

# Human Trafficking: Directions for Research

Kaden Grace

September 11, 2024



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

# Background

- **Human Trafficking:** “the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor against their will.” (U.S. Law)
  - Action: induces, recruits, harbors, transports, provides
  - Means: force, fraud, coercion
  - Purpose: commercial sex acts or labor/services
- TN - 3,043 identified victims since 2007 (HT Hotline)

# Background

- **Means of Control:** Debt bondage, threats, abuse, false promises, withholding documents
- **Exploits:** Labor, sex, marriage, military, organ removal

## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

### CONTACT THE NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

Do you **want to get out of the life?**  
Are you being **forced to work** against your will?  
Or **threatened or tricked** by your boss?  
**Do you know someone who may be?**



#### CALL

1-888-373-7888



#### TEXT

"BeFree" (233733)



#### LIVE CHAT

HumanTraffickingHotline.org

- ✓ Get help.
- ✓ Report a tip.
- ✓ Find services.
- ✓ Learn about your options.

24/7 • Toll free • Confidential • 200+ languages



Polaris received \$1.75 million through competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #95001134-01-01. The project will be financed with 43.75% of federal funds and 56.25% (\$2.25 million) by non-governmental sources. The contents of this flyer are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

OPERATED BY  
**Polaris**

# Myths

- HT perpetrators & victims are strangers
- HT is primarily sex labor
- All sex labor is HT
- HT involves cross-border movement

# Challenges to Research

- Varying definitions of HT
- Clandestine nature
- Victims fear retribution/legal consequences

## Current Research

- **Sociology:** Ethnographic interviews with survivors
- **Economics:** Modelling HT as a labor market (Wheaton et al., 2010)
- **Finance:** Tracking banking patterns to uncover HT rings (Polaris FIU)

# Available Data

- Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (2002 - present)
  - Sources: Trafficking Hotline, Law Enforcement case management
  - Variables: Year of report, victim demographics, means of control, exploit, relationship to recruiter
  - Strength: Global in scope, merges data from contributing countries
  - Weakness: K-anonymized for privacy
  - Also offers “Synthetic Dataset” via differential privacy
- NIBRS/UCR: U.S. Law Enforcement reports



## Next Steps

- Exogenous variation
- Unrestricted