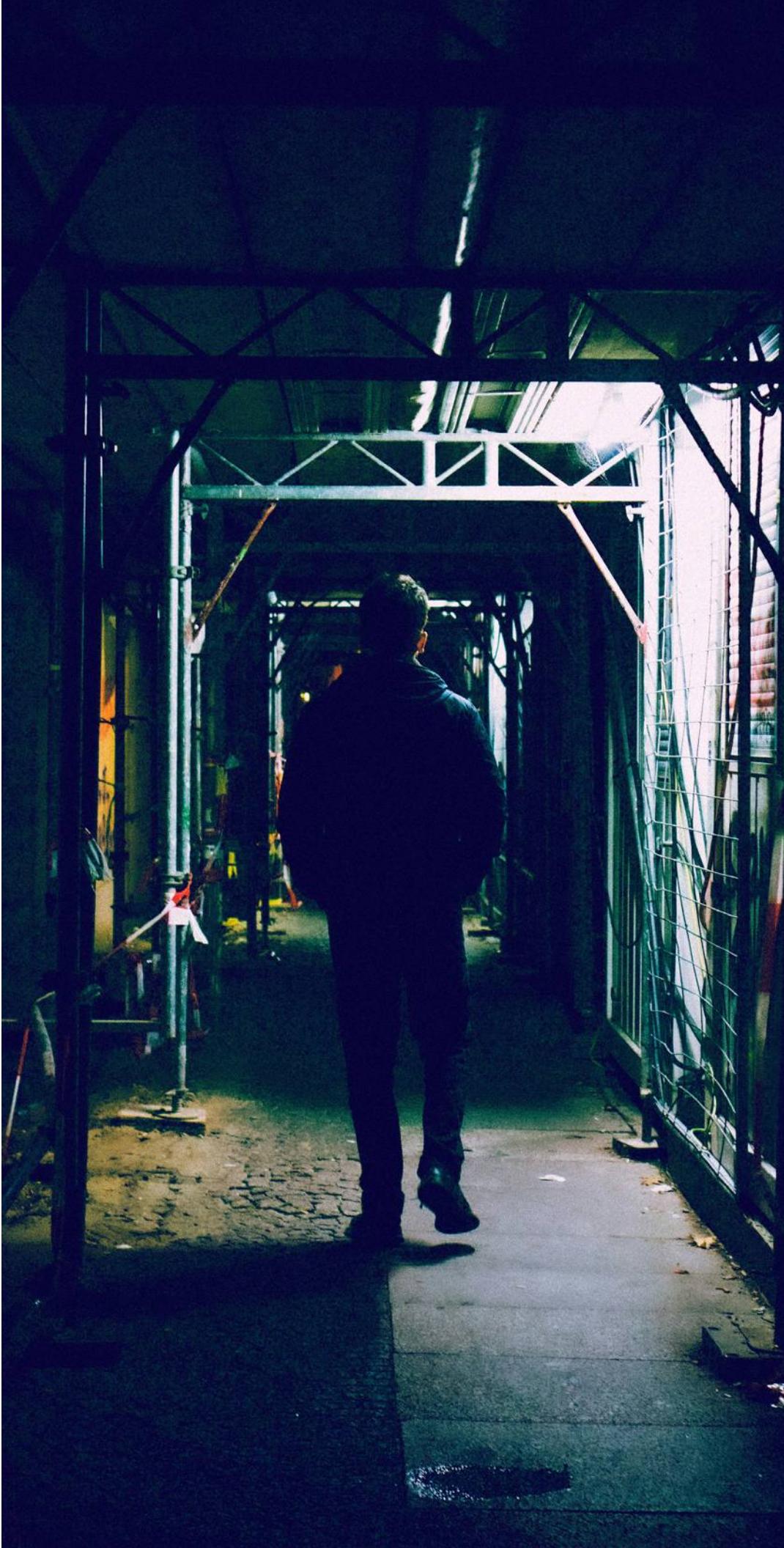
The Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTTR) reports annually on the number of human trafficking cases filed in U.S. federal courts. However, this number alone does not fully reflect the federal response to human trafficking. It is crucial to also consider other data points, including the number of defendants charged each year.

2.1 NEW DEFENDANTS

In 2023, there were 202 criminal human trafficking cases filed against 271 defendants. This is a 3% increase from the 263 defendants charged in 2022. The number of defendants charged in 2023 is the first increase in defendants charged in a single year since 2019.⁸

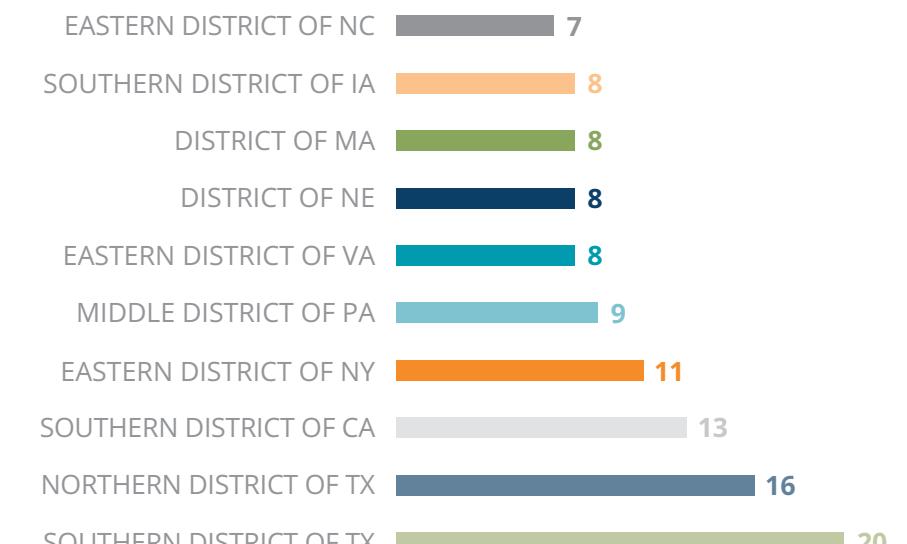


⁸ Based on 399 defendants in 2019; 369 in 2020; 388 in 2021; 263 in 2022; and 271 in 2023.



“The number of defendants charged in 2023 is the first increase in defendants charged in a single year since 2019.”

Defendants Charged by Federal District 2023



Traffickers may exploit more than one victim at a time, perhaps exploiting multiple victims over extended periods. In 2023, single defendants exploited an average of 3.3 victims in each case charged.⁹ For this reason, we must examine both the number of cases charged each year and the number of defendants prosecuted to better understand the impact of the federal response to trafficking.

In 2023, numerous federal districts led in the number of defendants charged with human trafficking. The Southern District of Texas charged more defendants (20) with human trafficking than any of the other 94 federal districts.

⁹ Based on 670 victims of human trafficking and 271 defendants. For more information, see Section 4.1.1 Single and Multiple Defendants.

2.2 PENDING DEFENDANTS

At the conclusion of 2023, there were 1,193 pending criminal defendants in 816 human trafficking cases in the federal court system. This number is slightly down from 1,343 pending defendants at the end of 2022. The number of pending defendants has stayed relatively consistent over the last five years.

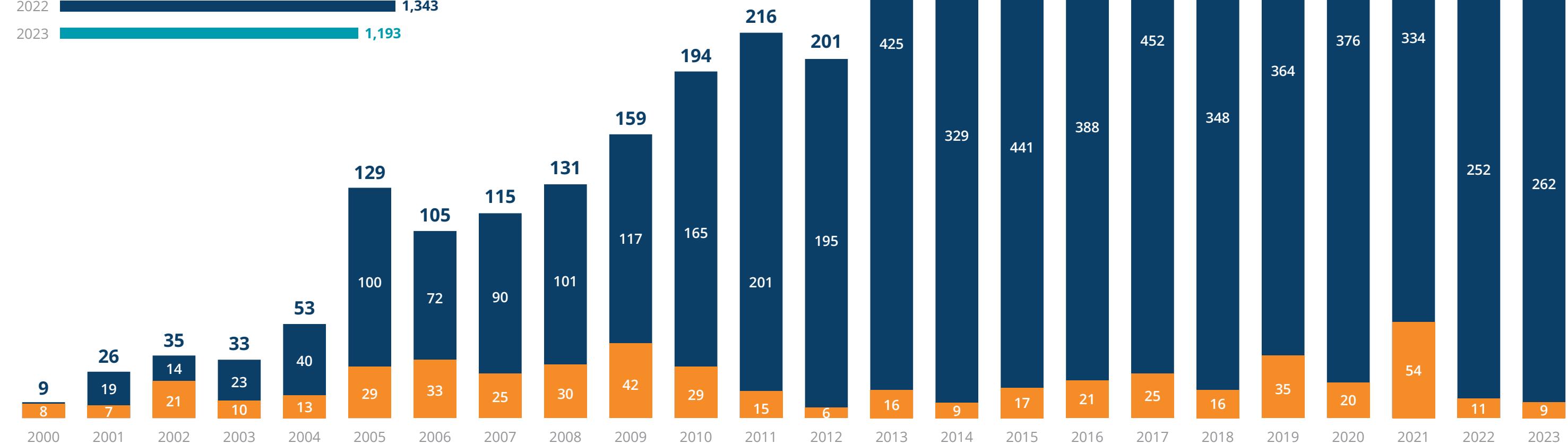
2.3 DEFENDANTS BY CASE TYPE

As in previous years, there were fewer forced labor cases filed than sex trafficking cases in 2023, resulting in fewer defendants charged with forced labor than sex trafficking. Of the 271 defendants charged in 2023, 3% (9) were charged in forced labor cases, and 97% (262) of defendants were charged in sex trafficking cases. In 2023, there were 3 defendants identified as charged with *both* forced labor and sex trafficking charges.

Defendants 2023



Pending Defendants 2019-2023

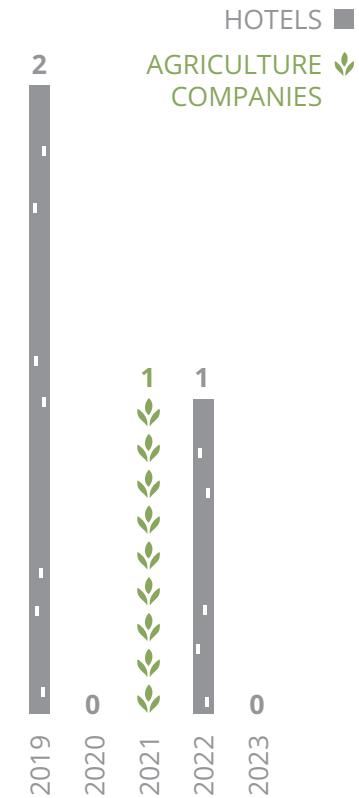


Defendants Charged by Case Type 2000-2023

SEX TRAFFICKING ■
FORCED LABOR ■



Entity Defendants 2019-2023



2.4 ENTITY DEFENDANTS

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) allows prosecutors to criminally charge corporations if the company knowingly or in reckless disregard benefited financially from participation in a venture that engaged in human trafficking. No corporations were criminally charged in 2023. Since 2008, 12 entities have been criminally charged: five hotels, two farms, one manufacturer, one construction company, and three employment agencies.

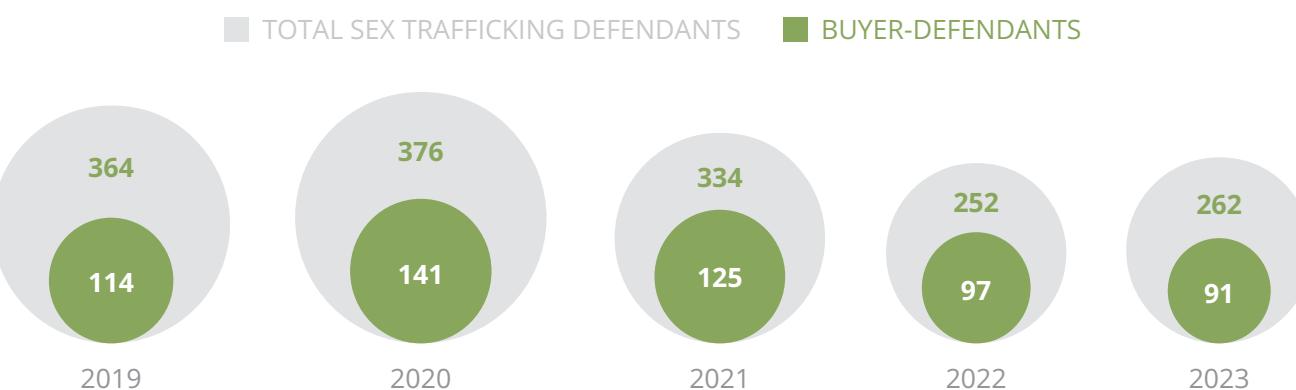
2.5 BUYER-DEFENDANTS

One proactive response to sex trafficking is targeting buyer demand. Buyers of commercial sex may be prosecuted for purchasing or attempting to purchase commercial sex with a minor. In cases where the victim was an adult, buyer-defendants may be prosecuted when force, fraud, or coercion was used to compel the victim to engage in commercial sex. Thus, buyer-defendants are a subset of individual sex trafficking defendants. In 2023, buyer-defendants accounted for 35% (91) of defendants charged in federal sex trafficking cases.¹⁰

Often, buyer-defendants are charged for purchasing or attempting to purchase commercial sex from a victim of human trafficking as a result of an undercover or “sting” operation. During sting operations, law enforcement may pose as fictitious victims or work undercover to identify and respond to real victims of human trafficking, resulting in the arrest of potential buyers. In 2023, there were 52 buyer-defendants charged in cases involving *real* victims and 39 buyer-defendants charged in sting operations involving *fictitious* victims only.

¹⁰ Based on 262 sex trafficking defendants in 2023.

Buyer-Defendants 2019-2023



2.6 DEFENDANTS BY VICTIM TYPE

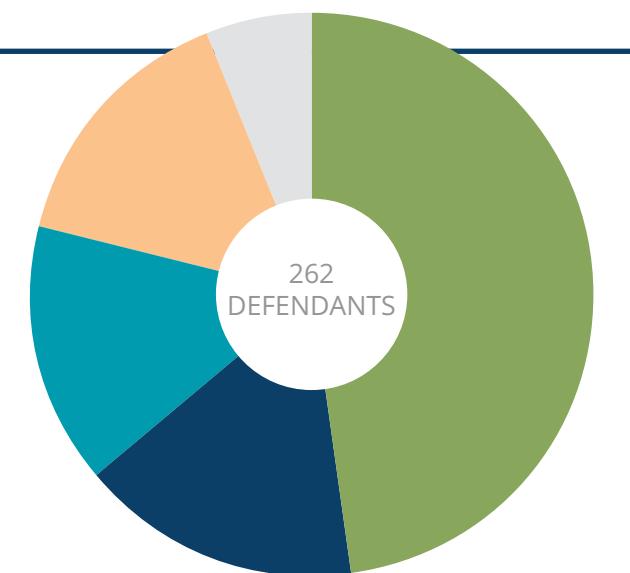
Examination of victim ages provides essential insight into the demographics of individuals targeted by traffickers, as well as the demographics of those served by the federal response to human trafficking. To do so, the FHTR distinguishes between defendants charged with sex trafficking of a minor (minor-only), sex trafficking of an adult (adult-only), and sex trafficking of both minors and adults.

Of the 262 sex trafficking defendants charged in 2023,

126 (48%) were charged with crimes against only *minor* victims. Comparatively, 41 (16%) sex trafficking defendants were charged with crimes against only *adult* victims, 39 (15%) involved *both* minor and adult victims, 40 (15%) included *fictitious* victims, and 16 (6%) of defendants were charged with crimes against victims of unknown age. In 2023 forced labor cases, 9 defendants were charged, 2 with crimes against only *minor* victims, 1 with crimes involving only *adult* victims, 4 with forced labor against *both* minor and adult victims, and 2 with forced labor crimes against victims of unknown age.

Sex Trafficking Defendants by Victim Type 2023

MINOR VICTIMS	48%
ADULT VICTIMS	16%
MINOR & ADULT VICTIMS	15%
FICTITIOUS VICTIMS	15%
UNKNOWN VICTIM AGE	6%

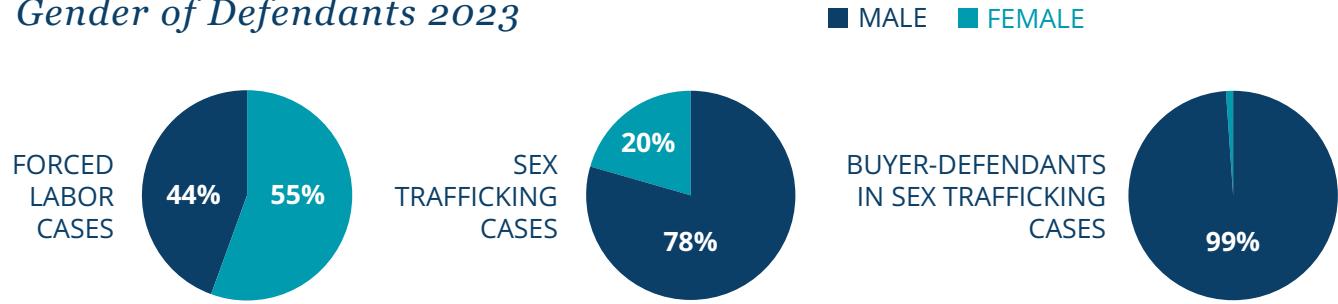




2.7 DEFENDANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Using the limited information derived from publicly available documents, the FHTTR captures a small amount of demographic information on defendants. In 2023, defendants ranged in age from 19 to 79 years old at the time of arrest, with an average age of 37. The average age of sex trafficking defendants was 37 years old, and the average age of buyer-defendants was 44 years old. By comparison, defendants in forced labor cases averaged 47 years of age.

Gender of Defendants 2023



¹¹ Based on 271 human trafficking defendants in 2023.

¹² Based on 271 human trafficking defendants in 2023.

¹³ Based on 262 sex trafficking defendants in 2023.

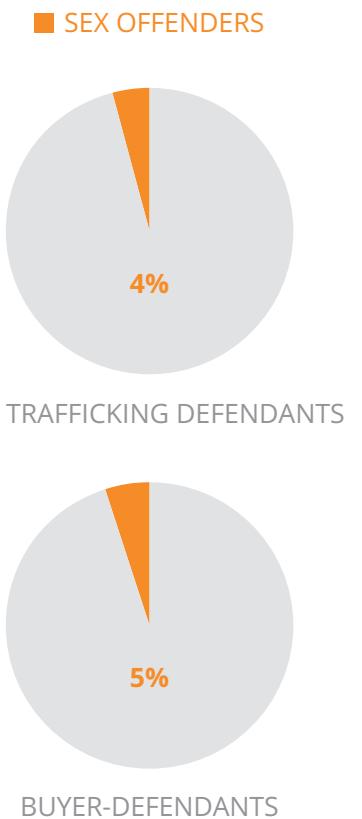
Of all defendants charged in 2023, 77% (208) were male and 21% (57) were female.¹¹ Gender was unknown for 2% (6) of defendants.¹² In sex trafficking cases, males made up 78% (204) of defendants, compared to 20% (52) who were female defendants.¹³ Alternatively, females made up a higher percentage of defendants in forced labor cases (55%, 5) than males (44%, 4).¹⁴ For buyer-defendants, 90 (99%) were identified as male, and 1 (1%) was female.¹⁵ The average age of male defendants was 40, and the average age of female defendants was 42.

2.8 DEFENDANTS ON THE SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

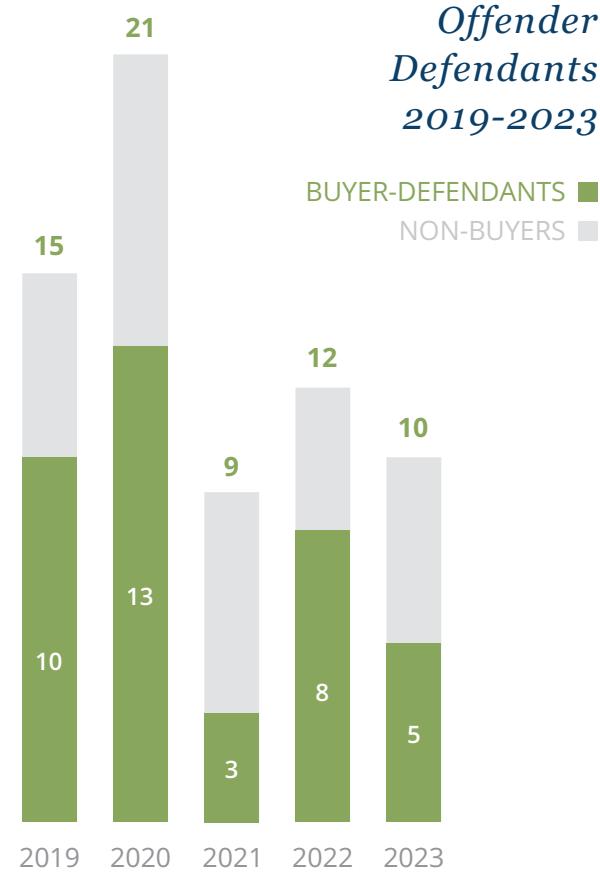
In 2022, the FHTTR began tracking data on whether defendants were registered sex offenders when they committed the charged human trafficking offense. By examining defendants' prior convictions for registrable offenses, the FHTTR hopes to better understand traffickers' operations and recidivism over time.

In 2023, 4% (10) of sex trafficking defendants charged were identified as registered sex offenders prior to the charged trafficking offense.¹⁶ Looking at the subset of buyer-defendants, 5% (5) were registered sex offenders at the time of the offense.¹⁷

Registered Sex Offender Defendants 2023



Registered Sex Offender Defendants 2019-2023



“By examining defendants’ prior convictions for registrable offenses, the FHTTR hopes to better understand traffickers’ operations and recidivism over time.”

¹⁴ Based on 9 forced labor defendants in 2023.

¹⁵ Based on 91 buyer-defendants in 2023.

¹⁶ Based on 262 sex trafficking defendants in 2023.

¹⁷ Based on 91 buyer-defendants in 2023.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER

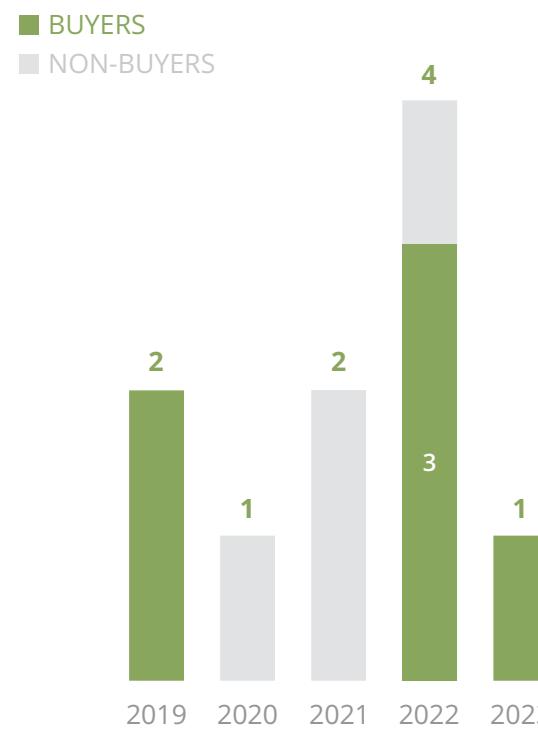
United States v. Terry Blankenship, Southern District of West Virginia

In June 2023, defendant Terry Blankenship and his wife, Laurel Blankenship, were charged with Obstructing Enforcement of a Sex Trafficking Offense (18 U.S. § 1591(d)) and Witness Tampering (18 U.S. § 1512), for influencing and bribing a 12-year-old victim-witness who had disclosed against Terry Blankenship in a sex trafficking investigation. The defendants were recorded offering bribes to the victim, including the purchase of an iPhone, for her continued silence and recantation of her statement against the defendant. Terry Blankenship was a registered sex offender at the time of the sex trafficking allegations and the obstruction and witness tampering charges, having previously been convicted of possession of child sexual exploitation materials in 2008.

The case was investigated and charged by Mercer County Sheriff's Department and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jennifer Rada Herald and Andrew D. Isabell of the Southern District of West Virginia. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.



Defendants with Military Affiliation 2019-2023



2.9 DEFENDANT MILITARY AFFILIATION

In 2023, 1 defendant was identified as a current member of the U.S. Military when charges were filed. This defendant was identified as a buyer of commercial sex.

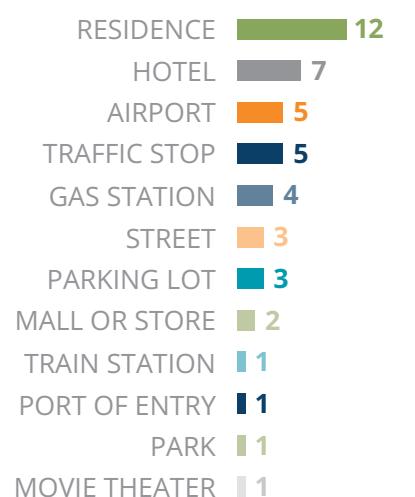
2.10 DEFENDANT ARREST LOCATION

Of the 271 defendants charged in 2023, the defendant's location at the time of arrest could be determined for 87 defendants. Non-buyer sex trafficking defendants were most commonly arrested at a hotel (16), followed by traffic stops (14). By comparison, buyer sex trafficking defendants were most likely to be arrested at residences (12) where they planned to meet with a victim for commercial sex, followed by hotels (7), airports (5), and traffic stops (5). The location of arrest was unknown for all (9) forced labor defendants.

Location of Arrest 2023



NON-BUYER-DEFENDANTS IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES



BUYER-DEFENDANTS IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES

UNKNOWN 9

DEFENDANTS IN FORCED LABOR CASES



CASE HIGHLIGHT POSITION OF TRUST

United States v. Zacharias,
Southern District of Ohio

Beginning in 1999, Michael Zacharias used his position of trust as a Catholic priest to form relationships with three young male victims, who, along with their families, believed he was a trusted friend and religious leader. Over many years, the victims developed severe substance addictions, which Zacharias exploited by purchasing drugs for the victims and coercing them to perform commercial sex acts in return. At trial, the victims testified about their growing list of fears that kept them from ending their relationship with Zacharias including the mental and emotional harm of losing someone they saw as a mentor and friend, losing their connection to God, and the fear that Zacharias would abuse others if they did not comply with his demands.

In May 2023, Zacharias was found guilty of five counts of sex trafficking of a minor and sentenced to life in prison. At the end of 2023, Zacharias's appeal was pending.

The case was investigated by the FBI. Assistant U.S. Attorney Tracey Ballard Tangeman, and DOJ's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit Trial Attorney, Lindsey Roberson, prosecuted the case.

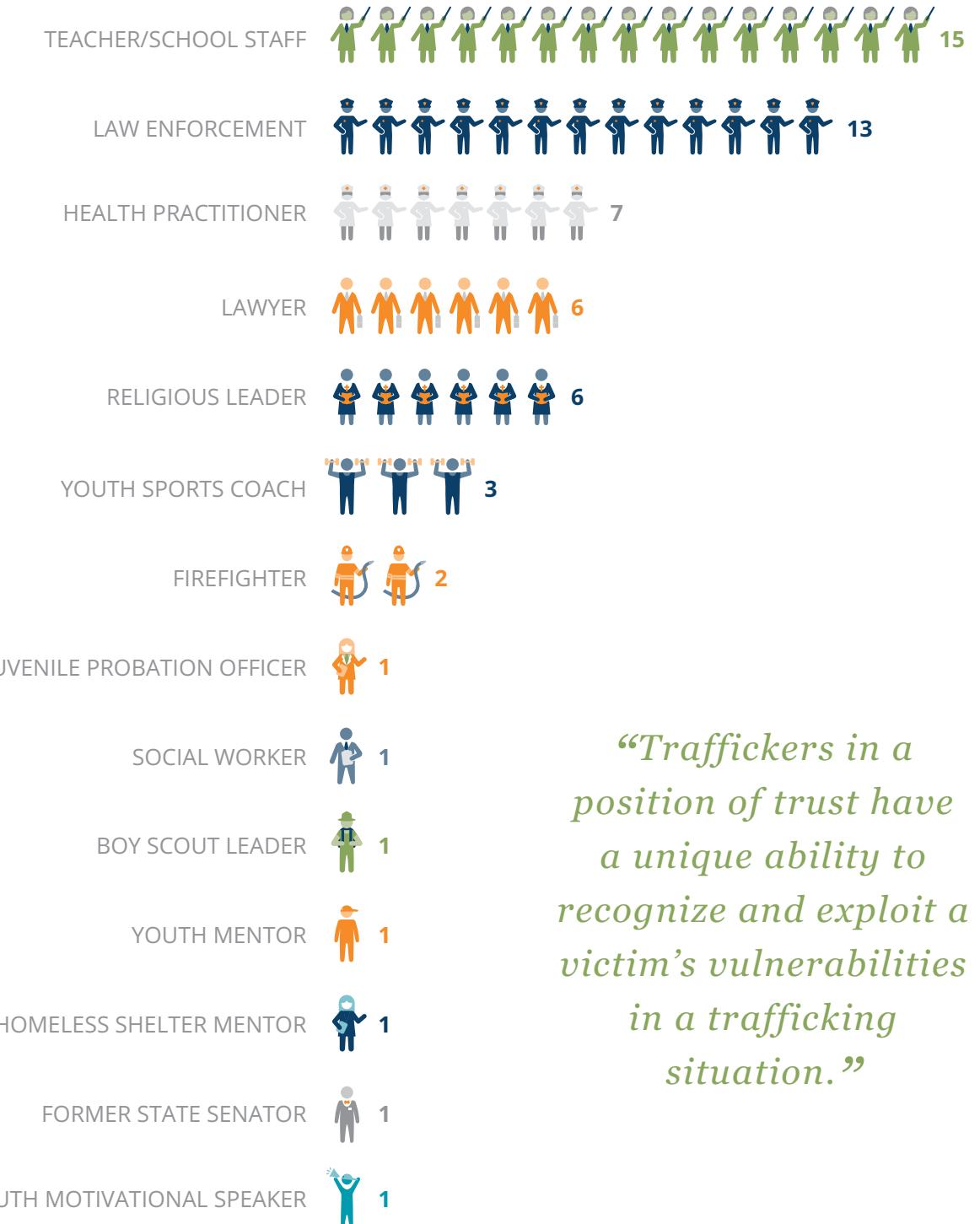
2.11 DEFENDANT POSITION OF TRUST

Traffickers in a position of trust have a unique ability to recognize and exploit a victim's vulnerabilities in a trafficking situation. According to the federal sentencing guidelines, "If the defendant abused a position of public or private trust, or used a special skill, in a manner that significantly facilitated the commission or concealment of the offense..." the defendant may receive a sentencing enhancement.¹⁸ In 2023, the FHTR began tracking when a defendant holds a position of trust within the community.

Defendant Position of Trust 2023



Defendant Position of Trust 2019-2023



"Traffickers in a position of trust have a unique ability to recognize and exploit a victim's vulnerabilities in a trafficking situation."

¹⁸ U.S. Sentencing Guidelines Manual, §3B1.3 (Dec. 2023).

Section 3

VICTIMS

SECTION 3 HIGHLIGHTS

*Victim Nationality
2023*



Victims 2023

15
ADULT MALES



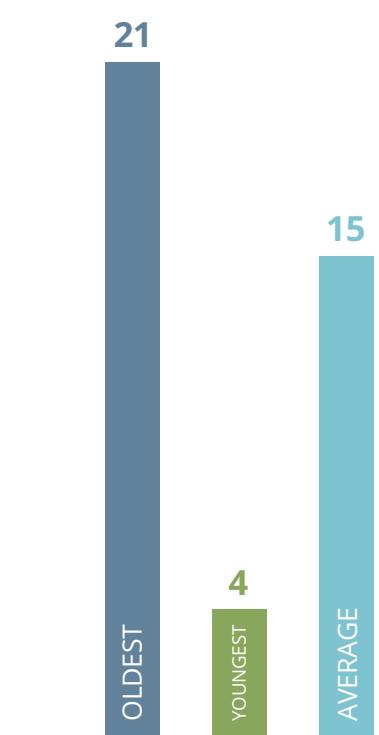
9
MINOR MALES

151
MINOR FEMALES

99
ADULT FEMALES



*Age Range of Sex
Trafficking Victims 2023*



Victims 2023

151
MINOR FEMALES



Section 3

VICTIMS



Understanding how traffickers recruit, coerce, and control victims of human trafficking is essential not only to protect victims of human trafficking but also to prevent the exploitation of future victims. This section will examine victim demographics and vulnerabilities in trafficking schemes.

3.1 VICTIMS¹⁹

In 2023, there were 670 victims in human trafficking cases filed in the federal court system. Of the 670 victims, 296 were identified by prosecutors in charging documents—usually by initials or pseudonyms, for anonymity—and 374 victims were identified by the Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTTR) through reviews of case documents and public sources.²⁰ Most importantly, like all the data presented in the FHTTR, it is inaccurate to use the following information as a reflection of the prevalence of victims in the U.S. or to extrapolate demographic trends to victims beyond those named in federal prosecutions.

3.2 VICTIMS BY CASE TYPE

Of the 670 victims in cases filed in 2023, 95% (638) were victims of sex trafficking and 5% (32) were victims of forced labor. The total number of victims in 2023 increased by 39% from 2022 when there were 482 victims identified.

3.3 VICTIM DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE & GENDER²¹

Twenty-nine percent (196) of the 670 victims in cases filed in 2023 were minors, 25% (169) were adults, and 46% (305) of the victims' ages were unknown. The amount of public information relating to victims in human trafficking cases is limited, therefore the age of victims cannot always be determined.

Victims 2023

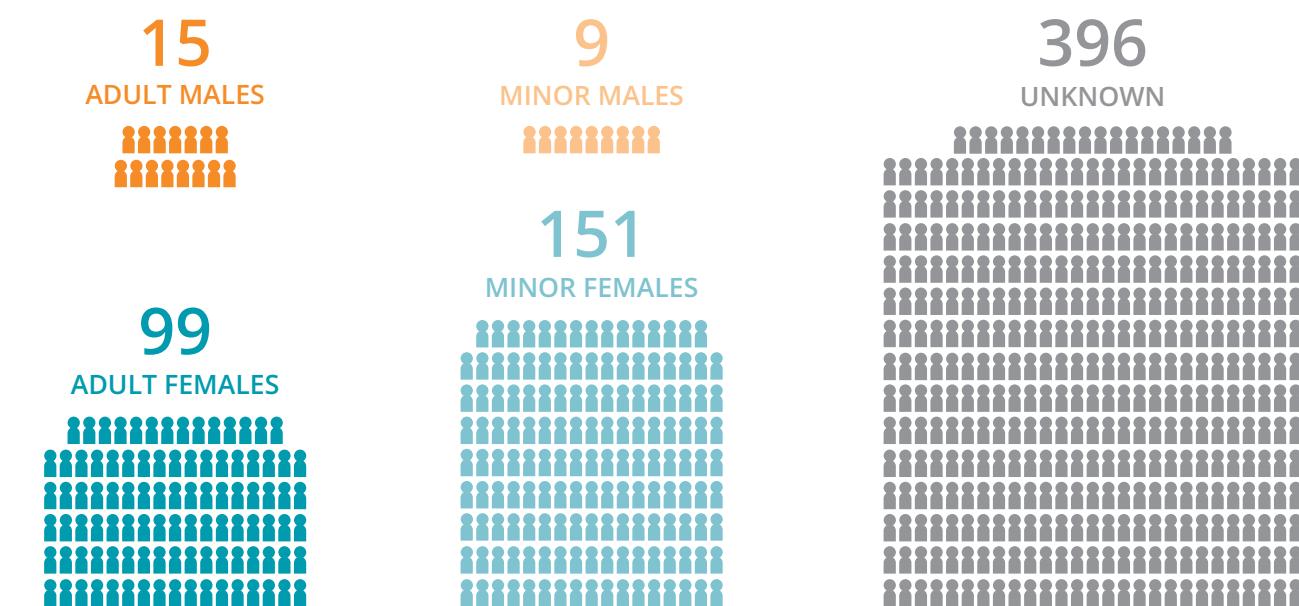


"Public sources rarely reveal information about gender identity or sexual orientation."

Gender was identified for 275 of the 670 victims in 2023 cases; 37% (99) were female, 4% (15) were male, and 59% (151) of victims' gender was unknown. Adult females accounted for 15% (99) of victims, and minor females comprised 23% (151) of victims.²² There were 15 adult males (2%) and 9 (1%) minor male victims.²³ The combination of age and gender was unknown for the remaining 396 (59%) victims at the end of 2023.

Public sources rarely reveal information about gender identity or sexual orientation. In 2023, there was one victim who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ). Because of the limited amount of publicly available information on the sexual orientation or sexual identity of victims, the number of persons within the LGBTQ community who are impacted by human trafficking is unclear and may be underrepresented.

Victims 2023



¹⁹ The term "victim" is used throughout the FHTTR to describe a person harmed by a criminal act. While the term may not adequately convey the resiliency and strength of those who have overcome the harms of human trafficking, the term "victim" is intentionally used for purposes of reporting data in the FHTTR to maintain consistency with the legal definition and the language set forth in the federal laws.

²⁰ Pleadings and public sources indicate at least 374 victims who were not named in charging documents that were impacted by crimes committed in new criminal human trafficking cases in 2023.

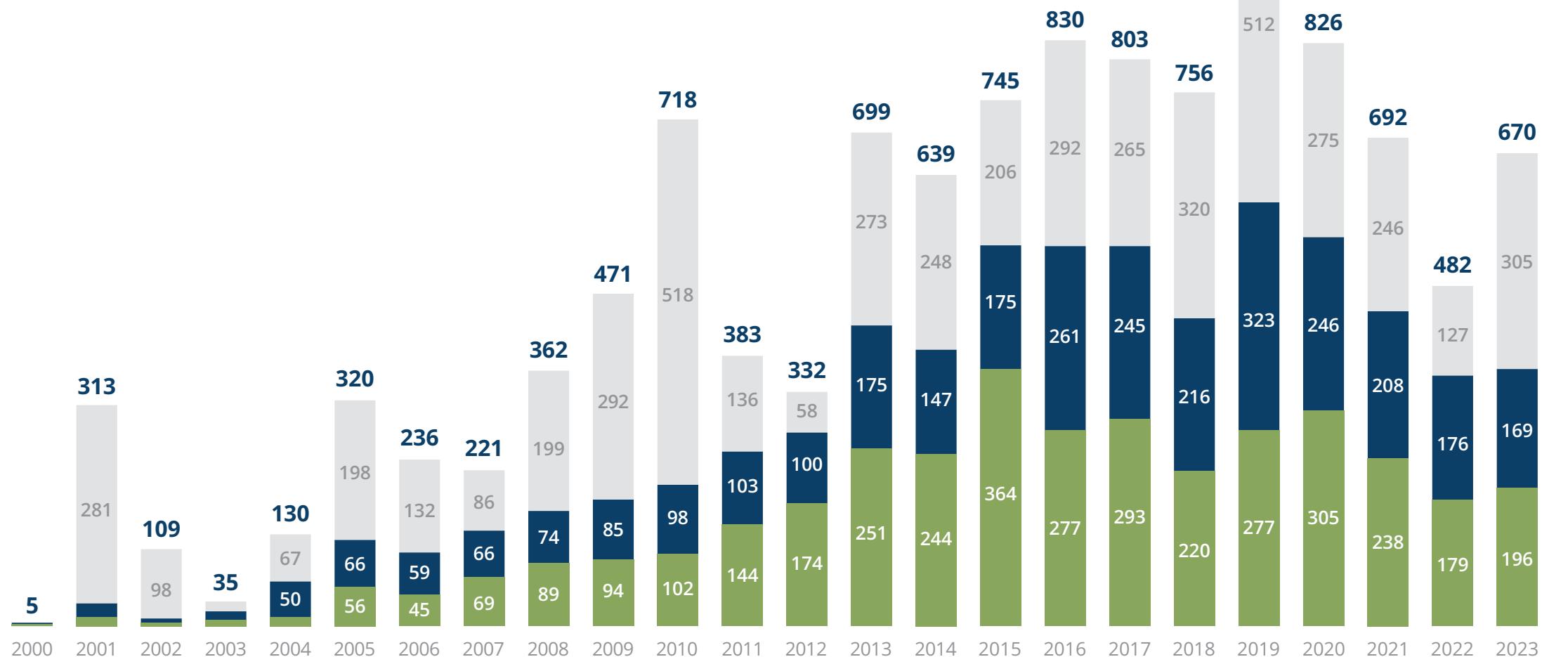
²¹ The FHTTR categorizes defendants and victims as "male," "female," or "other" based on how they self-identify when this information becomes publicly available. When there is no information on how an individual self-identifies, the FHTTR categorizes based on how law enforcement or other public sources identified them.

²² Based on 670 victims in 2023 cases.

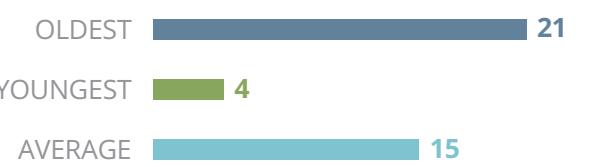
²³ Based on 670 victims in 2023 cases.

Victims by Age 2000-2023

■ ADULT
■ MINOR
■ UNKNOWN



Age Range of Sex Trafficking Victims 2023

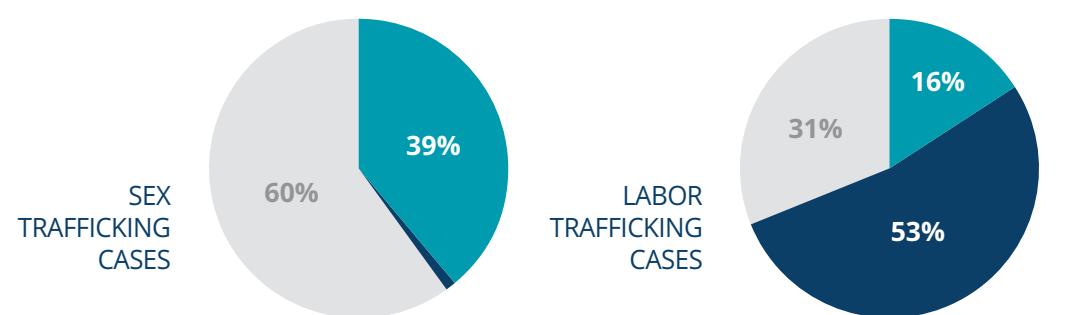


In 2023 sex trafficking cases, 39% (246) of victims were female, 1% (7) were male, and the gender was unknown for 60% (385) of victims.²⁴ In contrast, 16% (5) of victims in forced labor cases were female, compared to 53% (17) who were male, while 31% (10) were of unknown gender.²⁵

The oldest known age for sex trafficking victims in 2023 cases was 21 years old and the youngest known age of a sex trafficking victim was 4 years old. The average age of all real victims in sex trafficking cases was 15 years old. The average age of victims in forced labor cases was 16 years old. In some cases, traffickers exploit the same victim at various ages over several years. For consistency, the FHTR uses the victim's age at the time the victim was recruited or first exploited by the trafficking conduct prosecuted in the case.

Victims by Gender 2023

■ MALE
■ FEMALE
■ UNKNOWN

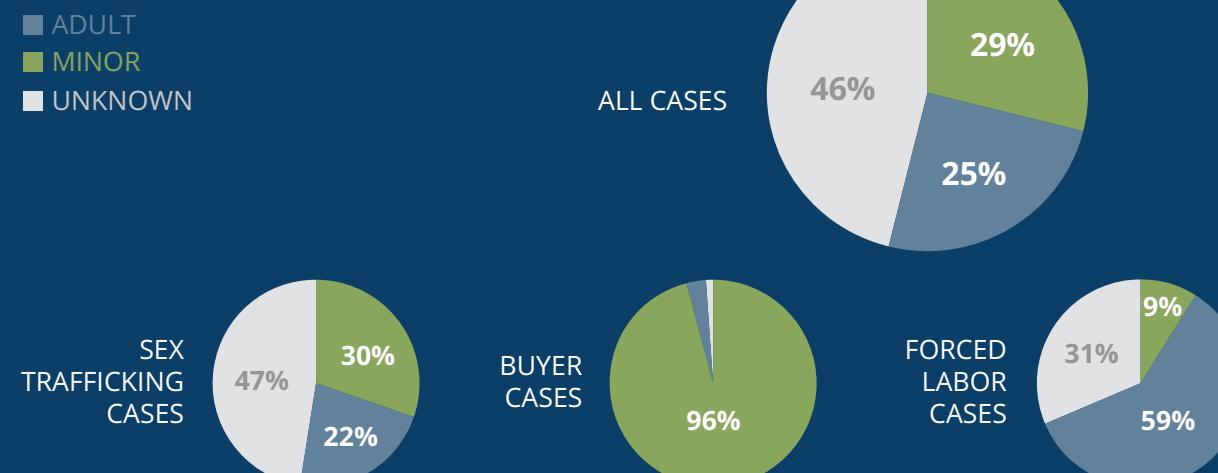


*“In some cases,
traffickers exploit the
same victim at various
ages over several years.”*

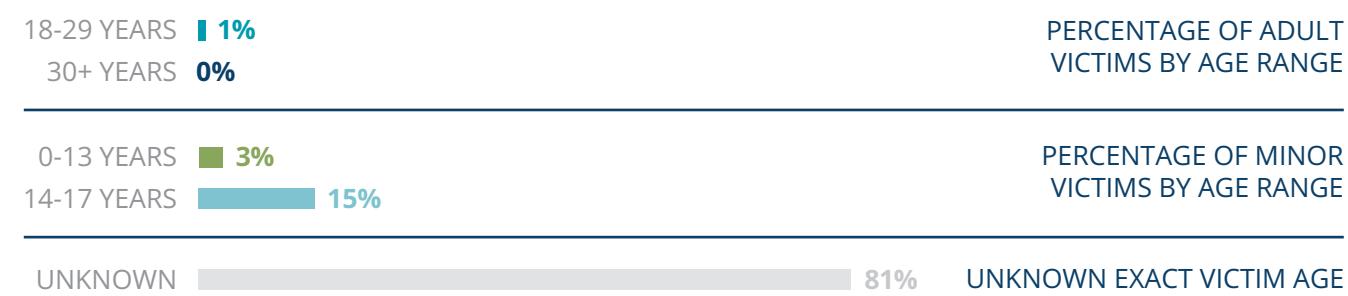
²⁴ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.

²⁵ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.

Victims by Age 2023



Age Ranges of Victims in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023



In sex trafficking cases filed in 2023, 30% (193) of victims were minors, and 22% (142) were adults, 47% (303) of victims' age at recruitment were unknown.²⁶ In the subset of cases involving buyer defendants, 96% (90) of real victims were minors.²⁷ However, in contrast to sex trafficking cases, 59% (19) of victims in forced labor cases were adults, 9% (3) were minors, and 31% (10) were unknown.²⁸

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) provides different penalties for defendants convicted of sex trafficking, depending on the age range of the victims.³¹

Sex trafficking using force, fraud, or coercion carries a minimum term of imprisonment of 15 years, irrespective of the victim's particular age.²⁹ Specific ages of victims were known for 121 of the 638 sex trafficking victims in 2023 cases, 5 of which were adult victims with ages ranging from 18-29. The minimum term of imprisonment for trafficking of minors below 14 years old is also 15 years.³⁰ There were 20 victims in 2023 identified as under the age of 14 at the time of the offense. The minimum term of imprisonment is reduced to 10 years for sex trafficking of a minor between 14 and 17 years of age, which was the range for 96 victims.³¹

3.4 FICTITIOUS VICTIMS

As discussed in greater detail in *Section 5: Investigations*, law enforcement agencies often conduct undercover or "sting" operations in human trafficking investigations and sometimes create fictitious victims to use in those investigations. The FHTR defines a *fictitious victim* as a fake or imaginary victim created by law enforcement to engage with targets in an undercover operation or sting. Fictitious victim profiles created and used by law enforcement give us insight into the demand for commercial sex, specifically as it relates to traffickers seeking to exploit minors.

In 2023, there were 61 fictitious victims in the 197 sex trafficking cases filed. This was a decrease from 2022 when 83 fictitious victims were used in human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. The average age of fictitious sex trafficking victims in 2023 was 11 years old, four years less than the average age of real victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.³² It is important to note that even though a fictitious victim was utilized in an operation, human trafficking is never a "victimless" crime.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF FICTITIOUS VICTIMS	AVERAGE AGE OF FICTITIOUS VICTIMS	GENDER BREAKDOWN	HOW MANY WERE IN BUYER CASES?
2019	74	12	Male: 6; Female: 67; Unknown: 1	66
2020	98	12	Male: 6; Female: 92	85
2021	86	12	Male: 5; Female: 80; Unknown: 1	82
2022	83	13	Male: 4; Female: 76; Unknown: 3	79
2023	61	11	Male: 1; Female: 58; Unknown: 2	57

²⁶ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.

²⁷ Based on 94 real victims in 2023 buyer cases.

²⁸ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.

³² Compared to the average age of real sex trafficking victims of 15 years old.

CASE HIGHLIGHT UNDERCOVER OPERATION

United States v. Denzel Loftin, Eastern District of Virginia

During an undercover operation, law enforcement officers encountered 32-year-old Denzel Akeem Loftin, when Loftin began talking to an undercover officer pretending to be a 17-year-old female living in Pennsylvania.³³ Loftin said he was a “pimp” and tried to recruit the undercover officer to come to Virginia and work for him. A short time later, the FBI learned of a 14-year-old missing from Colorado, who had been located in commercial sex advertisements in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia.³⁴ Law enforcement set up an undercover “date” with Loftin for commercial sex with the 14-year-old and another juvenile, later identified as a missing 17-year-old from Missouri. In June 2023, Loftin pleaded guilty to sex trafficking a minor and was sentenced in December 2023 to 25 years in prison followed by 7 years of supervised release.

The FBI led the investigation with significant support from the Chesapeake Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney E. Rebecca Gantt.

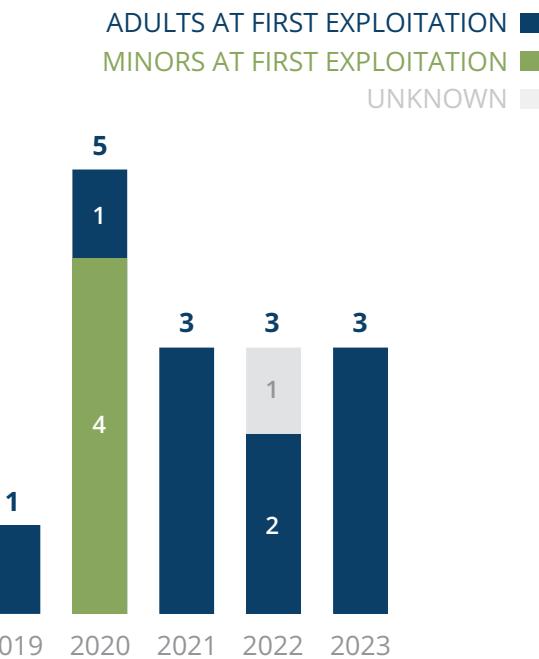
3.5 VICTIM “BOTTOMS”

Traffickers may use victims to help carry out their trafficking scheme. When a female victim actively engages in the recruiting, management, and control of other victims on behalf of the trafficker, they may commonly be referred to as a “bottom.” Often, bottoms are the victims who have been with the trafficker the longest. Operating as a “right hand,” the bottom may help instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishments on other victims.³⁵ Victims may be coerced into helping the trafficker carry out the trafficking scheme for numerous reasons, including fear and the complex nature of a trauma bond between the victim and the trafficker.

Bottoms create a unique predicament in that they are actively engaged in criminal behavior, but they are often doing so as a result of the coercion of their trafficker. While some victims become a bottom as adults, some victims become a bottom after being exploited by the trafficker as a minor.

In 2023, the FHTR began reporting on instances where criminal pleadings indicated that a victim was a bottom in a trafficking scheme. Since 2019, 15 victims have been identified in pleadings as bottoms. Of those 15 victims, 4 were first exploited by the trafficker while they were minors.

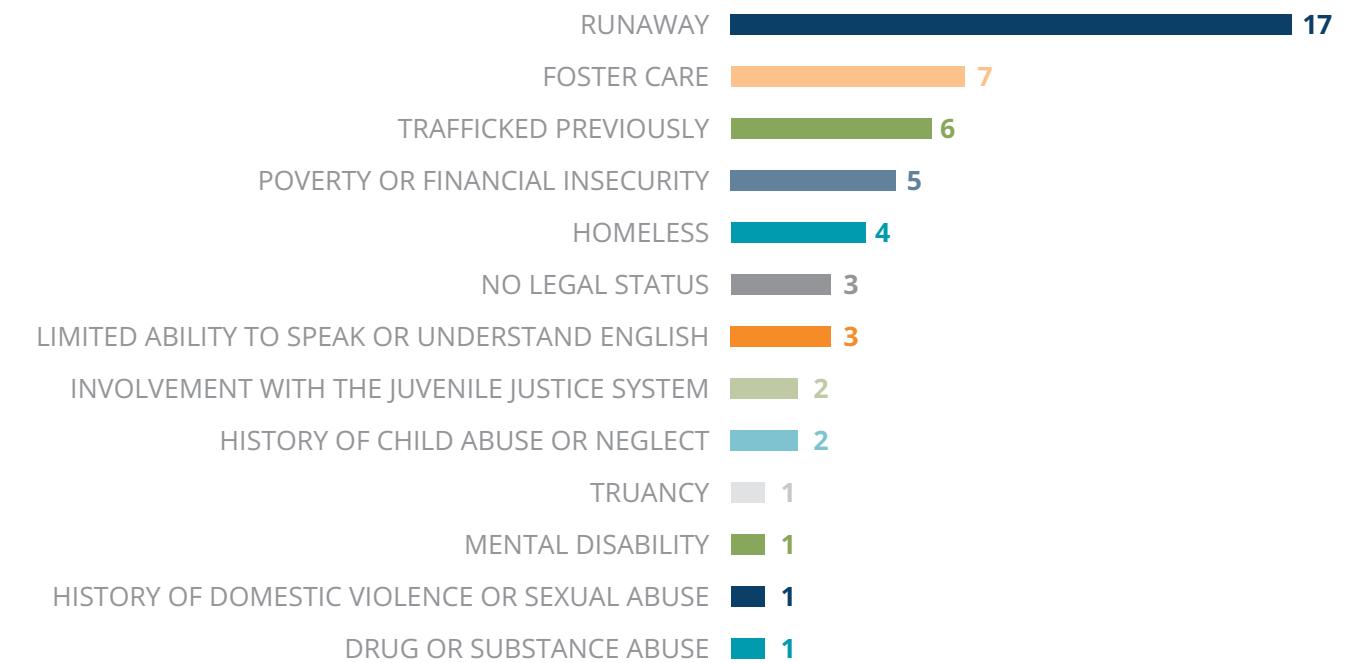
Victim “Bottoms” 2019-2023



3.6 VICTIM VULNERABILITIES

A victim’s pre-existing vulnerabilities make them particularly at risk of recruitment and coercion by traffickers. For minor victims, running away from home was the most common vulnerability (17), followed by being in the foster care system (7), having been trafficked in the past (6), poverty or financial insecurity (5), being homeless (4), no legal status (3), limited ability to speak or understand English (3), past involvement with the juvenile justice system (2), and a history of child abuse or neglect (2).³⁶

Pre-existing Vulnerabilities of Minor Victims 2023



³³ Press release, Department of Justice (Dec. 20, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/chesapeake-man-sentenced-sex-trafficking-minors>.

³⁴ Id.

³⁵ Trafficking Terms, Shared Hope International, <https://sharedhope.org/the-problem/trafficking-terms/>.

³⁶ Based on 33 minor victims in 2023 cases for whom at least one vulnerability was known.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

United States v. Payton Brown, District of Southern Ohio

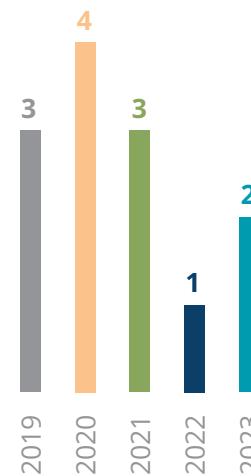
In October 2022, investigators responded to a report about a potential minor sex trafficking victim. The victim, a 16-year-old girl, and another minor had been reported missing and were recovered at Brown's residence.

Investigators interviewed the victim and learned she was on house arrest at her grandparent's house when she decided to join a dating app. The victim met Brown on the dating app, and he agreed to pick her up from her grandparent's house. Brown eventually took the victim to his house where they began a sexual relationship, and the victim stated they were in love. After a while, Brown told the minor he was out of money and asked her to go on "dates" for money. Brown instructed the victim to take nude photos of herself, which he posted with advertisements of the victim online and she immediately began meeting customers for commercial sex.

After law enforcement recovered the juveniles from Brown's residence, the victim and her friend were placed in a restrictive access treatment facility. Approximately two months after entering the facility, the victim and her friend both escaped custody and were again located at Brown's residence.

This case is being investigated by the FBI and local law enforcement. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.

Victim Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System 2019-2023

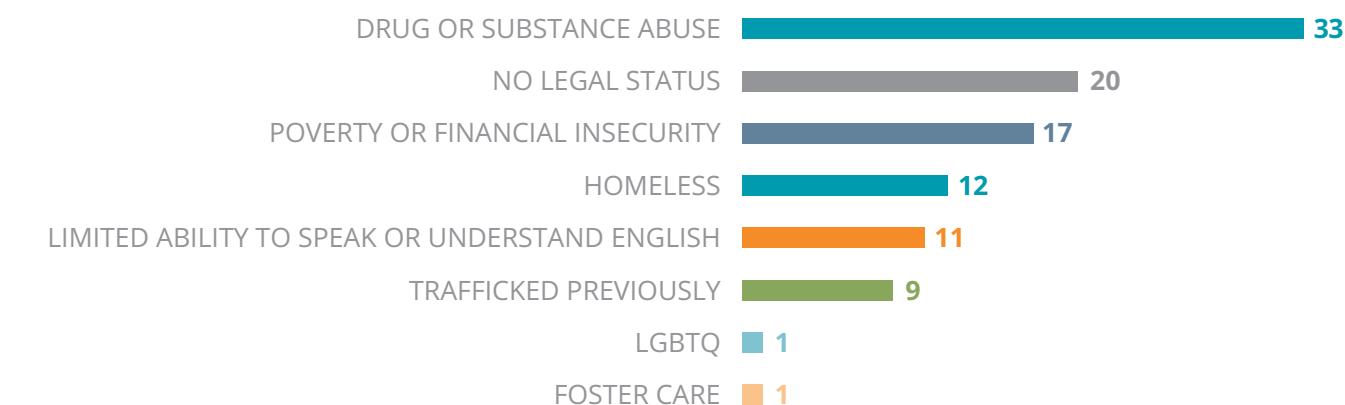


The top vulnerabilities for adult victims of human trafficking included: drug or substance abuse (33); no legal status (20); poverty or financial insecurity (17); being homeless (12); limited ability to speak or understand English (11); prior trafficking victim (9); LGBTQ status (1); and having been in the foster care system (1).³⁷

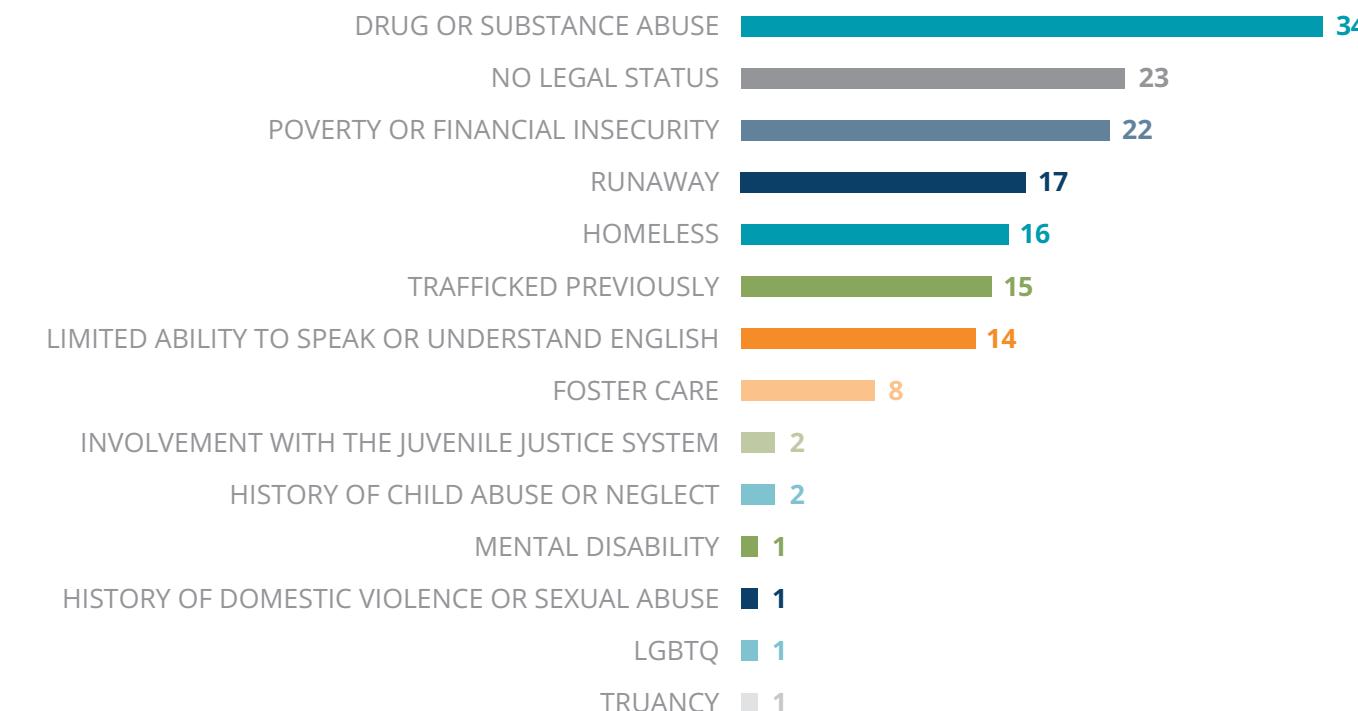
Victims with children can be uniquely vulnerable in trafficking situations, as traffickers may use a victim's children to coerce and control the victim. The FHTR collects data on whether children of trafficking victims were exposed to the trafficking scheme, whether that child also became a victim of trafficking, and whether or not the trafficker was the biological parent of the child. In 2023, no victims were identified as having children exposed to trafficking schemes.

³⁷ Based on 64 adult victims in 2023 cases for whom at least one vulnerability was known.

Pre-existing Vulnerabilities of Adult Victims 2023



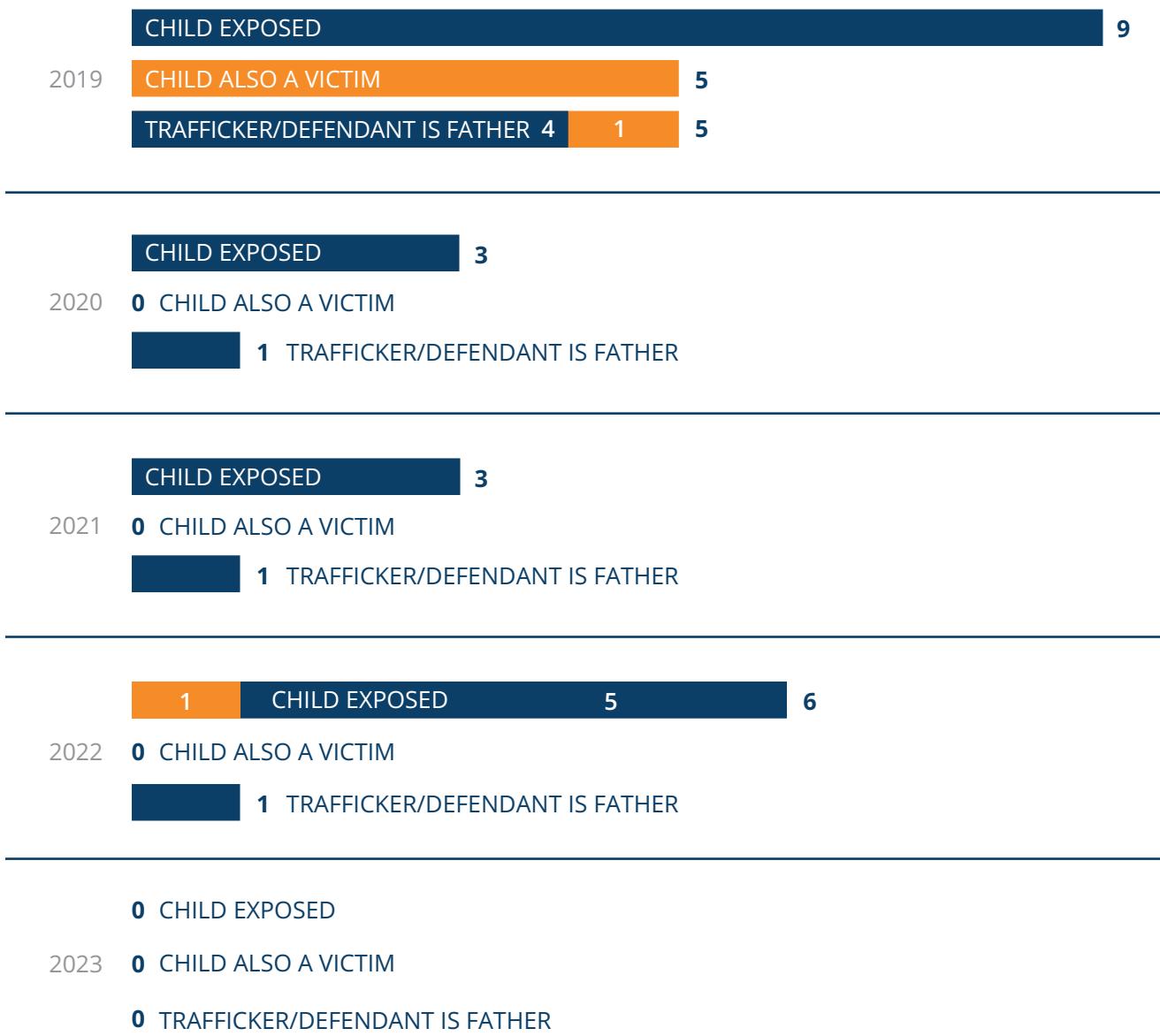
Pre-existing Vulnerabilities of Victims 2023



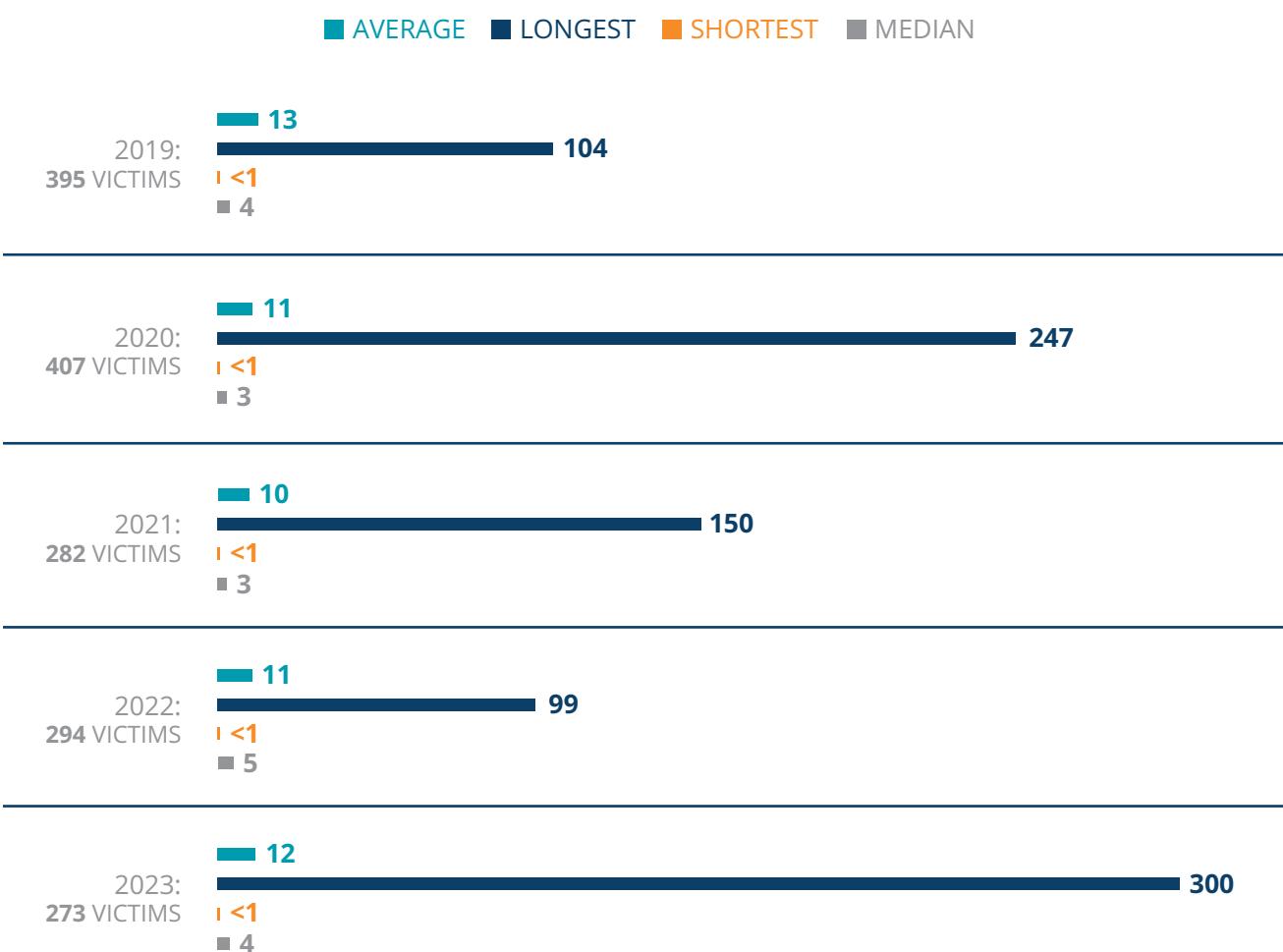


Victims with Children 2019-2023

■ SEX TRAFFICKING ■ FORCED LABOR



Length of Exploitation of Sex Trafficking Victims (Months) 2019-2023



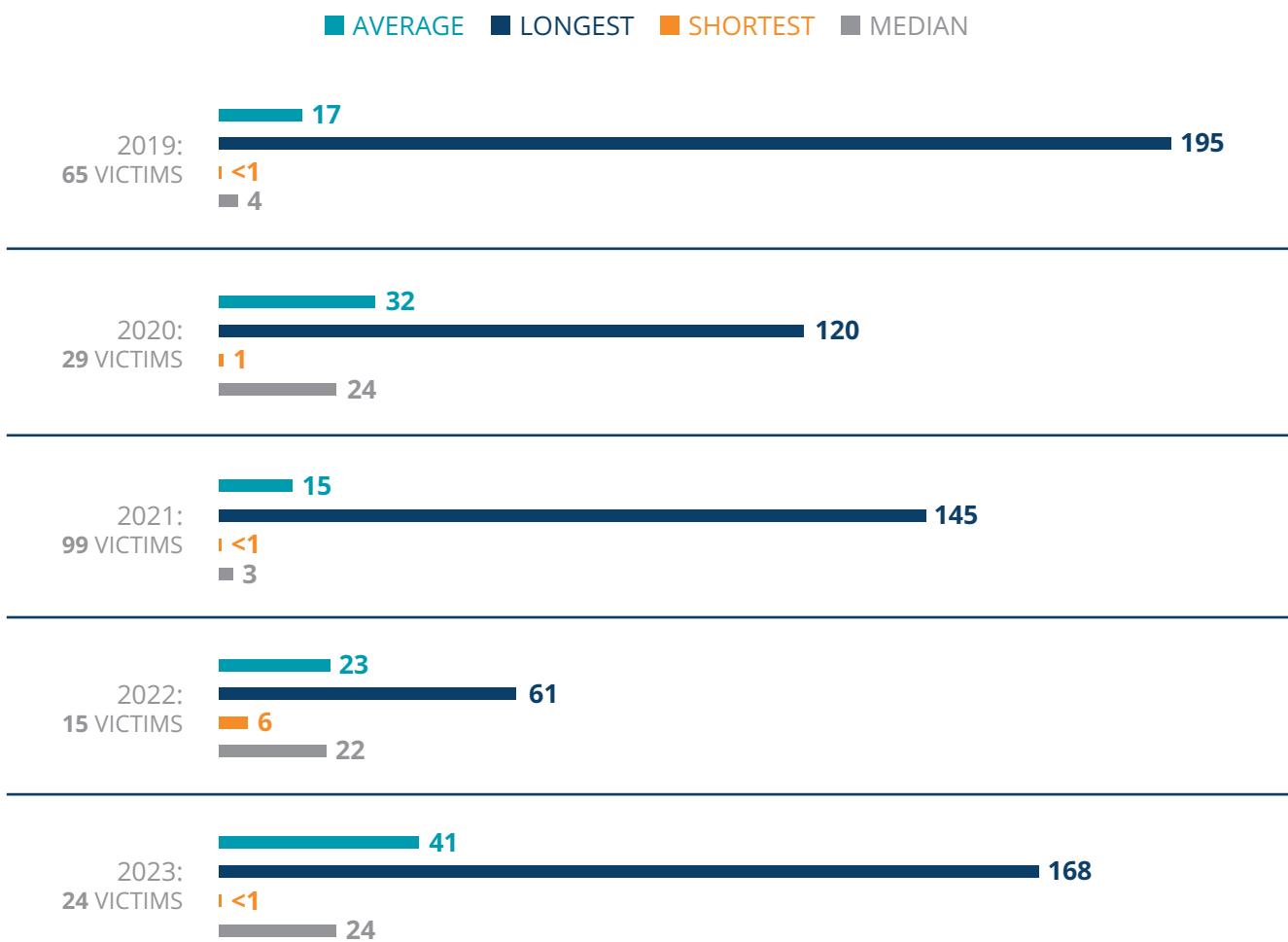
3.7 LENGTH OF VICTIM EXPLOITATION

Understanding the length of time victims spend in a trafficking scheme can be incredibly insightful in shaping interventions for victims and care for survivors. It can also shed light on the impact of intervention, helping us understand the number of victims that are protected when a trafficker is removed from society through arrest and prosecution. When available, the FHTR uses close approximations or exact dates of victims' exploitation from beginning to end.

For victims of sex trafficking in 2023 cases for which a length of exploitation could be determined, the average length of time victims spent in exploitation was 12 months. This length of time was fairly consistent with the previous years.

When examining the length of exploitation of victims in forced labor, the average time victims spent in exploitation was higher than that of sex trafficking victims. In 2023, the average length of exploitation for victims of forced labor was 41 months.

Length of Exploitation of Forced Labor Victims (Months)



3.8 VICTIM SELF-REPORTING

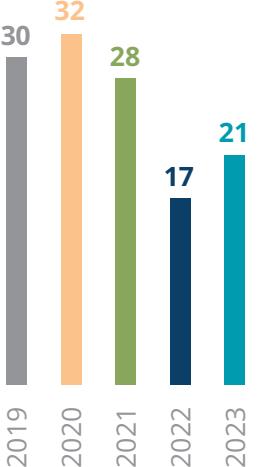
Victims of human trafficking may not recognize they are being trafficked during their exploitation. For this reason, law enforcement, prosecutors, service providers, medical professionals, first responders, educators, and other frontline personnel must understand the signs and indicators of human trafficking, and have proper referral and support mechanisms in place in the event that they encounter a potential victim of trafficking. Examining

how cases are reported helps us better understand which agencies are encountering victims of trafficking, and how to better support survivors in those industries through education and training of practitioners.

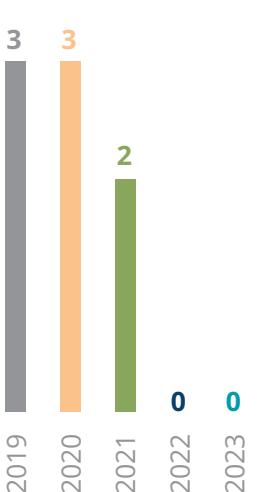
In 2023, 21 victims self-reported their trafficking to law enforcement or to someone else who contacted law enforcement. All 21 of the victims were victims of sex trafficking, and no victims of forced labor were identified as self-reporting in 2023.

“Victims of human trafficking may not recognize they are being trafficked during their exploitation.”

Self-Reporting Victims of Sex Trafficking 2019-2023



Self-Reporting Victims of Forced Labor 2019-2023



CASE HIGHLIGHT FORCED LABOR

United States v. Balcazar, et al., District of South Carolina

After being charged in 2021, a father and daughter's scheme to exploit agricultural workers through their business, Balcazar Nature Harvesting, LLC (BNH), ended with guilty pleas, prison time, asset forfeiture, and a restitution order of over \$500,000.

After receiving approval from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to employ foreign national agricultural workers in 2021, Elizabeth and Enrique Balcazar provided seasonal agricultural workers to farms in and around Lexington County, South Carolina. Elizabeth Balcazar traveled to Mexico to recruit workers and then brought them back to South Carolina under the guise of fair pay and favorable working conditions. Throughout the scheme, she recruited 55 Mexican nationals who each received H-2A temporary agricultural worker visas.

However, the Balcazars overworked, underpaid, and illegally required their workers to pay for fees and equipment necessary for the work. The Balcazars failed to provide promised meals and required victims to work up to 90 hours a week but refused to pay them for hours after 40. BNH participated in illegal cost-shifting by requiring workers to pay for transportation, visas, food, and work equipment. Further, Enrique Balcazar used force and coercion to compel the workers to stay at BNH. Balcazar confiscated passports and visas, discharged firearms, failed to provide medical care, placed locks on the outside of the facility where workers slept, threatened workers with deportation, and posted armed guards at the camp facility. Workers ultimately escaped and communicated with victim service providers and law enforcement.

Enrique Balcazar pleaded guilty to Labor Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 1589) and Passport Confiscation in Furtherance of Labor Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 1592) and was sentenced in 2023 to 40 months in federal prison. Elizabeth Balcazar and BNH pleaded guilty to Fraud in Foreign Labor Contracting (18 U.S.C. § 1351) and were sentenced in 2023 to 3 months imprisonment.

This case was investigated by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), HSI, and the DOL. Assistant U.S. Attorney Carrie Sherard prosecuted the case with the support of Assistant U.S. Attorney Elliot Daniels.

3.9 VICTIM INTERACTION WITH HEALTHCARE

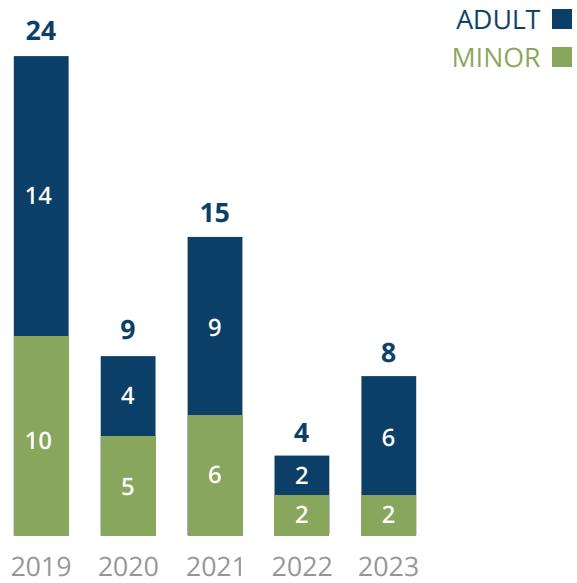
Studies show many victims of human trafficking access healthcare during their exploitation.³⁸ When healthcare personnel are trained in identifying the signs and indicators of trafficking and have trauma-informed systems and processes in place, these encounters can lead to successful referrals to law enforcement and support for survivors. In 2023, the FHTTR began collecting data on victim interaction with healthcare providers to better understand when and how victims interact with the healthcare system. In cases filed in 2023, the FHTTR identified 8 victims who accessed healthcare services during their exploitation.

3.10 DEATH OF VICTIM DURING EXPLOITATION

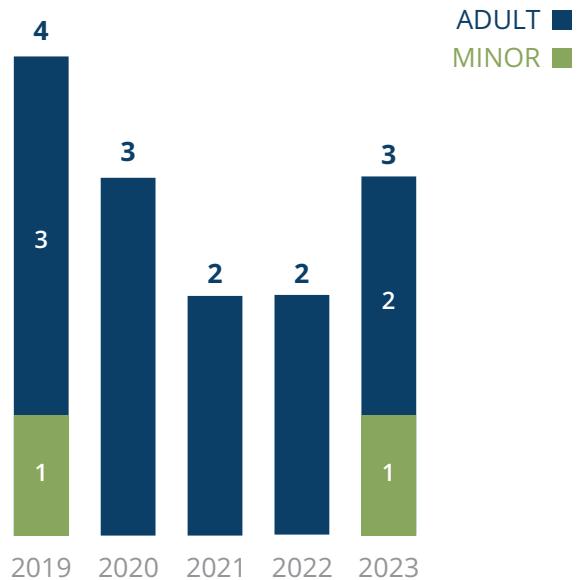
Human trafficking poses severe dangers to its victims, exposing them to physical, emotional, and psychological harm. Tragically, the harms of exploitation can lead to the death of the victim, either as a direct result of violence from the trafficker or as a result of the circumstances of exploitation. Recognizing the extreme harm that can result from the exploitation of victims of human trafficking, the FHTTR began collecting data on instances of the death of a victim during exploitation. Since 2019, 14 victims have died during the period of exploitation by their trafficker, 2 of whom were minors.

“Studies show many victims of human trafficking access healthcare during their exploitation.”

Victim Interaction with Healthcare 2019-2023



Death of Victim During Exploitation



³⁸ Brittany Anthony, Polaris Project, *On Ramps, Intersections and Exit Ramps: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking, Healthcare* (2018).



— CASE HIGHLIGHT — DEATH OF VICTIM DURING EXPLOITATION

United States v. Jermall Anderson et al., District of Massachusetts

While investigating *United States v. Barry Davis*, investigators learned about Jermall Anderson. According to case documents, Davis, who pleaded guilty to sex trafficking in 2017, and Anderson were both trafficking women for sex and would share and transport each other's victims. Charges were filed against Anderson and two others in August of 2023.

Court documents state that Anderson and his co-conspirators targeted individuals based on their vulnerabilities, most often individuals who were unemployed, homeless, struggled with drug addiction, and didn't have connections with others in the area. Victims were recruited through Anderson's network of drug dealers, Backpage, strip clubs, and often directly from drug rehabilitation facilities. Anderson sent other victims or "bottoms" into rehabilitation facilities to recruit victims from within the program, promising drugs, housing, and other necessities.

Anderson controlled all the money within the trafficking scheme and controlled the victims' access to and allotment of drugs as a way to influence and coerce his victims. If a victim didn't answer her phone, talked back to Anderson, or if Anderson thought she was hiding money or didn't make enough money, he would withhold drugs, forcing the victim to experience withdrawal symptoms.

One victim who struggled with drug addiction became very ill, but Anderson stated she was just going through withdrawals and refused to allow her to seek medical treatment. Anderson continued to post ads and forced the victim to continue working for another week before another individual took her to the hospital where she later died of several severe infections.

This case was investigated by HSI, the Lynn and Tewksbury Police Departments in Massachusetts, and the Hampden, Connecticut Police Department.

Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending against all defendants at the end of 2023.



SMUGGLING VS. TRAFFICKING

The terms “smuggling” and “human trafficking” are often conflated and incorrectly used interchangeably. Title 8, U.S.C. §1324 prohibits the smuggling, transportation of, concealing, harboring, encouraging, or inducing of unauthorized aliens to enter the U.S. The crime of smuggling involves the illegal movement of humans across international borders.

Title 18 U.S.C. §1589 and §1591 prohibit human trafficking which is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to benefit from forced labor or commercial sex trafficking. Force, fraud, or coercion need not be proven for the sex trafficking of a minor. Converse to smuggling, human trafficking does not require movement.

Not all persons smuggled into the U.S. are victims of human trafficking, nor are all human trafficking victims smuggled into the country. However, when victims are smuggled across the U.S. border for forced labor or sex trafficking, they are victims of *both* smuggling and human trafficking. Twenty-three victims fell within this category in 2023, such that they were smuggled into the country for exploitation through forced labor or sex trafficking.

There were 8 foreign national victims exploited *after* entering the U.S. in 2023. Foreign nationals can become uniquely vulnerable to human trafficking after entering the country because of their undocumented status, language barriers, and financial instability.

“Title 18 U.S.C. §1589 and §1591 prohibit human trafficking which is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to benefit from forced labor or commercial sex trafficking.”

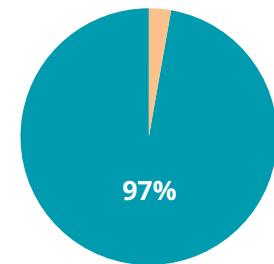
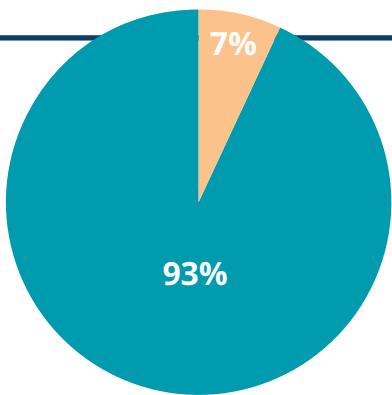
3.11 FOREIGN NATIONAL VICTIMS

In 2023, 93% (624) of victims were either U.S. citizens or their nationality was unknown, and 7% (46) of victims in new cases filed were foreign nationals.³⁹ The breakdown of victim nationality varied by case type. In sex trafficking cases, 3% (16) of victims were identified as foreign nationals,⁴⁰ while 94% (30) of victims in new forced labor cases were identified as foreign nationals.⁴¹

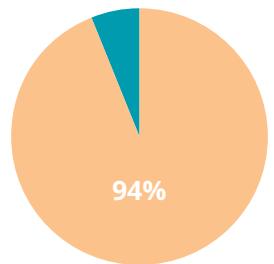
Victim Nationality 2023

■ FOREIGN NATIONAL
■ U.S. CITIZENS OR
NATIONALITY UNKNOWN

VICTIMS IN ALL HUMAN
TRAFFICKING CASES⁴²



VICTIMS IN SEX
TRAFFICKING
CASES⁴³



VICTIMS
IN FORCED
LABOR CASES⁴⁴

³⁹ Based on 670 total victims in 2023 cases. A victim is classified as a foreign national only if the pleadings specifically state that the victim is of foreign nationality. All other victims are considered U.S. Citizens or unknown, as the facts and circumstances set forth in the pleadings may not specify the victim's nationality.

⁴⁰ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.

⁴¹ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.

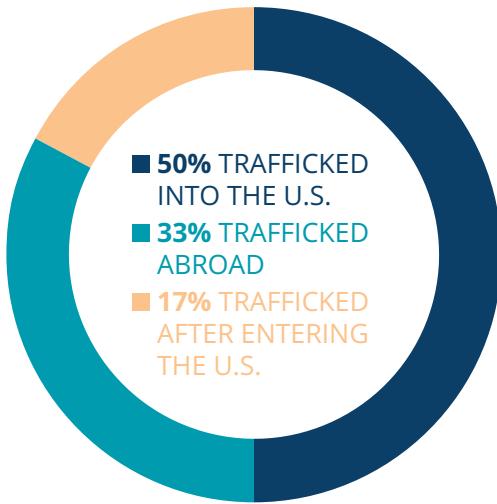
⁴² Based on 670 total victims in 2023 cases.

⁴³ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.

⁴⁴ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.



Trafficking Trends of Foreign National Victims 2023



It is important to note that even if a victim of human trafficking is identified as a foreign national, it does not mean that the victim was trafficked across borders into the U.S.⁴⁵ In 2023, 50% (23)⁴⁶ of foreign national victims were trafficked *into* the U.S.; 2% (1) in sex trafficking cases and 48% (22) in forced labor cases.⁴⁷ For 17% (8) of those victims, exploitation occurred only *after* entering the U.S. and 33% (15) victims were identified as being exploited entirely abroad.⁴⁸ Within the foreign national victims, 59% percent (27) of victims were adults and 41% (19) were minors.⁴⁹

When foreign nationals enter the U.S., with or without authorization, they can become uniquely vulnerable to human trafficking. Fifty percent (23) of foreign national victims were undocumented prior to being trafficked, 30% (14) had limited English language skills, 22% (10) were in poverty or financially insecure, and 2% (1) identified as LGBTQ.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Illegal movement of a human across borders is considered smuggling. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, harboring, transportation, obtaining, or provision of a person for the purpose of forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation, which sometimes can include movement across borders.

⁴⁶ Based on 46 foreign national victims in 2023 cases.

⁴⁷ Based on 46 foreign national victims in 2023 cases.

⁴⁸ Based on 46 foreign national victims in 2023 cases.

⁴⁹ Based on 46 foreign national victims in 2023 cases.

⁵⁰ Based on 46 foreign national victims in 2023 cases.

CASE HIGHLIGHT TRAFFICKING OF FOREIGN NATIONAL VICTIMS

United States v. Rita Martinez et al., Southern District of Texas

In December 2023, Rita Martinez, age 65, a legal permanent resident of the U.S., and her son, Genaro Fuentes, age 41, were convicted of operating a decades-long sex trafficking scheme from their bar in Mission, Texas.⁵¹ For several years, Martinez and her son traveled from the U.S. to Mexico and enticed impoverished, young females across the U.S. border with false promises of a better life. Upon arriving in the U.S., Martinez then forced the victims to engage in commercial sex under the guise of paying off their smuggling debt.⁵² Martinez used physical abuse, threats of abuse, and debt manipulation to control victims, and profited from commercial sex acts the victims were forced to perform for customers.

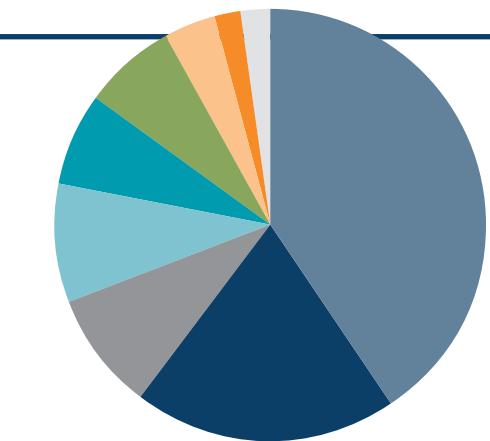
Martinez was sentenced to 360 months in prison, was ordered to pay over \$840,000 in restitution, and ordered to forfeit her house and bar to the government. Fuentes was sentenced to 72 months in prison and ordered to pay \$20,000 in restitution.

The case was charged by the FBI, and investigated by the McAllen Resident Agency with the support of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. Trial Attorney Kate Hill of the Civil Rights Division's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Laura Garcia and Sherri Zack for the Southern District of Texas prosecuted the case.⁵³

Foreign national victims identified in 2023 traveled to the U.S. from multiple countries including Mexico (19, 41%), Colombia (9, 20%), the Philippines (4, 9%), Guatemala (4, 9%), Brazil (3, 7%), El Salvador (3, 7%), Panama (2, 4%), India (1, 2%), and one victim's country of origin was unknown.

Foreign National Victims by Country 2023

MEXICO 19	■
COLOMBIA 9	■
THE PHILIPPINES 4	■
GUATEMALA 4	■
UNKNOWN 1	■
BRAZIL 3	■
EL SALVADOR 3	■
PANAMA 2	■
INDIA 1	■



⁵¹ Press release, Department of Justice (Dec. 8, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/texas-mother-and-son-sentenced-sex-trafficking-minor>.

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

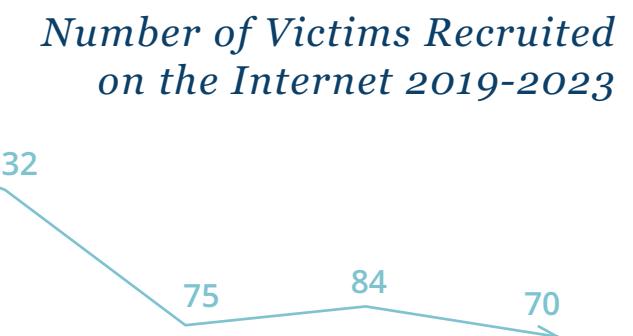
Section 4

HUMAN TRAFFICKING SCHEMES

SECTION 4 HIGHLIGHTS

WHEN A LOCATION OF RECRUITMENT COULD BE IDENTIFIED,
60%
OF SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMS WERE RECRUITED
ONLINE
IN 2023

AVERAGE NUMBER OF VICTIMS PER SINGLE SEX TRAFFICKING DEFENDANT 2023
3.3
VICTIMS



THE TOP THREE PLATFORMS IDENTIFIED TO RECRUIT VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING IN 2023 WERE
SNAPCHAT, FACEBOOK, AND INSTAGRAM

BETWEEN 2019 AND 2023, 17 OF THE 3,782 VICTIMS IN FEDERAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROSECUTIONS WERE KIDNAPPED BY THEIR TRAFFICKER



Section 4

HUMAN TRAFFICKING SCHEMES

There are many forms of human trafficking. Understanding the different types of human trafficking schemes not only helps us identify trafficking situations but also helps us develop an effective response to combat trafficking. This section explores both sex trafficking and forced labor schemes. Examining schemes helps us better understand the recruitment, coercion, and transportation of victims, the solicitation of buyers, and where human trafficking operations occur.

4.1 SEX TRAFFICKING SCHEMES

While human trafficking occurs in many different forms, the most common human trafficking cases filed in U.S. federal courts involve sex trafficking. In 2023, 98% (197) of the new cases filed involved sex trafficking.⁵⁴ Forced labor cases accounted for 2% (5) of the cases filed.⁵⁵



⁵⁴ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

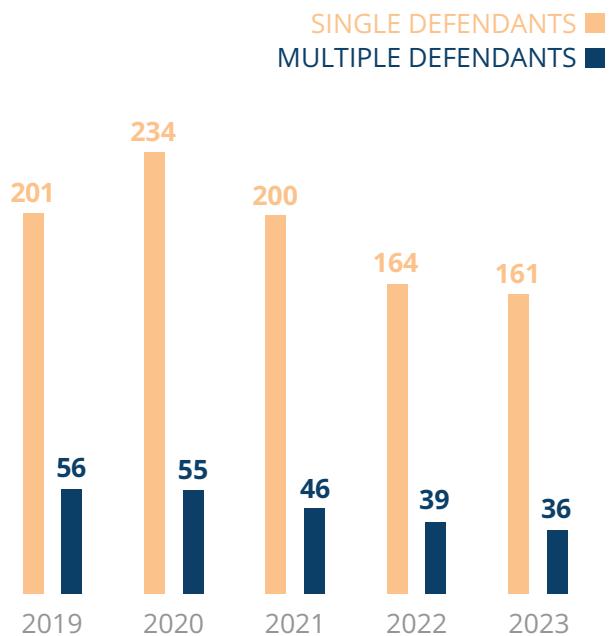
⁵⁵ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

4.1.1 SINGLE AND MULTIPLE DEFENDANT TRAFFICKING MODELS

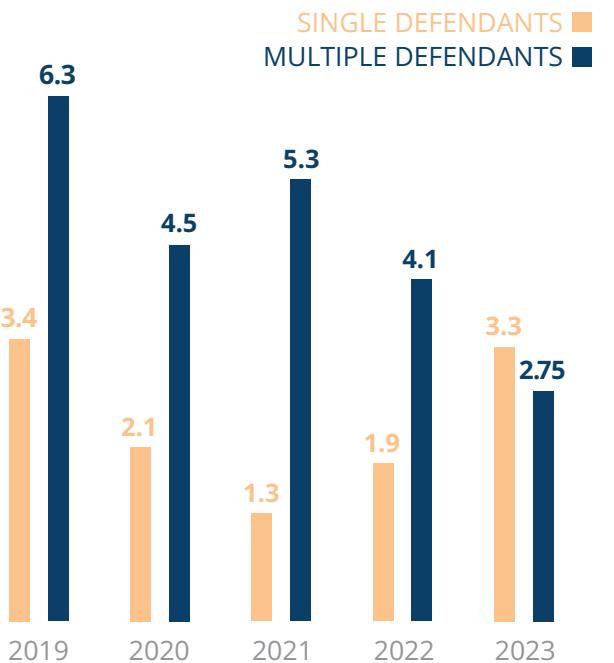
Traffickers may operate independently or in concert with others. Likewise, trafficking schemes can range from small-scale operations to large, complex trafficking rings. Understanding how traffickers function in small and large-scale operations helps us better identify and respond to trafficking schemes. In 2023, 82% (161) of the 197 sex trafficking cases filed involved a trafficking model that included only one defendant. The remaining 18% (36) included a trafficking model involving multiple defendants.⁵⁶

In 2023, there were 539 victims resulting from the 161 sex trafficking cases involving single defendants, for an average of 3.3 victims per single defendant case. In the 36 sex trafficking cases involving multiple defendants in the trafficking model, there were 99 victims involved, for an average of 2.75 victims per multiple-defendant case.

Cases with Multiple or Single Defendants 2019-2023



Average Number of Victims per Defendant 2019-2023



⁵⁶ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.



MULTI-DEFENDANTS IN GANG-DIRECTED TRAFFICKING SCHEMES

The Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR) monitors the intersectionality of gangs and human trafficking to understand how often the intersection occurs and to better identify and respond to gang-related trafficking schemes. Trafficking may occur within criminal gang syndicates as a stream of revenue, and gang members may use coercion, violence, and intimidation tactics to control their victims.

Between 2000 and 2023, 70 federal trafficking cases were gang-directed, involving 494 victims. These cases arose in 15 states: Maryland, Texas, New York, Wisconsin, California, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Oregon, Florida, Illinois, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Indiana, and Georgia.

The largest portion – 17 of the 70 cases – were filed in California and 13 were filed in Virginia. The most common gangs identified within the 70 gang-directed cases included, the Bloods (13), Crips (13), MS-13 (6), Gangster Disciples (3), Folk Nation (2), and Vice Lords (2).

CASE HIGHLIGHT

United States v. Clarence Chambers et al., Southern District of Texas

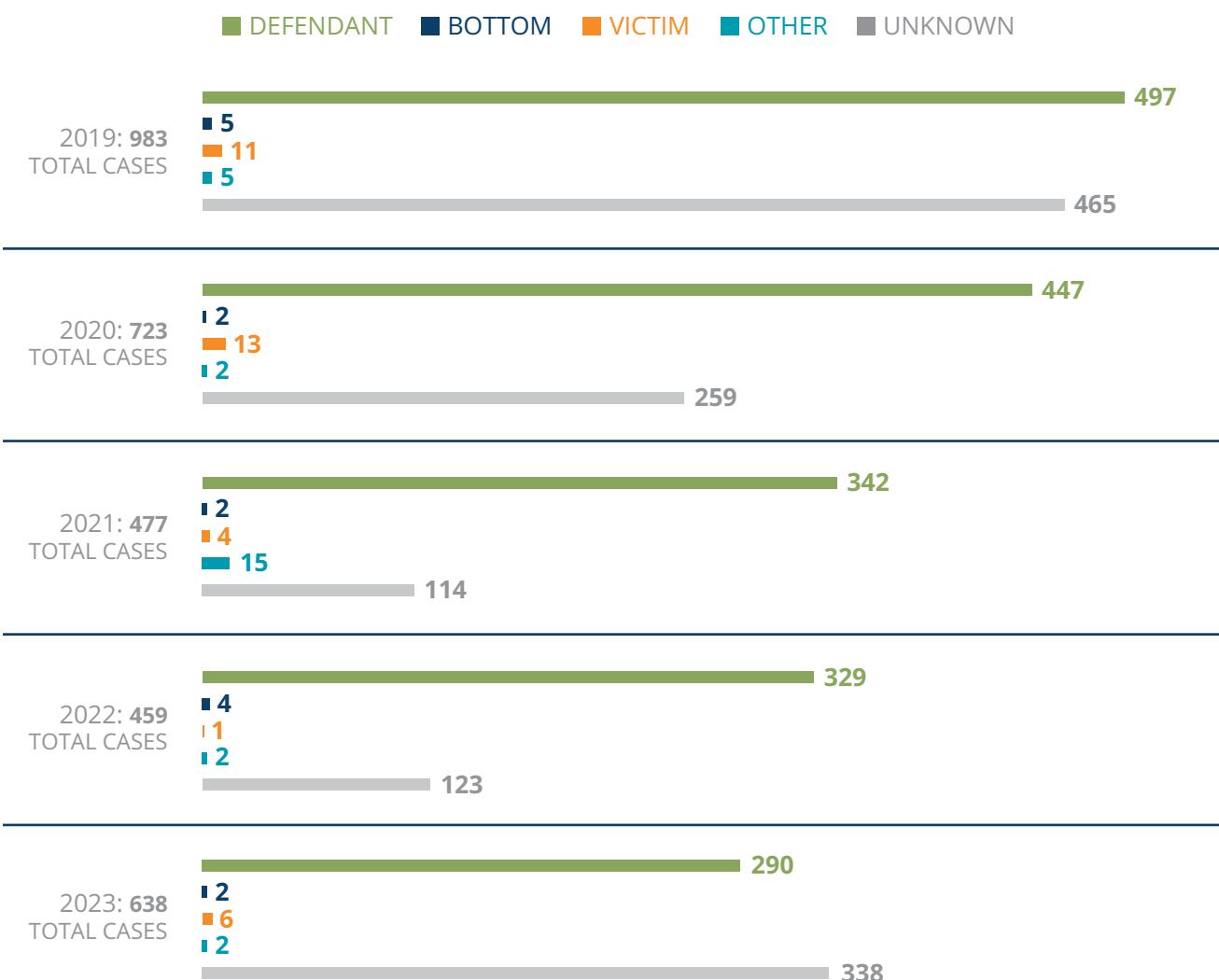
Many of the cases identified spanned across multiple states and jurisdictions, including the case *United States v. Clarence Chambers et al.*, filed in the Southern District of Texas in 2021. Chambers and his co-defendants, members of the Lincoln Park Bloods, recruited and coerced numerous adult and minor female victims into a sex trafficking scheme in an area of Houston, Texas, commonly known for commercial sex called, “The Blade”.⁵⁷ The defendants threatened gang violence against the victims and their families, brandished weapons, inflicted physical abuse, and withheld pay, exploiting the victims throughout Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, and Illinois.

After targeting and recruiting young runaways, the defendants advertised the victims to commercial sex buyers on websites including CityXGuide and Escort Directory, and arranged dates at area hotels. The defendants required the victims to meet daily monetary quotas and punished some victims with beatings and humiliation when they failed to make the quota.⁵⁸

Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.



Recruiter of Sex Trafficking Victims 2019-2023



4.1.2 RECRUITMENT

Data from the Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR) consistently shows that victims of human trafficking are rarely kidnapped and forced into a trafficking scheme. Instead, many victims know their trafficker and are recruited and then exploited based on the victim’s unique vulnerabilities. Victims may be recruited by their trafficker or a third party, and recruitment may occur in a variety of locations.

RECRUITERS

In 2023, the FHTR identified the recruiter for 300 (47%) of the 638 sex trafficking victims. Defendants recruited victims in 290 (97%) of those 300 instances, non-defendant “bottoms” recruited 2 (1%), and another victim recruited 6 (2%) victims. The remaining 2 (1%) victims were recruited by individuals not party to the criminal case.⁵⁹ There was insufficient information to identify the recruiter for the remaining 338 (53%) victims.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Press release, Department of Justice (June 29, 2021), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdtx/pr/gang-members-charged-trafficking-young-girls-sex>.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Based on 300 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases whose recruiter was known.

⁶⁰ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.



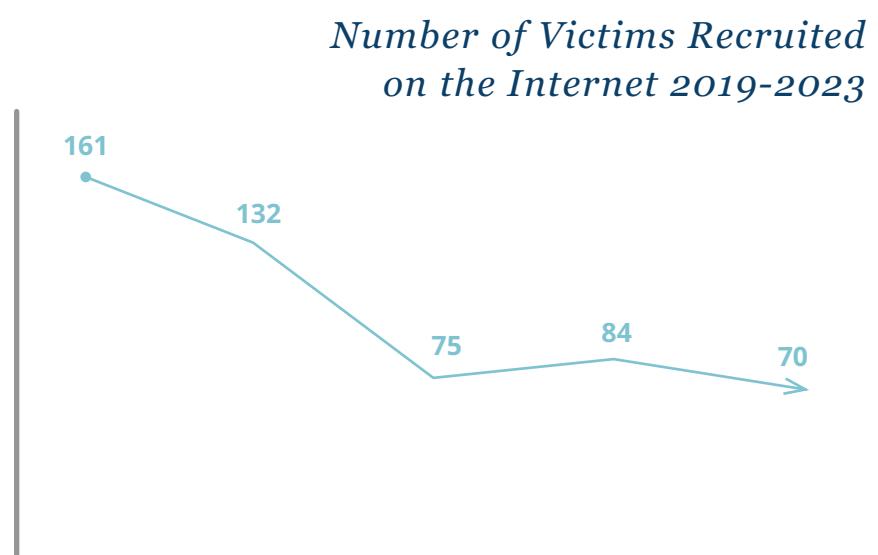
LOCATION OF RECRUITMENT

Within the 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023, there were 117 (18%) victims for whom at least one location of recruitment could be identified.⁶¹ Of the 638 sex trafficking victims, 70 (11%) were recruited on the internet, 18 (3%) at a residence, 12 (2%) in a foreign country, 10 (2%) on the street, 6 (1%) at hotels, and 1 (<1%) at school. There was insufficient information to determine the location of recruitment for 521 (82%) sex trafficking victims.⁶²

As technology increases over time, so too has the use of the internet in the recruitment of victims of human trafficking. Over the past five years, the number of victims recruited over the internet each year remains significant, with 522 sex trafficking victims being recruited over the internet since 2019.

ONLINE PLATFORMS USED TO RECRUIT VICTIMS

As technology and trends change, so do the platforms and apps used by traffickers to recruit victims. Within the cases filed in 2023, the most commonly identified platforms used by traffickers to recruit victims were: Snapchat (28), Facebook (10), Instagram (7), PlentyofFish (4), and WhatsApp (2). Snapchat was the most commonly identified platform for the recruitment of sex trafficking victims over the past three years.⁶³



⁶¹ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases

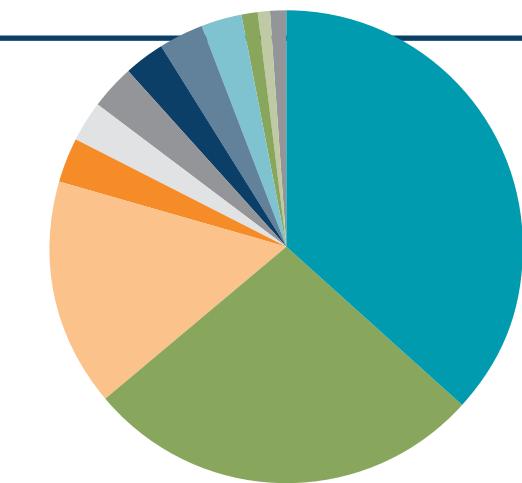
⁶² Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases

⁶³ Based on Snapchat being used 74 times to recruit victims in sex trafficking cases between 2021 and 2023.

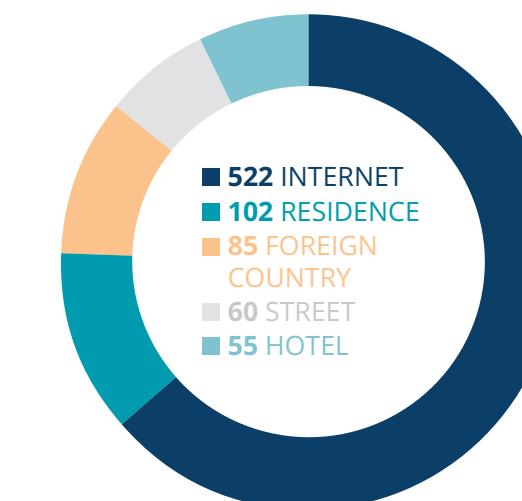
“As technology and trends change, so do the platforms and apps used by traffickers to recruit victims.”

Top Platforms Used in Recruitment of Victims 2019-2023

FACEBOOK 151	■
SNAPCHAT 114	■
INSTAGRAM 64	■
TAGGED 13	■
PLENTYOFFISH 10	■
KIK 10	■
WHATSAPP 9	■
SEEKING ARRANGEMENTS 7	■
DISCORD 7	■
CRAIGSLIST 6	■
VIDEO GAME 5	■
TEXTNOW 5	■



Top 5 Locations of Victim Recruitment in Sex Trafficking Cases 2019-2023

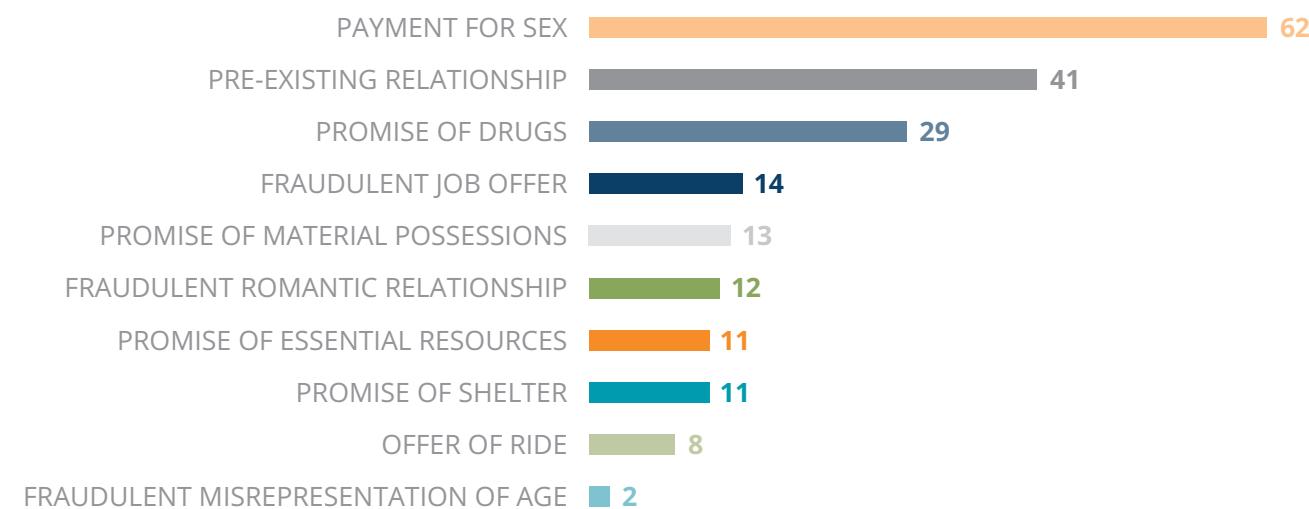


While the internet is the most commonly identified location for the recruitment of victims, traffickers may recruit victims from other or additional locations. Within the cases filed in 2023, traffickers recruited victims from residences (18), foreign countries (12), the street (10), hotels (6), malls/stores (3), group homes (3), drug treatment facilities (2), schools (1), and church (1).⁶⁴

Since 2019, the FHTR recorded the following locations: the internet (522); residence (102); foreign country (85); street (60); hotel (55); school (25); mall or store (23); phone (12); bar or cantina (9); group home (8); party (7); office (6); vehicle (5); bus stop (5); restaurant (4); drug treatment facility (3); carnival or festival (3); park (3); strip club (3); church (2); marina (2); spa or massage parlor (1); sporting event (1); shelter (1); camp (1); and the beach (1). There were 1,157 unknown locations of recruitment since 2019.

⁶⁴ Based on the 117 instances where recruitment location could be determined.

Methods of Recruitment in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023



METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

There were 134 (21%) sex trafficking victims with at least one known method of recruitment in sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.⁶⁵ Ten methods of recruitment were identified in these cases. Defendants recruited victims through offers of payment for sex (62), pre-existing relationships with the victims (41), promises of drugs (29), fraudulent job offers (14), promises of material possessions (13), fraudulent romantic relationships (12), promises of essential resources (11), promises of shelter (11), offers of a ride (8), and misrepresentation of age (2). Payment for sex (52), pre-existing relationships (32), and promise of material possessions (10) were the three most commonly identified methods of recruitment used to recruit minor victims of sex trafficking in 2023. Some of the most common material possessions promised to recruit minor victims of sex trafficking were alcohol, vape or tobacco, marijuana, a car, cell phones, and in one instance, the promise

to get an identification card. To recruit adult victims, traffickers used the promise of jewelry, cars, clothing, and a lavish lifestyle.

A common misconception is that victims of human trafficking are abducted and forced into trafficking. Fortunately, data from the FHTR helps dispel this myth by showing that victims are rarely kidnapped into a trafficking scheme. Since 2000, .2% of victims in federal human trafficking cases were kidnapped by their traffickers.⁶⁶ Instead, data shows that victims of trafficking often know their traffickers.

In 2023 sex trafficking cases, 49 (8%) victims were recruited through a pre-existing relationship with the recruiter, through which the recruiter took advantage of their relationship with the victim or the victim's relationship with someone else to recruit them.⁶⁷ Of these victims, the most common pre-existing relationships included recruitment by a mutual friend (22); intimate partner (9); friend or classmate (6); partner of parent or guardian (3); and neighbor (2).

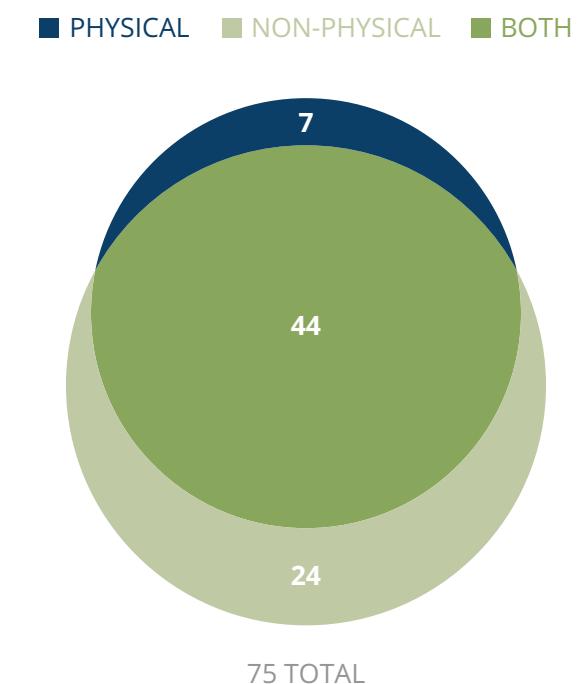


4.1.3 METHODS OF COERCION

Traffickers employ numerous methods of coercion to manipulate and control victims, including physical, non-physical, and sometimes violent means. In 2023, 24 (12%) of the sex trafficking cases filed involved coercion exclusively through non-physical means.⁶⁸ Non-physical methods of coercion can be more difficult to recognize than physical coercion, as they are invisible and subjective. There were 7 (4%) cases in 2023 that included *only* physical coercion. Often, traffickers will use *both* physical and non-physical methods of coercion. The use of both physical and non-physical forms of coercion has been consistently present in cases over the past five years.⁶⁹ This remained the same in 2023 where in 44 (22%) of sex trafficking cases, victims experienced both physical and non-physical forms of coercion.⁷⁰ Eighty-nine cases (45%) involved buyers of commercial sex and therefore did not have a method of coercion, and in an additional 33 (17%) sex trafficking cases in 2023, the method of coercion could not yet be identified.⁷¹

In 2023, the most common methods of coercion identified in sex trafficking cases involving adult victims were withholding pay (15), threats of physical abuse (14), physical abuse (14), inducing or exploiting substance abuse issues (12), and required quotas (11).⁷²

Physical & Non-Physical Coercion in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023



⁶⁵ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.

⁶⁶ Based on 19 out of 11,889 victims in the 3,164 human trafficking cases filed since 2000.

⁶⁷ Based on 638 victims in 2023 sex trafficking cases.

⁶⁸ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

⁶⁹ Based on 49 cases in 2022, 59 cases in 2021, 90 cases in 2020, 94 cases in 2019.

⁷⁰ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

⁷¹ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

⁷² Based on 28 adult-only sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

EXPLOITING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

*United States v.
David Amin et al.,*
Eastern District of New York

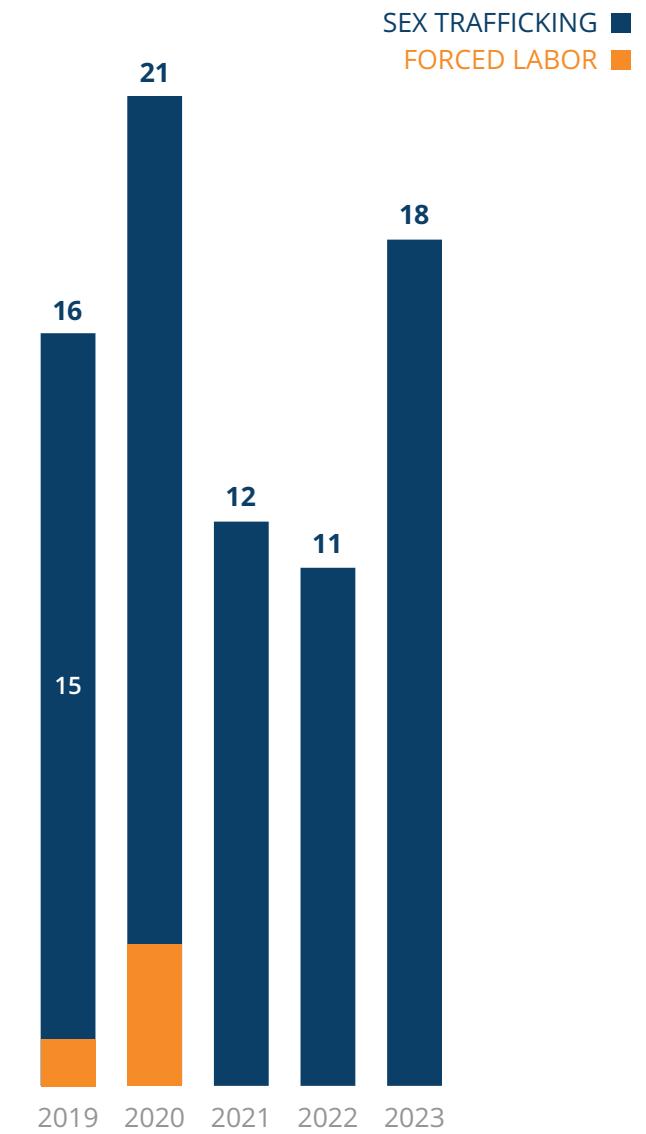
In 2023, three defendants were indicted on multiple counts of sex trafficking by force, interstate prostitution, and various drug charges. Two of the defendants are brothers and members of the Bloods street gang.

Case filings allege the defendants targeted and recruited women suffering from drug addiction, provided them with drugs, and then led them to believe they had debts with the defendants. The defendants used their access to illicit drugs and debt manipulation to coerce the victims into performing commercial sex acts, then controlled and withheld all the proceeds. Defendants also withheld drugs from the victims until they met the required daily quotas. As further means of coercion, the defendants subjected victims to emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual assault, stranded them without money, phones, or identification, and forced at least one of the victims to consume blood that a defendant claimed was HIV-positive. The victims were solicited via the internet and trafficked throughout New York and Virginia.

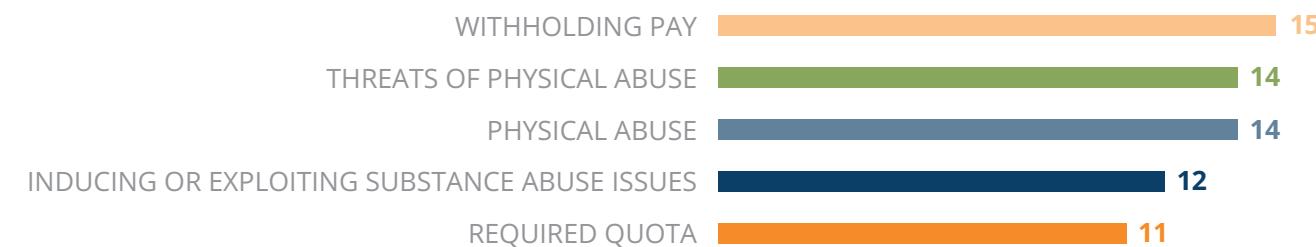
HSI and local law enforcement investigated this case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Megan Farrell prosecuted the case. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.

Trafficking is a financially motivated crime. As a result, many traffickers force victims to meet monetary quotas and may threaten consequences if the victim fails to meet the quota. Traffickers may use quotas in both sex trafficking and forced labor cases. To better understand how traffickers use quotas to coerce victims in trafficking schemes, in 2023, the FHTR began collecting data on the use of quotas as a method of coercion.

Cases Involving Quotas as a Method of Coercion



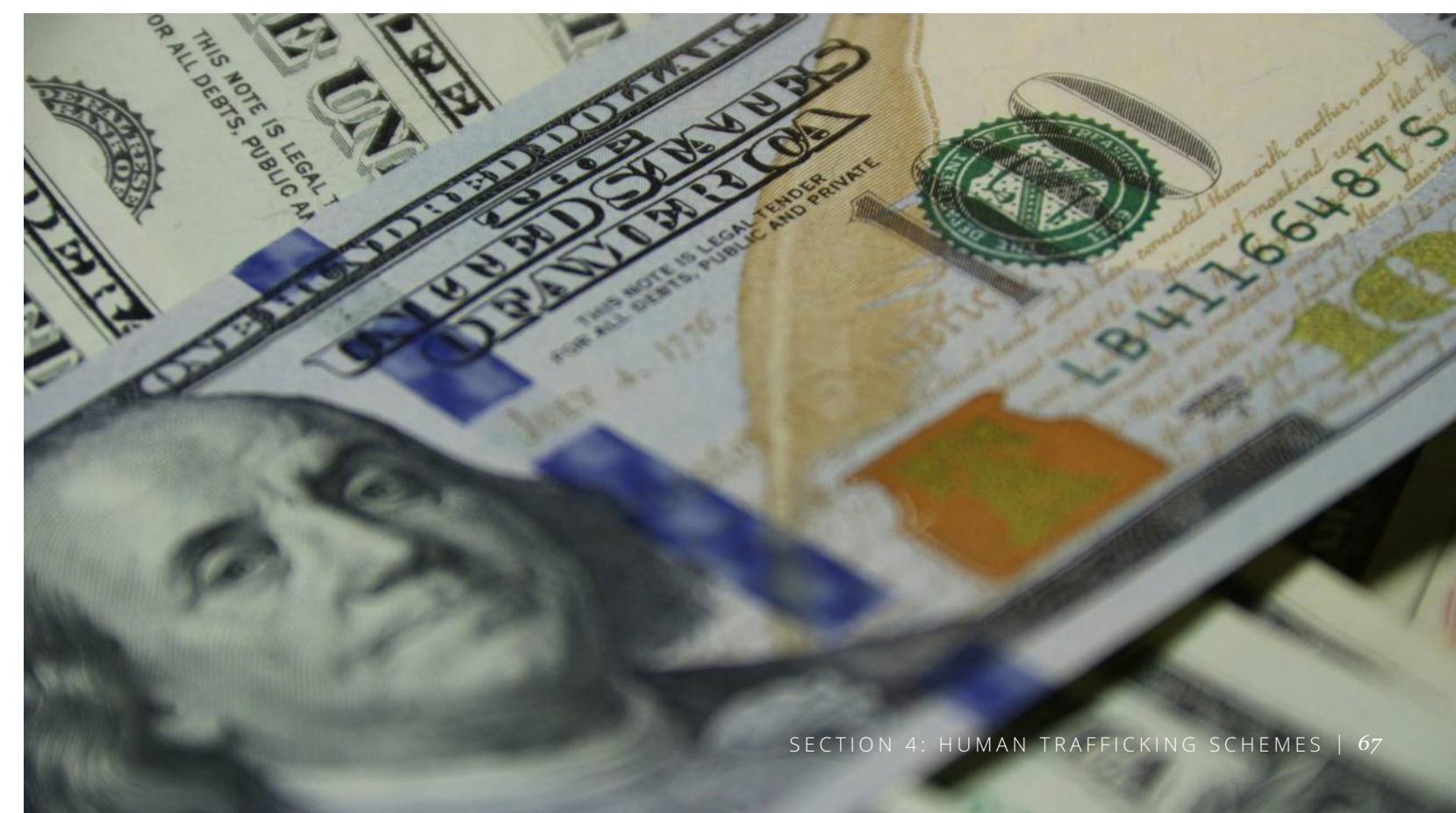
Top 5 Methods of Coercion in Sex Trafficking Cases Involving Adult Victims 2023



Other identified methods of coercion for adults included: brandishing weapons (8); physical isolation (8); verbal or emotional abuse (7); debt manipulation (5); withholding phone or electronic communication (5); withholding personal identification documents (4); tattoo or branding (4); controlling or withholding victim's access to food (4); electronic surveillance (3); rape or sexual violence (3); threats to victim's child or family members (3); withholding medical care (2); sleep deprivation (2); extortion (2); abuse of position of

power (1); access to victim's child or family members (1); chains or shackles (1); fear of gang violence (1); misrepresentation of job (1); promise of romance (1); manipulation of written contracts (1); and threats to other victims or third parties (1).

Since 2019, the most common categories of coercion for adult victims were withholding pay (115), physical abuse (92), threats of physical abuse (83), inducing or exploiting substance addiction (61), and rape or sexual violence (42).



CASE HIGHLIGHT

QUOTA AS A METHOD OF COERCION

United States v. Terrael Alls, Southern District of Ohio

In February 2022, a woman staying at a Red Roof Inn in the Columbus area was approached by a man who handed her a business card and told her to call him. While the card advertised a modeling agency, the tipster was concerned it had a connection to human trafficking, so she reported the incident to local law enforcement, who referred the tip to the Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force (COHTTF). Using the phone number and email from the card, the COHTTF identified a Cash App account and several commercial sex advertisements on the internet connected to the information.

Around the same time, the Delaware County Sheriff's Office also received a tip from a witness in police custody. Interviews with the witness and further investigation revealed Alls's trafficking scheme. According to victims and witnesses, Alls recruited women through the guise of modeling and romantic relationships with the victims. Once a business or romantic relationship was formed, Alls used fictional debts, drugs, physical abuse, and threats to compel victims to perform commercial sex acts.

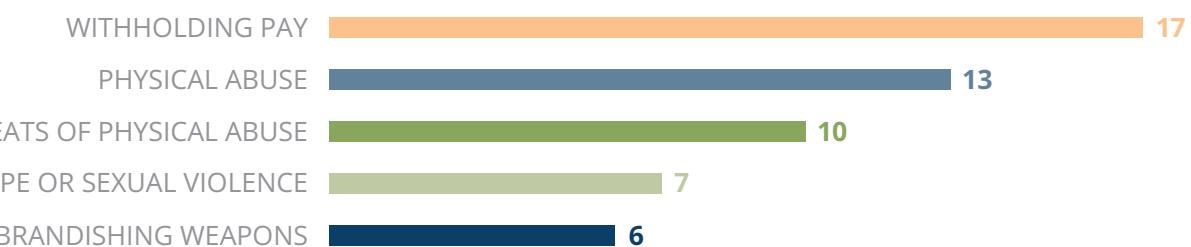
In addition to creating fictional debts, Alls set daily quotas for the victims and then took all the proceeds. The scheme employed the use of online payment methods, including Cash App, to receive money from buyers and transfer commercial sex proceeds to Alls. A review of Alls's Cash App records showed him attempting to enforce set quotas, demanding a money transfer, and threatening the victim for failure to comply.

This case is being investigated by HSI, the COHTTF, and local law enforcement, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Emily Czerniejewski and Jennifer Rausch are prosecuting the case. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.

Minors cannot consent to perform commercial sex, therefore federal legislation does not require that prosecutors prove the element of coercion in sex trafficking cases involving a minor.⁷³ However, the FHTC collects data on the coercive methods used by traffickers to control minor victims to better understand how traffickers operate. In 2023, coercive

methods were identified in 36 of the 95 sex trafficking cases filed where *only* a minor victim was involved. The most commonly identified coercive means in 2023 sex trafficking cases involving only minor victims were: withholding pay (17); physical abuse (13); threats of physical abuse (10); rape or sexual violence (7); and brandishing weapons (6).

Top 5 Methods of Coercion in Sex Trafficking Cases Involving Minor Victims 2023

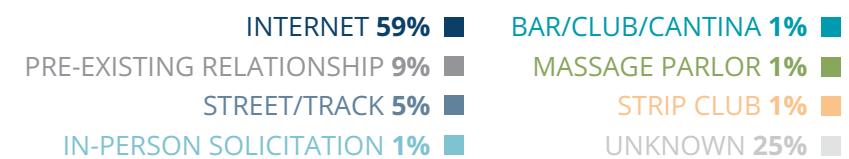


4.1.4 SOLICITATION OF BUYERS

Advances in technology and the expansion of the internet have changed the face of human trafficking in the U.S. and around the world. Buyers of commercial sex can now easily and discreetly peruse commercial sex advertisements on websites and apps, and can pay for commercial sex using online payment platforms and systems. Utilizing this technology, traffickers can now operate a trafficking scheme from behind the screen of a computer or mobile device.

In 2023, the primary method traffickers used to solicit buyers of commercial sex was through the internet (59%, 116).⁷⁴ Less frequently, defendants solicited buyers through a pre-existing relationship (9%, 17), on the street or track (5%, 10), via in-person solicitation (1%, 2), at a bar, club, or cantina (1%, 1), massage parlor (1%, 1), and strip club (1%, 1).⁷⁵ In 49 (25%) cases, there was insufficient information to determine the method of solicitation.⁷⁶

Methods of Solicitation in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023



⁷³ According to 18 U.S.C. § 1591, a person commits sex trafficking of a minor if they knowingly recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, advertise, maintain, patronize, or solicit by any means a person under the age of 18 years and the minor will be caused to engage in a commercial sex act. § 1591 does not require force or coercion. Minors cannot consent to commercial sex, thus commercial sex acts with a minor meet the threshold for federal sex trafficking of a minor. 18 U.S.C. § 1591 (2018).

⁷⁴ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

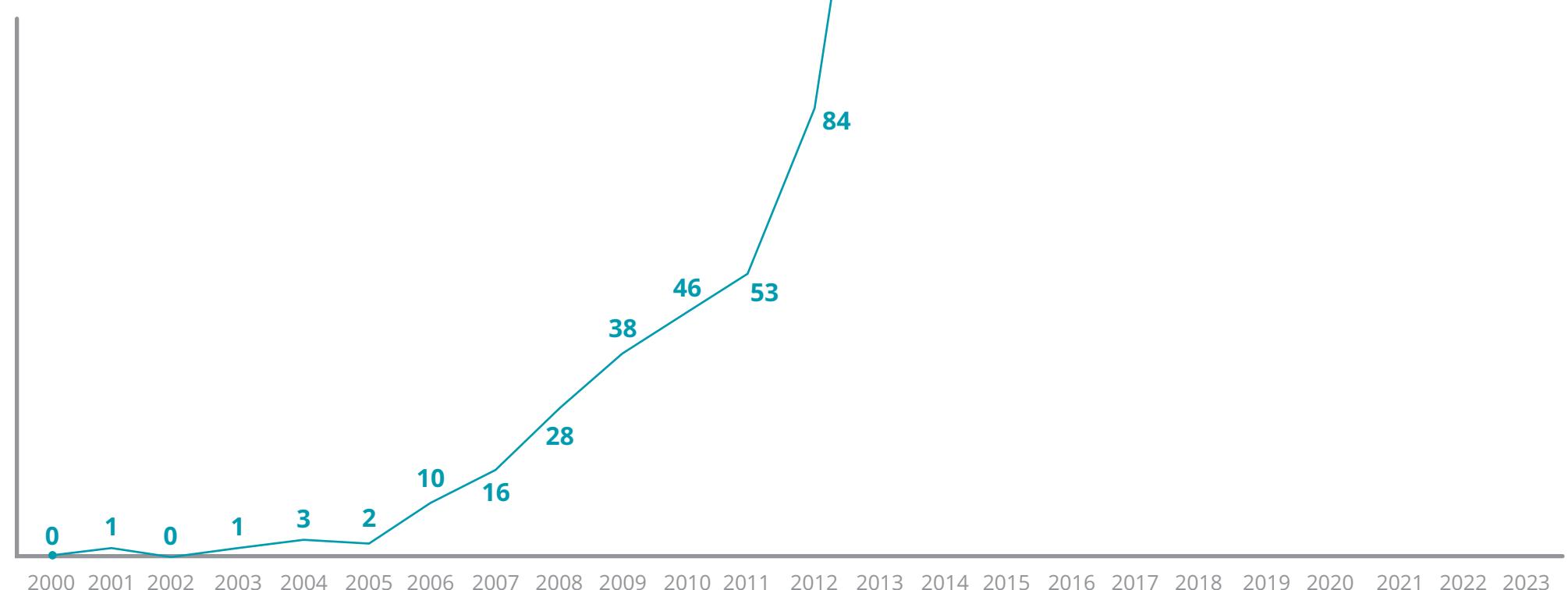
⁷⁵ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

⁷⁶ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

Since 2000, the internet has continued to be the main source for traffickers to solicit buyers of commercial sex. Although it appears that the percentage of cases utilizing the internet to solicit buyers decreased in 2023, from 67% in 2022 to 59% in 2023, this number may ultimately increase for 2023, as more information becomes publicly available when cases reach disposition.⁷⁷

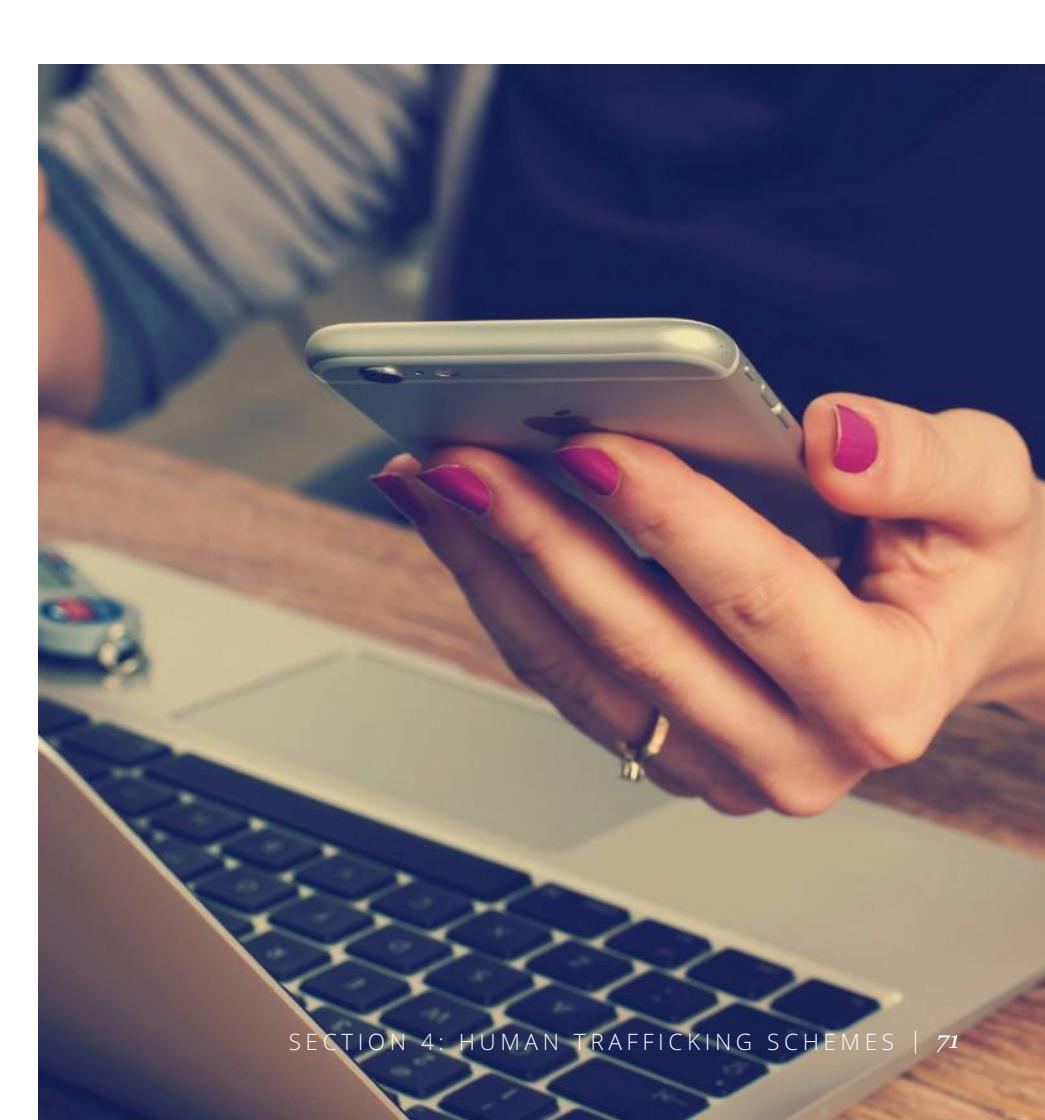
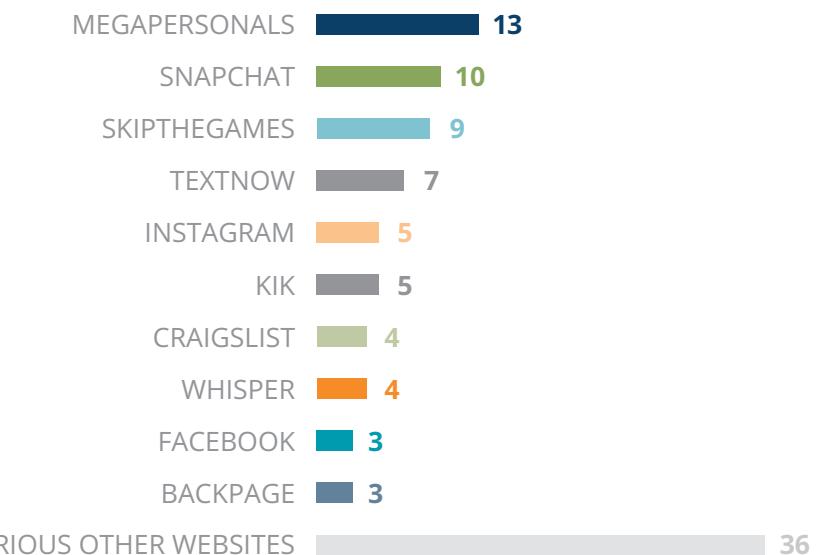
As trends change, so too, do the platforms, websites, and apps used in the solicitation of commercial sex. In 2023, the most commonly identified platforms or websites used to solicit commercial sex were Megapersonals (13), Snapchat (10), SkipTheGames (9), TextNow (7), Instagram (5), Kik (5), Craigslist (4), Whisper (4), Facebook (3), Backpage (3), and other various websites (36).

Cases where Internet Used to Solicit Buyers 2000-2023



⁷⁷ Based on 136 of 198 in 2022 and 116 of 197 in 2023 in sex trafficking cases.

Online Platforms Used for Solicitation of Commercial Sex 2023



CASE HIGHLIGHT

USE OF THE INTERNET TO SOLICIT BUYERS

United States v. Al Bones, Jr., Eastern District of Arkansas

Defendant Al Bones, Jr.'s actions came to the attention of the FBI after numerous commercial sex advertisements featuring a minor appeared on various online platforms. Upon investigation, law enforcement determined that the defendant had used multiple platforms including Megapersonals, Skipthegames, and CityXGuide to post the advertisements including images of a 16-year-old female. An undercover FBI task force officer posing as a potential buyer contacted Bones on the number listed on the advertisement and arranged a date for commercial sex with the minor for \$150 at the Rest Inn in Little Rock, Arkansas. At the meeting point, Bones, Jr. was found concealed in the bathroom of the motel room and was arrested.

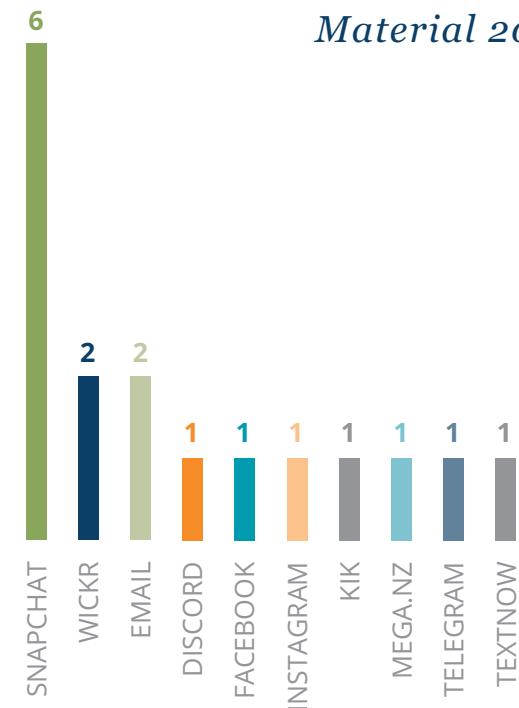
The defendant was charged with sex trafficking of a minor and three counts of sexual exploitation of children (18 U.S.C. § 2251) for possession of the sexually explicit images of the minor victim. The three counts of sexual exploitation of a child were dismissed upon the defendant's guilty plea to two counts of sex trafficking of a minor (18 U.S.C. § 1591). In September 2023, Bones was sentenced to 135 months imprisonment and 10 years of supervised release.

The case was investigated by the FBI and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kristin Bryant.

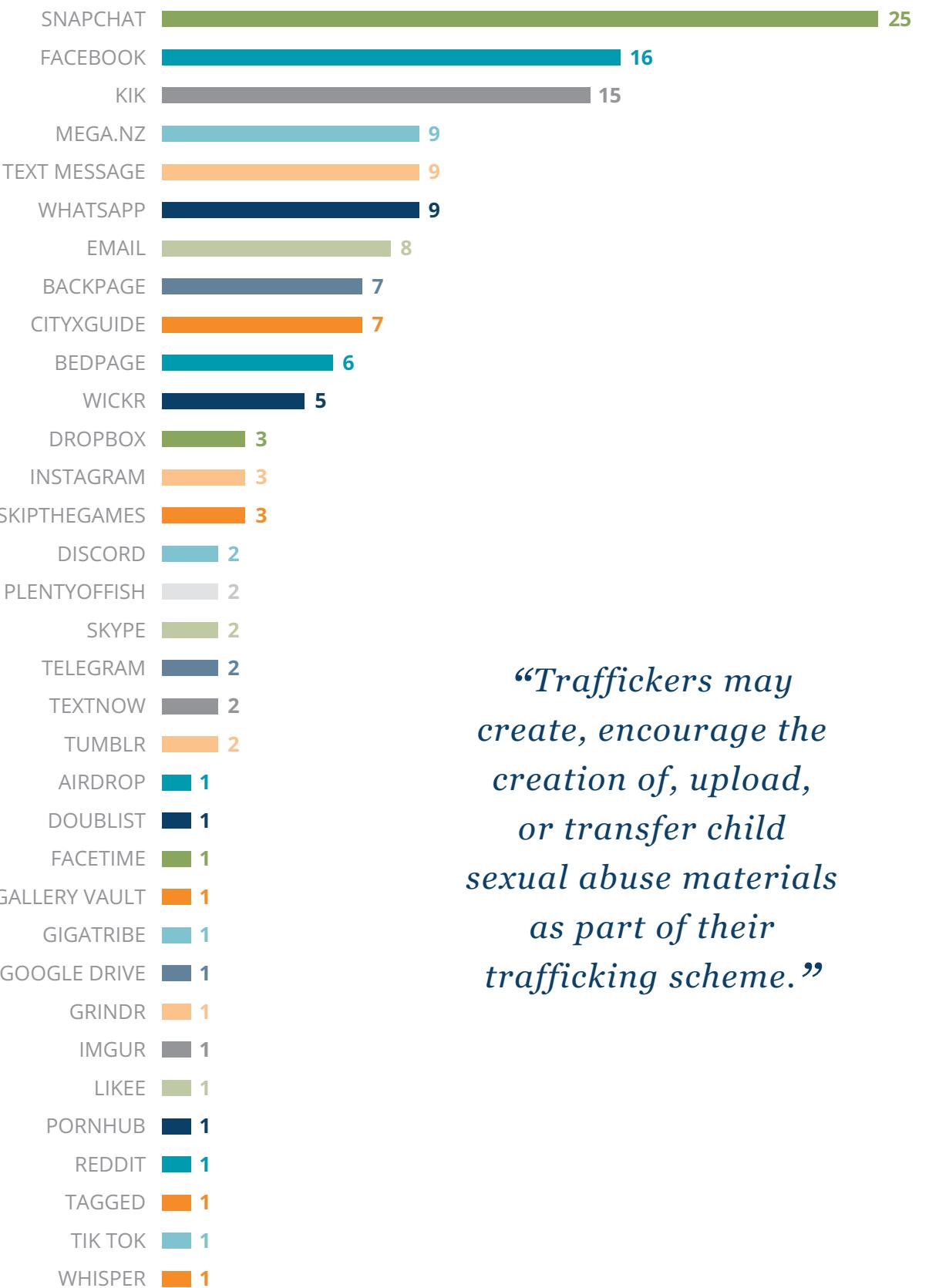
4.1.5 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL

Society's increased use of technologies and the internet in recent years has inevitably affected its intersectionality with child sexual exploitation (18 U.S.C. § 2251), child pornography (18 U.S.C. § 2252), and sex trafficking of a minor (18 U.S.C. § 1591). Traffickers may create, encourage the creation of, upload, or transfer child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) as part of their trafficking scheme. As discussed further in section 4.1.6 *Location of Commercial Sex Acts*, technology has now made it possible for victims to be trafficked completely in a virtual setting. Recognizing this emerging trend, in 2023, the FHTB began tracking which websites traffickers use to transfer or sell CSAM as part of their trafficking scheme. It is important to note that these websites are not websites used to solicit buyers of commercial sex, but rather websites where defendants are either sharing and/or selling CSAM as part of their trafficking scheme.

Websites Used to Share Child Sexual Abuse Material 2023



Websites Used to Share Child Sexual Abuse Material 2019-2023



"Traffickers may create, encourage the creation of, upload, or transfer child sexual abuse materials as part of their trafficking scheme."

CASE HIGHLIGHT

SHARING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIALS ONLINE

United States v. Brett Janes, Eastern District of Virginia

In 2023, the Eastern District of Virginia charged Brett Janes, a former FBI contractor, with two counts of sexual exploitation of children, one count of production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), one count of attempted coercion and enticement, and one count of receipt of child pornography.

Through the investigation, law enforcement discovered that Janes had contacted at least a dozen minor boys over Discord and Snapchat, telling them that he worked for a "U.S. Intelligence Agency." If a minor indicated that he did not wish to continue messaging, Janes would repeatedly threaten suicide if the boys did not continue communication. Using threats of suicide, Janes coerced one 13-year-old boy to engage in sexually explicit acts over a live Discord video and then sent the boy money over Cash App. Another 12-year-old boy was coerced into sending Janes sexually explicit material through Discord after Janes's repeated begging and flattery. Janes also purchased hundreds of videos and images of CSAM through Telegram, an encrypted instant messaging application.

Janes pleaded guilty to child pornography and child sexual exploitation in March 2024 and is currently awaiting sentencing. The case was investigated by the FBI and Arlington County Police Department and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney McKenzie Hightower.

4.1.6 ONLINE PAYMENT PLATFORMS

The increasing use of digital currency and electronic payments in lieu of cash has led to the increased use of digital payment platforms in human trafficking schemes. Between 2019 and 2023, Cash App (85) was the most commonly identified payment platform used in commercial sex transactions, followed by PayPal (17) and Venmo (17).

While the internet may have made commercial sex more accessible for traffickers and buyers, it should be noted that the use of technology also creates a digital footprint for law enforcement to use in human trafficking investigations. The internet and technology devices provide valuable digital forensic evidence that helps identify victims and prosecute traffickers. Building strong cases using digital forensic evidence is an effective way to increase successful outcomes in investigations, prosecutions, and support for the survivor. Digital forensic evidence is a powerful tool to corroborate victim statements, guide investigations, and alleviate the pressure on victims to testify at trial.

4.1.7 LOCATION OF COMMERCIAL SEX ACTS

Sex trafficking is no longer confined to streets and motels in red-light districts. Just as technology has shaped the way traffickers solicit buyers and receive payment for commercial sex, it has also changed the possibilities of locations where sex trafficking can occur. Of the 197 sex trafficking cases in 2023, the location of the sex act was known in 81 cases, unknown in 71 cases, and in 45 cases there was no completed sex act. When looking at specific locations where sex trafficking took place, 52 cases involving a completed sex act occurred at a hotel. Other common venues where sex trafficking took place were: private residences (24); vehicles (12); street or alley (5); parks (3); and short-term rental properties (2). Most notably, there were 9 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023 where the location of the completed sex act occurred completely in a virtual setting.

When looking specifically at the hotel industry, numerous national chain hotels, as well as locally owned hotels, were identified as locations used for commercial sex in sex trafficking cases.

Payment Platform Companies 2019-2023

CASH APP	\$ 85
PAYPAL	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ 17
VENMO	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ 17
WESTERN UNION	\$\$\$\$\$\$ 9
BANK ACCOUNT TRANSFER	\$\$\$\$\$ 6
MONEYGRAM	\$\$\$\$ 5
ZELLE	\$\$\$ 4
WALMART MONEY TRANSFER	\$\$ 3
APPLE CASH	\$\$ 2
REMITLY	\$\$ 2
UNKNOWN	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ 11

CASE HIGHLIGHT VIRTUAL EXPLOITATION

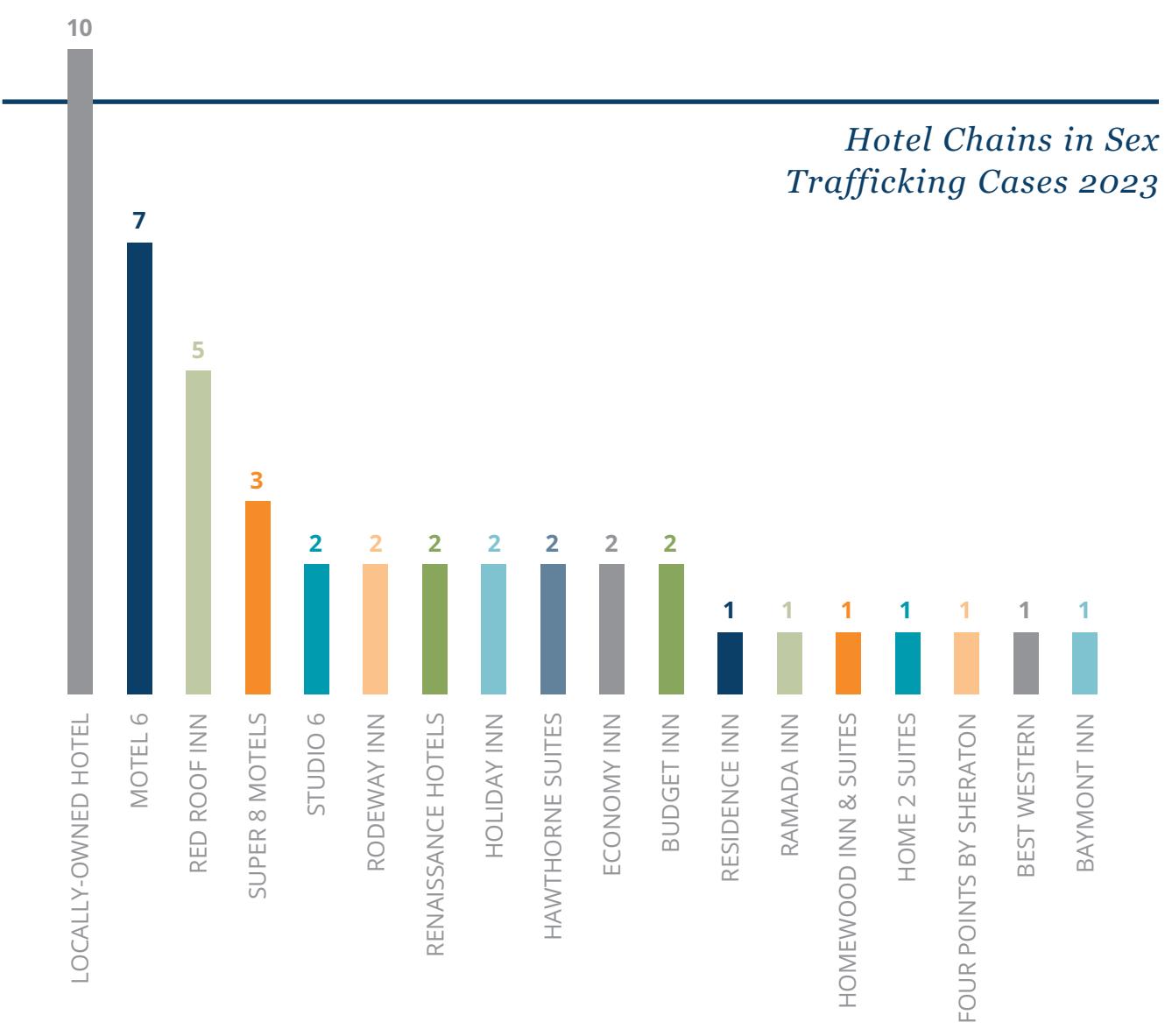
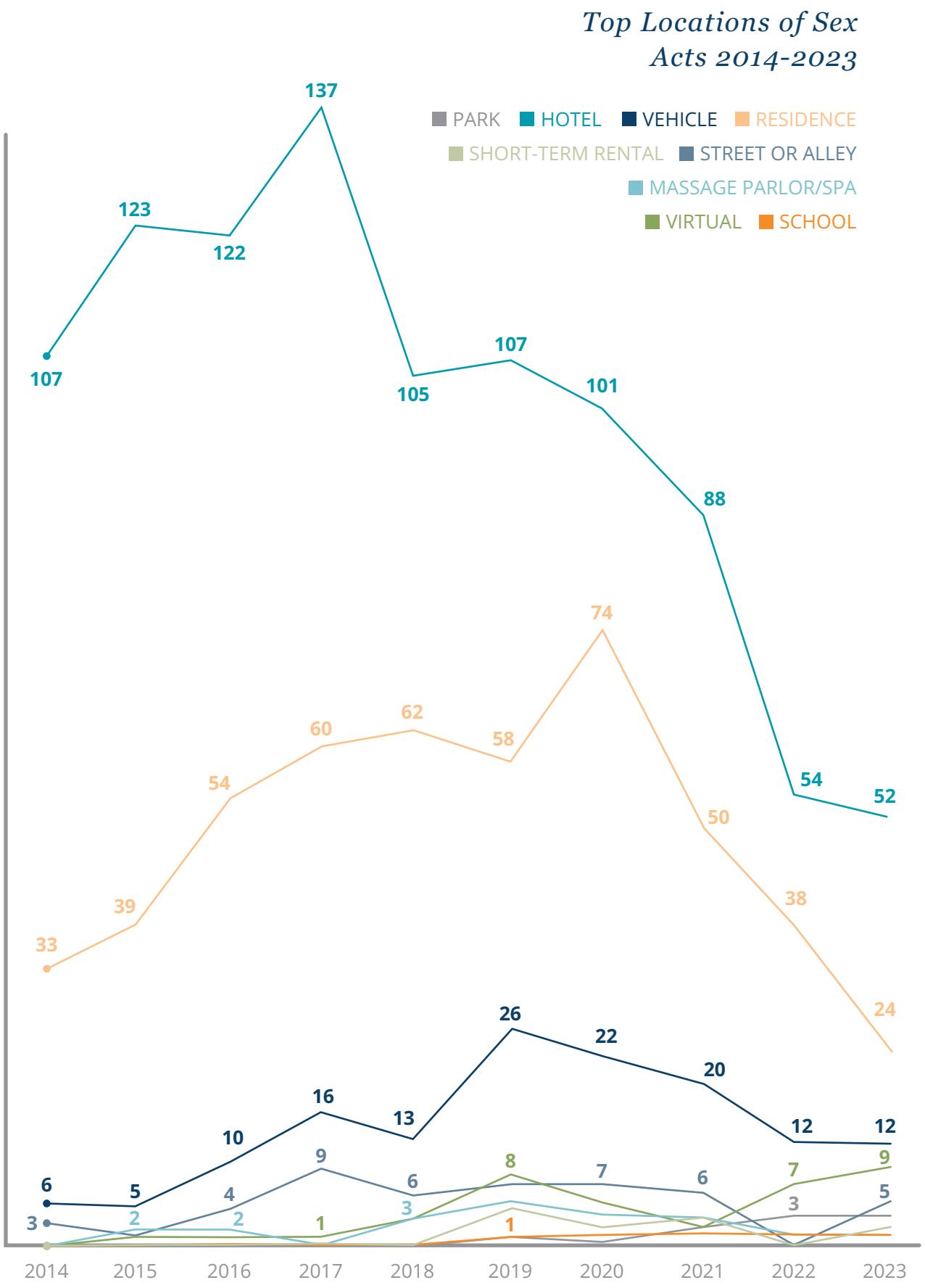
United States v. Caleb McLaughlin, District of Minnesota

In the spring of 2023, the FBI received information from a victim's parent and thereafter initiated an investigation into McLaughlin. The 14-year-old victim disclosed she had been exploited by McLaughlin since she was approximately 11 years old after he contacted her on Snapchat. McLaughlin initially offered the victim money in exchange for nude pictures and videos, to which she agreed. Eventually, he demanded the victim constantly take new pictures, or take pictures and videos of her engaging in specific sex acts, which she did. He also offered several times to pay the minor victim for sex acts and attempted to meet with the victim in person, but a meeting never took place. Initially, McLaughlin sent online gift cards as payment to the victim, but he eventually stopped paying her and then blocked her on social media.

Further investigation revealed McLaughlin's interactions with other minors - online and in person. Records revealed McLaughlin followed the same or similar patterns when contacting other minor victims: he would initially start by sharing or purchasing nude photos, then he would request sexual video chats with the minors, and eventually, he offered to pay the minors to meet in person for sex. McLaughlin met several minors in person for sex and offered money (via cash or Cash App), alcohol, vapes, and marijuana in exchange for sex.

McLaughlin was initially charged in July 2023. In October 2023 he pleaded guilty to two counts of Sexual Exploitation of Children (18 U.S.C. § 2251), two counts of Child Pornography (18 U.S.C. § 2252), and one count of Coercion/Enticement of a Minor (18 U.S.C. § 2422(b)). He was awaiting sentencing at the end of 2023.

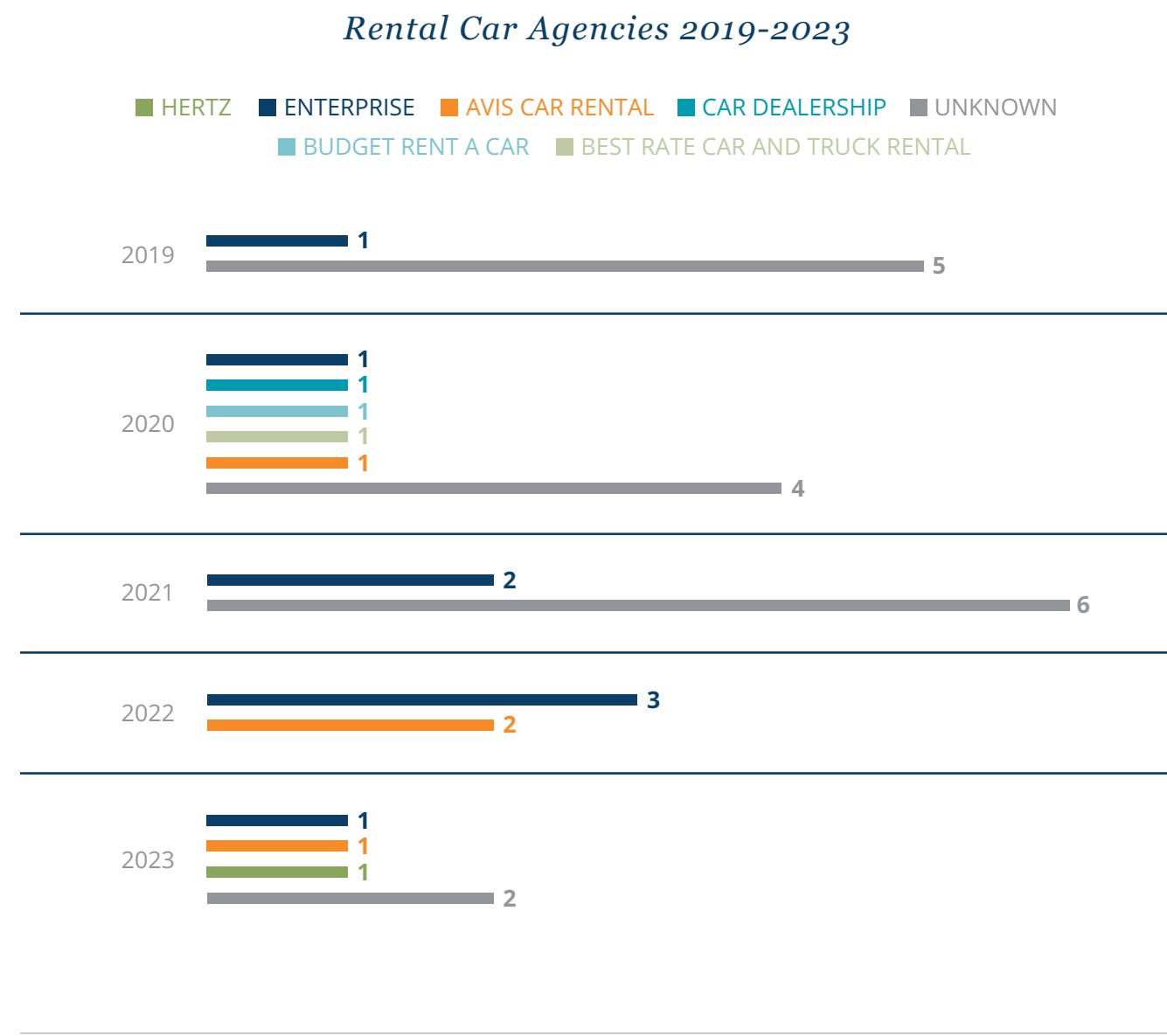
This case was investigated by the FBI, St. Paul Police Department, Pine County Sheriff's Office, and Hennepin County Sheriff's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Hillary A. Taylor and Rachel L. Kraker prosecuted the case.



4.1.8 MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

A variety of transportation modes are used in trafficking schemes to transport victims. In the sex trafficking cases filed in 2023, private vehicles (75, 38%) were the most common form of transportation.⁷⁸ Defendants also utilized rideshares (13, 7%), airplanes (13, 7%), rental cars (5, 3%), commercial vehicles (5, 3%), buses (3, 2%), and trains (1, 1%).⁷⁹ Ninety (46%) cases had an unknown form of transportation and 9 cases (5%) had no form of transportation used.⁸⁰

Recognizing a trend in the use of rental cars to transport victims in trafficking schemes, in 2023, the FHTR began collecting data on the companies traffickers use to rent vehicles. Since 2019, the most common rental companies identified were Enterprise (8) and Avis (4).



⁷⁸ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

⁷⁹ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

“A variety of transportation modes are used in trafficking schemes... In the sex trafficking cases filed in 2023, private vehicles were the most common form of transportation.”

CASE HIGHLIGHT

USE OF RENTAL CAR

United States v. Donte Cole, Western District of Pennsylvania

In November 2023, Donte Lashawn Cole, 39, was indicted on one count of sex trafficking of a minor (18 U.S.C. § 1591) after investigators discovered Cole was operating a sex trafficking scheme across multiple states and jurisdictions. Cole recruited victims into his sex trafficking scheme and then controlled them using threats of physical abuse, withholding pay, withholding food, and requiring the victims to meet a quota of \$600-\$700 per day. Cole used photos of the victims to create and post advertisements of the victims on commercial sex websites, then transported the victims to the arranged dates. Evidence obtained in the investigation showed that Cole posted ads of the victims in multiple states across the country and used rental cars from Enterprise to transport victims from various hotels in Ohio, Washington D.C., North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, and Illinois.

Cole trafficked both adult and minor female victims, the youngest of whom had been trafficked by Cole since she was 12.

This case resulted from the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, including HSI and the Attorney General's Office of Pennsylvania.

Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.

⁸⁰ Based on 197 sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.



— CASE HIGHLIGHT — *USE OF RIDESHARES*

United States v. Jaron Jackson, Eastern District of Wisconsin

From February to June 2019, Jaron Jay Jackson ran a commercial sex trafficking operation throughout Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota. Jackson, who was previously released from the Wisconsin prison system on extended supervision, eventually fled to Illinois. Once in Illinois, Jackson trafficked two 15-year-old runaways and a 23-year-old woman, directing the victims to engage in commercial sex with buyers from various states.

Jackson posted advertisements on internet platforms such as Adultlook, Eros, Skipthegames, and Silxa, and communicated with buyers via email, text messaging, TextNow, and Google Voice. When buyers requested "out calls," Jackson booked transportation for the victims through taxis or rideshares, including Uber and Lyft. Jackson often split proceeds with the adult victim but withheld most or all proceeds from the two minor victims. Furthermore, videos recorded on Jackson's phone depicted him engaged in sexual activity with the two minors. Milwaukee police arrested Jackson when he traveled from Chicago to Wisconsin via an Amtrak train.

In November 2023, Jackson was convicted of two counts of sex trafficking of minors (18 U.S.C. § 1591) and one count of transporting child pornography (18 U.S.C. § 2252A) and was sentenced to 240 months imprisonment and 10 years of supervised release. The case remains pending following Jackson's appeal.

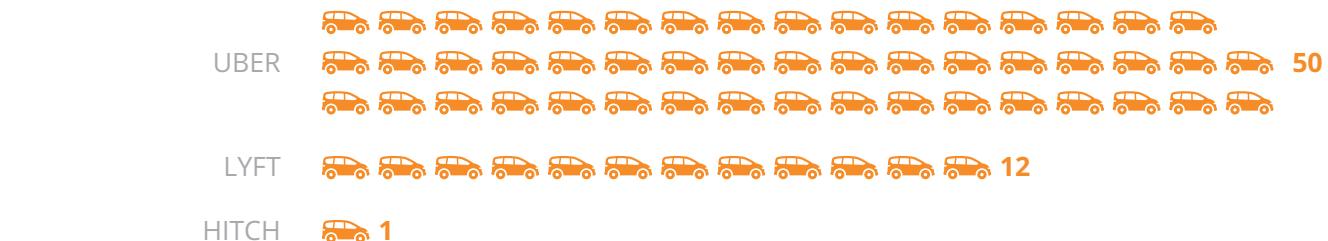
The investigation was led by the Oshkosh Police Department (OPD) and the Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), with assistance from the Milwaukee Police Department and the FBI. Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy Funnel prosecuted the case.

Transportation Companies in Sex Trafficking Cases 2019-2023

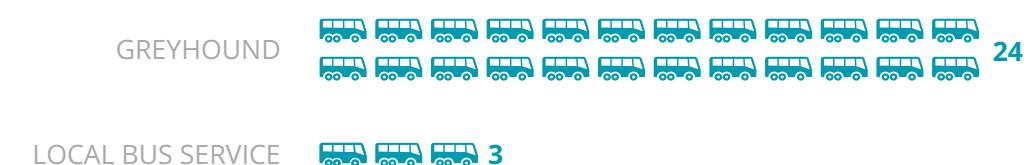
AIRLINES



RIDESHARES



BUSES



TRAINS



4.2 FORCED LABOR SCHEMES

Since the enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, the majority share of the federal human trafficking prosecutions filed each year have been sex trafficking cases. Despite the small number of forced labor prosecutions each year, forced labor is still very much an issue of concern in the United States. Departments and agencies across the country continuously seek new and innovative ways to identify, investigate, and successfully prosecute forced labor cases. In 2023, 2% (5) of cases filed in human trafficking prosecutions were forced labor cases.⁸¹

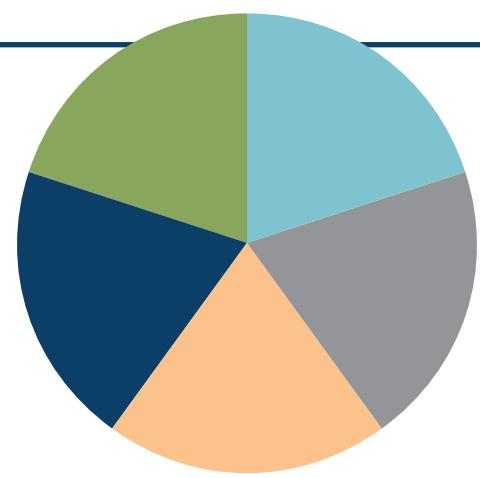
One potential contributing factor to the lower number of forced labor prosecutions may be victims' inability to recognize forced labor trafficking schemes. Within the 5 cases of forced labor charged in 2023, none of the cases were reported to law enforcement by the victim. Instead, cases were referred by an attorney, a friend of the victim, a consulate, and via a hotline. Referral to law enforcement was unknown for two cases.

Between 2000 and 2023, there have been 15 forced labor cases resulting from a victim self-reporting they were a victim of forced labor. The low percentage of victims self-reporting can make it difficult to identify victims and forced labor schemes. Creating awareness within industries where forced labor is common is essential to recognizing and disrupting forced labor schemes.

“...forced labor is still very much an issue of concern in the United States.”

4.2.1 INDUSTRIES

Forced labor exists across a variety of industries. Of the 5 forced labor cases filed in 2023, industries included medical or health services (1), retail (1), restaurant or food service (1), domestic work (1), and agriculture or farm (1). Since 2000 when the TVPA was enacted, 173 forced labor cases have been filed. Within those cases, 159 (92%) cases had at least one known business model in a specified industry.⁸² As shown in the graph, forced labor can occur in a variety of industries, from domestic work to the hospitality industry. As discussed throughout the FHTR, one of the suspected reasons that forced labor cases are charged infrequently is that forced labor schemes may all look quite different, and can occur across multiple, otherwise legal, industries, making them more difficult to detect than the often stereotypical sex trafficking schemes.



Industries in Forced Labor Cases 2023

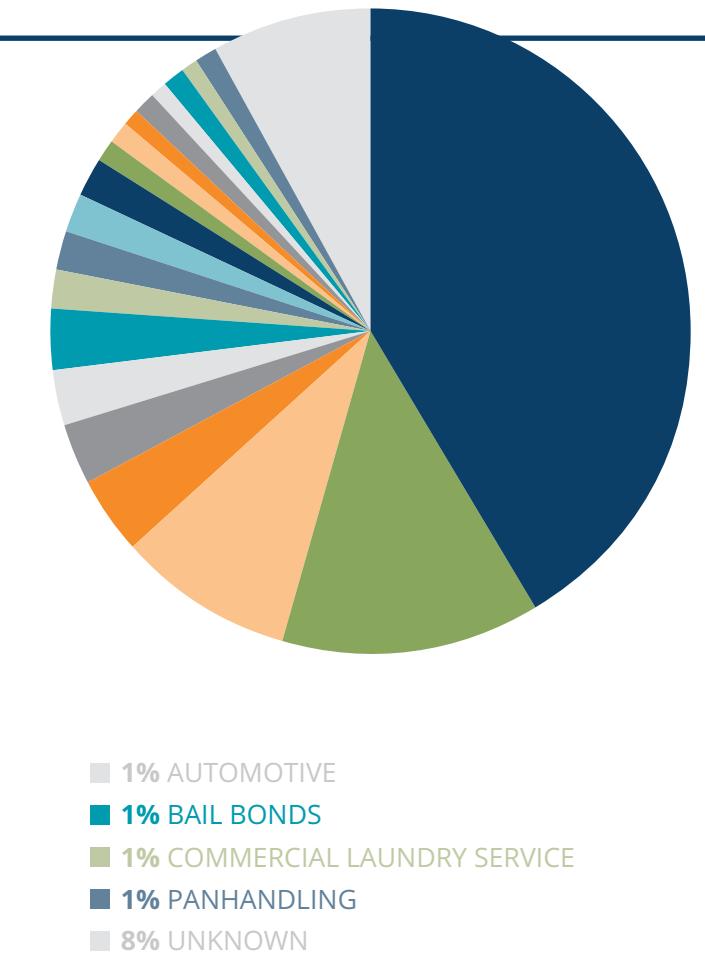
- 1 MEDICAL/HEALTH SERVICE
- 1 RETAIL
- 1 RESTAURANT/FOOD SERVICE
- 1 DOMESTIC WORK
- 1 AGRICULTURE/F FARMS

⁸¹ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

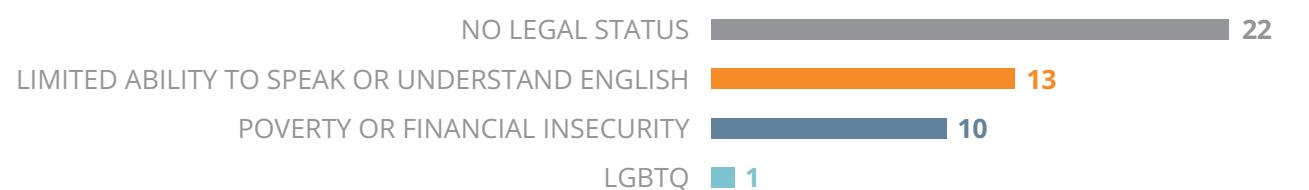
⁸² Based on 173 forced labor cases filed between 2000-2023.

Industries in Forced Labor Cases 2000-2023

- 42% DOMESTIC WORK
- 13% AGRICULTURE/FARMS
- 9% RESTAURANT/FOOD SERVICE
- 4% CONSTRUCTION
- 3% RETAIL
- 3% BAR/CLUB/CANTINA
- 3% HOTEL/HOSPITALITY
- 2% MANUFACTURING/FACTORIES
- 2% BEAUTY SERVICES
- 2% MEDICAL/HEALTH SERVICE
- 2% LANDSCAPING
- 1% DOOR TO DOOR SALES
- 1% HIGH-CONTROL OR RELIGIOUS GROUP
- 1% ILLEGAL PURCHASE/SALE OF CONSUMER GOODS
- 1% MASSAGE PARLOR
- 1% AUTOMOTIVE
- 1% BAIL BONDS
- 1% COMMERCIAL LAUNDRY SERVICE
- 1% PANHANDLING
- 8% UNKNOWN



Pre-Existing Vulnerabilities of Forced Labor Victims 2023



4.2.2 RECRUITMENT

In the forced labor cases filed in 2023, victim vulnerabilities identified included, no legal status (22), limited ability to speak and or understand English (13), poverty or financial insecurity (10), and LGBTQ status (1).⁸³

The most identified method of recruitment in 2023 forced labor cases was through a fraudulent job offer, with 13 (41%) of the victims being recruited through

the false promise of employment.⁸⁴ The remaining methods of recruitment identified for forced labor victims were the promise of shelter (2, 6%), pre-existing relationship (1, 3%), and fraudulent promise of education (1, 3%). There were 8 (25%) instances in which the method of recruitment was unknown.⁸⁵ In prior years, forced labor victims have commonly been identified as recruited through fraudulent job offers, pre-existing relationships, promise of shelter, and promise of essential resources.⁸⁶

Methods of Recruitment in Forced Labor Cases 2023



⁸³ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.

⁸⁴ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.

⁸⁵ Based on 32 victims in 2023 forced labor cases.

⁸⁶ Based on 502 victims recruited via fraudulent job offer; 115 recruited via pre-existing relationship; 96 recruited via promise of shelter; and 90 recruited via promise of essential resources in forced labor cases filed between 2000 and 2023.

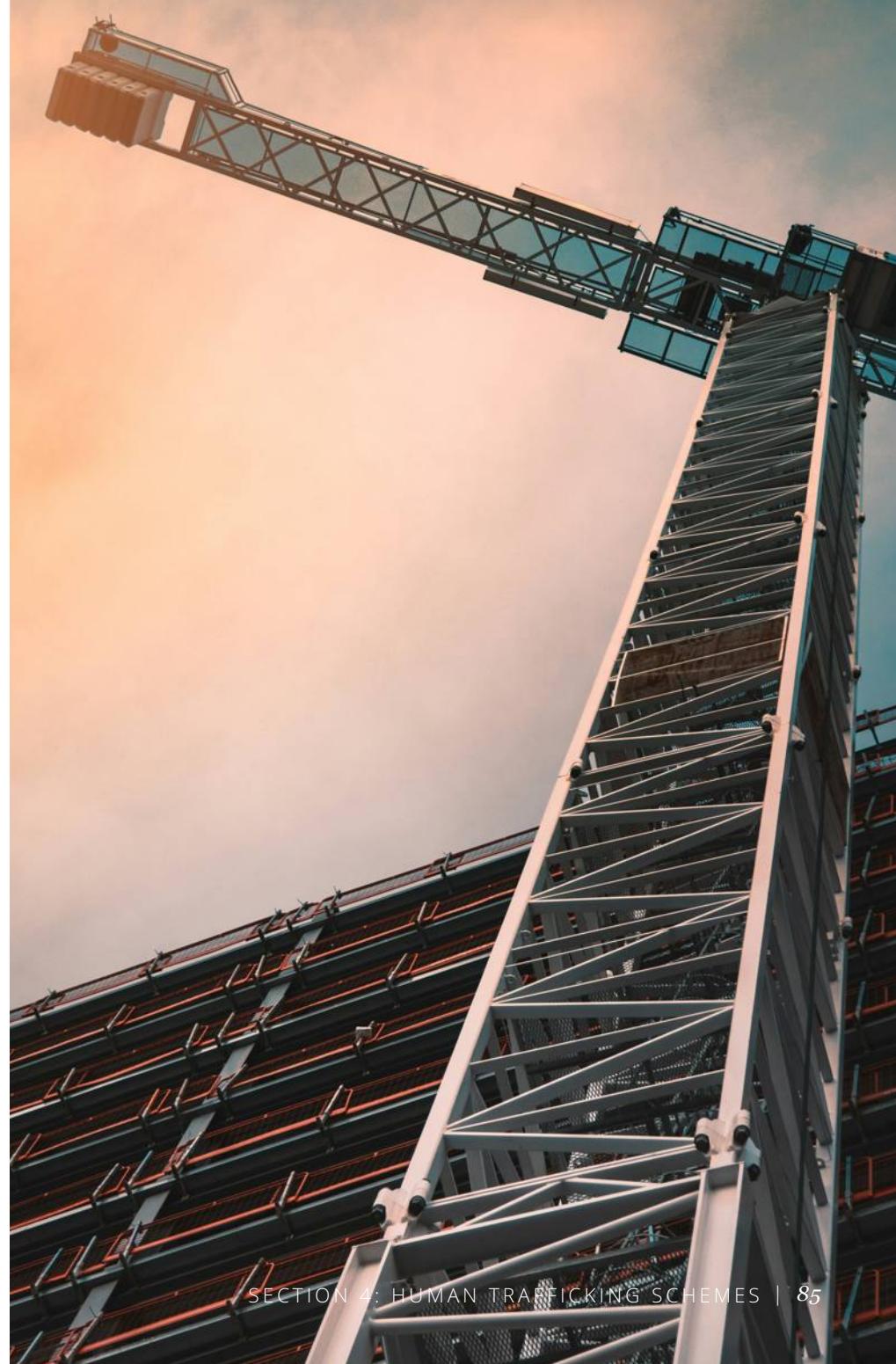
Physical & Non-Physical Coercion in Forced Labor Cases 2023



4.2.3 METHODS OF COERCION

Traffickers may use one or more than one method of coercion to control a victim, and may also change the method of their coercion throughout the trafficking scheme. The FHTR categorizes coercive methods used by traffickers as either physical or non-physical. In 2023, 100% (5) of the forced labor cases involved *both* physical and non-physical methods of coercion.⁸⁷

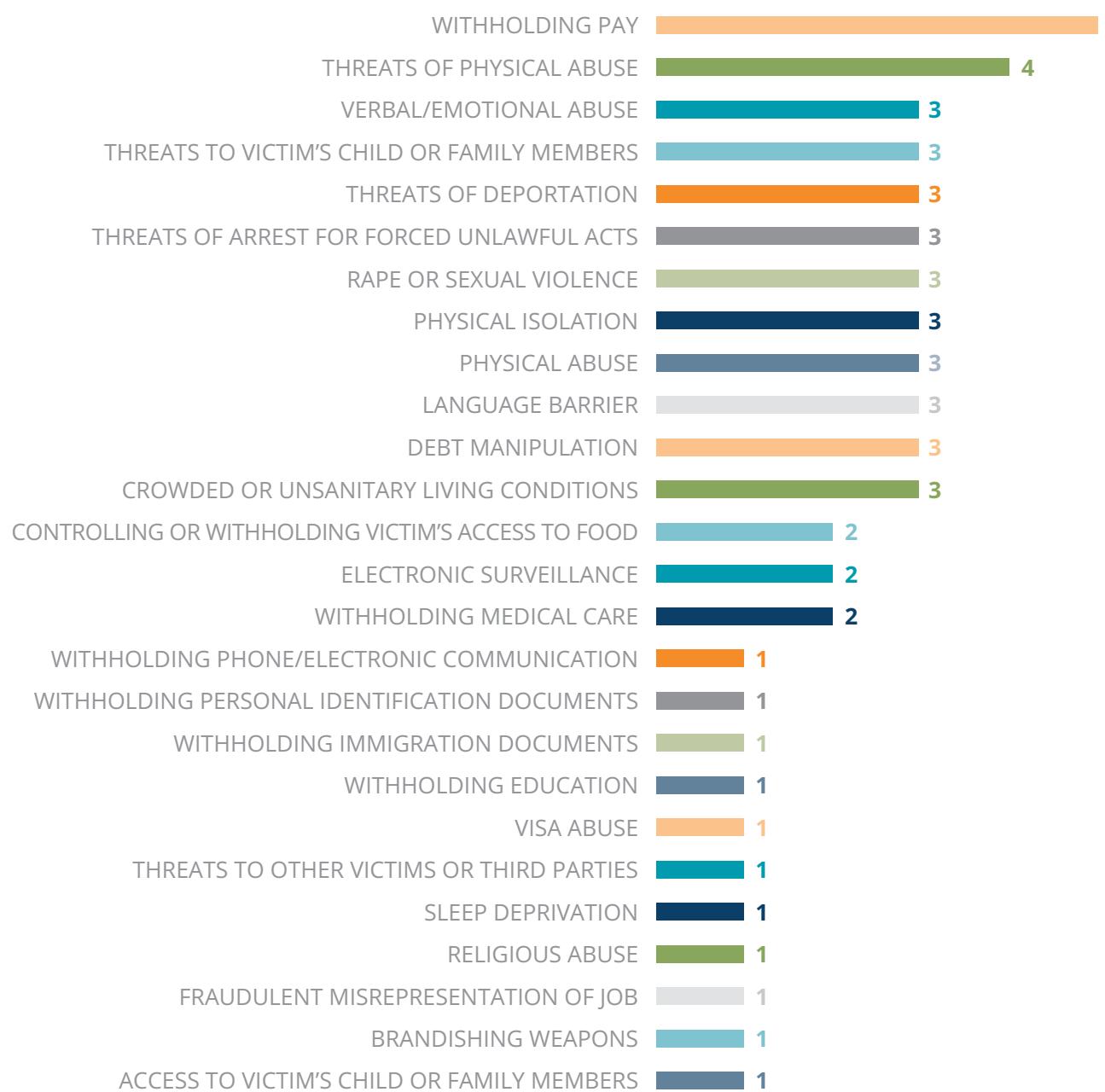
“In 2023, the most identified method of recruitment in forced labor cases was by way of a fraudulent job offer.”



There were 26 different types of coercive methods identified in the 5 forced labor cases filed in 2023. Many of the methods of coercion identified specifically related to the victims' statuses as foreign nationals. Of the 32 victims of forced labor in 2023,

30 (94%) were foreign nationals. As the data shows, foreign nationals can be uniquely vulnerable to certain methods of coercion, such as withholding immigration or identification documents, language barriers, visa abuse, and threats of deportation.

Methods of Coercion in Forced Labor Cases 2023



— CASE HIGHLIGHT — USE OF PHYSICAL AND NON-PHYSICAL COERCION

United States v. Augusto Francisco, Western District of New York

Augusto Mateo Francisco, 32, was indicted in November 2023 on two counts of forced labor (18 U.S.C. § 1589), one count of kidnapping a minor (18 U.S.C. § 1201), and one count of transportation of a minor for illegal sexual activity (18 U.S.C. § 2423(a)).

Francisco helped smuggle Guatemalan migrants into the U.S., where he provided housing and farm work for them. Francisco charged the migrants for their housing, transportation to and from work, and other items while taking a cut of their wages earned from working on the farms. The victims were also threatened with harm to their families and deportation if they stopped working or if they did not pay the money back that Francisco claimed they owed.

In addition to the forced labor, Francisco sought a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old Guatemalan migrant who came to the U.S. with her mother. Francisco raped the minor female and threatened to harm her family members in Guatemala if she reported the assault. Francisco later kidnapped the minor and held her for two weeks until she was recovered in Ripley, New York. She then fled to Georgia with her mother, where Francisco later found her and took her back to New York, kidnapping her a second time.

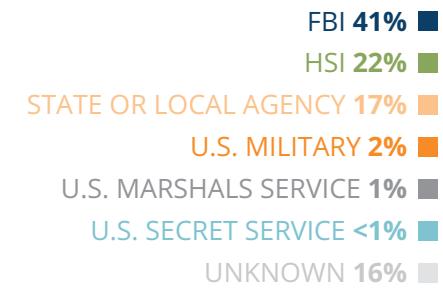
The case was investigated by HSI and the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas Pinrose. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.

INVESTIGATIONS

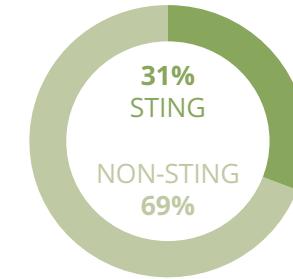
Section 5

SECTION 5 HIGHLIGHTS

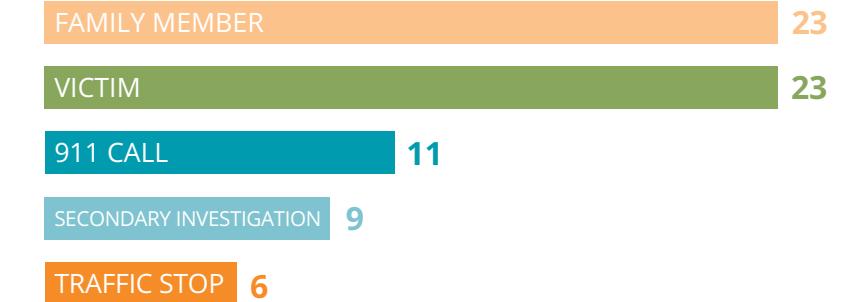
Primary Investigative Agencies 2023



Sting Operations in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023

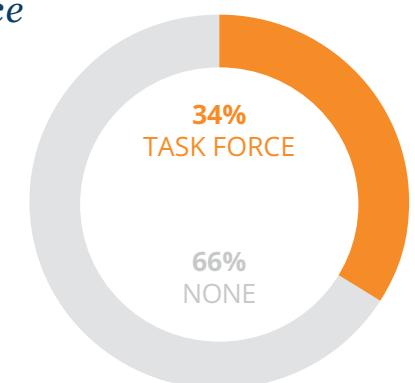


Top 5 Referrals to Law Enforcement 2023



IN 2023,
66%
OF THE 62 STING CASES
IDENTIFIED INVOLVED ONLY
**FICTIONAL VICTIMS
OF TRAFFICKING**

Cases Involving a Task Force 2023





Section 5

INVESTIGATIONS

Successful outcomes in human trafficking prosecutions result from quality criminal investigations. Exploring how these cases are investigated helps us better understand the federal response to trafficking and identify emerging trends and techniques that lead to more victims supported and more traffickers convicted. This section discusses data collected from investigations resulting in human trafficking prosecutions within the federal court system. Further, processes for identifying and referring human trafficking cases to law enforcement, along with data from reactive and proactive investigation techniques, are also covered.

The Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR) tracks data *only* from investigations resulting in federal prosecution. Thus, the investigation section in the FHTR *does not* represent the total number of human trafficking investigations occurring across the U.S. each year, nor does it represent investigations that do not result in federal prosecution of a trafficking offense.

5.1 REACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS

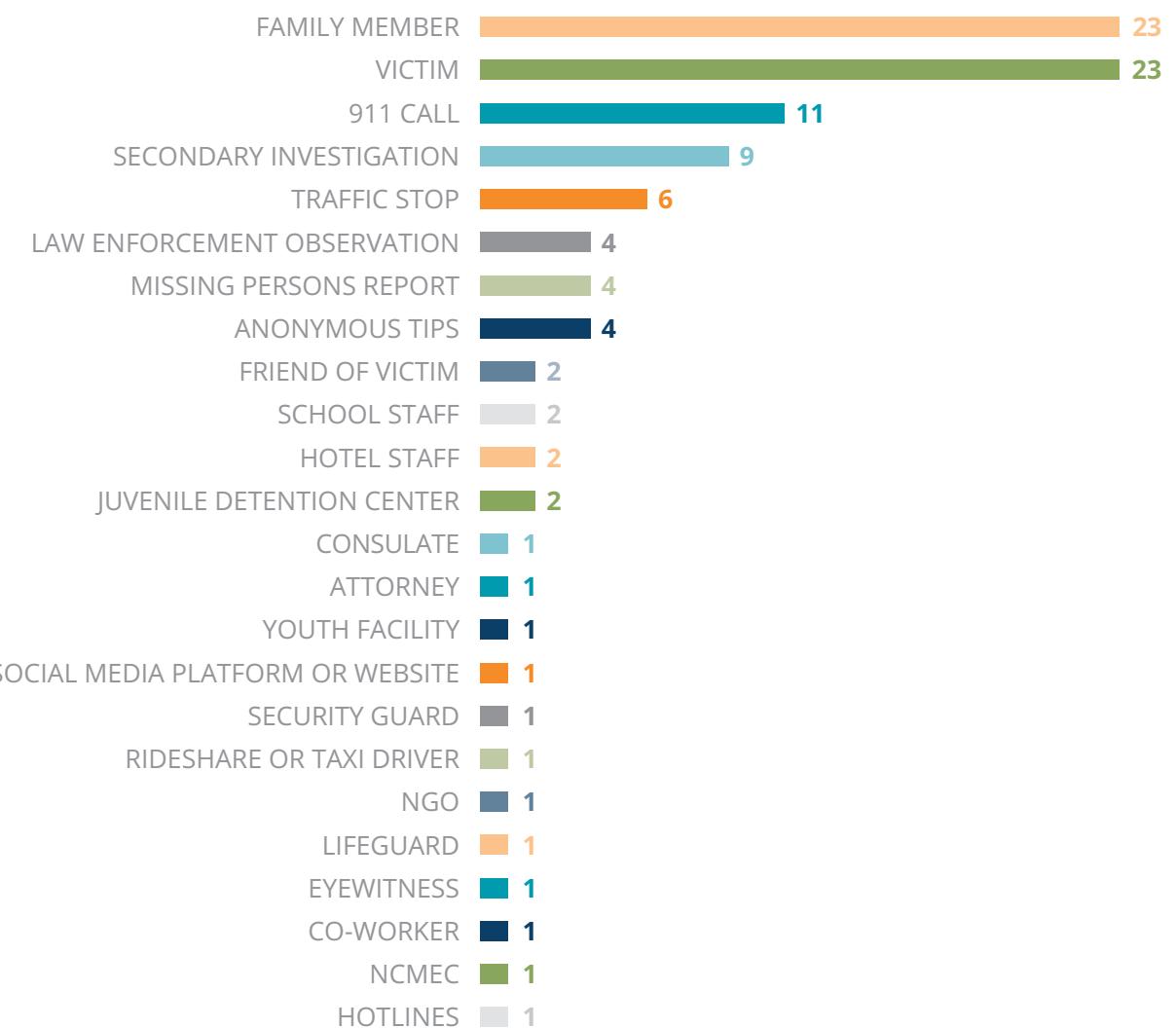
Human trafficking prosecutions are often a result of a *reactive* investigation. A reactive investigation is one initiated by law enforcement after receiving a report of criminal behavior. Reactive investigations are a valuable component in identifying victims and helping end their exploitation.

CASE REFERRALS

Reactive investigations occur after a referral is made by someone to law enforcement about suspected criminal conduct. Seventy-four of the 202 human trafficking cases filed in 2023 had known methods of referral. The most common methods of referral were victim self-referral (23) or by a family member (23). Other referral methods identified in 2023 were: 911 calls to law enforcement (11), secondary investigations (9), traffic stops (6), law enforcement observations (4), anonymous tips (4), missing person reports (4), hotel staff (2), and by a friend of the victim (2).

Education on the signs, indicators, and behaviors of human trafficking is essential to identifying victims and stopping traffickers. One important data point measuring the effectiveness of public awareness is the use of 911 to report suspected trafficking. In 2023, the FHTR began collecting data on the use of 911 to report human trafficking. Between 2019 and 2023, 54 referrals through 911 calls were made in cases resulting in federal human trafficking charges. Interestingly, this number is 3 times higher than the number of referrals made to law enforcement through a hotline (18) and higher than the number of referrals made from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) (34).

Referrals to Law Enforcement 2023



Referrals to Law Enforcement 2019-2023

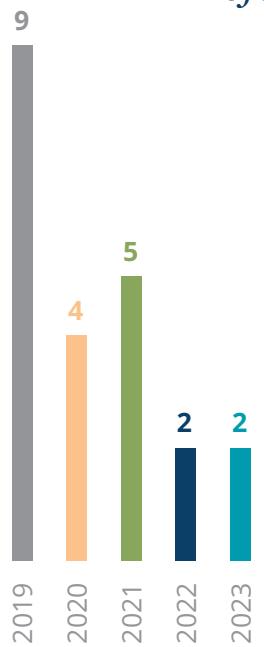
	VICTIM	FAMILY MEMBER	NGO	NCMEC	MEDICAL PERSONNEL	SCHOOL STAFF	TRAFFIC STOP	911 CALL	HOTLINE
2019	43	40	4	10	3	4	6	10	5
2020	38	35	1	7	3	2	8	12	4
2021	34	32	2	11	2	1	8	9	5
2022	23	22	0	5	3	0	3	12	3
2023	23	23	1	1	0	2	6	11	1
TOTAL	161	152	8	34	11	9	31	54	18

Since 2019, there have been 800 cases with known referrals in human trafficking cases filed in federal courts. In those cases, the most commonly identified referral method came from victims self-reporting (161). Family members were the second most common means of referral, with 152 instances identified.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS

Some referrals to law enforcement result from information provided by a confidential informant. A confidential informant is someone who provides credible and useful information to law enforcement officers.⁸⁸ Confidential informants are commonly used in proactive undercover operations and can provide law enforcement with valuable information that is not easily obtained from more traditional law enforcement methods. Since 2019, the FHTR has identified 22 cases resulting from a referral from a confidential informant.

Confidential Informant Referrals to Law Enforcement 2019-2023



“A confidential informant is someone who provides credible and useful information to law enforcement officers.”

⁸⁸ Office of the Attorney General, *The Attorney General’s Guidelines Regarding the Use of Confidential Informants*, <https://irp.fas.org/agency/doj/fbi/dojguidelines.pdf>.



CASE HIGHLIGHT

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS IN STING OPERATIONS

*United States v. Steven Earnest & United States v. Justin Aubrey,
Western District of Kentucky*

In early 2023, law enforcement agencies in Kentucky conducted an undercover operation to identify individuals seeking to sexually exploit minors. Operation Angel led to the arrest of four individuals, including Steven Earnest, 35, and Justin Aubrey, 26.

Steven Earnest began communicating online with a female sex worker who was also a confidential informant (CI) for the Jefferson Kentucky Police Department. Earnest asked the CI if they could provide him with a minor to engage in sex with. The CI informed Earnest that they had access to a 12-year-old. After making arrangements over two days, and agreeing upon a price, Earnest drove to the arranged meeting point with the \$500 payment in hand to pay for sex with the fictitious victim. Earnest eventually pleaded guilty to Attempted Sex Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 1594(a)) and Coercion/Enticement of a Minor (18 U.S.C. § 2422(b)), for which he was sentenced to 180 months and a 30-year term of supervised release.

Defendant Justin Aubrey contacted a different CI to arrange a meeting, agreeing to pay \$1,500 for sex with a 14-year-old. Aubrey never arrived at the meeting but later solicited child sexual abuse material (CSAM) of the same fictitious minor victim from the CI. Later, Aubrey contacted a second CI seeking sex with a 7-year-old and a 14-year-old. Eventually, Aubrey agreed to pay the CI \$800 for sex with the older victim. The CI directed Aubrey to meet at a liquor store where Aubrey would pick up the minor victim. When officers arrived on the scene to arrest Aubrey, he fled in his vehicle and later on foot. Aubrey was ultimately arrested and indicted for Attempted Sex Trafficking of Children (18 U.S.C. § 1594(a)), and Online Enticement (18 U.S.C. § 2422(b)). At the end of 2023, his case was still pending.

Operation Angel was led by the U.S. Secret Service, specifically the USSS Electronic Crimes Task Force, in the case of Justin Aubrey. Other law enforcement agencies involved in the two cases included: the FBI, HSI, the Kentucky Attorney General’s Office Department of Criminal Investigations, the Louisville Metro Police Department, the Jefferson Police Department, and the Owensboro Police Department.

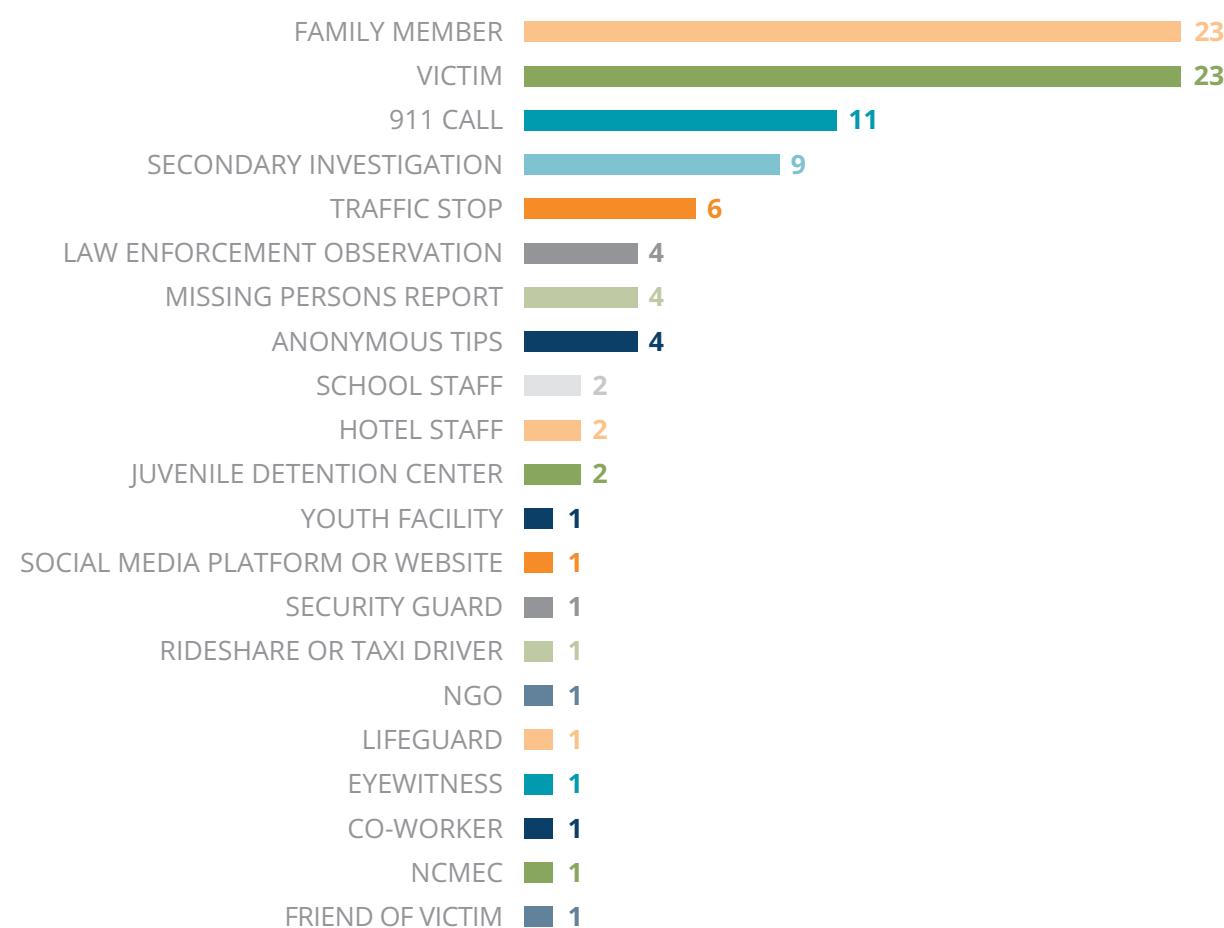
Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.



5.2 REFERRALS IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES

In 2023, two methods were identified as the highest-reported methods of referral, those from family members (23) and victims who self-reported (23). Sex trafficking cases were also reported to law enforcement via 911 calls (11), secondary investigations (9), traffic stops (6), missing person reports (4), anonymous tips (4), and by hotel employees (2). There was insufficient information to identify a method of referral in 125 of the sex trafficking cases filed in 2023.

Referrals to Law Enforcement in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023



5.3 REFERRALS IN FORCED LABOR CASES

Within the forced labor cases filed in 2023, the referral methods identified were through a friend of a victim (1), hotline (1), consulate (1), and attorney (1). There was insufficient information to determine a method of referral in 2 forced labor cases in 2023.

Since 2019, 9 cases involved a victim of forced labor self-referring to law enforcement. Other methods of referral were through a 911 call (3), NGO (2), anonymous tip (2), family (2), neighbor (2), a friend of the victim (2), co-worker (2), a medical professional (1), and a social worker (1).

5.4 PROACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS & STING OPERATIONS

One of the most common and effective forms of proactive investigations is an undercover sting operation. Sting operations, also known as problem-oriented policing, are pre-planned, police-initiated opportunities for targeting criminals (such as traffickers or buyers of commercial sex) who engage in crime, resulting in the arrest or identification of the offender.⁸⁹

In these operations, law enforcement targets individuals facilitating or purchasing commercial sex by posing as a victim, buyer, or pimp. The most common type of sting operation identified in 2023 sex trafficking cases involved law enforcement officers posing as a victim, followed by law enforcement officers posing as a pimp.

Referrals to Law Enforcement in Forced Labor Cases 2023



The FHTR also examines whether cases resulting from a sting operation are charged under the human trafficking statute outlined in Chapter 77 of the U.S. Penal Code, or if they are charged under the non-Chapter 77 statute commonly referred to as the Mann Act.⁹⁰ In 2023, 197 sex trafficking cases were filed, 31% (62) of which resulted from a sting operation. Of those 62 sting cases, 31% (19) were charged under Chapter 77, and 69% (43) were charged outside of Chapter 77.

Within the subset of 62 sting cases in 2023, 52% (32) resulted from an operation where law enforcement posed as a *victim*. Of those 32 cases, 19% (6) were charged under Chapter 77, and 81% (26) were charged using the Mann Act.

Twenty (32%) of the 62 sting cases involved law enforcement posing as a *pimp*, 35% (7) of which were charged under Chapter 77, and 65% (13) were charged outside of Chapter 77.

⁸⁹ Graeme R. Newman, *Sting Operations*, U.S. Dept. of Just., 3, https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/sting_operations.pdf.

⁹⁰ For more information on the types of charges used by prosecutors to charge defendants for criminal human trafficking actions, see Section 6: *Types of Charges*.

Sting Operations in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023

Finally, 15% (9) of the 62 sting cases in 2023 involved law enforcement posing as a potential *buyer* seeking to purchase commercial sex. Within these 9 cases, 67% (6) were charged under Chapter 77, and 33% (3) were charged using the Mann Act.

Most sting operation cases involve *only* fictitious victims. A fictitious victim is a fake or imaginary victim created by law enforcement to engage with targets in an undercover operation or sting. Where possible, the FHTR documents whether a case involves real or fictitious victims or both.

In 2023, 66% (41) of the 62 sting cases identified involved only fictitious victims of trafficking. Because fictitious victims are not actual victims, they are intentionally excluded from all other data points in the FHTR.

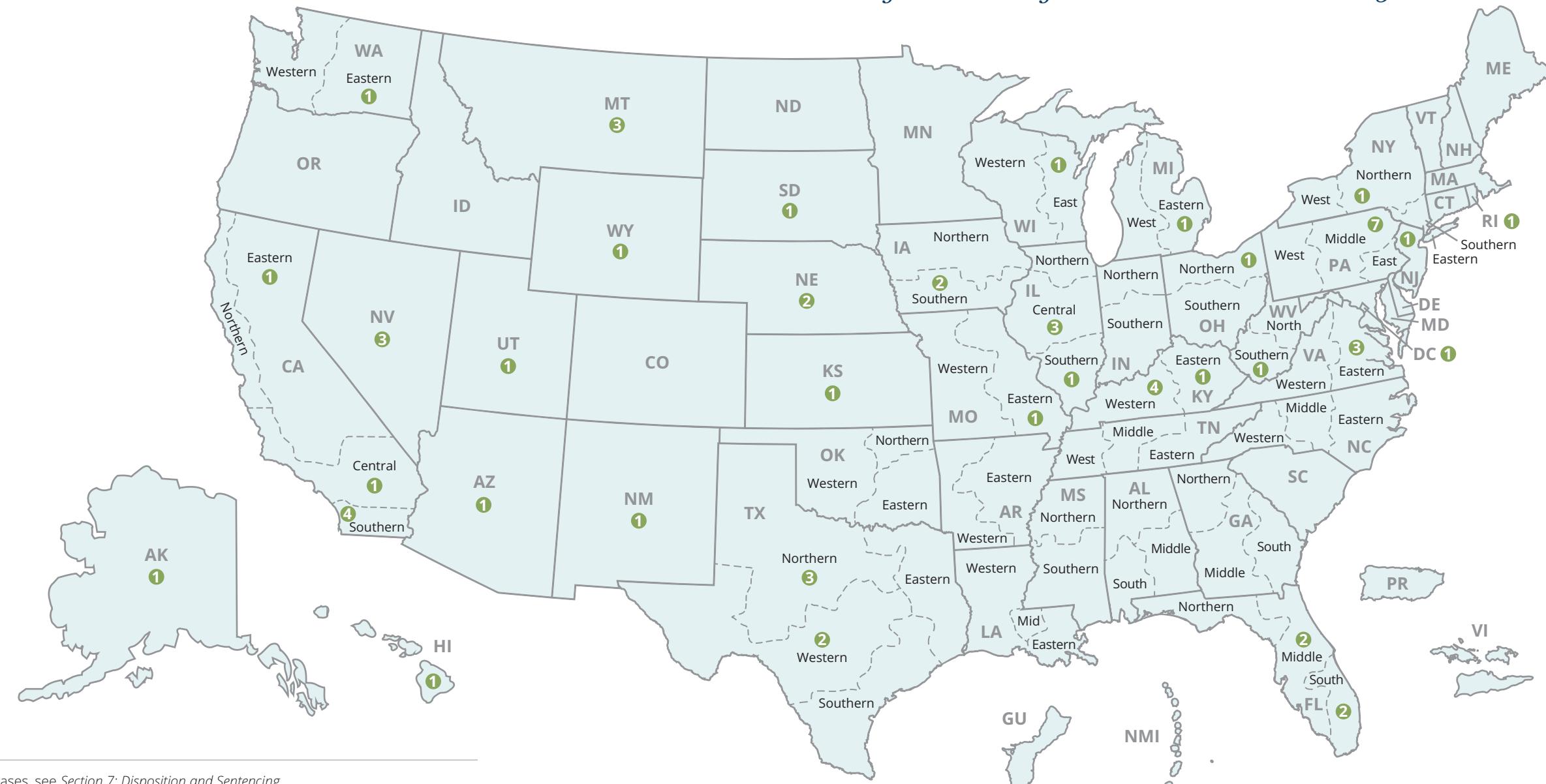
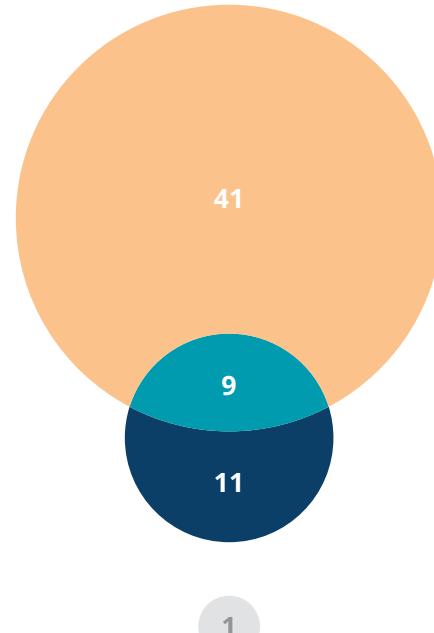
In 2023, 35 of the 94 U.S. federal districts filed one or more of the 62 cases resulting from a sting operation. From 2019 to 2023, a total of 524 sting cases were recorded, charged throughout 81 of the 94 U.S. federal districts.⁹¹



Sting Cases Charged in Federal Districts 2023

Types of Victims in Sting Cases 2023

■ FICTITIOUS ■ REAL
■ BOTH ■ UNKNOWN



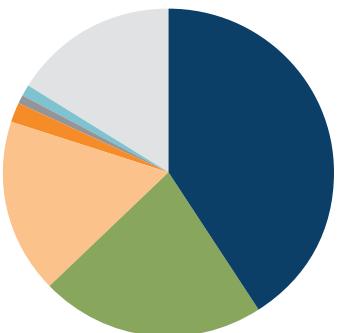
⁹¹ For conviction information on defendants charged in sting cases, see Section 7: Disposition and Sentencing.

5.5 INVESTIGATIVE AGENCIES

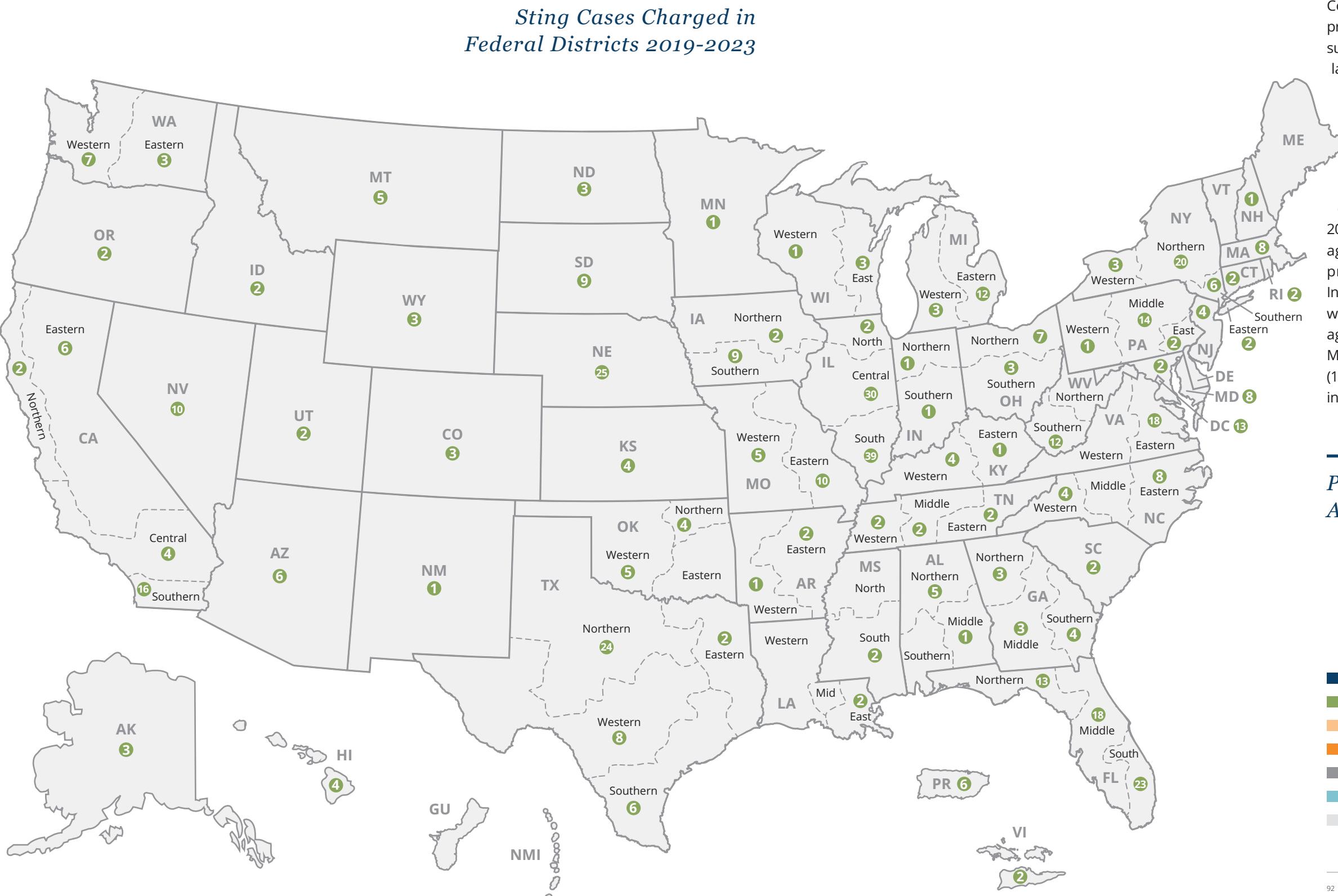
Collaboration between law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and service providers is essential for the successful prosecution of traffickers. The FHTR tracks law enforcement agencies serving as the primary investigating agency in cases, and also denotes when those cases are the result of task force collaboration.

Since 2019, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has served as the leading primary investigating agency in human trafficking cases charged federally each year.⁹² This remained true in 2023, with the FBI serving as the primary investigative agency in 41% (83) of federal human trafficking prosecutions, followed by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) with 22% (44).⁹³ The remaining cases were investigated by state or local law enforcement agencies 17% (34), the U.S. Military 2% (4), the U.S. Marshals Service 1% (3), and the U.S. Secret Service <1% (1).⁹⁴ There was insufficient information to determine an investigating agency for 33 (16%) cases filed in 2023.⁹⁵

Primary Investigative Agencies 2023



- 41% FBI
- 22% HSI
- 17% STATE OR LOCAL AGENCY
- 2% U.S. MILITARY
- 1% U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE
- <1% U.S. SECRET SERVICE
- 16% UNKNOWN



⁹² Based on the FBI as the primary investigating agency in 621 of 1,197 human trafficking cases filed since 2019.

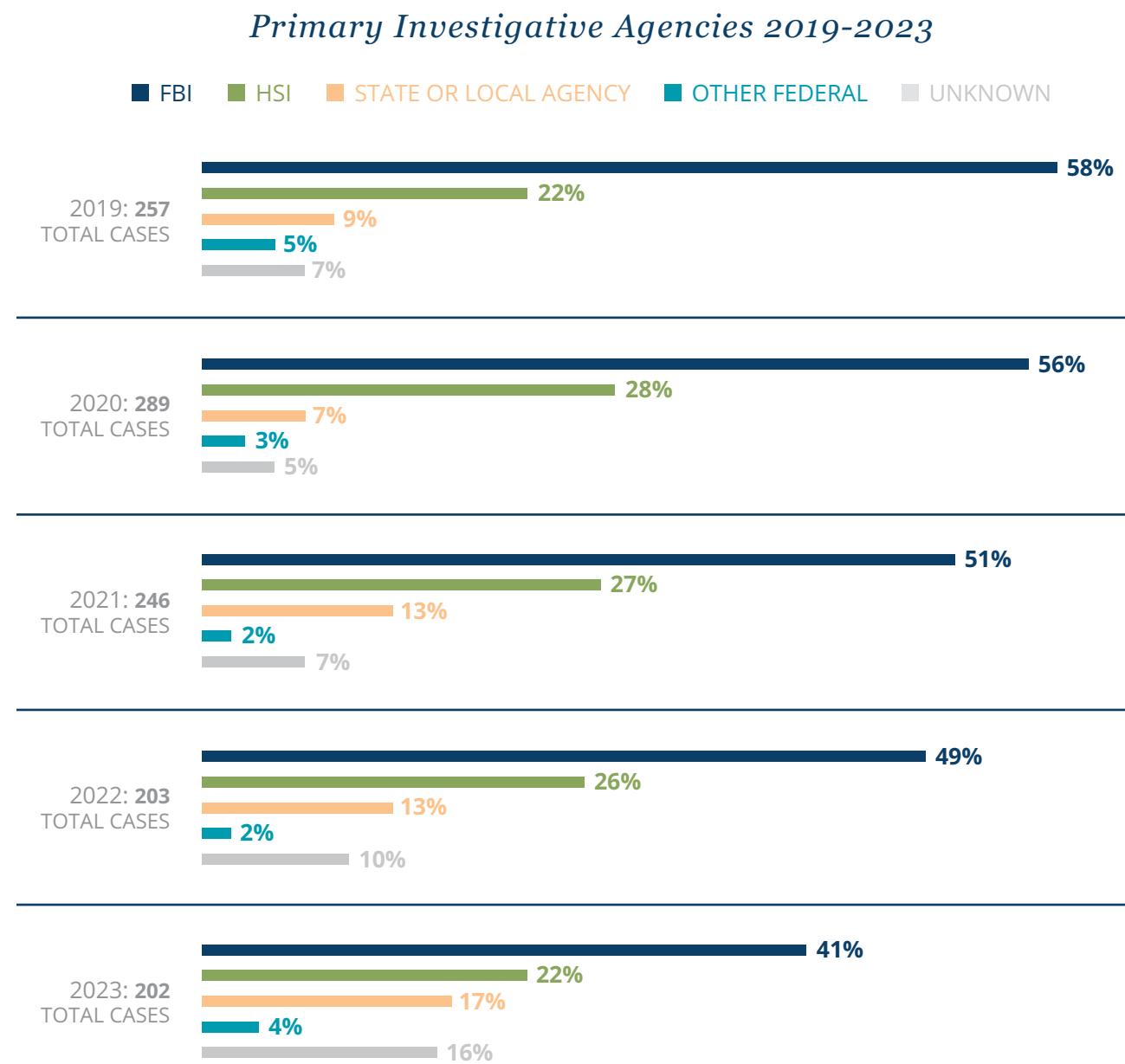
⁹³ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

⁹⁴ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

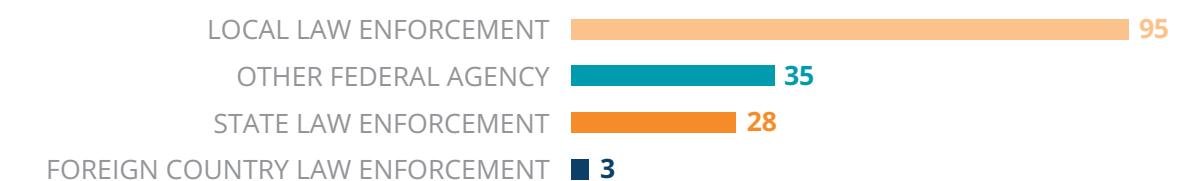
⁹⁵ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

“Task forces are used across many federal jurisdictions to investigate, prosecute, and support victims in human trafficking cases.”

In 2023, numerous federal, local, and state agencies served as supporting investigative agencies to the primary investigative agency. Some of the agencies identified as collaborating with primary investigators included the U.S. Postal Service, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Military, U.S. Department of Labor, Law Enforcement in Foreign Countries, University Police, and the U.S. Social Security Administration.



Cases with Identified Supporting Agencies 2023



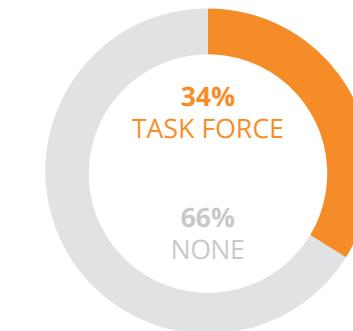
5.6 TASK FORCES

In 2023, 34% (68) of the 202 cases filed identified task force participation, 67 of which were sex trafficking cases, and 1 was forced labor. Since 2019, task forces have been identified in 39% (469) of cases filed.⁹⁶

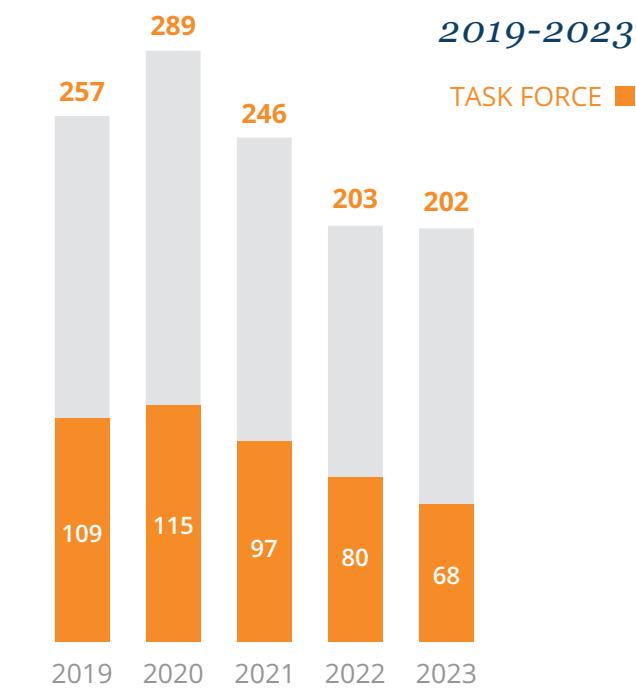
Task forces are used across many federal jurisdictions to investigate, prosecute, and support victims in human trafficking cases. In 2023, there were 68 task force cases charged across 40 U.S. federal districts. The Southern District of California charged the most task force cases in 2023 with 8. The Southern District of Texas charged the second highest with 5, and Massachusetts charged 4.

The most commonly identified task forces across all districts were: the FBI Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force (12); the San Diego Human Trafficking Task Force (7); FBI Boston's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force (2); FBI Houston's Human Trafficking Task Force (2); Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (3); Rio Grande Valley Child Exploitation Investigations Task Force (2); and the West Virginia Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force (2). There were many additional task forces identified as involved in the investigation of human trafficking, child exploitation, or internet crimes in 2023.⁹⁷

Cases Involving a Task Force 2023



Cases Involving a Task Force 2019-2023



⁹⁶ Based on 1,197 human trafficking cases filed since 2019.

⁹⁷ See Section 11: Appendix for a full list of task forces identified.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

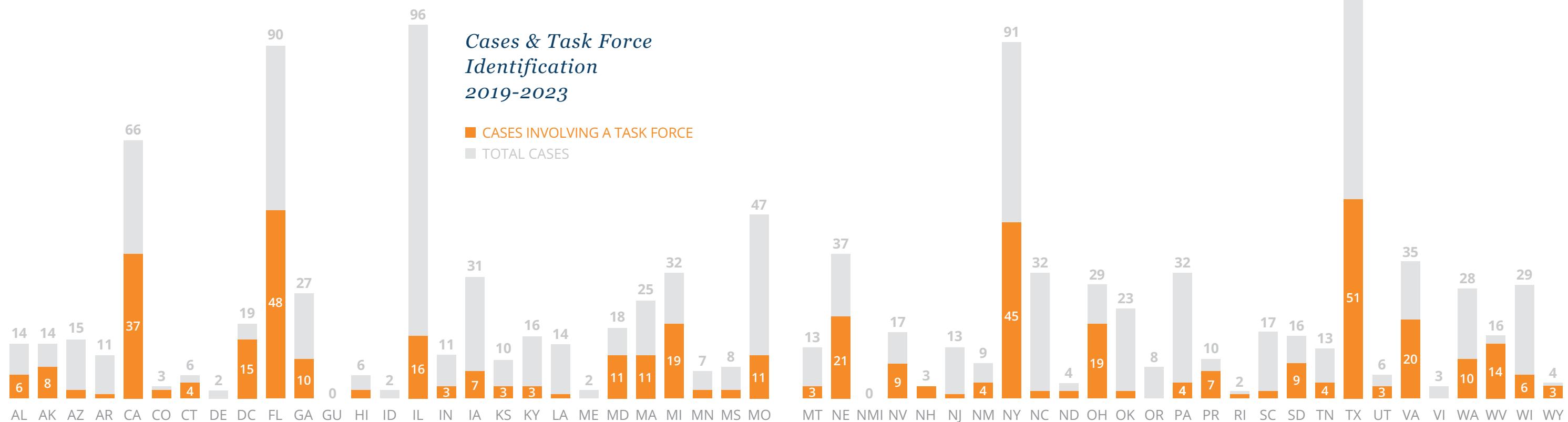
INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION & TASK FORCES

United States v. Christopher Todd Evans, Eastern District of North Carolina

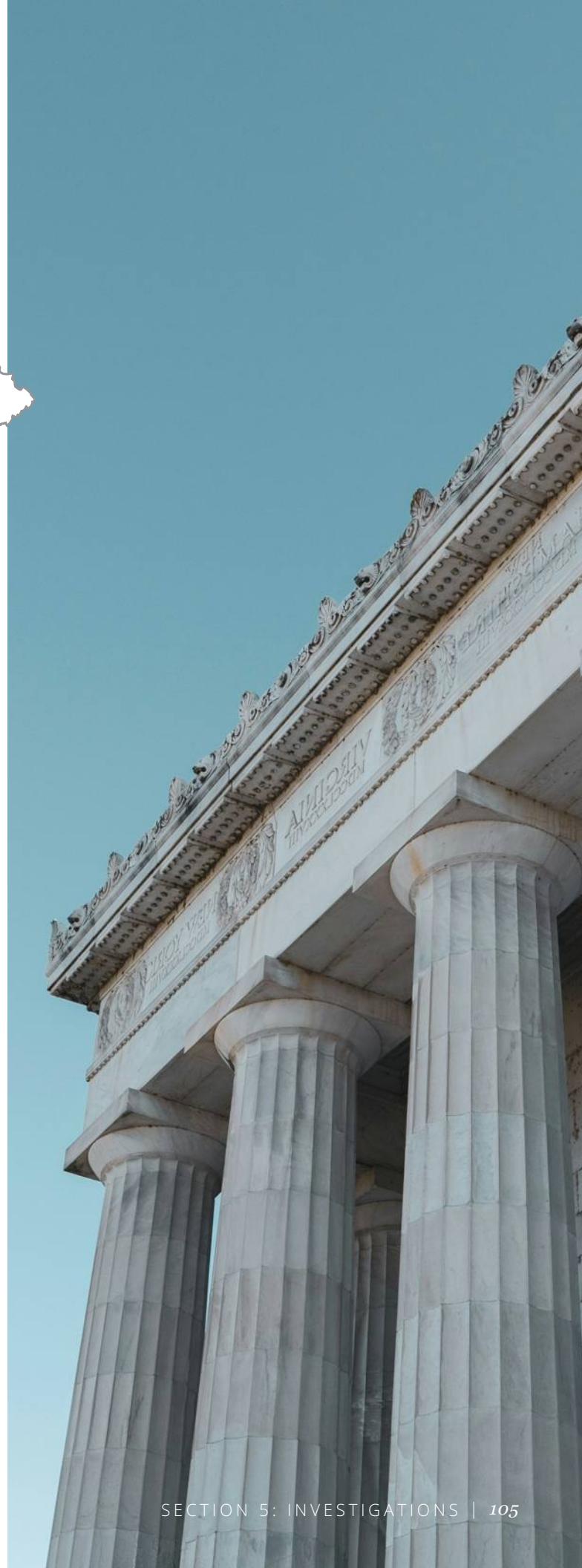
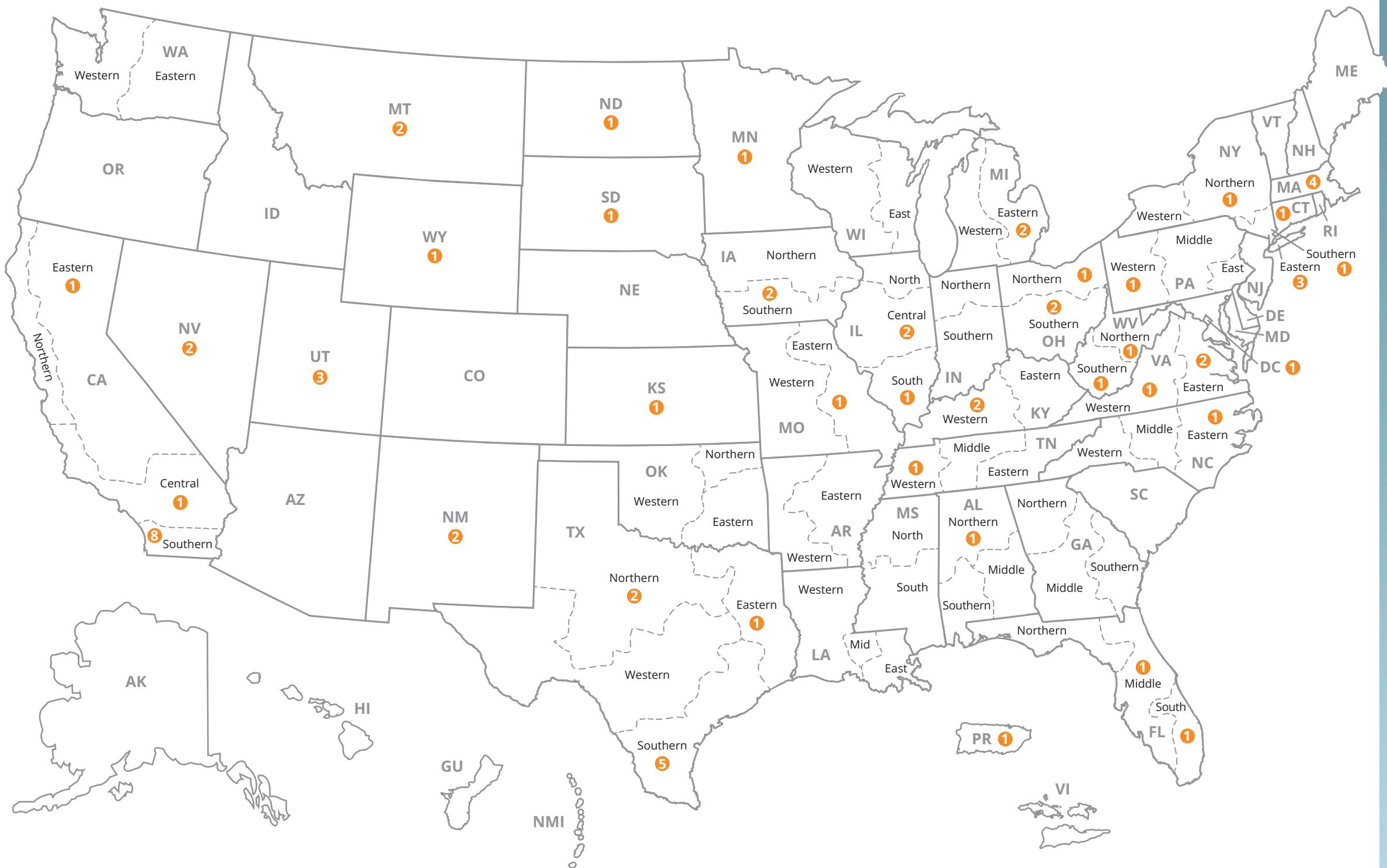
In April 2023, Christopher Todd Evans was arrested after a six-month investigation into Evan's business, Cape Fear Escorts. Evans recruited 150 people to dance for his escort service by promising them thousands of dollars in income. Instead of dancing, the victims were forced to work in commercial sex for Evans, where he required them to turn over all their proceeds. Evans was charged with one count of Promotion or Facilitation of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 2421A) and one count under the Interstate and Foreign Travel or Transportation in Aid of Racketeering Enterprises (18 U.S.C. § 1952). His case was still pending at the end of 2023.

Interagency collaboration was essential in the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of Evans. The defendant's charges initially began at the state level in New Hanover County, North Carolina, after an investigation from the East Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force. Support from federal agencies and the U.S. Attorney's Office led to the subsequent investigation and indictment of Evans federally in the Eastern District of North Carolina.

This case was investigated by the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, the FBI, HSI, and the U.S. Military. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bryan Stephany. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. This case was still pending at the end of 2023.



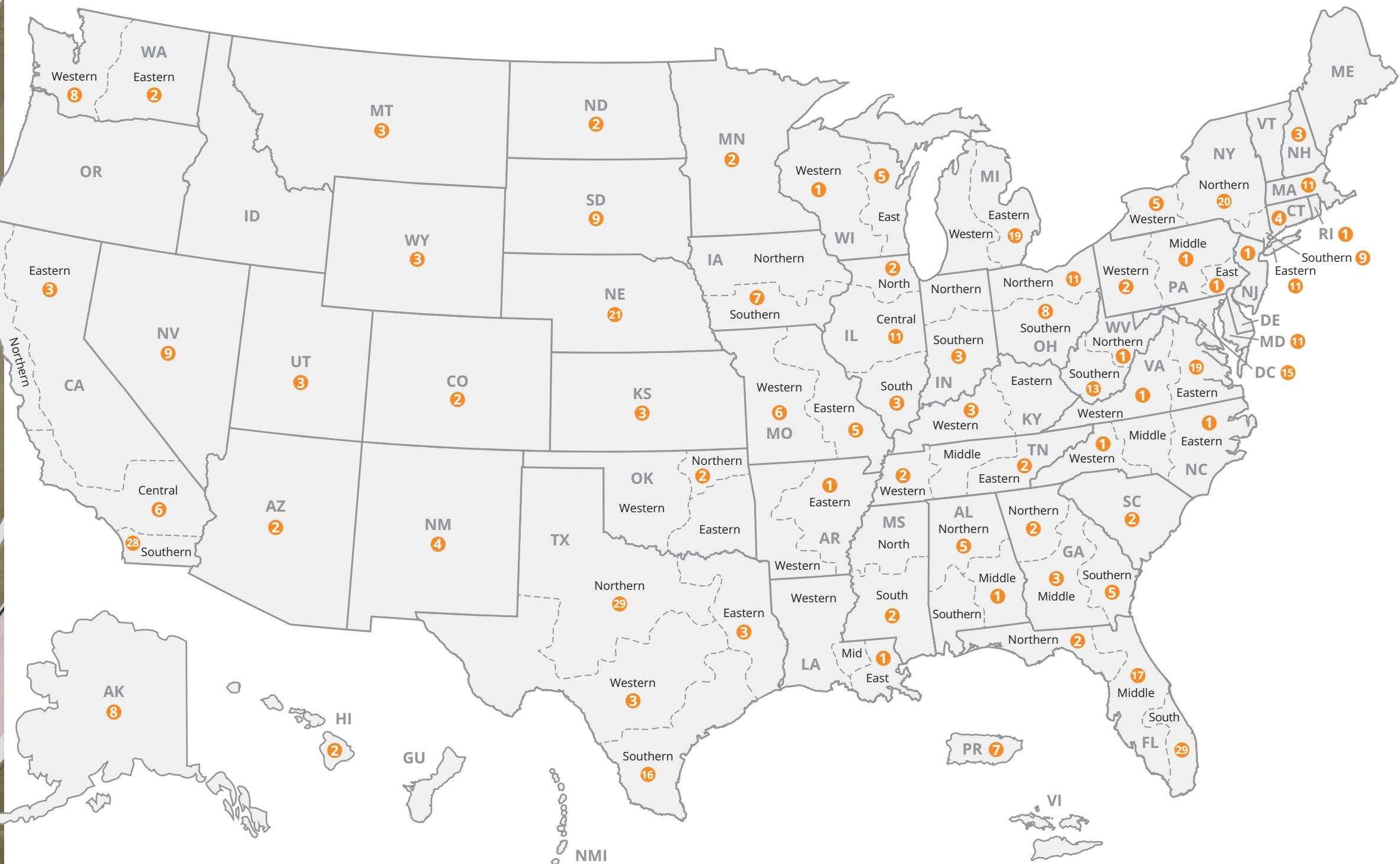
*Federal Districts with
Task Force Cases 2023*



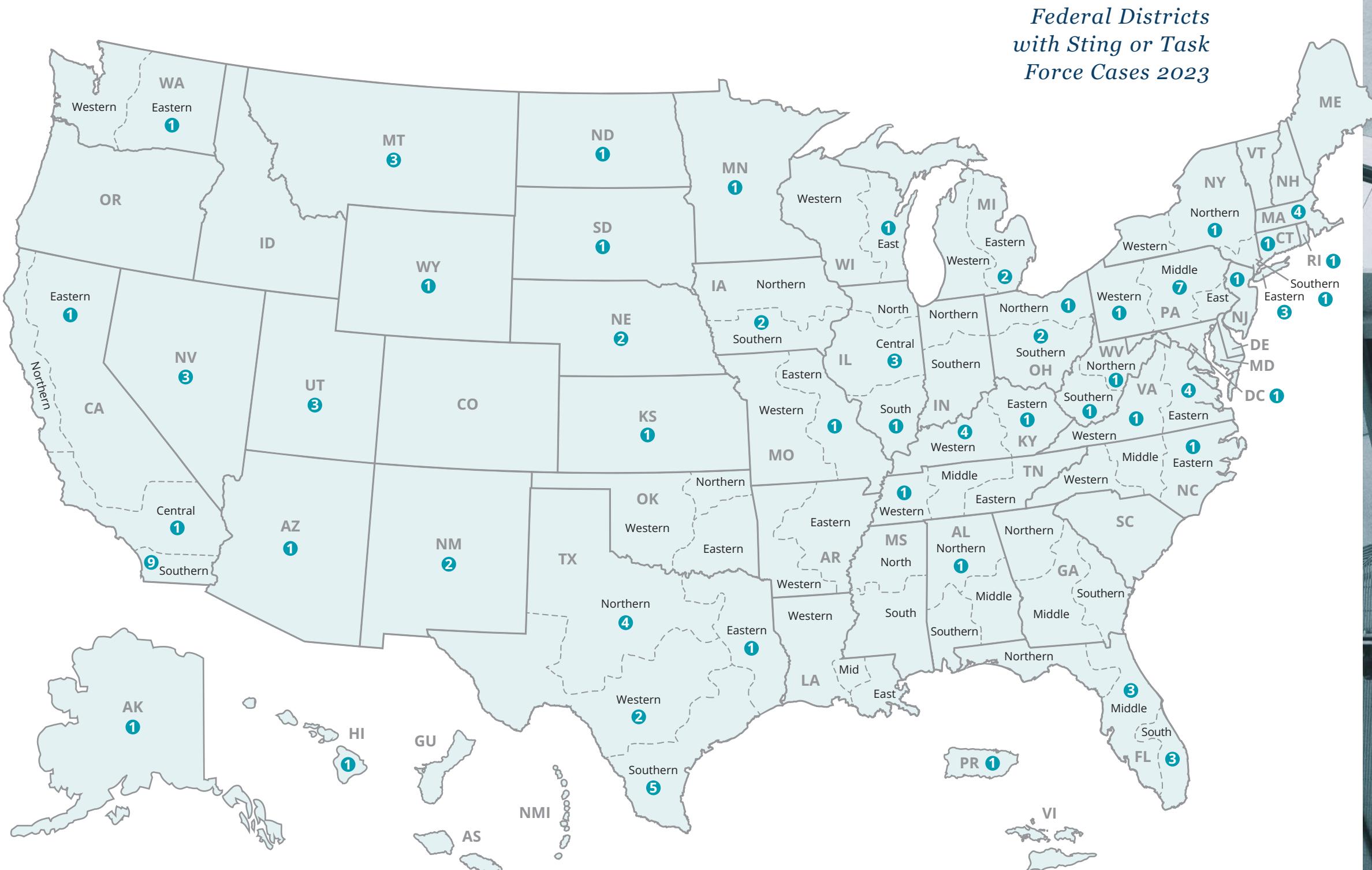


From 2019 to 2023, there were a total of 72 U.S. federal districts that charged at least one task force case. Collectively, those 72 U.S. district courts charged 469 task force cases over the last five years.

Federal Districts with Task Force Cases 2019-2023

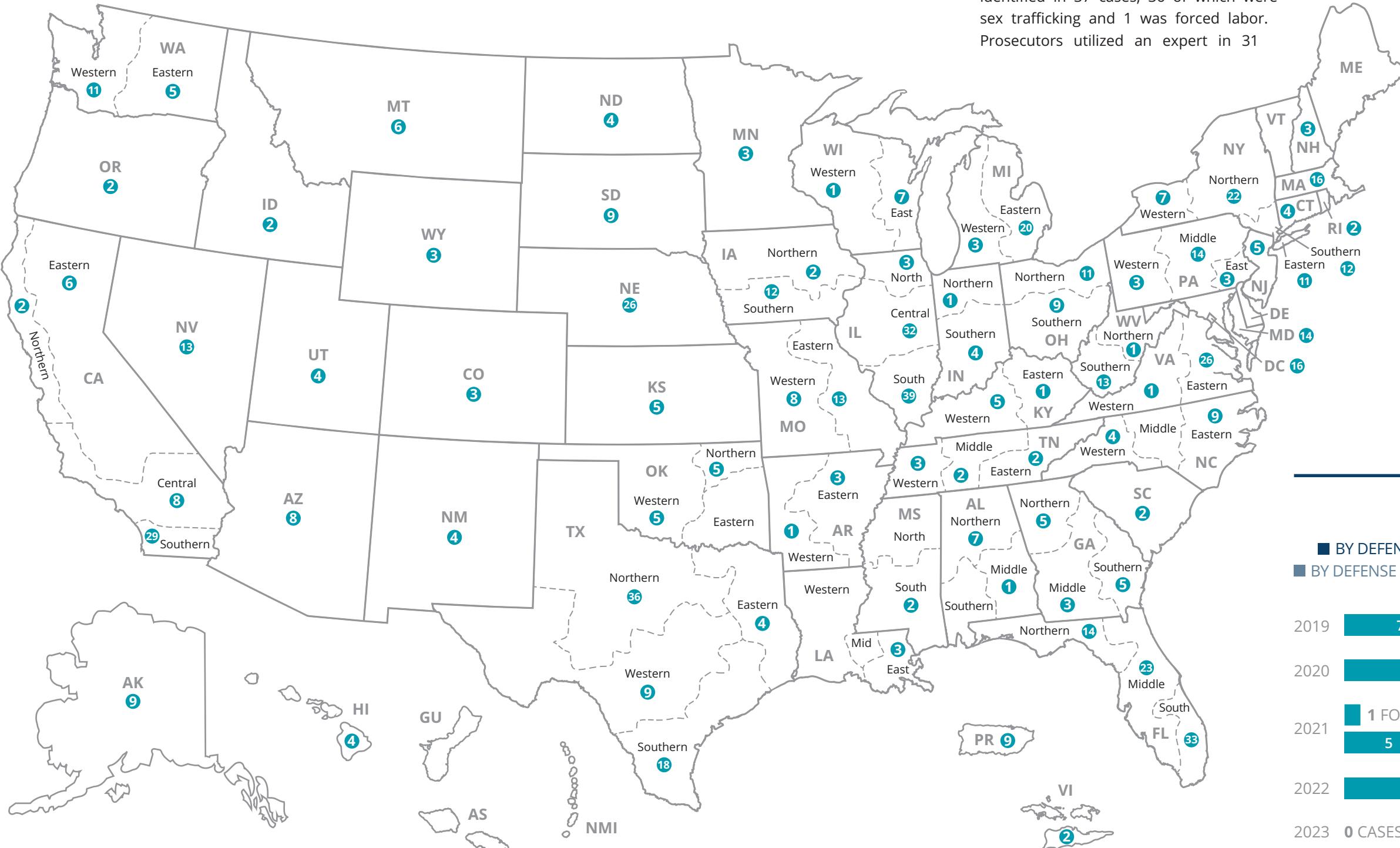


Conducting proactive investigations, either directly through an undercover sting operation or collaboratively through a task force, are both effective tools in the response to trafficking. In 2023, 51 federal districts charged at least one sting or task force case, for a total of 101 cases. Of those 51 federal districts, the Southern District of California charged the most, with a total of 9 sting or task force cases in 2023. The map below displays districts that charged at least one sting or task force case in 2023.



Between 2019-2023, 88% (83) of the 94 federal districts have charged at least one sting case or one task force case, for a collective total of 720 cases charged. The district with the most charged sting or task force cases over the last five years was the Southern District of Illinois with 39 cases charged.

Federal Districts with Sting or Task Force Cases 2019-2023

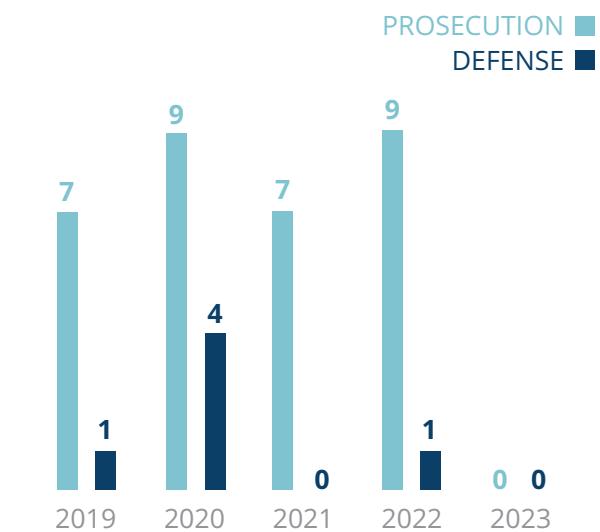


5.7 USE OF EXPERTS

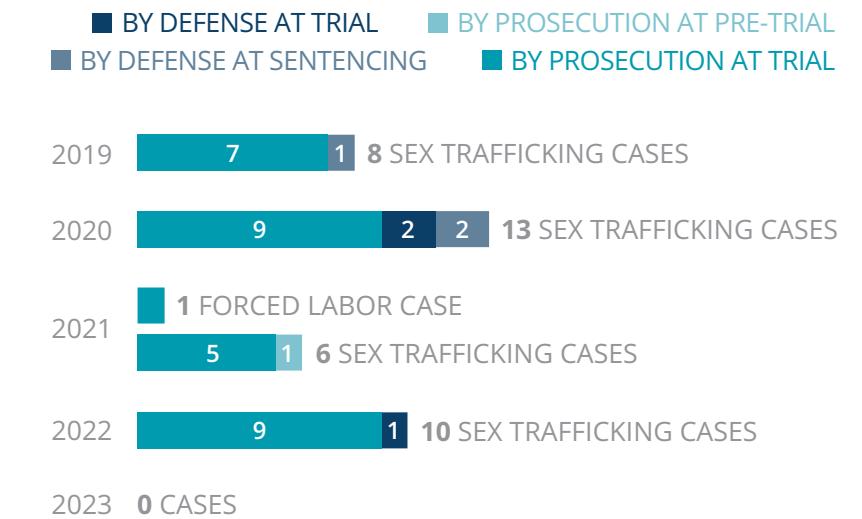
Expert testimony can be incredibly useful in human trafficking cases to provide specialized knowledge and investigative techniques, educate the jury, provide insight into the psychological impact trafficking has on victims, and explain forensic evidence. In cases filed in 2023, no experts were identified. However, since 2019, experts have been identified in 37 cases, 36 of which were sex trafficking and 1 was forced labor. Prosecutors utilized an expert in 31

cases, and defendants utilized experts in 5 cases. One case involved an expert in both the prosecution and defense cases. Within those 37 cases, experts were used during pre-trial proceedings (1), the trial phase (33), and in post-trial proceedings (3). Prosecutors employed experts at trial in 31 of the cases, and once during pre-trial, while defendants used an expert at trial in 3 cases, and for sentencing in another 3 cases.

Experts Used by Prosecution & Defense



Experts Used 2019-2023



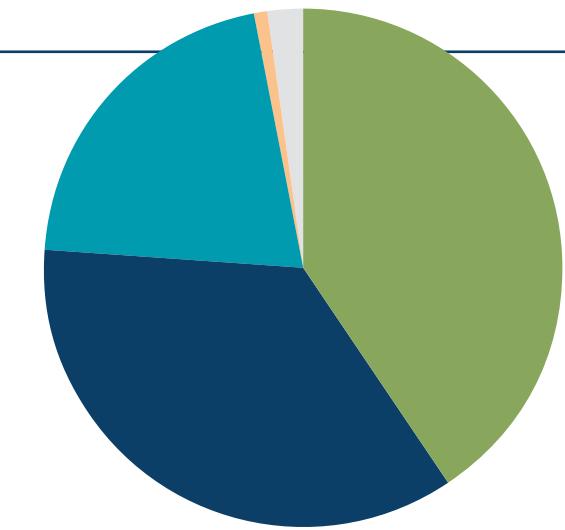
Section 6

TYPES OF CHARGES

SECTION 6 HIGHLIGHTS

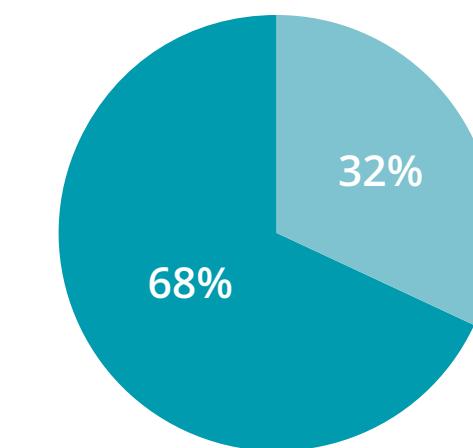
18 U.S.C. § 1591
Counts of Sex Trafficking 2023

MINOR VICTIMS ONLY 41% ■
ADULT VICTIMS ONLY 36% ■
MINOR & ADULT VICTIMS 21% ■
STING CASES WITH FICTITIOUS VICTIMS <1% ■
UNKNOWN VICTIM AGE 2% ■



PROSECUTORS
CHARGED A TOTAL OF
1,072
COUNTS AMONG THE 262
SEX TRAFFICKING
DEFENDANTS

PROSECUTORS
CHARGED A TOTAL OF
58
COUNTS AMONG THE 9
FORCED LABOR
DEFENDANTS



*Sex Trafficking Charges
Against Defendants 2023*

■ CHARGED USING CHAPTER 77
HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTES
■ CHARGED OUTSIDE CHAPTER 77
HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTES



Section 6

TYPES OF CHARGES

6.1 HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES

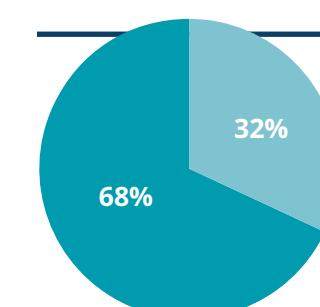
In the federal court system, human trafficking cases may be charged using a variety of statutes. Most commonly, sex trafficking and forced labor cases are charged under Chapter 77 of the U.S. Code. Chapter 77 offenses include those within the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), including 18 U.S.C. §§ 1589-1597, as well as historical slavery statutes under 18 U.S.C. §§ 1581-1588. Other Chapter 77 statutes used in trafficking prosecutions include 18 U.S.C. § 2 (Attempt), 18 U.S.C. § 371 (Conspiracy), 18 U.S.C. § 1952 (ITAR), and 18 U.S.C. § 1962 (RICO).

Some human trafficking offenses are filed outside of Chapter 77. These non-Chapter 77 cases are commonly charged under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2421-2423 (the Mann Act). They are still considered human trafficking offenses when they contain substantial evidence of force, fraud, or coercion, commercial sex with a minor, or an identified victim of trafficking.

After careful evaluation of the facts and circumstances of each case, prosecutors may exercise discretion in how a defendant should be indicted for human trafficking activity. This section discusses some of the most common charges in cases identified by the Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR).

6.2 SEX TRAFFICKING CHARGES

In 2023, prosecutors charged 68% (179) of the 262 sex trafficking defendants with at least one crime under Chapter 77. The remaining 32% (83) of defendants in human trafficking cases were charged *outside* of Chapter 77.



Sex Trafficking Charges Against Defendants 2023

- CHARGED USING CHAPTER 77 HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTES
- CHARGED OUTSIDE CHAPTER 77 HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTES



18 U.S.C. § 1591 Counts of Sex Trafficking 2023



CHAPTER 77 OFFENSES

The 262 sex trafficking defendants in 2023 were charged with a total of 407 counts of human trafficking offenses under Chapter 77. Within the 407 counts, 298 were under the most commonly charged sex trafficking statute, 18 U.S.C. § 1591. Prosecutors also charged 69 counts of Conspiracy to Commit Sex Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 1594(c)), 17 counts of Attempted Sex Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 1594(a)), 13 counts of Forced Labor (18 U.S.C. § 1589), and 7 counts of Obstructing Enforcement of Sex Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 1591(d)). Finally, there was 1 count charged under each of the following statutes: Conspiracy to Commit Trafficking Offense (18 U.S.C. § 371); Promotion or Facilitation of Prostitution and Reckless Disregard of Sex Trafficking (18 U.S.C. § 2421A); and Benefiting Financially from Peonage, Slavery, and Trafficking in Persons (18 U.S.C. § 1593A).

Prosecutors may employ 18 U.S.C. § 1591 to charge traffickers with 1) sex trafficking of an adult, which

requires proof of force, fraud, or coercion, or 2) sex trafficking of a minor, which does not require proof of force, fraud, or coercion, but instead, knowledge (or reckless disregard) of the victim's age. Of the 298 counts charged under 18 U.S.C. § 1591, 41% (122) involved *only* minor victims, 36% (107) involved *only* adult victims, 21% (62) involved *both* adult and minor victims, <1% (1) were in sting cases with no real victims, and 2% (6) involved victims of unknown ages.

Defendants may be prosecuted under 18 U.S.C. § 1591 for their engagement in the criminal act, benefiting financially from the criminal act, or both.⁹⁸ Within the 298 counts of § 1591 charged in 2023, 76% (225) alleged the defendant committed prohibited trafficking acts, while 24% (73) alleged the defendant *both* engaged in and benefited financially from the trafficking crimes. In 2023, the government did not charge any defendants under § 1591 *exclusively* for financially benefiting from trafficking.

⁹⁸ 18 U.S.C. § 1591 (a)(1).

CASE HIGHLIGHT

MANN ACT WITH COMMERCIAL SEX ELEMENT

*United States v. Ross Brown,
District of Hawaii¹⁰²*

In 2023, the District of Hawaii indicted Lieutenant Colonel Ross Brown, an active-duty U.S. Airman. Brown, who served as an attorney and prosecuted child sex crimes for the Air Force, was indicted on one count of Attempted Sexual Enticement of a Minor under §2422(b) of the Mann Act.

An individual with the Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID), posing as a 14-year-old female, posted an ad on the social media platform, Whisper. Brown responded and began a sexual conversation with the fictitious minor victim. For the next few days, Brown communicated with the purported minor on Whisper and Telegram, telling her he wanted to meet and "teach" her about sex. Brown set a day and time to meet the purported minor and agreed to bring several items, which included him purchasing a particular pack of gum in exchange for sex. Federal law enforcement officers then arrested Brown at Schofield Barracks, where he agreed to meet the minor.

Brown's case was still pending at the end of 2023. Details included here from the charging documents are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

This case was investigated by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Army CID. Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig Nolan is prosecuting the case.

Fifty-three percent (158) of the 298 counts charged under § 1591 in 2023 alleged the defendant's use of force, fraud, or coercion, 39% (117) alleged the defendant had knowledge of or reckless disregard for the victim's age, and 8% (23) alleged *both*. In cases involving sex trafficking of *only* minor victims, the majority of § 1591 charges (80%, 97 of 122 counts) alleged the defendant's knowledge or reckless disregard of a victim's age. Eight percent (10 counts) alleged the defendant's use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a minor victim to engage in commercial sex, and 12% (15 counts) alleged the defendant *both* had knowledge of or reckless disregard for the victim's age *and* used force, fraud, or coercion to compel the minor to perform commercial sex acts.

While prosecutors need not prove force, fraud, or coercion in cases involving a minor, as shown in the 8% of counts described above, prosecutors may include the language as a matter of strategy.

NON-CHAPTER 77 OFFENSES

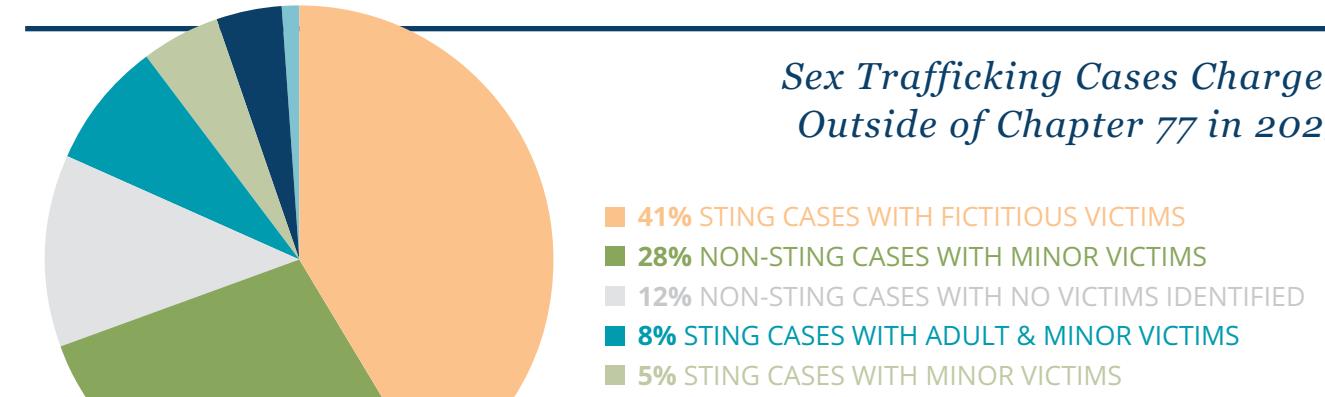
Some sex trafficking defendants are charged under the Mann Act, as codified in 18 U.S.C. §§ 2421-2423. The Mann Act prohibits the transportation of a person across state lines, the coercion or enticement of a person to engage in illegal sexual activity, or the transportation of minors for illegal purposes.⁹⁹ In collecting data for the FHTR, cases filed under the Mann Act may be classified as human trafficking cases if there was a commercial element to the sexual exploitation (the defendant paid or offered to pay something of value in exchange for the sex act), and if the defendant used force, fraud, or coercion against an adult victim.¹⁰⁰ In 2023, the FHTR identified 30 sex trafficking defendants charged exclusively under the Mann Act.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See, 18 U.S.C. § 2421 Transportation Generally; 18 U.S.C. § 2422 Coercion and Enticement; 18 U.S.C. § 2423 Transportation of Minors.

¹⁰⁰ For more information on how cases are screened for inclusion in the FHTR, see *Methodology*.

¹⁰¹ 18 U.S.C. § 2421 Transportation Generally; 18 U.S.C. § 2422 Coercion and Enticement; 18 U.S.C. § 2423 Transportation of Minors.

¹⁰² Press release, Department of Justice (Dec. 1, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-hi/pr/military-lawyer-indicted-attempted-sexual-enticement-minor>.



Sex Trafficking Cases Charged Outside of Chapter 77 in 2023

Some defendants may be charged with *both* Chapter 77 human trafficking charges and non-human trafficking charges outside of Chapter 77. In 2023, 201 defendants were charged in 78 sex trafficking cases with 665 counts for crimes *outside* of Chapter 77.

Within that subset of 78 sex trafficking cases, 41% (32) were sting cases with only *fictitious* victims, 5% (4) were sting operations involving only *real* victims, 8% (6) were sting operations with *both* real and fictitious victims, and 1% (1) was a sting case with an unknown victim type. The remaining 35 non-Chapter 77 cases were non-sting cases involving: minor victims only (28%, 22), adults only (4%, 3), both minor and adult victims (1%, 1), and no identified victims (12%, 9).¹⁰³

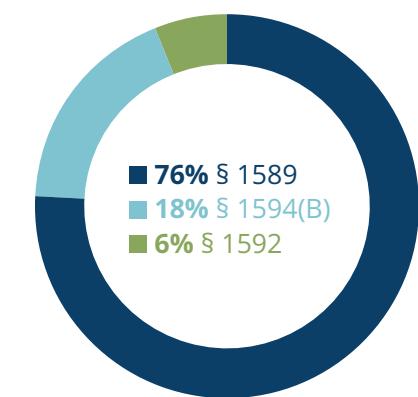
In 2023, 42 (45%) of the 94 federal districts charged human trafficking cases outside of Chapter 77, and 15 (16%) districts exclusively charged human trafficking cases outside of Chapter 77.

6.3 FORCED LABOR CHARGES

Prosecutors charged 9 forced labor defendants in 2023. All 9 defendants were charged with a total of 33 counts under Chapter 77, and 6 defendants were charged with 25 additional counts outside of Chapter 77. The 33 Chapter 77 counts included 25 counts of Forced Labor (18 U.S.C. § 1589), 6 counts of Conspiracy to Commit Forced Labor (18 U.S.C. § 1594(b)), and 2 counts of Unlawful Conduct with Respect to Documents in Furtherance of Trafficking, Peonage, Slavery, Involuntary Servitude, or Forced Labor (18 U.S.C. § 1592).

¹⁰³ Based on 78 sex trafficking cases charged outside Chapter 77 in 2023.

Chapter 77 Forced Labor Counts Filed 2023



Section 7

DISPOSITION & SENTENCING

SECTION 7 HIGHLIGHTS



*Conviction
Rates 2023*

THE
CONVICTION RATE
FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING
DEFENDANTS CONVICTED IN 2023 WAS
96%

10

SEX TRAFFICKING DEFENDANTS
RECEIVED SENTENCES OF
LIFE IN PRISON
IN 2023

*Average Terms of Imprisonment
(months) 2023*

	CHAPTER 77	OUTSIDE CHAPTER 77
OVERALL	178	119
PLEA AGREEMENT	159	115
JURY TRIAL	260	174
BENCH TRIAL	n/a	120

AVERAGE PRISON SENTENCE FOR
BUYER-DEFENDANTS
IN CASES WITH REAL VICTIMS:
16 YEARS, 10 MONTHS

A TOTAL OF
\$27,392,163.45
IN NON-JOINT AND SEVERAL VICTIM
RESTITUTION
WAS ORDERED IN 2023



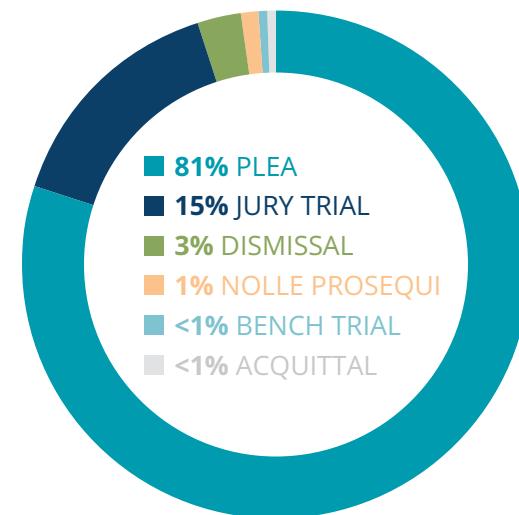
Section 7

DISPOSITION & SENTENCING

7.1 DISPOSITION OF CHARGES

Cases reach disposition at the trial court level when the defendant enters a guilty plea, is convicted or acquitted at trial, or the case is dismissed voluntarily by the government or due to the defendant's death. In 2023, 305 human trafficking defendants received disposition at the trial court level. Of those 305 defendants who reached disposition in 2023, 246 (81%) pleaded guilty, 47 (15%) were convicted at jury trial, and 1 (<1%) was convicted via bench trial. Charges were dismissed—either by the court or by the prosecutor—against 8 (3%) defendants, 2 (1%) defendants received a *nolle prosequi* due to the defendant's death, and 1 (<1%) defendant was acquitted at trial.¹⁰⁴ The conviction rate in 2023 for defendants charged in human trafficking cases was 96%.¹⁰⁵

Defendant Dispositions 2023



¹⁰⁴ Based on 305 defendants receiving disposition in 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Based on 294 defendants convicted out of 305 defendants receiving disposition in 2023.

Defendant Dispositions 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
CONVICTED	95%	90%	96%	96%	96%
DISMISSED	4%	10%	2%	2%	3%
ACQUITTED	0%	0%	1%	1%	<1%
NOLLE PROSEQUI	1%	<1%	1%	1%	1%
TOTAL DISPOSED	410	219	395	410	305

7.2 CONVICTIONS

In 2023, federal courts convicted 100% (15) of defendants in forced labor cases¹⁰⁶ and 96% (279) of defendants in sex trafficking cases.¹⁰⁷

ENTITY DEFENDANT CONVICTIONS

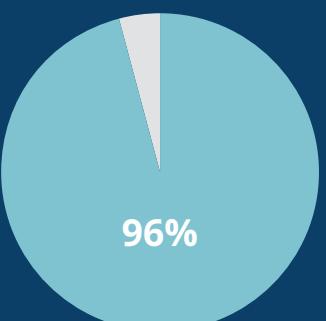
Since 2000, there have been 12 entity defendants charged for facilitating or financially benefiting from human trafficking, as prohibited by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Of those 12 entity defendants, 1 defendant is still pending in the courts, 8 were dismissed, 2 were found guilty at trial, and 1 entered a guilty plea.

SEX TRAFFICKING CONVICTIONS

There were 290 sex trafficking defendants whose cases reached disposition in 2023. Of those 290 defendants, 279 (96%) were convicted; 83% (232) pleaded guilty, 16% (46) were convicted at a jury trial, and <1% (1) was convicted at a bench trial.¹⁰⁸ These defendants were convicted in cases involving: only minor victims (40%, 111), only adult victims (19%, 52), both minor and adult victims (18%, 51), only fictitious victims (22%, 62), and victims with unknown ages (1%, 3).¹⁰⁹

Conviction Rates 2023

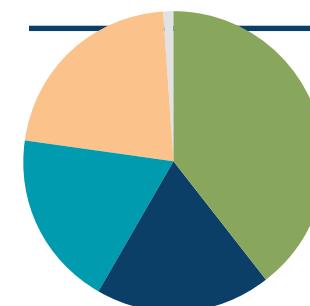
CONVICTED ■



100%

FORCED LABOR

Sex Trafficking Convictions 2023



¹⁰⁶ Based on 15 forced labor defendants receiving disposition in 2023.

¹⁰⁷ Based on 290 sex trafficking defendants receiving disposition in 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Based on 279 sex trafficking defendants convicted in 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Based on 279 sex trafficking defendants convicted in 2023.

In 2023, buyer-defendants made up 38% (107) of sex trafficking convictions.¹¹⁰ Of the buyer-defendants convicted in 2023, 59% (63) were convicted for attempting to purchase commercial sex in a sting case where law enforcement officers posed as a fictitious victim.¹¹¹ Another 40% (43) were convicted for attempting to purchase—or did purchase—commercial sex with an actual victim.¹¹² The remaining 5% (5) of buyer-defendants were convicted for attempting to purchase commercial sex from a fictitious victim in a non-sting case.¹¹³

FORCED LABOR CONVICTIONS

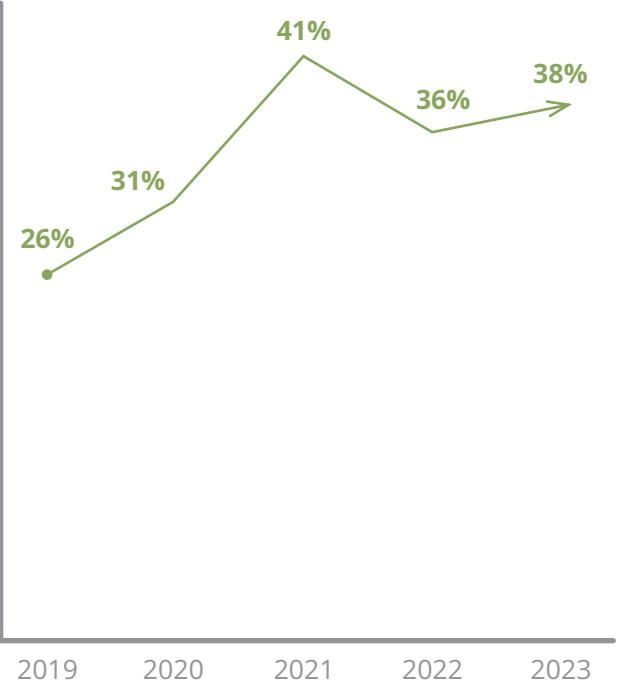
In 2023, 15 forced labor defendants reached disposition. Of those 15 defendants, 100% (15) were convicted; 93% (14) pleaded guilty and 7% (1) was convicted at trial.¹¹⁴ While there were fewer forced labor convictions in 2023 than in 2022, the 93% conviction rate in 2023 was a *percentage* increase from 2022, when 91% (32) of forced labor defendants were convicted.¹¹⁵

CONVICTIONS FROM 2000-2023

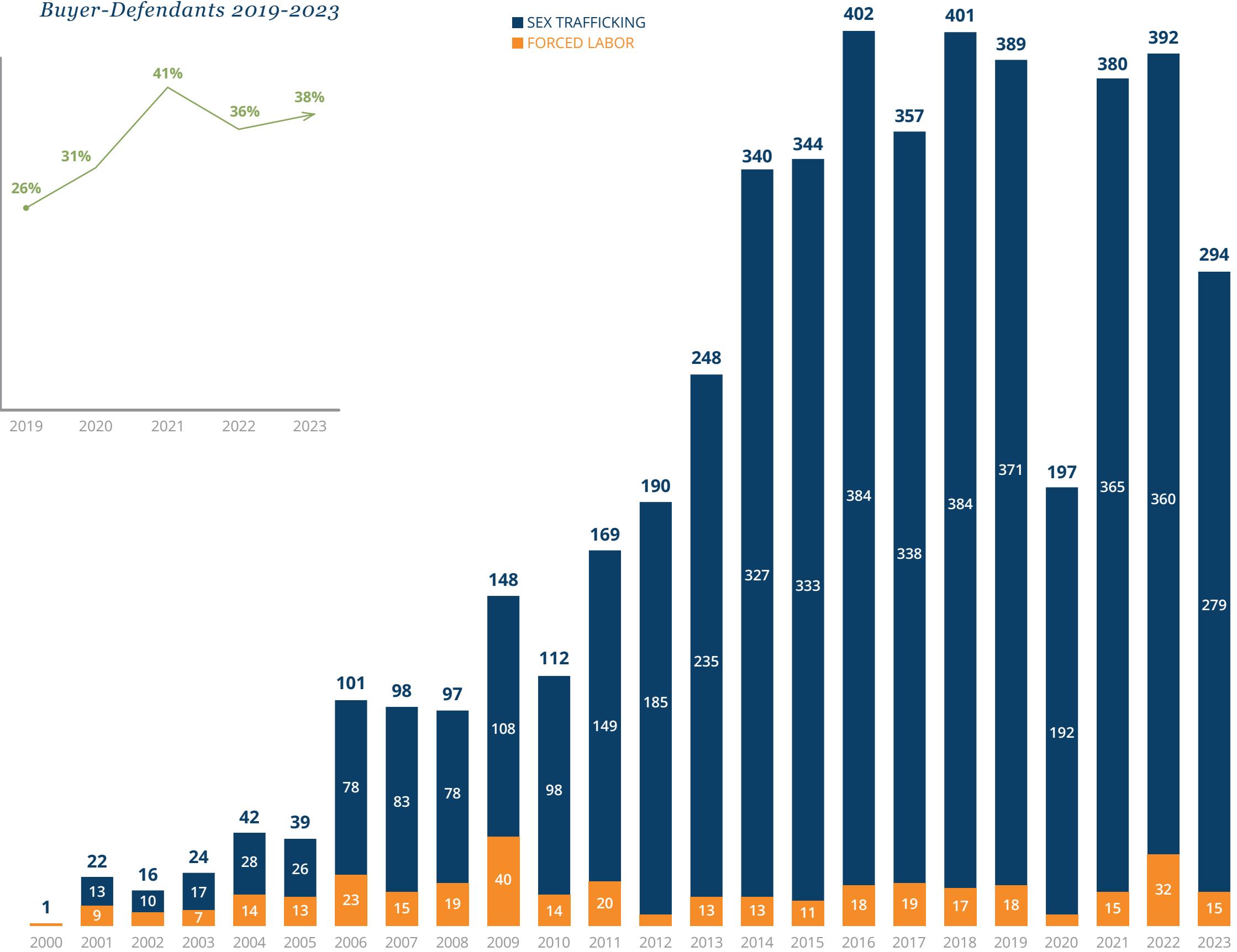
Since the TVPA's enactment in 2000, 4,803 defendants have been convicted of human trafficking in U.S. federal courts. The highest number of defendants convicted in a single year was in 2016 when 402 defendants were convicted. Since that time, the number of defendants convicted has fallen, which correlates to the slight decrease in the number of cases filed, year-over-year.

Of the 4,803 defendants convicted since 2000, 92% (4,441) were convicted of sex trafficking and 8% (362) were convicted of forced labor.

Percentage of Convicted Buyer-Defendants 2019-2023



Convictions 2000-2023



¹¹⁰ Based on 279 sex trafficking defendants convicted in 2023.

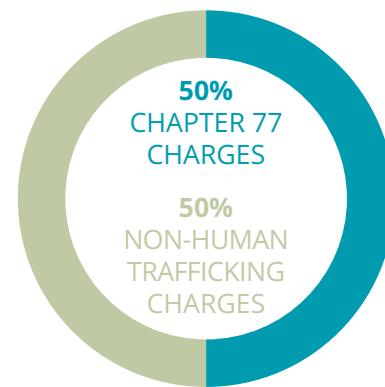
¹¹¹ Based on 107 buyer-defendants convicted in 2023.

¹¹² Based on 107 buyer-defendants convicted in 2023.

¹¹³ Based on 107 buyer-defendants convicted in 2023.

¹¹⁴ Based on 15 forced labor defendants convicted in 2023.

¹¹⁵ Based on 35 forced labor defendants reaching disposition in 2022.



Convictions 2023



7.3 CONVICTIONS BY COUNT

Defendants can be charged with and convicted of multiple counts under the same statute, as well as crimes under multiple statutes. In 2023, 294 defendants were convicted of 581 criminal counts. Fifty percent (147) of those 294 defendants were convicted of at least one Chapter 77 offense. This is a slight increase from 2022 when 49% (194) of defendants were convicted of at least one Chapter 77 crime.¹¹⁶ The remaining 50% (147) of defendants convicted in 2023 were convicted of non-human-trafficking crimes only, some of which included convictions for Mann Act offenses, the production, distribution, and/or possession of child sexual abuse material, sexual exploitation of a child, alien harboring, drug-related offenses, money laundering, and witness tampering. A full list of the non-human-trafficking counts of conviction can be found in the Appendix.

Convictions by Count 2023



¹¹⁶ Based on 392 defendants convicted in 2022.

¹¹⁷ Based on 279 sex trafficking defendants convicted in 2023.

SEX TRAFFICKING COUNTS

In 2023, 279 sex trafficking defendants were convicted of 552 criminal counts. This is a decrease from 2022 when 360 defendants were convicted of 693 counts. Of the 279 defendants convicted in 2023, 49% (138) were convicted of at least one charge under Chapter 77.¹¹⁷ The remaining 51% (141) of defendants were convicted only of offenses outside of Chapter 77.¹¹⁸ Thirty percent (84) of the 279 sex trafficking defendants convicted in 2023 were originally charged with at least one Chapter 77 offense, but ultimately convicted of a non-Chapter 77 offense.

FORCED LABOR COUNTS

In 2023, 15 forced labor defendants were convicted of 29 criminal counts, which is a decrease from 2022, when 32 defendants were convicted of 42 counts. Of the 15 forced labor defendants convicted in 2023, 9 (60%) were convicted of at least one forced labor charge under Chapter 77. The remaining 6 (40%) were convicted of crimes outside of Chapter 77.

“... defendants who are convicted of Chapter 77 human trafficking offenses are sentenced based upon a variety of factors, including the type of exploitation they committed, as well as the age of the victims in the case.”

Average Terms of Imprisonment (months) 2023

	CHAPTER 77	OUTSIDE CHAPTER 77
OVERALL	178	119
PLEA AGREEMENT	159	115
JURY TRIAL	260	174
BENCH TRIAL	n/a	120

7.4 SENTENCES

Under the TVPA, defendants who are convicted of Chapter 77 human trafficking offenses are sentenced based upon a variety of factors, including the type of exploitation they committed, as well as the age of the victims in the case. Defendants convicted of § 1591 offenses involving sex trafficking of a minor under the age of 14, or the defendant's use of force, fraud, or coercion, are punishable by a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years imprisonment.¹¹⁹ Defendants convicted of § 1591 offenses involving a minor victim between the ages of 14 and 17, without evidence of force, fraud, or coercion, are punishable by a mandatory sentence of 10 years imprisonment.¹²⁰ By comparison, forced labor convictions do not carry a statutory mandatory minimum sentence. Instead, § 1589 establishes that a defendant convicted of forced labor under § 1589 is subject to a prison sentence of up to 20 years.

In 2023, 359 defendants were sentenced for human

trafficking crimes, 97% (350) of which received sentences that included a term of imprisonment ranging from 3 months to life, with an average term of imprisonment of 147 months. The percentage of sentences including a term of imprisonment was lower in 2022, at 94%.¹²¹

The average sentence in 2023 for defendants convicted of Chapter 77 human trafficking cases was 178 months (14 years, 10 months). Defendants who pleaded guilty to Chapter 77 offenses in 2023 received an average sentence of 159 months (13 years, 3 months) imprisonment, whereas defendants found guilty at trial faced an average of 260 months (21 years, 8 months) imprisonment. There were 175 defendants sentenced for crimes outside of Chapter 77, of which 97% (170) received sentences that included a term of imprisonment, ranging from 3 months to 540 months. The average term of imprisonment for defendants sentenced for crimes outside of Chapter 77 was 119 months (9 years, 11 months).

¹¹⁹ 18 U.S.C. § 1591(b)(1).

¹²⁰ 18 U.S.C. § 1591(b)(2).

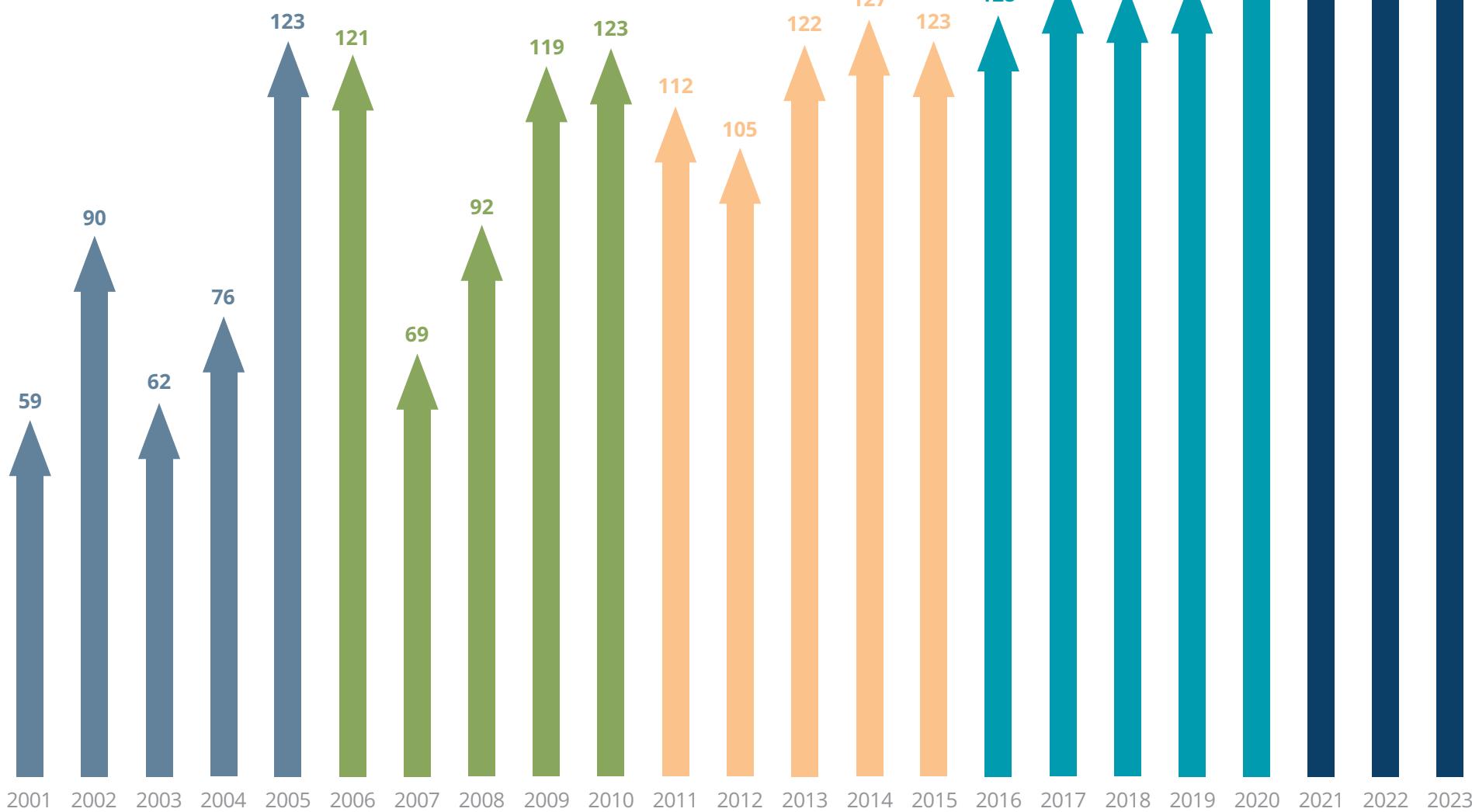
¹²¹ Based on 441 of 469 defendants sentenced receiving a term of imprisonment in 2022.

Imprisonment is *not* mandatory for some offenses under the sentencing guidelines, and in 2023, 9 defendants received sentences that did not include a term of imprisonment. Though not sentenced to a term of imprisonment, all 9 of these defendants were sentenced to terms of probation or supervised release, and 2 were ordered to pay victim restitution totaling \$514,025.69.

The length of prison sentences imposed in human trafficking cases has steadily increased since the TVPA was enacted in 2000. In 2001 the average sentence imposed against a defendant convicted in a trafficking case was 59 months—less than five years. This number increased over time and has continuously remained above 10 years since 2013.



Average Sentences for Defendants Convicted in Human Trafficking Cases (months) 2001-2023



Average Term of Imprisonment for Defendants in Sex Trafficking Cases (months) 2023

MINOR-ONLY CASES	→ 169
ADULT-ONLY CASES	→ 131
ADULT & MINOR CASES	→ 177
BUYER-DEFENDANT CASES	→ 158

SEX TRAFFICKING SENTENCES

In 2023, 326 (98%) sex trafficking defendants were sentenced to a term of imprisonment ranging from 5 months to life, with an average term of imprisonment of 152 months (12 years, 8 months).¹²² Defendants convicted in minor-only cases faced the longest periods of imprisonment, an average of 169 months (14 years, 1 month). In 2023, defendants convicted in adult-only cases faced an average imprisonment term of 131 months (10 years, 11 months), and defendants convicted in cases with *both* adult and minor victims faced an average imprisonment of 177 months (14 years, 9 months).

Buyer-defendants received sentences ranging from 8 months to 540 months (45 years), with an average term of imprisonment of 158 months (13 years, 2 months). Buyer-defendants convicted in cases with real victims faced longer prison terms on average (202 months, or 16 years and 10 months) than those convicted in sting cases with exclusively fictitious victims (130 months, or 10 years, 10 months).

“The length of prison sentences imposed in human trafficking cases has steadily increased since the TVPA was enacted in 2000.”

¹²² Based on 334 sex trafficking defendants sentenced in 2023.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

RESTITUTION

*United States v.
Lawrence Ray et al.,
Southern District of New York*¹²⁴

In 2020, Lawrence Ray was indicted on multiple counts of sex trafficking, forced labor, extortion, and other charges for the exploitation of numerous victims over several years. Beginning in 2010, Ray began befriending young college students whom he met through his daughter at a college campus. He established close, paternal-like relationships with multiple students, getting to know them on deeply personal levels, and even conducted "therapy sessions" with some students to help them with psychological issues. Once Ray identified the students' vulnerabilities, he used those vulnerabilities to manipulate and control the students. Ray used physical, emotional, and psychological abuse to coerce his victims into engaging in both forced labor and commercial sex, profiting millions of dollars off the exploitation of the victims.

In April 2022, Ray was convicted of sex trafficking, forced labor, money laundering, racketeering, and several other charges. In 2023, Ray was sentenced to sixty years in federal prison and lifetime supervised release. He was also ordered to pay \$4,636,849.06 in victim restitution and to forfeit several assets including a home used in the forced labor scheme. At the end of 2023, Ray's appeal was pending.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Southern District of New York and the New York City Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Danielle Sasso, Mollie Bracewell, and Lindsey Keenan prosecuted the case.

Life Sentences

2019-2023



There were 10 (3%) defendants convicted of sex trafficking in 2023 who were sentenced to life in prison.¹²³ Six of the defendants were convicted of exploiting both adults and minors, 2 were convicted of exclusively exploiting minor victims, and 2 exploited only adult victims.

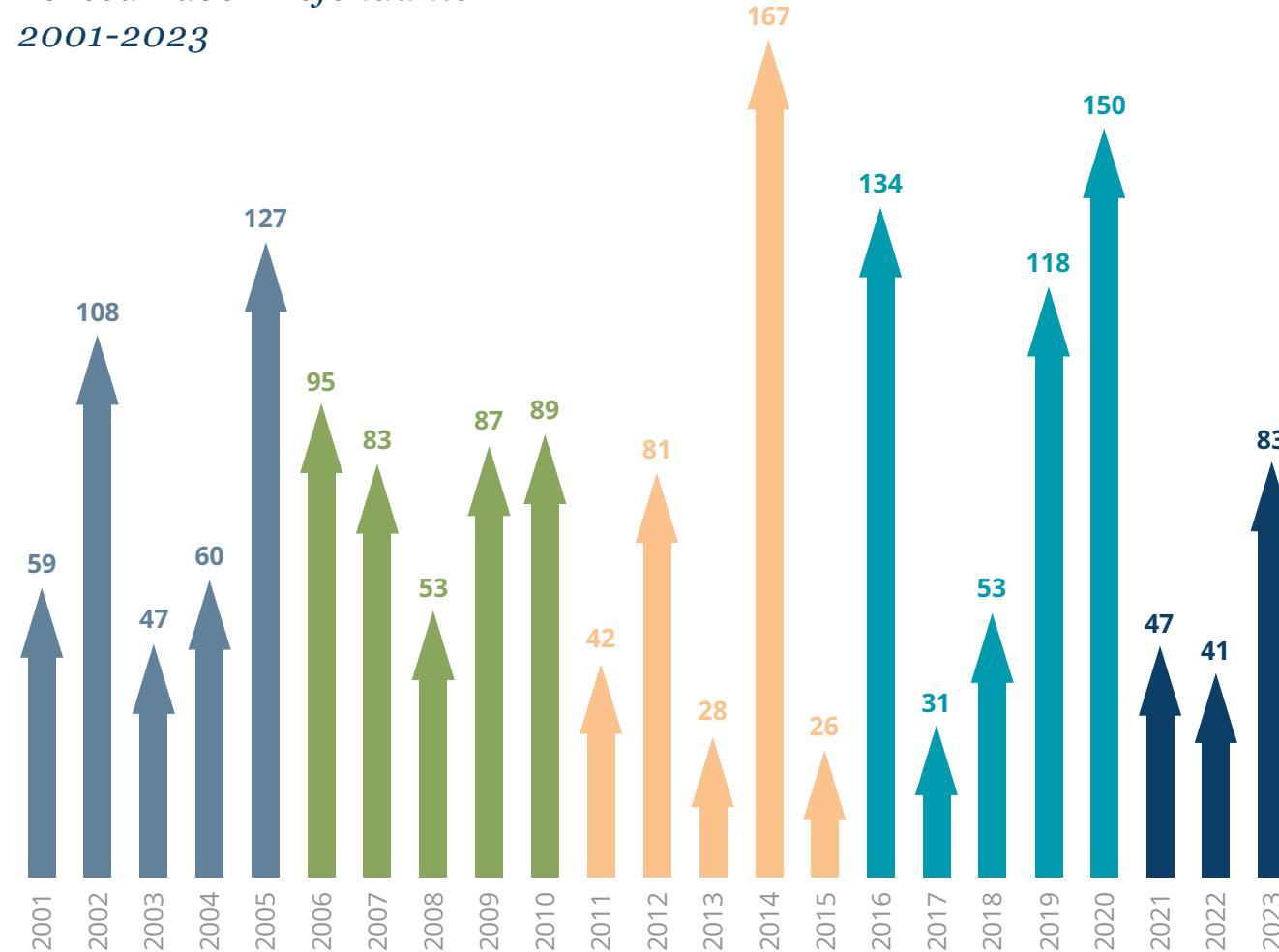
The FHTR excludes defendants who receive a sentence greater than 600 months from the average sentencing calculations and reports those numbers separately to provide the most accurate representation of the average sentences imposed in sex trafficking cases. In 2023, 2 defendants were sentenced to more than 50 years in prison. From 2000 to 2023, 10 defendants were sentenced to more than 50 years in prison, with sentences ranging from 660 months (55 years) to 1,440 months (120 years).

FORCED LABOR SENTENCES

In 2023, 96% (24) of the defendants sentenced for forced labor convictions received a sentence that included a term of imprisonment ranging from 3 to 420 months (35 years).¹²⁵ This was an increase from 2022 where 71% (20) received a term of imprisonment.¹²⁶ The average sentence imposed in 2023 for forced labor convictions was 83 months (6 years, 11 months), which is more than double the average sentence in 2022.¹²⁷ Since the enactment of the TVPA, average sentences for convicted forced labor defendants have varied, ranging from 26 months (2 years, 2 months) in 2015 to 167 months (13 years, 11 months) in 2014. The average sentence, when considering every forced labor sentence since the TVPA's enactment, is 72 months (6 years).

Average Sentences for Convicted Forced Labor Defendants

2001-2023



¹²³ Based on 334 sex trafficking defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹²⁴ Press release, Department of Justice (Jan. 20, 2023),

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/lawrence-ray-sentenced-years-long-predatory-crimes-against-students-sarah-lawrence>.

¹²⁵ Based on 25 forced labor defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹²⁶ Based on 28 forced labor defendants sentenced in 2022.

¹²⁷ Based on the average term of imprisonment of 41 months for forced labor defendants in 2022.



Total Amount of Fines Ordered 2019-2023



7.5 MONETARY PENALTIES

Defendants convicted in human trafficking cases may be ordered to pay monetary penalties, including fines, restitution, and special assessments, as part of their sentence. Some of these monetary penalties, such as restitution, are mandated by law.

FINES

In 2023, 23 defendants (6%) sentenced in human trafficking cases were ordered to pay fines totaling \$207,950.00.¹²⁸ The number of defendants ordered to pay a fine in 2023 decreased from 39 (8%) defendants in 2022.¹²⁹ Since the TVPA's enactment, the number of defendants ordered to pay a fine has fluctuated, from 1 defendant in 2012 to 40 defendants in 2016, for a total of 330 defendants ordered to pay a fine since 2000, totaling \$7,252,412.54.

When broken down by case type, a higher percentage of defendants convicted of forced labor were required to pay fines than defendants convicted of sex trafficking. In forced labor convictions, 8% (2) of defendants sentenced were ordered to pay a fine.¹³⁰ In comparison, 6% (21) of defendants sentenced for sex trafficking were ordered to pay a fine in 2023.¹³¹

JVTA SPECIAL ASSESSMENT

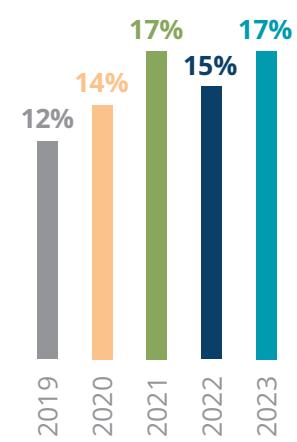
A provision within the 2015 Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA) requires courts to order defendants convicted of human trafficking crimes or other offenses related to the sexual abuse of children to pay a \$5,000 special assessment into a "Domestic Trafficking Victim's Fund."¹³² The statute provides an exemption for indigent defendants, and prioritizes the payment of victim restitution and other outstanding court-ordered fines prior to satisfying the JVTA special assessment.¹³³

In 2023, 17% (60) of defendants sentenced for human trafficking were ordered to pay the JVTA special assessment.¹³⁴ This is a percentage increase from 2022 when 15% (71) of defendants were ordered to pay the assessment.¹³⁵ Over the past five years, the number of defendants ordered to pay the JVTA special assessment has fluctuated, from 12% in 2019 to 17% in 2021 and 2023.¹³⁶

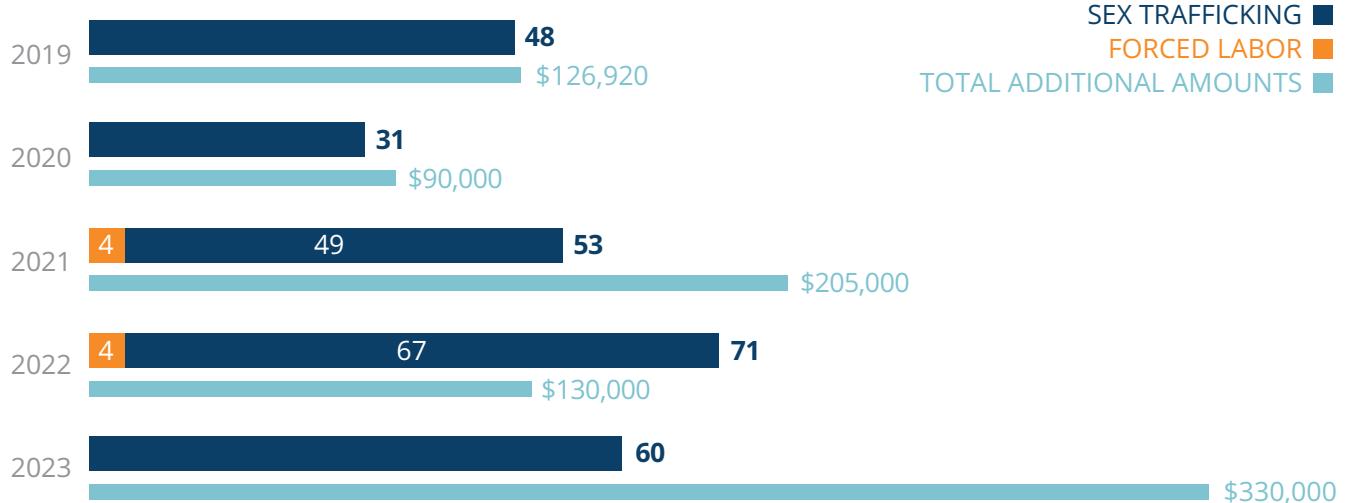
The JVTA special assessment applies to defendants convicted of *any* crime under Chapter 77, including sex trafficking and forced labor. Of the 334 sex trafficking defendants sentenced in 2023, 60 were ordered to pay the assessment. None of the forced labor defendants sentenced in 2023 were ordered to pay the assessment. Of the 60 defendants ordered to pay the JVTA special assessment in 2023, 45% (27) were in minor-only cases, 17% (10) were in adult-minor cases, 10% (6) were in adult-only cases, and 28% (17) were in buyer cases with only fictitious victims.

While the JVTA requires a payment of \$5,000, some defendants may be required to pay more than that amount due to the number of charges for which they are convicted, and the number of victims involved in the case.

Percentage of Sentenced Defendants Ordered to Pay the JVTA Special Assessment 2019-2023



Defendants Ordered to Pay JVTA Special Assessment & Total Additional Amounts 2019-2023



¹²⁸ Based on 359 defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹²⁹ Based on 469 defendants sentenced in 2022.

¹³⁰ Based on 25 forced labor defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹³¹ Based on 334 sex trafficking defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹³² The \$5,000 special assessment under 18 U.S.C. § 3014 applies to defendants convicted under Chapter 77.

¹³³ 18 U.S.C. § 3014(a).

¹³⁴ Based on 359 defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹³⁵ Based on 469 defendants sentenced in 2022.

¹³⁶ Based on 48 of 388 human trafficking defendants ordered to pay JVTA in 2019, 53 of 315 in 2021, and 60 of 359 in 2023.

7.6 VICTIM RESTITUTION

The TVPA requires restitution to be ordered when a defendant is convicted of a Chapter 77 human trafficking offense. Judges may exercise discretion in ordering restitution when a defendant is convicted of a crime outside of Chapter 77 but involves a victim of trafficking.¹³⁷

Restitution is calculated by the U.S. Probation Office with the assistance of the agents, prosecutors, and victims. Restitution can include lost income, medical expenses, counseling services, or other losses suffered as a result of the exploitation.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

ASSET FORFEITURE

United States v. William Foster et al., Southern District of Florida¹³⁸

The Southern District of Florida ordered the largest amount of non-joint and several mandatory victim restitution for 2022 in *United States v. William Foster, et al.* Foster was convicted of multiple crimes for his operation of a human trafficking scheme spanning over two decades and multiple jurisdictions, including sex trafficking of adults and minors, transporting an individual for prostitution, and money laundering.

Foster was convicted of trafficking multiple victims, both males and females, in exotic dance clubs throughout South Florida, where he forced them to work in commercial sex, six days a week for eight-hour shifts. Foster attempted recruitment of victims through a website he created called "Foster's Care," which offered support to victims of human trafficking. He also promised victims he would invest their commercial sex earnings so they could retire early, but he instead kept the money for himself.

Once in his scheme, Foster controlled victims through psychological manipulation and violence, and required that many victims follow liquid diets, get unsafe weight loss surgeries, and take antianxiety and anti-psychotic medications without proper diagnoses. He also engaged in sexual relations with victims, some of whom were minors, and transported victims between multiple states, including New York, New Jersey, Michigan, and Nevada.

In September 2022, Foster was sentenced to 60 years in prison and ordered to pay \$14,157,200.00 in victim restitution. Importantly, prosecutors also initiated forfeiture proceedings against Foster, requesting forfeiture of assets including cash and real estate. The court entered an order of forfeiture for assets totaling 3.4 million dollars.

This case was investigated by the FBI and HSI. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jessica Kahn Obenauf and Brooke Elise Latta prosecuted the case.

RESTITUTION BY DEFENDANT

In 2023, 33% (120) of defendants sentenced in human trafficking cases were ordered to pay victim restitution, with a total of 819 total victims.¹³⁹ This represents a decrease in the number of defendants ordered to pay restitution in 2022 when 35% (166) of defendants were ordered to pay restitution.¹⁴⁰

In 2023, 48% (88) of the defendants convicted of a Chapter 77 offense were ordered to pay restitution, even though restitution is mandatory.¹⁴¹ This is a decrease from 2022 when 49% (118) of defendants were ordered to pay mandatory restitution.¹⁴² For the remaining 96 defendants convicted of a Chapter 77 offense and sentenced in 2023, restitution was not ordered or had not been ordered at the end of 2023. Restitution hearings are pending for 6 defendants convicted of Chapter 77 offenses.

Mandatory restitution is ordered more often in forced labor cases than in sex trafficking cases. In 2023, 69% (11) of forced labor defendants were ordered to pay mandatory restitution.¹⁴³ By comparison, in sex trafficking cases, 46% (77) of the defendants were ordered to pay mandatory restitution.¹⁴⁴

When restitution was discretionary, federal courts ordered 18% (32) of defendants convicted of a crime outside of Chapter 77 to pay victim restitution in 2023.¹⁴⁵ This is a decrease from 2022, where federal courts ordered 21% (48) of defendants to pay discretionary restitution.¹⁴⁶ Restitution hearings are pending for 4 defendants convicted of crimes outside of Chapter 77.

Percentage of Defendants Ordered to Pay Restitution 2019-2023

	OVERALL	MANDATORY	DISCRETIONARY	TOTAL NON-JOINT AND SEVERAL RESTITUTION	NUMBER OF OVERALL VICTIMS
2019	27%	34%	17%	\$6,911,797.57	415
2020	35%	54%	18%	\$7,623,587.09	280
2021	28%	37%	18%	\$10,717,654.63	454
2022	35%	49%	21%	\$28,320,809.58	649
2023	33%	48%	18%	\$27,392,163.45	819

¹³⁹ Based on 359 defendants sentenced in 2023.

¹⁴⁰ Based on 469 defendants sentenced in 2022.

¹⁴¹ Based on 184 defendants sentenced in 2023 for Chapter 77 convictions.

¹⁴² Based on 240 defendants sentenced in 2022 for Chapter 77 convictions.

¹⁴³ Based on 16 forced labor defendants sentenced in 2023 for Chapter 77 convictions.

¹⁴⁴ Based on 168 sex trafficking defendants sentenced in 2023 for Chapter 77 convictions.

¹⁴⁵ Based on 175 defendants sentenced in 2023 for non-Chapter 77 crimes.

¹⁴⁶ Based on 229 defendants sentenced in 2022 for non-Chapter 77 crimes.

¹³⁷ 18 U.S.C. § 1593.

¹³⁸ Press release, Department of Justice (Sept. 27, 2022),

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdfl/pr/leader-sex-trafficking-ring-sentenced-60-years-federal-prison-ordered-pay-over-14>.

Mandatory Restitution by Primary Case Type 2023

■ ORDERED TO PAY RESTITUTION



RESTITUTION AMOUNTS

Courts may order restitution to be paid by a single defendant, or jointly and severally by multiple defendants. When multiple defendants are ordered to pay restitution jointly and severally, they are each responsible for the entire amount of restitution until the full amount is paid, regardless of the contributions of others. The Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR) distinguishes between individual restitution orders and joint and several restitution orders to prevent double-counting single restitution awards that are ordered to be paid jointly and severally by multiple defendants.

In 2023, the amount of non-joint and several victim restitution ordered ranged from \$280 to \$5,700,000.00, averaging \$338,174.86 per human trafficking defendant. The 2023 average is higher than in 2022 when the average amount of non-joint and several restitution per defendant was \$311,217.69.

The average amount of non-joint and several restitution per case in 2023 was higher in sex trafficking cases than in forced labor cases. Restitution orders in 2023 sex trafficking cases ranged from \$280 to \$5,700,000.00, with an average restitution amount of \$341,741.51 per defendant. In forced labor orders, the average was \$283,961.73.

A total of \$27,392,163.45 in non-joint and several victim restitution was ordered in 2023.

A total of \$2,669,544.89 in joint and several restitution was ordered in 2023.

7.7 ASSET FORFEITURE

Asset forfeiture is a legal process the government can use in human trafficking cases to take property it believes is connected to the crime.¹⁴⁷ Common assets subject to forfeiture include cash, vehicles, real estate, electronics, weapons, and other types of personal property. When asset forfeiture occurs in a trafficking case, the JVTA directs that proceeds from forfeitures be used to pay victim restitution orders.¹⁴⁸ A victim's ability to receive compensation through asset forfeiture is incredibly valuable for victims of trafficking, particularly when their trafficker receives prison time as a term of their sentence and therefore may not pay restitution to the victim due to indigence.

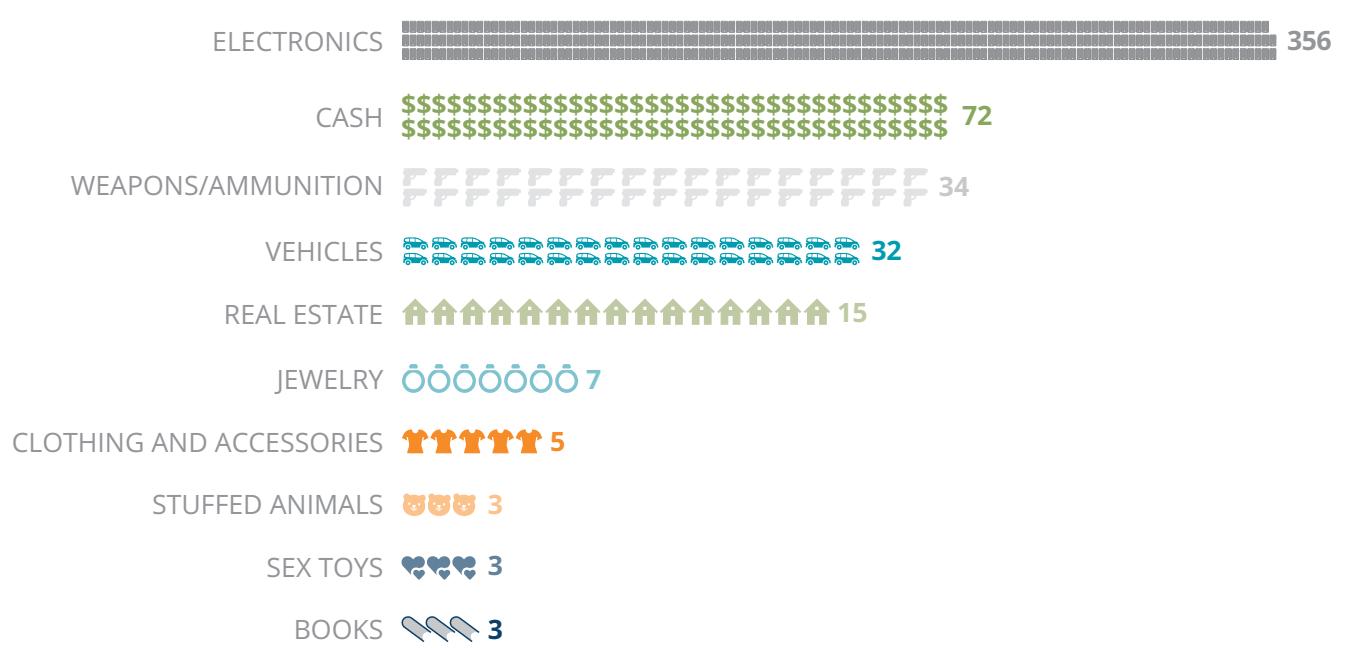
In 2023, 175 (49%) defendants sentenced for human trafficking crimes were ordered to forfeit assets involved in or proceeds earned from the defendants' criminal conduct.¹⁴⁹

Over the past 5 years, 739 (42%) defendants sentenced have been ordered to forfeit assets.¹⁵⁰ Assets forfeited in 2023 include electronics, cash, weapons, ammunition, jewelry, and real estate.

Defendants Ordered Asset Forfeiture 2019-2023



Most Common Items Forfeited 2019-2023



¹⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division, *Asset Forfeiture Policy Manual*, 2023
<https://www.justice.gov/criminal-afmls/file/839521/download>.

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

¹⁴⁹ Based on 359 defendants sentenced in 2023.

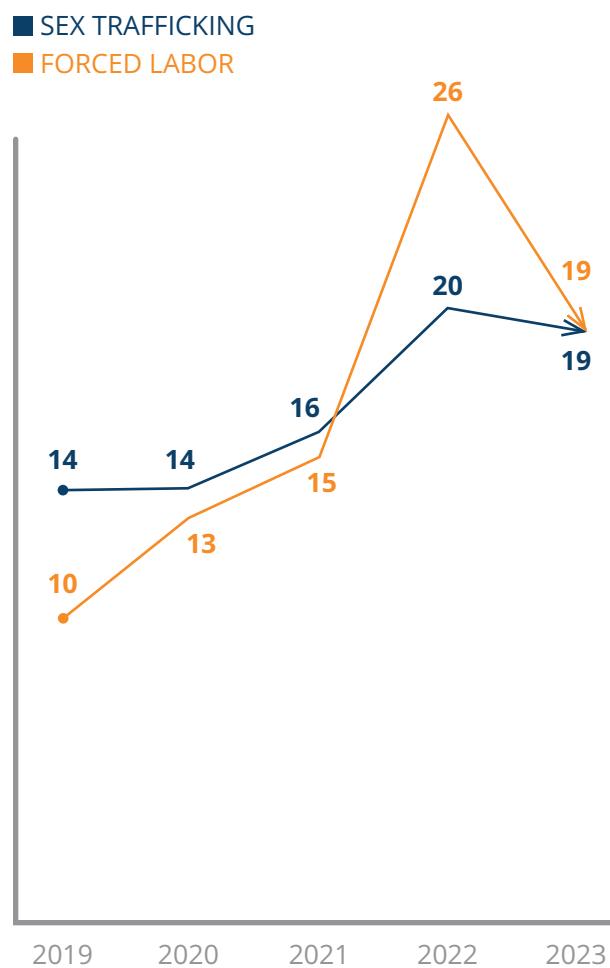
¹⁵⁰ Based on 1,756 defendants sentenced between 2019 and 2023.

7.8 LENGTH OF DISPOSITION

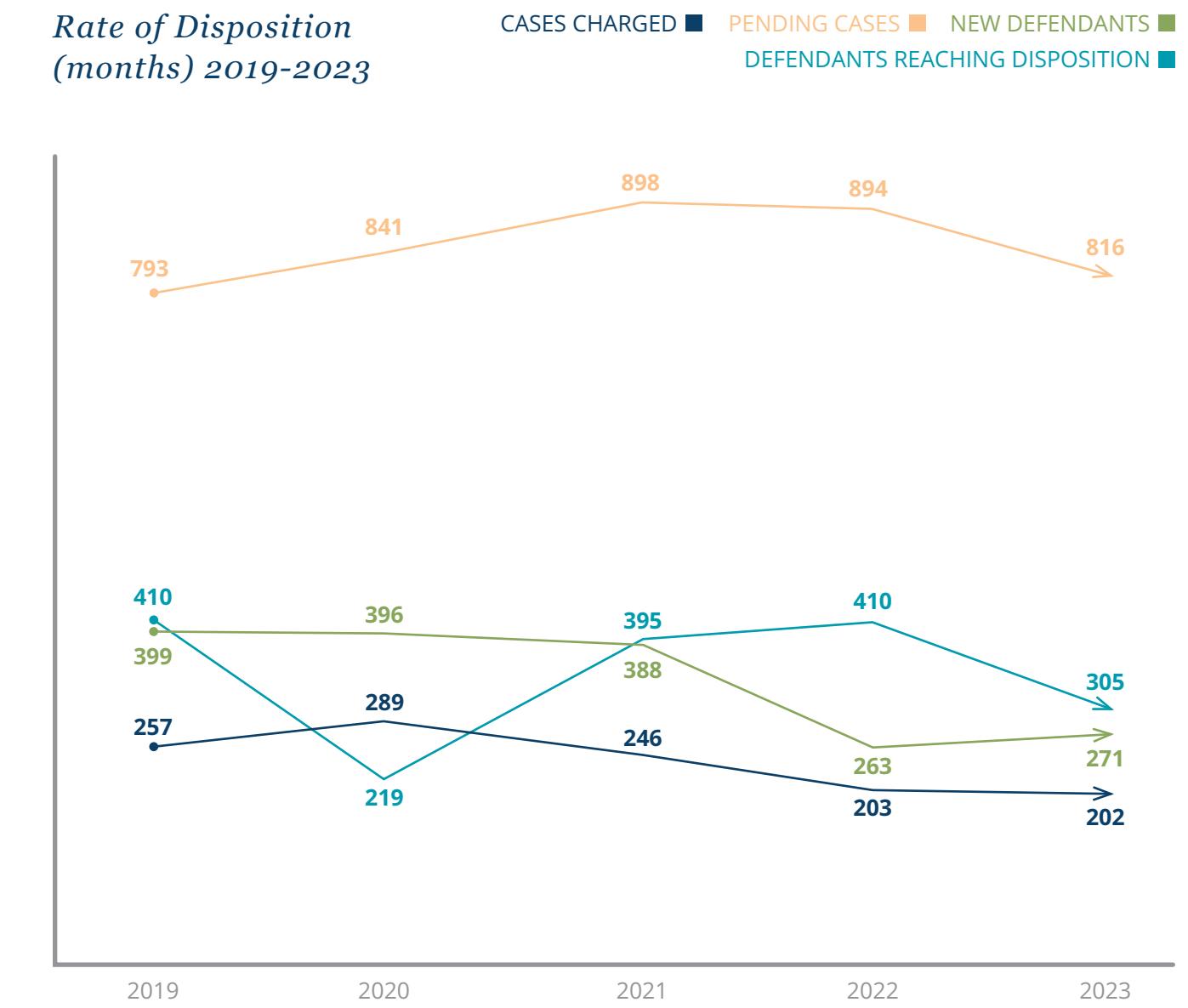
The average length of disposition for human trafficking cases in 2023 was 570 days (19 months). The length of disposition is calculated by counting the number of days from when the case is filed until there are no charges against any defendant left to be disposed of, *and* the time to directly appeal the final judgment for all defendants has expired. Broken down by case type, the average length of time to reach disposition does not vary greatly. Sex trafficking cases are disposed of in an average of 570 days (19 months), while forced labor cases reach disposition in 575 days. The average length of disposition decreased in both types of cases in 2023, from 613 days to 570 days in sex trafficking cases, and from 782 days to 575 days in forced labor cases. The length of disposition does not include defendants who are unserved or who have absconded.

Over the past five years, the length of disposition has averaged 501 days (17 months) for defendants charged in sex trafficking cases and 562 days (19 months) for defendants charged in forced labor cases. Examining the number of cases filed each year, in addition to the number of pending cases, defendants charged, and defendants reaching disposition, helps us monitor the rate at which cases are flowing through the federal courts.

Length of Disposition (months) 2019-2023



Rate of Disposition (months) 2019-2023



Section 8

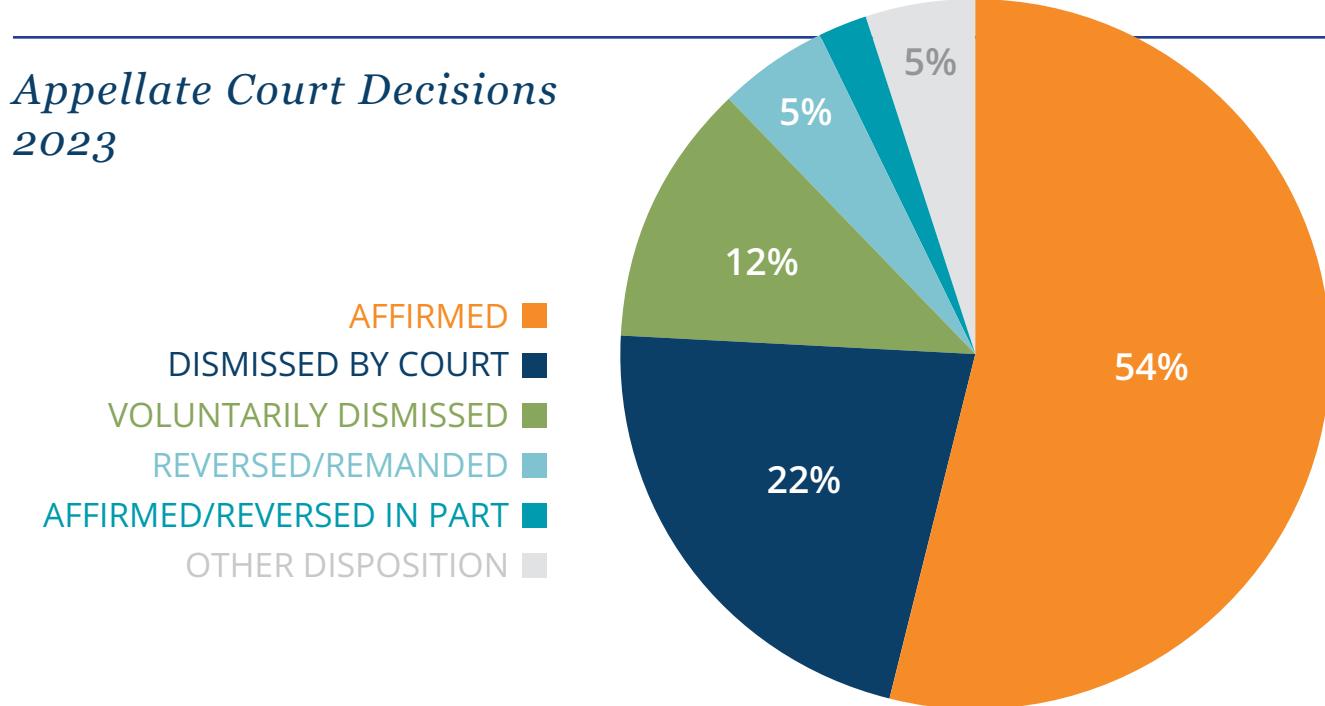
APPEALS

SECTION 8 HIGHLIGHTS

Top 5 Issues on Appeal 2023



Appellate Court Decisions 2023





Section 8

APPEALS

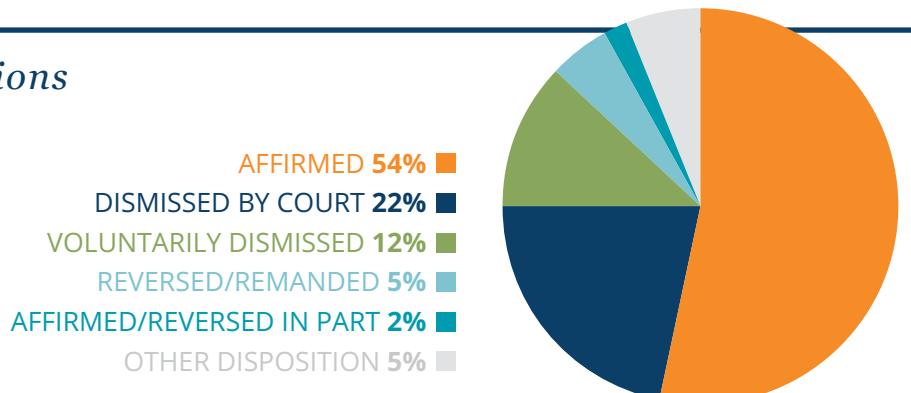
Defendants convicted in federal criminal cases have the right to appeal a trial court's decision by filing an appeal to a federal appellate court. The defendant must file a notice of appeal with the appropriate federal appellate court within fourteen (14) days following the trial court's entry of the judgment or order.¹⁵¹

There were 104 notices of appeal filed by 104 defendants in 2023. Of the 104 notices of appeal filed, 100 were filed for convictions of sex trafficking, and 4 were filed for convictions of forced labor. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals, which covers federal districts in Connecticut, New York, and Vermont, saw the largest number of appeals filed from human trafficking cases (16) in 2023.

8.1 APPELLATE COURT DISPOSITIONS

Appellate courts disposed of 103 appeals from defendants convicted in human trafficking cases, 99% (102) in sex trafficking cases, and 1% (1) in forced labor cases. Convictions or sentences imposed by trial courts were affirmed by appellate courts in 54% (56) of appeals and reversed and remanded in 5% (5) of appeals in 2023.¹⁵² Two percent (2) of appeals were affirmed in part and reversed in part, meaning the appellate court agreed with the lower court's decision on some issues, but disagreed with it on others, and 5% (5) were disposed of for other reasons. The remaining 34% (35) of appeals were dismissed, 22% (23) by the appellate court, and 12% (12) voluntarily by the defendant.

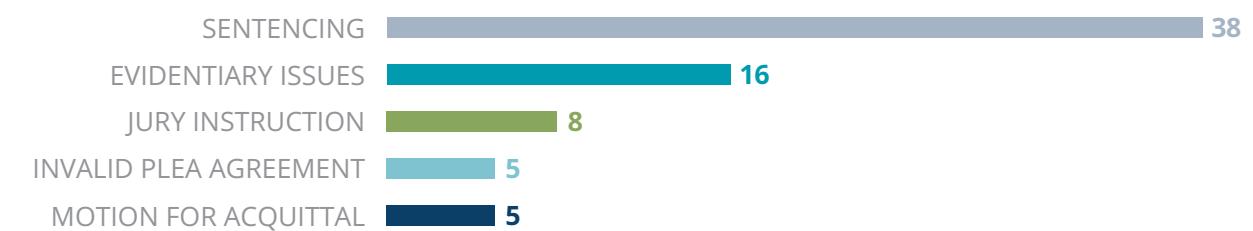
Appellate Court Decisions 2023



¹⁵¹ Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 4(b)(1)(A)(i).

¹⁵² Based on 103 circuit court decisions in 2023.

Top 5 Issues on Appeal 2023



8.2 ISSUES ON APPEAL

In the 104 cases appealed in 2023, there were 121 recorded issues on appeal. The top issues raised included: sentencing 31% (38), evidentiary issues 13% (16), issues related to jury instructions 7% (8), invalid plea agreements 4% (5), and motions for acquittal 4% (5).¹⁵³

8.3 WRITS OF CERTIORARI

A defendant may petition the U.S. Supreme Court to hear their case after they have exhausted their appeal at the appellate court level. Defendants may file a "writ of certiorari," requesting the Supreme Court hear their case on appeal. However, the Supreme Court's decision to hear an appeal is discretionary, and it only grants certiorari for cases with compelling reasons, such as cases of national significance, cases addressing conflicting decisions across federal circuits, or cases that could have precedential value.

There were 15 defendants in human trafficking cases who filed writs of certiorari with the Supreme Court in 2023. The Supreme Court denied certiorari—meaning the Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal—for 87% (13) of these defendants, the remaining 2 writs filed in 2023 are pending before the Supreme Court.

¹⁵³ Based on 121 issues on appeal in appellate cases filed in 2023.

CASE HIGHLIGHT

APPEAL OF LIFE SENTENCE

*United States v.
John Richard Brinson,
Central District of California*

In July 2021, John Richard Brinson, then 24 years old, pleaded guilty to one count of child pornography and three counts of sexual exploitation of a child. Brinson was one of multiple defendants charged in a child sex trafficking ring that sexually abused multiple minor victims, some of whom were as young as 3 and 4 years of age. Brinson played a substantial role in the exploitation of the victims and the creation and promulgation of extreme child sexual abuse materials. Brinson was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the child sex trafficking scheme. He filed an appeal claiming his sentence was substantially unreasonable in light of his age, lack of prior record, and possibility for rehabilitation.

In November 2023, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court's decision and upheld Brinson's life sentence.

Section 9

COUNTRY PROGRAMS





Section 9

COUNTRY PROGRAMS

The Human Trafficking Institute (HTI) combats trafficking at its source by empowering justice systems to stop traffickers. When justice systems have the tools and training needed to successfully investigate and prosecute trafficking in persons (TIP) cases, victims are protected and traffickers are deterred. One of the most effective resources HTI provides to justice systems in our partner countries is data. This section provides insight into the various forms of trafficking identified in our country programs in Uganda, Belize, and South Africa and highlights some of the ways HTI is using data to protect victims by stopping traffickers.

**“TIPMAP:
Uganda’s first
database designed
to collect and
share trafficking
in persons
investigation and
prosecution data.”**

UGANDA

Authors:

Lisa Churcher, *Legal Programs Manager, Uganda*

Gabrielle Massey, *Country Director, Uganda*

Since 2017, the Human Trafficking Institute (HTI) has worked in partnership with the government of Uganda to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). Through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the Uganda Police Force (UPF), the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), and the Judiciary of Uganda, HTI has built anti-trafficking teams of police, prosecutors, and victim specialists to combat trafficking across the country. Importantly, HTI has conducted extensive training for judiciary, prosecutors, and police to improve investigative and prosecutorial techniques that are victim-centered and trauma-informed.

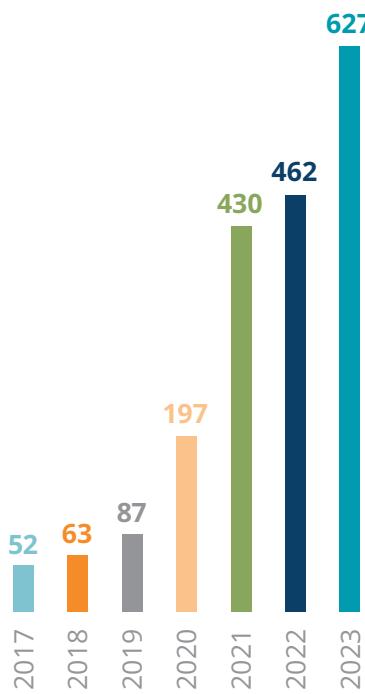
In 2023, HTI’s project in Uganda grew significantly with the addition of Special Counsel Megan Pepper as the third U.S. prosecutor to serve as an embed in Uganda, joining Tyler Dunman and Gabrielle Massey. HTI also implemented four regional response teams, which expanded engagement and partnership with the UPF and ODPP by allowing more direct contact with investigators and prosecutors handling TIP cases in the field. These regional response teams comprise Law Enforcement Coordinators, Victim Assistance Coordinators, and Data Assistants who support all facets of investigations and prosecutions across Uganda and ensure TIP cases are handled with victim-centered and trauma-informed methods. The teams were deployed in August 2023 and since then have engaged with 283 police stations, provided investigative support to 99 TIP investigations, and provided referrals to service providers for 376 TIP victims.

Through HTI’s support, Uganda continues to see tremendous success across the country in investigating and prosecuting TIP cases using a collaborative approach between prosecutors, investigators, and service providers.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS MOBILE APP PLATFORM (TIPMAP)

To increase the impact of combating TIP in Uganda, HTI sought a way to centralize, collect, and analyze case data to help shape best practices in Uganda’s anti-trafficking efforts. In 2021, HTI partnered with a fellow anti-trafficking NGO and developed the Trafficking in Persons Mobile App Platform (TIPMAP), Uganda’s first database designed to collect and share TIP investigation and prosecution data.

Uganda TIP Cases 2017-2023



In 2023, HTI, in partnership with the ODPP, made the data recorded in the TIPMAP platform accessible to the public. The website provides several visualization and analysis dashboards highlighting trends, challenges, and achievements of the ODPP, and is available at tipmap.ug. The website reports on victim demographics, types of exploitation, traffickers charged, cases filed, and convictions using information compiled from the 19 ODPP regions. TIPMAP is currently used throughout Uganda to collect data in TIP prosecutions and provides this data to the public via dashboards.

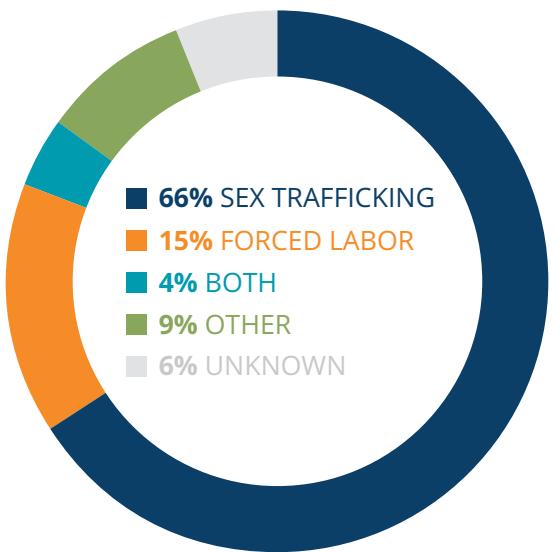
1. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS CASES

Ugandan prosecutors formally charged 627 TIP cases for prosecution in 2023. This number is a 36% increase from 2022 when prosecutors filed 462 TIP cases. Since HTI embedded an expert with the ODPP and began implementing targeted training in 2017, there has been a consistent increase in the number of cases filed.

Of the 627 cases filed in 2023, 61 (10%) received disposition within the same year, and 566 (90%) cases were pending at the end of 2023. Twenty-six cases involving 46 traffickers resulted in conviction in 2023.

Within the 627 cases filed in 2023, 414 (66%) involved human trafficking for sexual exploitation and 92 (15%) were trafficking for forced labor. There were 26 (4%) cases where trafficking was for *both* sexual exploitation and forced labor. Ugandan law includes more forms of exploitation than only forced labor and sexual exploitation as types of trafficking in persons. Other forms of exploitation include child marriage, human sacrifice, removal of organs and body parts for sale or use in witchcraft, use of a person in illegal activities, and use of a child in armed conflict. In 2023, 57 (9%) of the cases filed involved other forms of exploitation, 7 (1%) of which were the removal of organs for use in witchcraft, and 10 (2%) were cases of human sacrifice. The exploitative purpose was unknown in 38 (6%) cases filed in 2023.

Uganda TIP Cases 2023



The majority of 2023 TIP cases in Uganda involved the trafficking of victims within the country. Of the 627 cases filed in 2023, 9 cases (1%) involved victims being trafficked into or out of Uganda.

2. DEFENDANTS

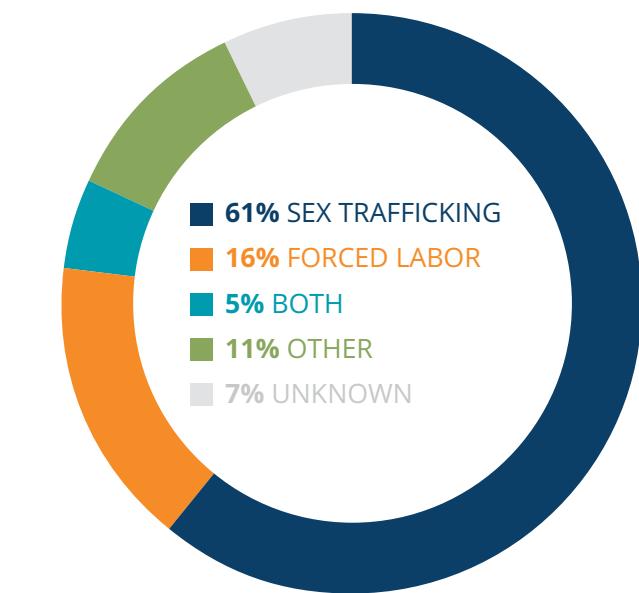
In 2023, there were 627 TIP cases filed against 779 defendants in Uganda. Of these defendants, 128 (16%) were charged with forced labor, 472 (61%) were charged with sex trafficking offenses, 36 (5%) were charged with *both* forced labor and sex trafficking, and 89 (11%) were charged with other forms of exploitation. There were 54 (7%) defendants charged where the purpose of exploitation is unknown.

Of the defendants charged in 2023, 582 (75%) were male and 197 (25%) were female. Male defendants made up a higher percentage in 2023 sex trafficking cases (85%) than in cases of forced labor (56%) and cases involving other forms of exploitation (60%).

At the time of arrest, defendants ranged in age from 16 to 80. The average age in all cases was 28 years old, with male defendants (27 years) on average being younger than female defendants (29 years). This age average of both male and female defendants was consistent across types of trafficking cases.



Uganda TIP Defendants 2023



Uganda TIP Defendants by Gender 2023

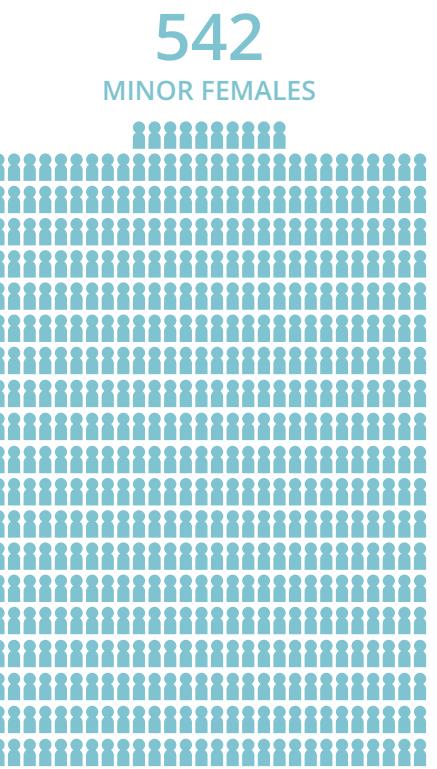
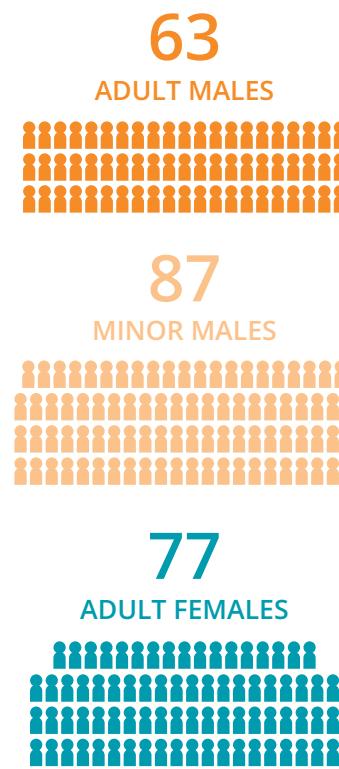


3. VICTIMS

There were 828 victims of TIP in cases filed in 2023. Of the 828 total victims, information relating to the type of case, age, and gender was available for 769 (93%) victims. Within the 828 total victims 450 (59%) were victims of sex trafficking, 162 (21%) were victims of forced labor, 26 (3%) were victims of both sex trafficking and forced labor, and 75 (10%) were victims of trafficking for other forms of exploitation.

In 2023, minor victims under the age of eighteen made up 82% (629) of victims, and adults made up 18% (140). Female victims comprised 80% (619), and 20% (150) were identified as male.

Uganda TIP Victims 2023



Uganda TIP Victims by Case Type 2023

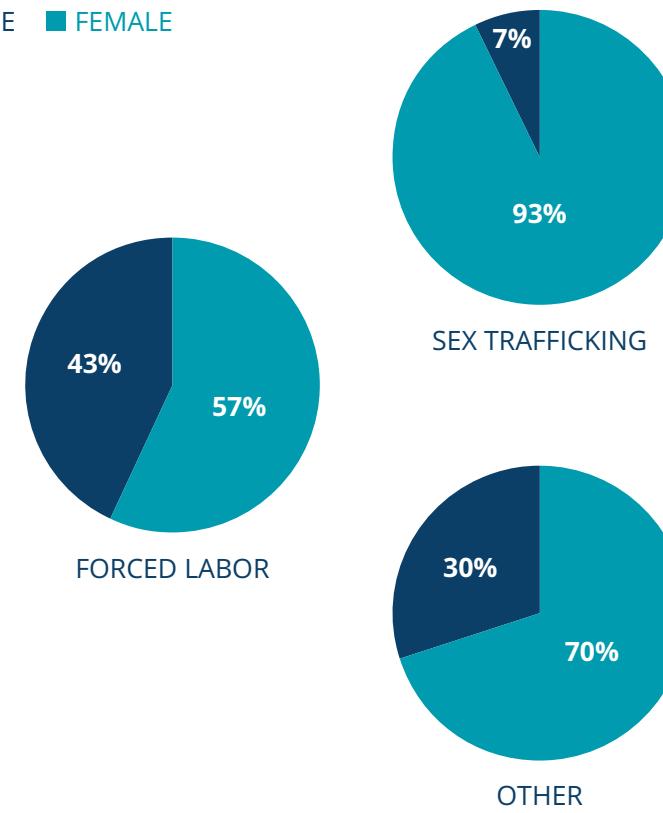


In 2023, the majority of victims in all types of TIP cases were female, with the largest disparity seen in sex trafficking cases.

In the sex trafficking cases filed in 2023, 402 (89%) victims were minors and 48 (11%) were adult victims. In forced labor cases, 111 (69%) victims were minors, and in cases involving other forms of exploitation, 116 (74%) of victims were minors.

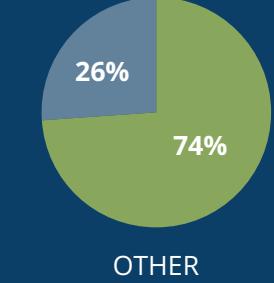
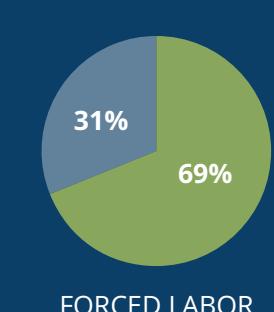
Uganda TIP Victims by Gender 2023

■ MALE ■ FEMALE



Uganda TIP Victims by Age 2023

■ MINOR ■ ADULT



Uganda is a source, transit, and destination country for TIP. It is a destination country for victims of trafficking from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ugandans are primarily trafficked to the Gulf States in the Middle East, however, there are also cases of Ugandans being trafficked to China, Malaysia, Thailand, and India.¹⁵⁴ It is also common for Ugandans to be trafficked to Kenya, both as a final destination and in transit to other countries.¹⁵⁵ Ugandans are trafficked internationally into both commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Most identified cases involve young women trafficked into domestic service in the Middle East.¹⁵⁶ Licensed and unlicensed labor recruitment companies have a significant role in trafficking Ugandans abroad.¹⁵⁷

However, prosecution data collected by HTI indicates that around 92% of TIP in Uganda is internal - where the trafficker(s), the victim(s), and all elements of the trafficking offense are found within the borders of Uganda.

Multiple circumstances fuel TIP in Uganda. Poverty, lack of employment opportunities, discrimination, difficult family circumstances, the post-conflict situation in northern Uganda, conflicts in neighboring countries, and the legal and social inequality of females all contribute to trafficking in Uganda. Forced labor, forced begging, child sacrifice, child marriage, and sexual exploitation are common manifestations of internal trafficking in Uganda.¹⁵⁸ Some minors are abducted and used for human sacrifice and other harmful rituals,¹⁵⁹ others are exploited in forced labor in agriculture, fishing, forestry, cattle herding, mining, stone quarrying, brick making, carpentry, steel manufacturing, street vending, bars, restaurants, gold mining, and domestic service.¹⁶⁰ Minors, particularly those from the Karamoja region, are also brought to Kampala and forced into street begging and other illegal activities.¹⁶¹ Finally, recruiters mainly target females aged 13-24 for domestic sex trafficking.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ US Department of State (n 5).

¹⁵⁵ US Department of State (n 5); Coalition against Trafficking in Persons Uganda (n 6).

¹⁵⁶ US Department of State (n 14); Platform for Labour Action and Centre for Human Rights Empowerment and Development, 'Combating Trafficking in Persons Training Manual for Duty Bearers and Community Stakeholders' (Uganda, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Platform for Labour Action (n 22).

¹⁵⁸ Case data reported by prosecutors to the Human Trafficking Institute on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Coalition against Trafficking in Persons Uganda, 'Ending Human Trafficking: Coalition against Trafficking in Persons Uganda Five Year Status Report' (GIZ, 2020).

¹⁵⁹ United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report – Uganda (2020).

¹⁶⁰ US Department of State (n 5).

¹⁶¹ Coalition against Trafficking in Persons Uganda (n 6).

¹⁶² Ibid.



— CASE HIGHLIGHTS —

TRAFFICKING FOR HUMAN SACRIFICE

Uganda v. Muyita Issa, Hassan Kafudde, and Kabaale Mubaraka

On September 12, 2023, two traffickers were convicted at the High Court in Jinja District of trafficking and killing an 11-year-old boy for human sacrifice. Muyita Issa, the father of the victim, and Hasaan Kafudde had been friends for 5 years when Kafudde suggested they perform a ritual sacrifice of one of Issa's children to gain wealth. On June 6, 2017, Issa volunteered to escort his son to school but instead brought his young child to meet up with Kafudde. The men then took the child to a sugarcane plantation in their community, where they stopped next to a stream. There, Kafudde removed the boy's head and genitals and collected his blood. Kafudde put the body parts in one bag and the blood in another, placing both in the child's school bag, which Kafudde kept. The two men then buried the rest of the child's body in a shallow grave. Issa then called his longtime friend, Kabaale Mubaraka, a witch doctor, who performed the sealing ritual that was supposed to bring wealth to Issa and Kafudde.

When the boy didn't return home, his mother contacted police and an investigation commenced. Issa was questioned as he was the last to see the boy. He eventually confessed and gave a statement against Mubaraka and Kafudde. Issa pleaded guilty to Aggravated Trafficking in Children for the purpose of witchcraft and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. As part of his plea deal, Issa agreed to testify against his co-defendants. Mubaraka and Kafudde both proceeded to trial, where Issa testified to the actions taken by himself and Kaffude and Mubaraka's knowledge of their actions. Kafudde was convicted of Aggravated Trafficking in Children for the purpose of witchcraft and sentenced to 52 years in prison. Mubaraka was sentenced to 3 years in prison for being an accessory after the fact.

TRAFFICKING TO USE A CHILD IN ARMED CONFLICT

Uganda v. Amid Hassan and Jamil Muhammed

On September 16, 2023, two individuals were sentenced to prison for Aggravated Trafficking in Children for the purpose of using a child in armed conflict. Amid Hassan and Jamil Muhammed were intercepted and arrested trying to cross the western border of Uganda into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with 13 children between the ages of 4 months and 12 years old. Hassan and Muhammed were part of a network of traffickers recruiting children in Uganda for the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a terrorist organization operating in the DRC. The traffickers traveled to different villages in Uganda and lied to the local leaders, convincing them that they were going to take the children from the villages to eastern Uganda for Islamic studies, but instead taking the children to the DRC to indoctrinate them into the ADF as child soldiers. The deceived local leaders provided recommendation letters in support of Hassan and Muhammed upon which the children's parents relied when entrusting the traffickers to take their children. Both Hasaan and Muhammed pleaded guilty to Aggravated Trafficking in Children for the purpose of using a child in armed conflict and were sentenced to 7 years in prison.

TRAFFICKING FOR FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

Uganda v. Bishop Nkurunziza Fiarce, Reverend Nsimiyemana John, Ndora Charles, and Byukusenge Valens

Led by Bishop Fiarce, the defendants traveled to villages in Western Uganda and recruited children who were impoverished or had medical issues under the guise of providing them with education. The defendants told the children's parents they had sponsors who would pay for the children's care and education, and the families accepted this purported "help" for their families and turned their children over to the defendants.

The defendants took the children back to a home in the Wakiso District of Uganda, which Fiarce claimed was a registered children's home approved by the government of Uganda to provide educational services to the children. However, it was neither and the children did not receive an education. Instead, Fiarce took photos of the children and used social media to solicit donor funds from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States to "provide care" for the children. However, instead of using these funds for the care of the children, the defendants took the donors' money for themselves.

The Uganda Police Force received intelligence and complaints about the neglect of the children at the home. Upon investigation into the facility, they found the children crying, hungry, dirty, and generally neglected. The children were all removed from the home and sent to HTI's partner NGO's shelters for support services before reuniting with their families.

The four defendants were charged with 14 counts of Aggravated Trafficking in Children for the purpose of financial exploitation. Additionally, John, Charles, and Valens were each charged with one count of Conspiracy to Commit a Felony, and Fiarce was charged with one count of Operating an Unapproved Children's Home.

On June 6, 2023, Fiarce pleaded guilty and was sentenced to prison for a term of 8 years and 8 days on each count of the Aggravated Trafficking in Children counts and 3 years 7 months on the Operation of an Unapproved Children's Home count.

On December 21, 2023, John, Charles, and Valens all pleaded guilty and were sentenced to 5 years in prison for each count of Aggravated Trafficking in Children, and 2 years in prison on the Conspiracy to Commit a Felony count.





BELIZE

Author:

Amber Sherwood, *Country Director*, Belize

In 2023, HTI's country program in Belize, Central America, made significant strides to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) by improving engagement and building capacity with anti-trafficking stakeholders across the country. Throughout the year, HTI worked toward three goals: (1) to strengthen government and civil society response to TIP, ensuring that frontline agencies can identify and report TIP cases, (2) to ensure government agencies and victim service providers collaborate on cases, and (3) to coordinate the provision of high-quality care for survivors.

HTI conducted multiple stakeholder trainings in Belize throughout 2023. HTI trained 149 Customs Officers in May and 254 Belize Defense Force (BDF) in July on TIP identification. These front-line personnel also received quick reference guides to use in the field for better TIP case detection and referral. In October, HTI trained 109 residential care facilities and 7 foster care families on TIP and Trauma-informed Care (TIC) and distributed a best practices manual for participants. Finally, HTI conducted a training titled "Training of the Trainer" in November. This training was for frontline officers of the Belize Police Department, Customs, and BDF officials to increase their capacity for conducting training among their staff.

HTI's team remained embedded within the Belize Police Department's Anti-Trafficking Unit and continued to provide key support and capacity building to the specialized TIP police investigators. HTI also provided victim support funding to survivors of TIP through its partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS), including assistance with counseling, housing, and other needs.

In 2023, HTI added several key team members in Belize, including former prosecutor Amber Sherwood who relocated to Belize from Florida to serve as the programs Country Director. Additionally, Kylah Ciego joined HTI as the Victim Assistance Coordinator. Kylah, an experienced social worker and victim advocate from Belize, will ensure that identified trafficking victims receive support from local service providers in Belize. Kizan Young joined HTI as Administrative Assistant, leading the Belize team with grant management and program support.

Section 10

METHODOLOGY & TERMINOLOGY





METHODOLOGY

SCOPE OF THE 2023 FEDERAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORT

The 2023 Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTTR) provides an exhaustive overview of human trafficking cases filed within the U.S. federal court system in 2023. The FHTTR identifies, extracts, and organizes numerous data points from the cases identified as criminal human trafficking cases filed in the 94 U.S. federal district courts each year. In an attempt to capture data from all criminal human trafficking cases filed in the federal court system, the FHTTR includes cases filed under the human trafficking statutes outlined in Chapter 77 of the U.S. Penal Code. The FHTTR also includes cases filed under other federal criminal statutes containing substantial evidence of human trafficking such as coercion, commercial sex with a minor, or that identify a victim as a victim of human trafficking.

The FHTTR **does not** represent the total number of human trafficking cases in the U.S., it includes only identified criminal cases charged in federal courts. Human trafficking cases charged only within the jurisdictions of state courts are not included. Some federal cases may originate from state investigations or prosecutions, but only cases charged in the U.S. federal courts are included in this report.

While the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 (TVPA) grants trafficking victims a civil cause of action allowing them to recover civil damages against their traffickers, the primary focus of the FHTTR is the criminal prosecution of human trafficking cases in the U.S. federal courts.¹⁶³ For detailed information regarding civil causes of action under the TVPA, readers are encouraged to seek information from the Human Trafficking Legal Center (HTLC) which provides an exhaustive review of civil causes of action filed in the U.S. federal courts.

“The 2023 Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTTR) provides an exhaustive overview of human trafficking cases filed within the U.S. federal court system in 2023.”

LIMITATIONS

The 2023 FHTTR conveys fact patterns and trends identified in human trafficking cases prosecuted at the federal level but **does not** present data on the prevalence of human trafficking within the U.S. While the 2023 FHTTR provides a snapshot of how traffickers operate domestically, the findings and trends throughout the FHTTR are derived only from criminal cases filed in the U.S. federal courts. The 2023 FHTTR does not capture data on criminal or civil human trafficking cases handled in state courts, nor does it include data on human trafficking investigations that do not result in federal prosecution.

Accordingly, the data is not intended—and should not be used—to convey a complete picture of the scope of human trafficking in the U.S. For example, the 2023 FHTTR found that 98% of new federal human trafficking prosecutions filed in 2023 were sex trafficking cases.¹⁶⁴ This percentage is a reflection of the cases filed in the U.S. federal courts—**not** an indication that 98% of human trafficking conduct in the U.S. involves commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁶⁵

NEW FEATURES

Each year, HTI seeks to expand the scope of data included in the FHTTR. The 2023 FHTTR captures several new data points for each federal human trafficking case filed between 2019 and 2023. Where available in public sources, the following new data points are included in the 2023 FHTTR:

- New Case Data Points:
 - Name of rental car agency used as a method of transportation in the trafficking scheme

- Required quota used as a method of coercion
- 911 calls referring cases to law enforcement

- New Victim Data Points:

- If a victim died during exploitation
- If a victim was a bottom
- If a victim interacted with the healthcare system during their exploitation
- If a victim was recruited at a residence
- If a victim was recruited in a foreign country, and if so, the country
- If a victim had involvement with the juvenile justice system before their exploitation, thereby creating a victim vulnerability

- New Defendant Data Points:

- If the defendant held a position of trust in the community
- Which websites defendants used for sharing CSAM
- If the defendant was convicted via a bench trial
- If the defendant was sentenced to a term of probation, and if so, the term
- If the defendant was ordered to forfeit assets

- New Appeals Data Points

- Issues on Appeal

To publish the 2023 FHTTR, HTI compiled an exhaustive list of human trafficking cases filed in federal court by conducting extensive searches of the federal government’s Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER), Westlaw, and reviewing press releases published by the federal government. In addition, HTI provided a list of identified human

¹⁶³ 18 U.S. Code § 1595.

¹⁶⁴ Based on 197 of 202 cases filed in 2023.

¹⁶⁵ Based on 197 of 202 cases filed in 2023.

trafficking cases to the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) in each district to verify already identified cases and to allow the USAO to identify any additional human trafficking cases not already identified by HTI's identification process.

PACER

Using the federal government's Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER), HTI searched the individual pages of 93¹⁶⁶ federal districts to identify cases involving Chapter 77 and Mann Act offenses related to human trafficking. In determining whether to include a case charged exclusively under the Mann Act, HTI considered whether the government, based on the facts alleged in pleadings and other publicly available sources, *could* ultimately have charged the defendant with a Chapter 77 offense. Thus, cases charged under the Mann Act without accompanying Chapter 77 offenses are included if public sources indicate that the defendant compelled an adult victim to engage in commercial sex through force, fraud, or coercion. HTI included cases involving minor victims where evidence indicated that a commercial exchange for sexual conduct took place. Finally, HTI also included cases charged exclusively under the Mann Act if federal prosecutors confirmed an identified victim of trafficking in the case.

PRESS RELEASES

HTI identified federal human trafficking prosecutions by reviewing government press releases and news stories, including those published by each of the 94 U.S. Attorney's Offices, as well as the following federal bureaus:

- Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section
- Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Criminal Section, Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit

- Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations
- Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs

HTI searched for and reviewed government press releases and news stories that referenced the indictment, arrest, trial, or sentencing of a defendant involved in human trafficking cases. In addition to identifying cases expressly labeled by the federal government as human trafficking, the 2023 FHTTR identified cases through press releases that discussed coerced labor, commercial sex, or transportation of a child for commercial sex. HTI identified <1% (1) of the new 2023 human trafficking prosecutions through its review of government press releases and news stories.¹⁶⁷

WESTLAW

HTI also conducted extensive searches on Westlaw to identify additional federal human trafficking prosecutions not identified on PACER or in government press releases. Specifically, HTI searched Westlaw for any court documents, filings, decisions, or appeals involving human trafficking. HTI identified <1% (1) of new 2023 human trafficking cases on Westlaw.¹⁶⁸

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE & U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICES

To confirm the accuracy and completeness of the list of federal human trafficking cases HTI identified in 2023, HTI provided the list to the Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit in the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division and emailed letters to the 94 U.S. Attorney's Offices, with a list of all the human trafficking cases filed in their district in 2023. HTI identified 4% (8) of 2023 criminal human trafficking cases through consultation with federal prosecutors,

2 of which involved charges under Chapter 77 and 6 were charged outside of Chapter 77.¹⁶⁹

LATE CASE ADDITIONS

In an effort to provide the most accurate, up-to-date information, HTI engages in an extensive search process each year with the goal of identifying and reporting on every human trafficking case filed in federal court. However, for many reasons, additional human trafficking cases may be added to HTI's database after the year in which the case was filed. This includes cases where court filings were initially sealed, preventing the case from appearing in HTI's search results, as well as cases where the government filed a superseding charging instrument alleging a Chapter 77 offense that was not alleged at the time the case was originally filed. Further, criminal cases filed by complaint may not appear in HTI's search results until a defendant is indicted. Thus, if the government charged a defendant by complaint in 2022, but did not indict the defendant until 2023, the case would not be added to HTI's database until 2023, unless a federal prosecutor specifically identified the case to HTI in 2022.

Human trafficking cases charged outside of Chapter 77 are also sometimes added in subsequent years because they were identified by the US Attorney's Office after the conclusion of HTI's inclusion deadline, or they were identified after new court filings clarified that a case qualified for entry. Further, there is sometimes a delay between the time a case is filed in federal court and the time a case is added to legal databases, such as Westlaw. For all of these reasons, case data captured in each annual FHTTR is likely to fluctuate from year to year.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGAL CENTER

While the 2023 FHTTR does not include data from civil human trafficking cases, the Human Trafficking

Legal Center (HTLC) compiles and tracks civil human trafficking cases filed in the U.S. Accordingly, HTI contacted HTLC for a count of the civil human trafficking cases filed in 2023 for context and comparison; HTLC shared they identified 156 civil human trafficking suits filed in 2023.

COLLECTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE DATA

In 2023, HTI employed a team of 4 attorneys, 1 data analyst, 4 law students, and 1 intern to review the public court documents, press releases, and news stories about each of the federal human trafficking cases identified. HTI analyzed the following public court documents, where available, to identify key data points about each human trafficking case: charging instruments, including indictments, complaints, and informations; key motions and briefs; plea agreements; verdict forms; sentencing memoranda; judgments; restitution orders; forfeiture orders; and appellate filings and decisions. HTI sought information including data about human trafficking schemes, defendants, charges, victims, and appeals. HTI did not review transcripts from court hearings or trials in each case. HTI entered the human trafficking case data into a Salesforce database designed expressly for the annual publication of the FHTTR. Each data point, when available, was inputted for all new cases filed in 2023, and updated for all pending cases filed prior to 2023.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES

A human trafficking case within the 2023 FHTTR may include a single defendant or multiple related defendants (co-defendants) whom the government charged with trafficking one or more victims. Where the facts indicated that multiple defendants were related through a commonly exploited victim or a

¹⁶⁶ Although there are 94 federal judicial districts, it is not currently possible to search PACER for human trafficking prosecutions filed in the Northern District of Georgia. Accordingly, HTI contacts the Clerk of Court in the Northern District of Georgia to identify human trafficking prosecutions filed in its district each year.

¹⁶⁷ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

¹⁶⁸ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

¹⁶⁹ Based on 202 cases filed in 2023.

common plan or trafficking scheme, HTI captured all the defendants within one case in the database, even when the government may have charged the defendants in separate charging instruments or under separate case numbers. For example, if the government charged two defendants for recruiting and facilitating the trafficking of a minor victim within one case number, and subsequently charged a buyer-defendant for purchasing a commercial sex act from the same minor victim within another case number, the FHTR captured all three defendants within one human trafficking case so long as the facts indicated that the defendants were all involved in the same trafficking scheme. Where two related defendants are charged in separate case numbers, but one defendant is charged after the other defendant's charges have been disposed of, the FHTR did not merge the defendants into one human trafficking case. Even though the defendants were related through a common human trafficking scheme, they were instead captured as two separate human trafficking cases within the FHTR.

NEW, PENDING, & INACTIVE CASES

A case is categorized as new according to the year in which the government charged the first defendant in the case by complaint, indictment, or information. The 2023 FHTR considered a human trafficking case to be *new* if the case was filed in federal court between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023. The FHTR considered cases to be *pending* in 2023 if the government filed charges in federal court and at least one defendant in the case was awaiting trial or sentencing, or if at least one defendant had time remaining to file a direct appeal. The FHTR classified a criminal case as inactive where there were no charges against any defendant left to be disposed of, and when the time for all defendants to directly appeal the final judgment had expired.

The FHTR relied on Rules 4 and 26 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure (FRAP) to calculate the date that a defendant's time to file a notice of direct appeal expired. In a criminal case, under FRAP 4(b), "a defendant's notice of appeal must be filed in the district court within 14 days after the later of: (i) the entry of either the judgment or the order being

appealed; or (ii) the filing of the government's notice of appeal." For criminal cases where the defendant did not appeal the District Court's final judgment and did not file any subsequent motions upon which the District Court must rule, the *inactive* date was 14 days beyond the judgment date.

In criminal cases where one or more defendants appealed the district court's judgment, and the Appellate Court issued its decision on appeal, the case became *inactive* when the defendant's time to appeal the Appellate Court's decision to the Supreme Court expired. Rule 13 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the United States provides that "a petition for a writ of certiorari to review a judgment in any case, civil or criminal, entered by . . . a United States court of appeals . . . is timely when it is filed with the Clerk of [the Supreme] Court within 90 days after entry of judgment." The Supreme Court may extend a party's time for filing a writ of certiorari upon a showing of good cause, for a period not exceeding 60 days, provided the extension is requested at least ten full days before the petition is otherwise due. For a criminal case where 90 days have passed since the Appellate Court rendered its decision and no additional entries have been added to the appellate docket, it is deemed inactive upon the date that the time to file the petition for certiorari expired.

In criminal cases, once there are no pending charges against any defendant and the time for all defendants to appeal the final judgment or order of the court has expired, the case is inactive. Subsequent motions for post-conviction relief, such as a motion challenging the defendant's conviction or sentence under 28 U.S.C. § 2255, or the filing of a habeas corpus petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, do not render the case pending. Furthermore, clerical activity on the docket following the expiration of the defendant's time to file a direct appeal, including the payment of a fine or restitution or a request for modification of a supervised term of release, does not reactivate an inactive case.

PRIMARY CASE TYPE: SEX TRAFFICKING & FORCED LABOR

The FHTR classified every case as either a sex trafficking case or a forced labor case by thoroughly

reviewing the facts included in pleadings, public sources, news stories, and press releases. If the facts indicated the defendants compelled or coerced the victims to provide labor or services, the case was classified as forced labor. Conversely, if the facts indicated the defendants compelled or coerced the victims to engage in a commercial sex act, the case was classified as sex trafficking. Attempt and conspiracy cases were included in both categories.

The case type classification was clear in the majority of human trafficking cases in the FHTR, as the facts or charges involved defendants who compelled or coerced victims to perform either labor/services or sex, not both. Sometimes, cases contained charges or fact patterns that related to both commercial sex and forced labor human trafficking. In 2023, there were two criminal cases involving *both* sex trafficking and forced labor charges.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING DEFENDANTS

DEFENDANTS

The FHTR captured every defendant named in federal criminal human trafficking cases, regardless of whether the individual defendant faced a human trafficking charge in the case. Including all defendants in the case ensured the FHTR captured the most accurate picture of human trafficking cases prosecuted in federal courts. However, in cases where human trafficking was an ancillary matter (discussed in detail below), the FHTR captured only defendants whom the government charged with a human trafficking crime. The FHTR did not include defendants whom prosecutors charged by complaint but never ultimately indicted.

NEW & PENDING DEFENDANTS

The FHTR presented data on 2023 new defendants, which are categorized as defendants the government charged for the first time in 2023. For example, in some instances, prosecutors may initiate and file a case in one year and add new defendants in subsequent years.



When the FHTR refers to 2023 pending defendants in human trafficking cases, it considers all defendants, whenever charged, whose cases are still pending in the federal courts, and therefore their time to file a direct appeal had not run before or in 2023.

A defendant's active date was the date they were initially charged. A defendant's inactive date was the date all charges against the defendant were disposed of and, if applicable, the defendant's window to directly appeal expired. For rare situations in which there were fugitive defendants or long periods of unexplained docket inactivity, project attorneys monitored these dockets annually for new activity. Fugitive defendants are considered inactive after two years of docket inactivity.

IMPORTANT DATES

For each defendant, the FHTR tracked important dates in the criminal justice process. These include dates:

- The government filed the initial charging instrument
- The defendant pleaded guilty or went to trial
- The district court entered the final judgment
- The defendant filed a notice of appeal (if applicable)
- The appellate court entered judgment (if applicable)
- The defendant's time to directly appeal expires

The FHTR calculated a defendant's length of disposition as the number of months from a defendant's active date to a defendant's inactive date.

When determining dates, the FHTR generally relied on the file stamp date in the court docket, unless the court docket indicated the event occurred on a different date. When the docket revealed an event occurred on a date different from the file stamp date, the FHTR relied on the date the event occurred.

DISPOSITION, IMPRISONMENT, & MONETARY PENALTIES

The FHTR also captured how the district court disposed of the charges against each defendant: by dismissal,

plea agreement, or trial. If the defendant was convicted, the FHTR tracked their sentence, including:

- Term of imprisonment, if any
- Term of supervised release, if any
- Term of probation, if any
- Amount of fine, if ordered
- Information about special assessments, if ordered
- Information about assets forfeited, if ordered
- Amount of restitution to the victims, if ordered

The FHTR tracked the total length of imprisonment to which a defendant in a human trafficking case was sentenced. This included the term of imprisonment ordered for human trafficking convictions as well as non-human trafficking convictions. When calculating average terms of imprisonment, the FHTR excluded sentences exceeding 600 months (50 years) because these sentences are infrequent and distort average sentencing data. In 2023, 2 defendants were sentenced to more than 50 years in prison. From 2000 to 2023, 10 defendants were sentenced to more than 50 years in prison, with sentences ranging from 660 months (55 years) to 1,440 months (120 years).

APPEALS

Where a defendant filed a notice of appeal, the FHTR tracked the timing and decision of the appeal. The FHTR tracked only direct appeals that followed a final judgment in cases that were filed within the timeline set out in Rule 4 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure. The FHTR captured information about direct appeals to an appellate court and direct appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court. The FHTR did not track interlocutory appeals. Furthermore, the FHTR did not capture appeals based on collateral attacks on the district court's judgment, such as motions to challenge a conviction or sentence under 28 U.S.C. § 2255, or the filing of a habeas corpus petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2241.

DEFENDANT'S PROFILE

When known, the FHTR included general information about the defendant's profile, such as their gender and

their age at the time of arrest. The FHTR classified the defendant's gender according to the gender specified in public court documents, press releases, or by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Where public sources identified the relationship that the defendant had with the victim prior to exploitation, the FHTR captured this data.

DEFENDANTS IN ANCILLARY HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES

In federal cases where human trafficking is an ancillary matter, the FHTR captured only defendants whom the government charged with a human trafficking crime. The FHTR categorized human trafficking as an ancillary matter, where it was clear that the *primary purpose* of the criminal enterprise was *not* human trafficking. For example, if a federal case was primarily about health care fraud, and the government charged only one of ten defendants with a human trafficking crime and the remaining defendants with non-human trafficking-related offenses, the FHTR considered human trafficking an ancillary matter in the case. The FHTR only captured information about the defendant the government charged with a human trafficking crime, it did not include other defendants unrelated to the trafficking crime(s).

Alternatively, the FHTR did not consider human trafficking as an ancillary matter in cases where the case is *primarily* about human trafficking even if the majority of charges brought were non-human trafficking offenses (i.e., where one defendant was charged with sex trafficking while the other defendants were charged non-human trafficking offenses for acts related to the same sex trafficking scheme). For example, if federal prosecutors charged one of ten defendants with a human trafficking crime and the remaining defendants with alien harboring and money laundering in a scheme where 30 women were smuggled into the U.S. and compelled to provide commercial sex at a massage parlor, the FHTR *did not* consider human trafficking to be an ancillary matter. Accordingly, the FHTR captured information about all the defendants the government charged.

Of the new cases charged in 2023, the FHTR found that human trafficking was an ancillary matter in no

new cases. It is important to note that in cases where trafficking was an ancillary matter, the case becomes inactive when the defendant charged with a trafficking crime becomes inactive, even where charges may still be pending against the other defendants.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING & NON-HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES

The FHTR captured each charge that the government filed against each defendant, including both human trafficking charges and non-human trafficking charges. The FHTR relied on the final charging instrument against the defendant when determining the appropriate charges to include, unless the final charging instrument contained no human trafficking charge and immediately preceded a plea agreement. This combination of circumstances indicated the government reduced a defendant's human trafficking charges as part of a plea agreement. In this situation, to accurately reflect that the defendant pled down from a human trafficking charge, the FHTR relied on the last in-time charging instrument that contains a human trafficking charge.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES

This FHTR categorized any charge filed against a defendant under the following criminal statutes as a human trafficking charge:

- 18 U.S.C. § 2 (Attempt to Commit Human Trafficking)
- 18 U.S.C. § 371 (Conspiracy to Commit Human Trafficking)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1581 (Peonage)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1582 (Vessels in the Slave Trade)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1583 (Enticement into Slavery)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1584 (Involuntary Servitude)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1585 (Seizure, Detention of Slaves)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1586 (Service on Vessels for Slave Trade)



- 18 U.S.C. § 1587 (Possession of Slaves Aboard a Vessel)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1588 (Transportation of Slaves from the United States)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1589 (Forced Labor)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1590 (Trafficking for Peonage, Slavery, Involuntary Servitude, or Forced Labor)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1591 (Sex Trafficking)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1592 (Documents)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1593A (Benefiting Financially)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1594 (Attempt or Conspiracy to Commit Human Trafficking)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1597 (Immigration Documents)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1952 (ITAR to Human Trafficking)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1962 (RICO to Human Trafficking)

This list encompasses all Chapter 77 offenses, as well as attempt, conspiracy, ITAR, and RICO charges where the underlying offense is clearly defined as a Chapter 77 offense.

NON-HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES

All criminal charges other than those listed above as human trafficking crimes are classified as non-human trafficking offenses. Non-human trafficking charges include, *inter alia*, the following offenses:

- 8 U.S.C. § 1324 (Alien harboring)
- 18 U.S.C. §§ 2421-2423 (Mann Act)
 - 18 U.S.C. § 2421 (Promotion or Facilitation of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking)
 - 18 U.S.C. § 2422(a) (Coercion/Enticement of an Adult)

- 18 U.S.C. § 2422(b) (Coercion/Enticement of a Minor)
- 18 U.S.C. § 2423(a) (Travel with Intent to Engage in Criminal Sexual Activity)
- 18 U.S.C. § 2423(b) (Travel with Intent to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct)
- 18 U.S.C. § 2251 (Sexual Exploitation of Children)
- 18 U.S.C. § 2252 (Child Sexual Abuse Material)
- 18 U.S.C. § 371 (Conspiracy)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1952 (ITAR)
- 18 U.S.C. § 1962 (RICO) where the predicate offense is outside of Chapter 77

NUMBER OF CHARGES

In general, the number of charges that the FHTR captured for a defendant equals the total number of charges included in the final charging instrument against the defendant. Where the government filed a superseding information that included additional charges for the sole purpose of a plea agreement, the FHTR also captured the charges from the charging instrument immediately preceding the superseding information. In doing so, the FHTR aimed to capture the most serious charges that the government brought against the defendant, as well as the ultimate charges included in the defendant's plea agreement. Where human trafficking is considered an ancillary matter, the FHTR included all charges that the government brought against only those defendants involved in the trafficking enterprise. This includes both human trafficking and non-human trafficking charges filed against those defendants.

VICTIMS

The FHTR captured only publicly available information about victims the government identified by name, initials, or pseudonym within one or more human trafficking charges or related charges listed in the charging instruments. For these victims, the FHTR tracked the victim's gender, age, particular vulnerabilities the recruiter may have exploited, how

the victim was recruited, who recruited the victim, and the length of time the victim was exploited. The FHTR also provided data on the nationality of victims, the type of visa held, if applicable, and whether the victim was trafficked into the U.S., after they were already present in the U.S., or abroad.

HTI's ability to determine the total number of victims exploited by defendants in federal human trafficking cases is limited, as the total number of victims exploited by a defendant may be more than the number of victims identified in the charging instrument. The victim-related findings in the FHTR **should not** be used as a prevalence estimate for the number of victims traffickers exploited in the U.S., nor should they serve as an estimate of the number of victims assisted by the government or civil society organizations. It should also be noted that fictional victims are not included in the overall total number of victims featured in the FHTR. Total number of victim calculations are reserved for real victims only.

REVIEW OF FEDERAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE DATA

To provide a complete and accurate analysis of human trafficking cases filed in federal court, HTI engaged in a comprehensive review process of each human trafficking case entered into the database. Every case in the database was reviewed by at least two different project attorneys. Once a project attorney entered information about a case into the database, a different project attorney was tasked with reviewing each field to confirm each entry was correct. The project attorneys raised questions and anomalies to the FHTR's Primary Authors for decisions. In addition, the project attorneys reviewed the database through various troubleshooting reports to detect any blank fields or unusual entries.

Note, all percentages in the FHTR are rounded up to the nearest whole number. For this reason, percentages may not always add up to 100%.



TERMINOLOGY

The terminology section is a valuable resource designed to clarify the sometimes complex and unique terms used within the human trafficking field. Whether you are a practitioner, researcher, or layperson, this section aims to provide concise definitions to promote clarity and context throughout the Federal Human Trafficking Report (FHTR).

SOLICITATION STRATEGIES IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES

The 2023 FHTR tracked the primary method that defendants in sex trafficking cases used to solicit buyers. The method of solicitation was determined by how or where a defendant located buyers, including the following strategies:

- **Bar or Club:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex at an establishment that served alcohol or drinks as their primary business purpose.
- **Brothels:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex through an illegal establishment where in-house commercial sex was offered to customers.

- **Business Cards or Flyers:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex by handing out business cards, flyers, or other similar documents.

- **Escort Service:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex via a real or purported escort service.

- **High-Control or Religious Group:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex through a high-control or religious group.

- **In-Person Solicitation:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex in person.

- **Internet:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex through an online website or social media platform.

- **Massage Parlor:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex at a business that offered or claimed to offer legitimate spa services. This included legal massage parlors, as well as illicit massage parlors that claimed to offer legitimate spa services but whose true purpose was to offer commercial sex to customers.

- **Party:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex at a party.

- **Phone or Text Message:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex via phone or text message.

- **Pre-existing Relationship:** When a trafficker solicited buyers of commercial sex among individuals they already knew. An example of the pre-existing relationship method of solicitation would be a drug dealer who began selling victims for commercial sex to his customers in addition to drugs.

- **Street-based Commercial Sex:** When a trafficker expects a victim to solicit or initiate commercial sex by walking a designated section of a street—often an area known for criminal activity—which is sometimes called a “track”, “stroll”, “block”, or “blade”.

- **Strip Club:** When a trafficker solicited or expected a victim to solicit buyers or initiate commercial sex at a strip club.

- **Truck Stop:** When a trafficker solicited or expected a victim to solicit buyers or initiate commercial sex at a truck stop.

INDUSTRIES IN FORCED LABOR CASES

The 2023 FHTR tracked the primary industry in forced labor cases, which was defined by the predominant type of labor or services that the defendant compelled a victim to provide. Federal human trafficking cases involved victims exploited for labor or services in the following industries:

- **Agriculture:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services for a farming business primarily engaged in growing crops, cultivating soil, or rearing animals for their byproducts.

- **Bar or Club:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at an establishment that served alcohol or drinks as its primary business purpose.

- **Beauty Services:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at a business, the primary purpose of which was providing health or beauty services. This includes but is not limited to manicures, haircuts, hair braiding, facials, and/or waxing.

- **Commercial Laundry Service:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at a business primarily engaged in textile cleaning and/or laundering.

- **Construction:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at a commercial business focused on the process of building or repairing infrastructure, facilities, or residences.

- **Domestic Work:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services for a family or household performing tasks such as cleaning or childcare, often living on site.

- **Door-to-Door Sales:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services by walking door-to-door to sell goods or services.

- **High-Control or Religious Group:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services as part of a high-control or religious group.

- **Hospitality:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at a hotel or in other hospitality services. This term is a broad industry category that focuses on lodging and tourism.

- **Illegal Purchase/Sale of Consumer Goods:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services by selling illegal or counterfeit goods, or compelled victims to purchase consumer goods via illegal means.

- **Imprisonment:** When a victim alleged that their detention in jail/prison alone constituted forced labor.

- **Janitorial Services:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services in janitorial

or cleaning duties for a cleaning company or commercial or public properties. This includes but is not limited to employees of maid services, and commercial janitors.

- **Labor While Incarcerated:** When victims were forced to perform labor or services while in jail/prison without adequate compensation.

- **Manufacturing:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services in any industry focused on the production or packaging of food or other merchandise to be sold, or any other type of industrial factory-type job.

- **Massage Parlor:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services in a business that offered or claimed to offer legitimate spa services. This includes, but is not limited to legal massage parlors, as well as illicit massage parlors that claimed to offer legitimate spa services.

- **Medical or Health Services:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services in any industry focused on health and medical care.

- **Panhandling:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services by asking others for money in a public place.

- **Restaurant or Food Industries:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at a venue, the primary purpose of which was selling prepared food. This includes but is not limited to fast food restaurants, sit-down restaurants, and food or ice cream trucks.

- **Retail:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services at a commercial venue whose primary purpose was to sell merchandise. This includes but is not limited to gas stations, grocery stores, and car dealerships.

- **Technology Services:** When a trafficker compelled a victim to provide labor or services in the technological industry.

METHODS OF COERCION

The 2023 FHTR categorized every method of coercion as either physical or nonphysical.

PHYSICAL COERCION

Physical coercion included any method that involved bodily contact, physical restraint, or physical isolation, as well as conduct that impacted the victim's physical health. The following methods of coercion were categorized as **physical coercion**:

- Cages, locked rooms, or barred cells
- Chains or shackles
- Controlling or withholding a victim's access to food
- Forced abortion
- Inducing or exploiting a substance use disorder or forcing a victim to use drugs
- Physical abuse
- Physical isolation
- Rape or sexual violence
- Sleep deprivation
- Tattoos or branding
- Withholding medical care

NON-PHYSICAL COERCION

Non-physical coercion included any method that involves threats, fraud, or conduct that impacted the victim's mental or emotional health.

The following methods of coercion were categorized as non-physical coercion:

- Abuse of a position of power
- Brandishing weapons
- Debt manipulation
- Exploitation of a cognitive disability
- Extortion, including threatening to share images or videos
- Fear of gang violence
- Fraudulent misrepresentation of a job
- Fraudulent promise of romantic relationship
- Language barrier



- Manipulation of a written contract
- Religious abuse, including the abuse of leadership in religious settings, as well as the exploitation of religious beliefs or principles to compel labor or sex
- Required Quota
- Threats of arrest for forced unlawful acts
- Threats of deportation
- Threats of physical abuse
- Threats to other victims or third parties
- Threats to the victim's child or other family members
- Verbal or emotional abuse
- Withholding immigration documents
- Withholding pay
- Withholding personal identification documents

ADDITIONAL TERMINOLOGY

- **Adult:** Any person who was 18 years of age or older.

- **Bottom:** A female victim actively engaged in the recruiting, management, and control of other victims on behalf of the trafficker. Bottoms are often the victim who has been with the trafficker the longest, operating as a "right hand". The bottom may help instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishments on other victims.

- **Buyer Case:** A case in which one or more of the defendants bought or attempted to buy commercial sex from a trafficking victim.

- **Buyer Defendant:** A defendant charged with buying or attempting to buy commercial sex from a person, knowing or in reckless disregard of the fact that the person is a trafficking victim. Buyer defendants can also be charged with buying or attempting to buy labor from a trafficking victim.

- **Commercial Exchange:** When persons provide a thing of value to another individual in exchange for a good or service.

- **District Court:** The district court was categorized by the district of the trial court that had jurisdiction over the case, or the district court that ultimately disposed of the charges in the case.

- **Fictitious Victim:** A fake or imaginary victim created by law enforcement to engage with targets in an undercover operation or sting.

- **Life Imprisonment:** A sentence of imprisonment for the defendant to remain in prison for the rest of their natural life. The FHTR captured life sentences that the court imposed against a defendant in a human trafficking case, even where the defendant was also convicted of other serious crimes.

- **Minor:** Any person under the age of 18.

- **Primary Investigative Agency:** The law enforcement agency that played the primary role in the investigation of a human trafficking case. If it is difficult to ascertain from public sources which agency played the primary role, the primary agency was classified as the agency that initiated the investigation, if known.

- **Public Sources:** Public court documents, press releases, news stories, and other publicly available information that HTI searched during the collection and entry of case data for the FHTR. This included case filings HTI purchased from PACER or documents that HTI retrieved from subscription legal databases.

- **Sting Case:** An undercover law enforcement operation used to catch a person committing a crime. This included sting cases in which law enforcement responded to an advertisement posted by a trafficker selling a victim, and cases in which law enforcement advertised a fictitious victim to attract buyers.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

CHARGE & CONVICTION TABLES



Human Trafficking Charges Filed Against Defendants in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSE	DEFENDANTS CHARGED	COUNTS CHARGED
18 U.S.C. § 1591 Sex Trafficking	150	298
18 U.S.C. § 1594(c) Conspiracy Sex Trafficking	66	69
18 U.S.C. § 1594(a) Attempted Sex Trafficking	16	17
18 U.S.C. § 1591(d) Obstructing Enforcement of Sex Trafficking Offense	6	7
18 U.S.C. § 371 Conspiracy to Commit Human Trafficking Offense	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 2421A Promotion or Facilitation of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1589 Forced Labor	3	13
18 U.S.C. § 1593A Benefiting	1	1

Human Trafficking Charges Filed Against Defendants in Forced Labor Cases 2023

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSE	DEFENDANTS CHARGED	COUNTS CHARGED
18 U.S.C. § 1589 Forced Labor	7	25
18 U.S.C. § 1594(b) Forced Labor Conspiracy	6	6
18 U.S.C. § 1592 Documents	2	2

Human Trafficking Convictions in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSE	DEFENDANTS CONVICTED	COUNTS OF CONVICTION
18 U.S.C. § 1591 Sex Trafficking	124	286
18 U.S.C. § 1594(c) Conspiracy Sex Trafficking	55	59
18 U.S.C. § 1594(a) Attempted Sex Trafficking	17	21
18 U.S.C. § 1591(d) Obstructing Enforcement of Sex Trafficking Offense	9	9
18 U.S.C. § 1962 RICO to Commit Trafficking Offense	4	4
18 U.S.C. § 1952 ITAR to Commit Trafficking Offense	2	2
18 U.S.C. § 1589 Forced Labor	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1590 Trafficking for Peonage, Slavery, Involuntary Servitude, or Forced Labor	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 371 Conspiracy to Commit Human Trafficking	1	1

Non-Human Trafficking Convictions in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023

NON-HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTE	DEFENDANTS CONVICTED	COUNTS OF CONVICTION
18 U.S.C. § 2422(b) Coercion/Enticement of minor	59	70
18 U.S.C. § 2251 Sexual exploitation of children	28	35
18 U.S.C. § 2252A Certain activities relating to material constituting or containing child pornography	24	27
18 U.S.C. § 2421 Mann Act	20	25
18 U.S.C. § 2422(a) Coercion/Enticement of adult Drug-Related Offense	13	19
18 U.S.C. § 2423 (b) Travel with intent to engage in illicit sexual conduct	13	17
18 U.S.C. § 2423 (a) Travel with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity	14	14
18 U.S.C. § 1952 ITAR	11	14
18 U.S.C. § 875 Interstate Communications	12	13
18 U.S.C. § 2252 Child Pornography	2	11
18 U.S.C. § 1512 Witness Tampering	9	10
18 U.S.C. § 371 Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud the United States	5	7
18 U.S.C. § 922(g) Felon in Possession of Firearm	6	6
18 U.S.C. § 1956 Laundering of monetary instruments	4	4
18 U.S.C. § 2425 Use of Interstate Facilities to Transmit Information	3	3
18 U.S.C. § 2423 (c) Engaging in illicit sexual conduct in foreign places	1	3
18 U.S.C. § 1959 Violent crimes in aid of racketeering activity	1	3
8 U.S.C. § 1201 Kidnapping	3	3
18 U.S.C. § 4 Misprision of felony	3	3
31 U.S.C. § 5324 Structuring Financial Transactions	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 2261A Stalking	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 2260A Penalties for Registered Sex Offenders	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 2245 - Offenses resulting in death	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 2241(c) Aggravated sexual abuse with children	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1962 RICO	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1951 Interference with commerce by threats or violence	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1519 Destruction, alteration, or falsification of records	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1470 Attempted Transfer of Obscene Material to a Minor	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1384 Prostitution near military and naval establishments	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1344 Bank fraud	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1028A Aggravated identity theft	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 1001 Statements or entries generally	1	1
18 USC § 924(c) Possession of a Firearm (Crime of Violence)	1	1
18 U.S.C. § 401 Power of court	1	1



Human Trafficking Convictions in Forced Labor Cases 2023

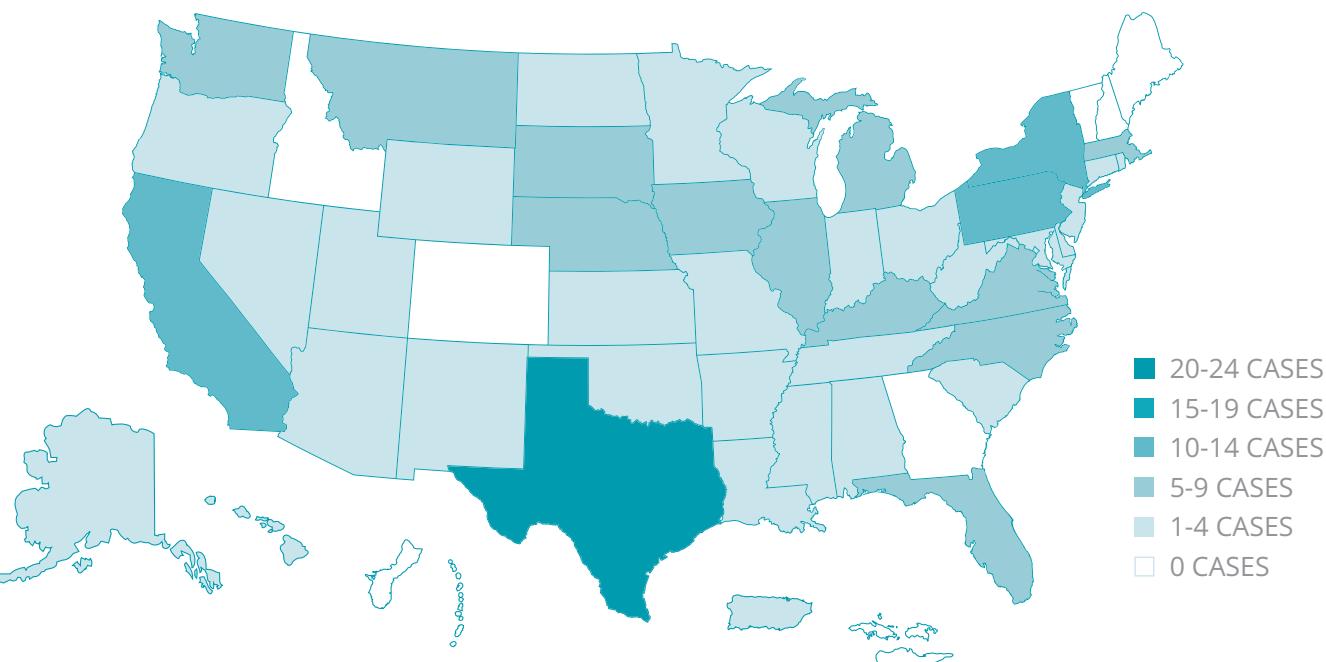
HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSE	DEFENDANTS CONVICTED	COUNTS OF CONVICTION
18 U.S.C. § 1589 Forced Labor	8	14
18 U.S.C. § 1594(b) Forced Labor Conspiracy	4	5
18 U.S.C. § 1590 Trafficking for Peonage, Slavery, Involuntary Servitude, or Forced Labor	2	2
18 U.S.C. § 371 Conspiracy to Commit HT Offense	2	2
18 U.S.C. § 1592 Documents	1	1

Non-Human Trafficking Convictions in Forced Labor Cases 2023

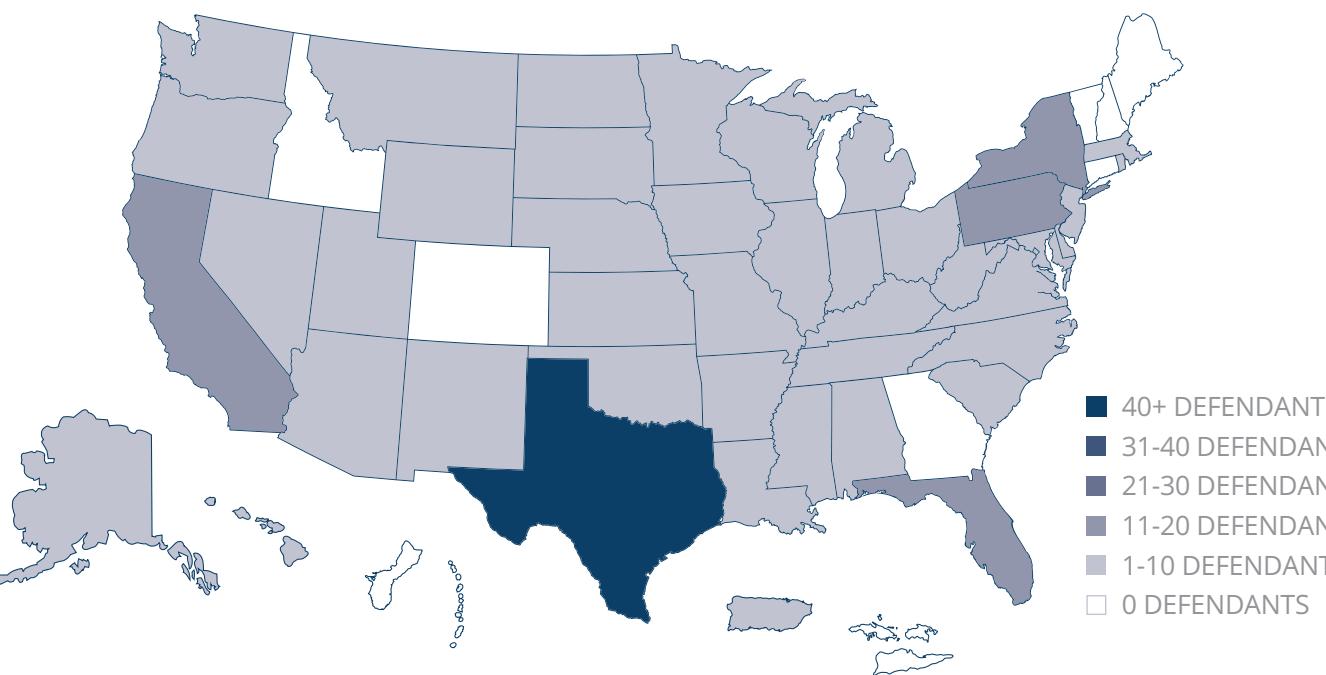
NON-HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSE	DEFENDANTS CONVICTED	COUNTS OF CONVICTION
18 U.S.C. § 371 Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud the United States	4	4
18 U.S.C. § 1957 Engaging in monetary transactions in property derived from specified unlawful activity	3	3
18 U.S.C. § 1956 Laundering of monetary instruments	2	2
18 U.S.C. § 1349 Attempt and conspiracy	2	2
18 U.S.C. § 1201 Kidnapping	1	2
18 U.S.C. § 1028 Fraudulent activity regarding identification documents	1	1
8 U.S.C. § 1324 Alien Harboring	1	1

MAPS OF FEDERAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES BY STATE

Cases Filed by State/Territory 2023



Defendants in Sex Trafficking Cases 2023

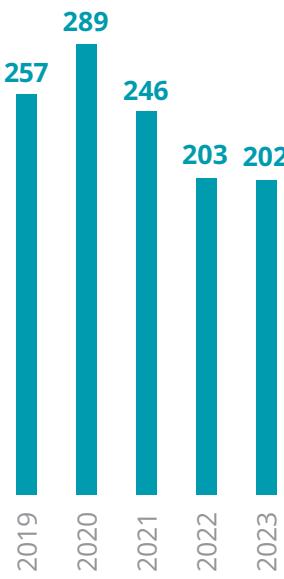


Defendants in Forced Labor Cases 2023

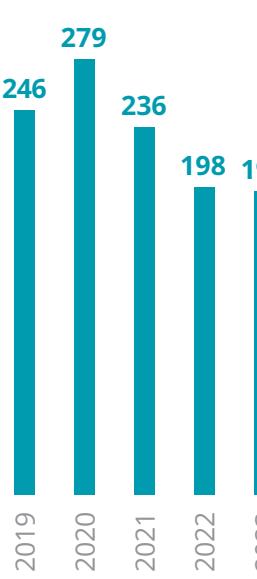


YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHARTS

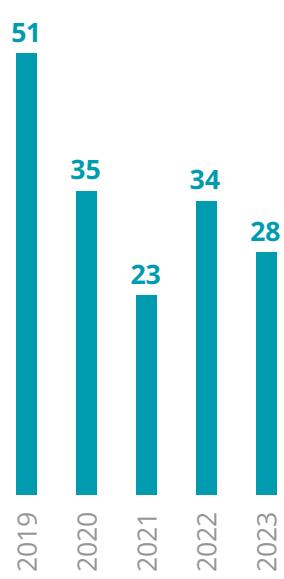
Human Trafficking Cases



Sex Trafficking Cases



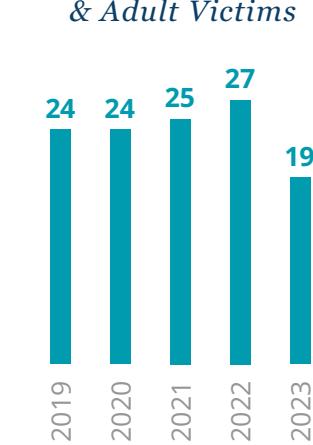
Sex Trafficking Cases with Adult Victims Only



Sex Trafficking Cases with Minor Victims Only



Sex Trafficking Cases with Minor & Adult Victims



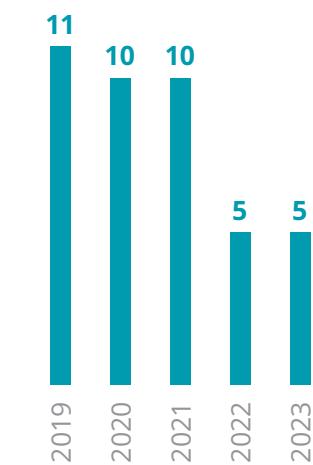
Sex Trafficking Sting Cases with Exclusively Fictitious Victims



Sex Trafficking Cases with Buyer Defendants



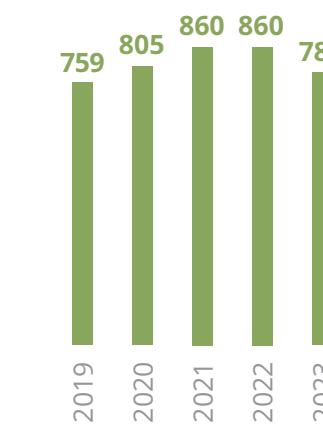
Forced Labor Cases



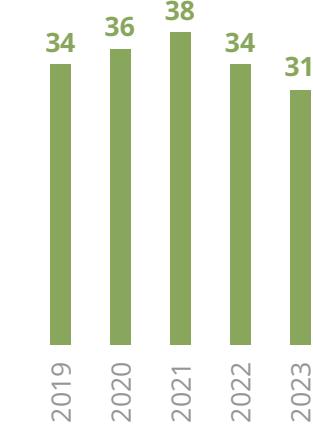
Pending Human Trafficking Cases



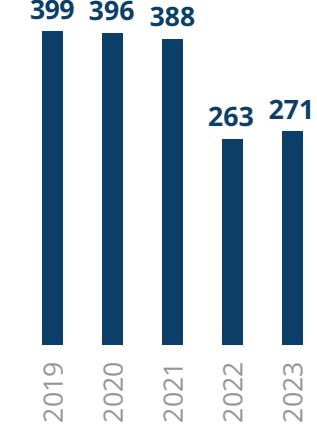
Pending Sex Trafficking Cases



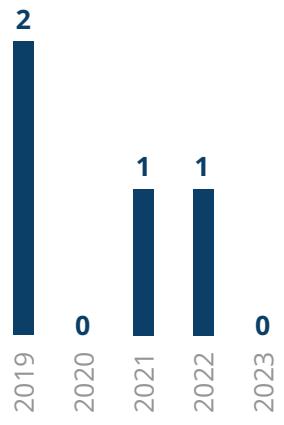
Pending Forced Labor Cases



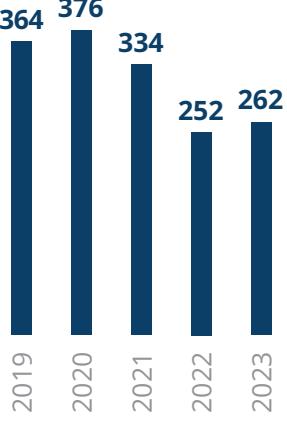
Defendants in Human Trafficking Cases



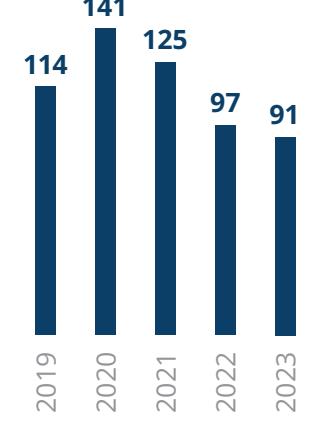
Entity Defendants in Human Trafficking Cases



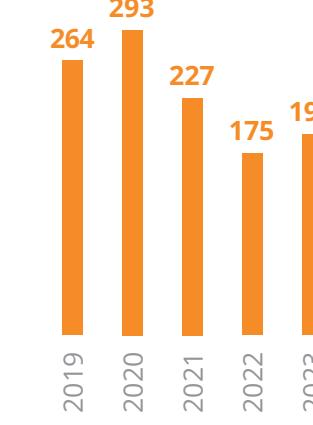
Defendants in Sex Trafficking Cases



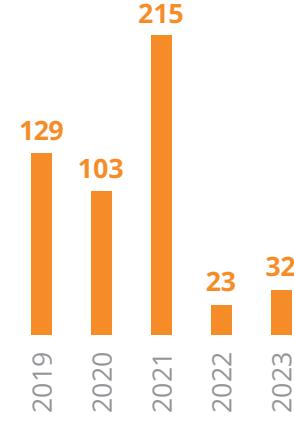
Buyer Defendants in Sex Trafficking Cases



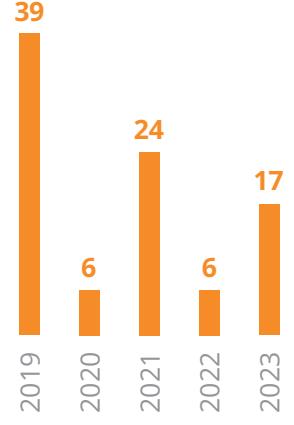
Minor Victims in Sex Trafficking Cases



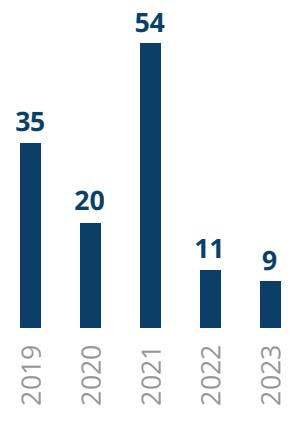
Victims in Forced Labor Cases



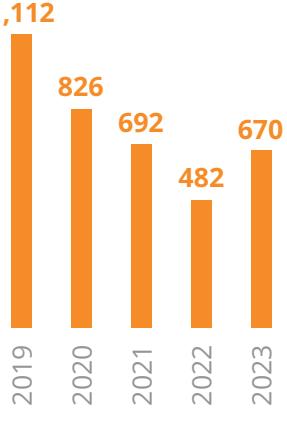
Male Victims in Forced Labor Cases



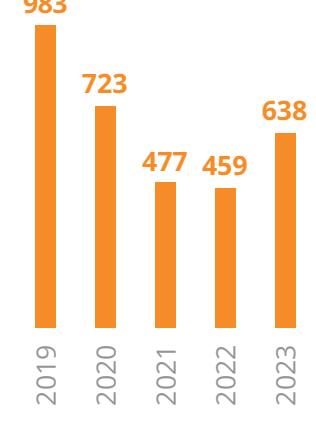
Defendants in Forced Labor Cases



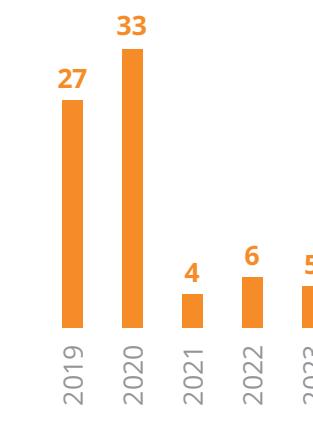
Victims in Human Trafficking Cases



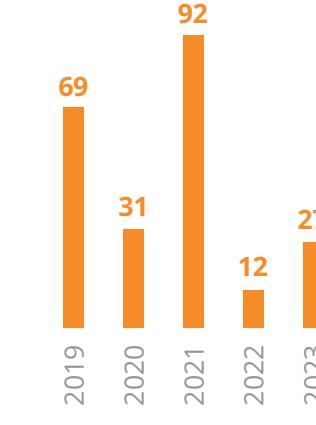
Victims in Sex Trafficking Cases



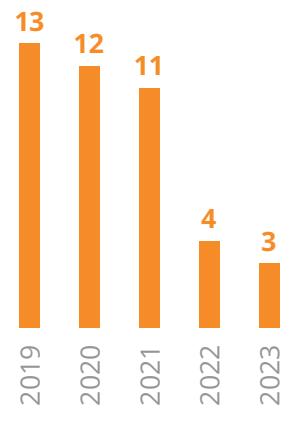
Female Victims in Forced Labor Cases



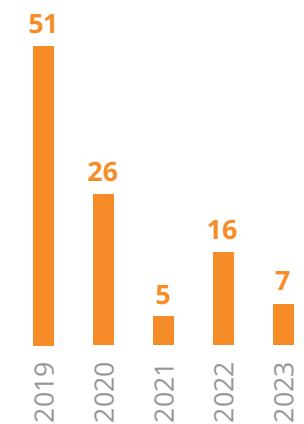
Adult Victims in Forced Labor Cases



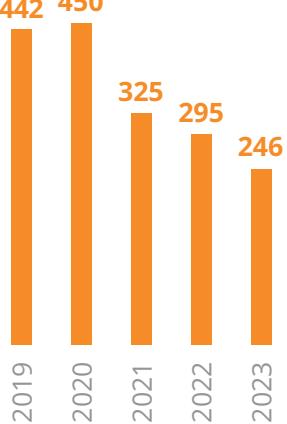
Minor Victims in Forced Labor Cases



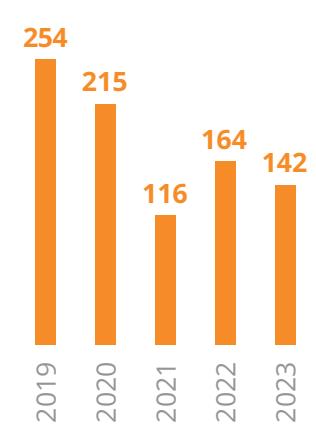
Male Victims in Sex Trafficking Cases



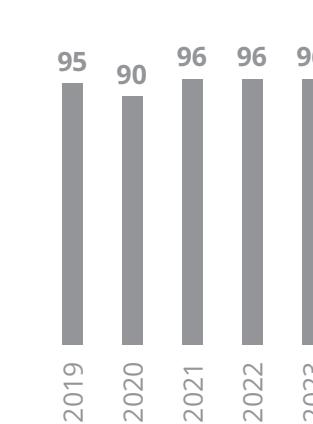
Female Victims in Sex Trafficking Cases



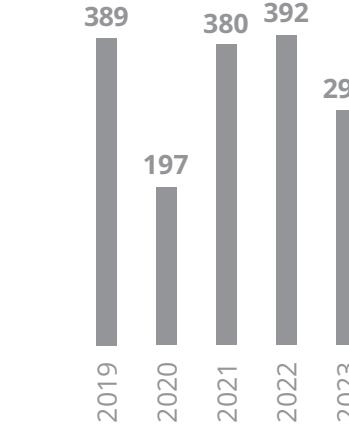
Adult Victims in Sex Trafficking Cases



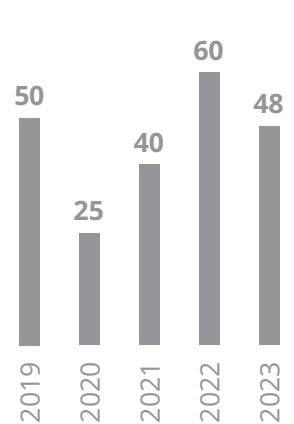
Conviction Rate in Human Trafficking Cases (%)



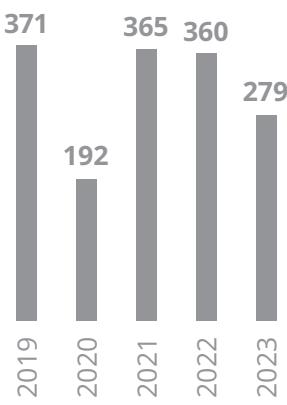
Defendants Convicted in Human Trafficking Cases



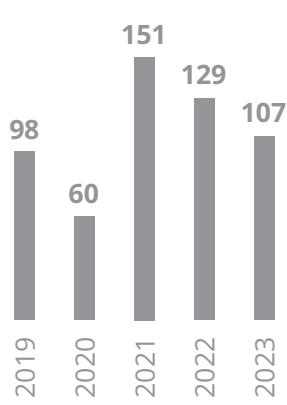
Defendants Convicted at Trial in Human Trafficking Cases



Defendants Convicted in Sex Trafficking Cases



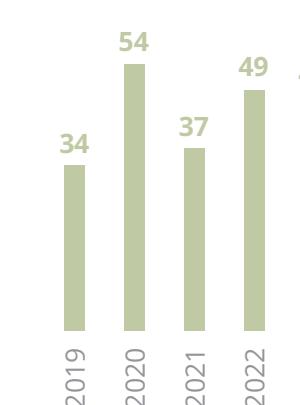
Buyer Defendants Convicted in Sex Trafficking Cases



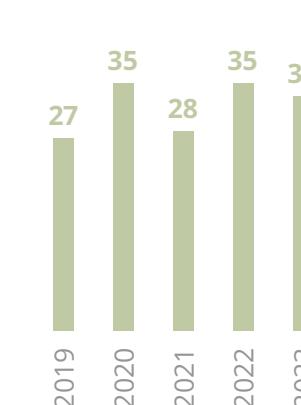
Defendants Convicted in Forced Labor Cases



Defendants Ordered to Pay Mandatory Restitution (%)



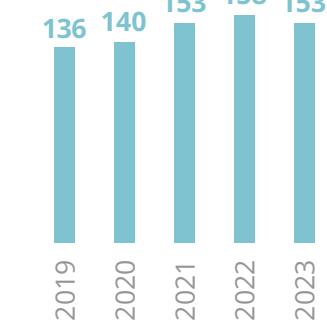
Defendants in Cases Ordered to Pay Restitution



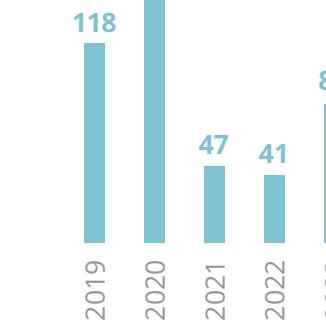
Defendants in Human Trafficking Cases Sentenced to Term of Imprisonment



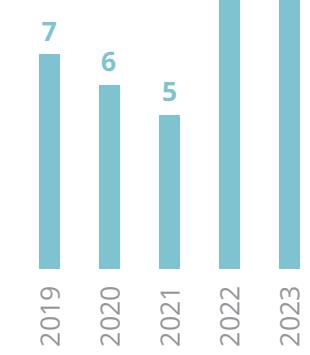
Average Length of Sentence for Sex Trafficking Defendants (Months)



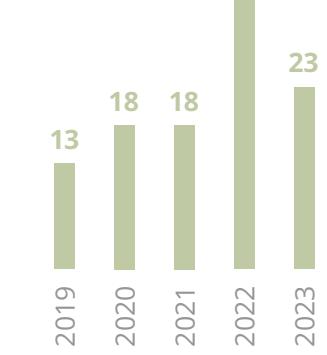
Average Length of Sentence for Forced Labor Defendant (Months)



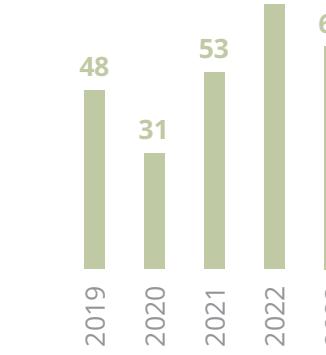
Defendants Sentenced to Life in Prison



Defendants Ordered to Pay a Fine



Defendants Ordered to Pay \$5,000 JVTA Assessment



FEDERAL JUDICIAL DISTRICT TABLE

Cases & Defendants Charged in 2023

DISTRICT	SEX TRAFFICKING CASES	DEFENDANTS IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES	FORCED LABOR CASES	DEFENDANTS IN FORCED LABOR CASES	CASES CHARGED OUTSIDE CH. 77
Alabama Middle	0	3	0	0	0
Alabama Northern	1	2	0	0	0
Alabama Southern	1	1	0	0	1
Alaska	2	2	0	0	1
Arizona	4	4	0	0	2
Arkansas Eastern	1	1	0	0	0
Arkansas Western	0	0	0	0	0
California Central	3	6	0	0	2
California Eastern	1	1	0	0	1
California Northern	0	0	0	0	0
California Southern	10	13	0	0	1
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0
Connecticut	0	0	1	3	0
Delaware	2	3	0	0	1
District of Columbia	2	2	0	0	0
Florida Middle	4	4	0	0	3
Florida Northern	0	0	0	0	0
Florida Southern	5	7	0	0	2

DISTRICT	SEX TRAFFICKING CASES	DEFENDANTS IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES	FORCED LABOR CASES	DEFENDANTS IN FORCED LABOR CASES	CASES CHARGED OUTSIDE CH. 77
Georgia Middle	0	0	0	0	0
Georgia Northern	0	0	0	0	0
Georgia Southern	0	0	0	0	0
Guam	0	0	0	0	0
Hawaii	2	2	0	0	1
Idaho	0	0	0	0	0
Illinois Central	3	3	0	0	3
Illinois Northern	2	2	0	0	1
Illinois Southern	1	1	0	0	1
Indiana Northern	1	1	0	0	0
Indiana Southern	1	1	0	0	0
Iowa Northern	0	0	0	0	0
Iowa Southern	7	8	0	0	3
Kansas	1	1	0	0	0
Kentucky Eastern	2	3	0	0	1
Kentucky Western	6	7	0	0	3
Louisiana Eastern	2	3	0	0	0
Louisiana Middle	0	0	0	0	0
Louisiana Western	2	2	0	0	1
Maine	0	0	0	0	0
Maryland	1	6	0	0	0
Massachusetts	5	7	1	1	0
Michigan Eastern	3	5	0	0	0
Michigan Western	3	3	0	0	1
Minnesota	1	1	0	0	1
Mississippi Northern	0	0	0	0	0
Mississippi Southern	1	1	0	0	1
Missouri Eastern	4	5	0	0	0
Missouri Western	0	0	0	0	0
Montana	7	7	0	0	3
Nebraska	6	8	0	0	2
Nevada	4	5	0	0	4
New Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	1	1	0	0	1
New Mexico	2	3	0	0	1
New York Eastern	5	9	1	2	0
New York Northern	1	0	0	0	1
New York Southern	2	2	0	0	1
New York Western	2	3	1	1	0
North Carolina Eastern	4	7	0	0	0
North Carolina Middle	0	0	0	0	0

DISTRICT	SEX TRAFFICKING CASES	DEFENDANTS IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASES	FORCED LABOR CASES	DEFENDANTS IN FORCED LABOR CASES	CASES CHARGED OUTSIDE CH. 77
North Carolina Western	1	1	0	0	0
North Dakota	1	1	0	0	1
Northern Mariana Islands	0	0	0	0	0
Ohio Northern	1	1	0	0	1
Ohio Southern	3	3	0	0	0
Oklahoma Eastern	0	0	0	0	0
Oklahoma Northern	2	2	0	0	0
Oklahoma Western	0	0	0	0	0
Oregon	1	1	0	0	1
Pennsylvania Eastern	1	1	0	0	1
Pennsylvania Middle	9	9	0	0	8
Pennsylvania Western	2	2	0	0	0
Puerto Rico	1	1	0	0	0
Rhode Island	1	1	0	0	0
South Carolina	4	4	0	0	3
South Dakota	5	6	0	0	0
Tennessee Eastern	1	1	0	0	1
Tennessee Middle	0	1	0	0	0
Tennessee Western	1	1	0	0	1
Texas Eastern	1	3	0	0	0
Texas Northern	7	16	0	0	1
Texas Southern	10	20	0	0	3
Texas Western	4	5	0	0	3
Utah	3	3	0	0	1
Vermont	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia Eastern	5	6	1	2	4
Virginia Western	1	1	0	0	0
Virgin Islands	0	0	0	0	0
Washington Eastern	4	4	0	0	3
Washington Western	2	2	0	0	0
West Virginia Northern	1	2	0	0	0
West Virginia Southern	3	4	0	0	1
Wisconsin Eastern	2	2	0	0	1
Wisconsin Western	1	1	0	0	0
Wyoming	1	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	197	262	5	9	78

2019-2023 LIST OF TASK FORCES

Other task forces identified in 2023 included: Central Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force; Central Valley Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force; Coastal Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force; Detroit Division's Southeast Michigan Trafficking and Exploitation Crimes (SEMTEC) Task Force; Organized Crime Task Force; FBI's Tidewater Violent Crimes Task Force; Denver Child Exploitation Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI Albuquerque's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI MPDC's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI Springfield's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI Tampa's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI WA Field Office's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; Greater Phoenix Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI Phoenix's Violent Crimes Task Force; Houston ICAC Task Force; I-81 Human Trafficking Task Force; Iowa's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force; FBI Omaha's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; Minnesota Child Exploitation Task Force; Montana Internet Crimes Against Children Task

Force; New Mexico Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force; Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force; North Texas Gangs and Violent Crimes Task Force; North Texas Human Trafficking Task Force; Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force; Puerto Rico Crimes Against Children Task Force; Regional Electronics and Computer Investigations (RECI) Task Force; San Diego Human Trafficking Task Force; FBI San Diego's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force; SECURE Task Force; South Dakota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force; Southeast Michigan Trafficking and Exploitation Crimes Task Force; South Florida Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force; South Haven Task Force; St. Louis County Police Task Force; Toledo Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force; United States Secret Service Electronic Crimes Task Force; Utah Attorney General's Office Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force; West Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force; Westchester Safe Streets Task Force; Wyoming DCI Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force



ABOUT THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING INSTITUTE

The Human Trafficking Institute exists to decimate human trafficking at its source by empowering police and prosecutors to stop traffickers. Working inside criminal justice systems, HTI provides the embedded experts, world-class training, investigative resources, and evidence-based research necessary to free victims.



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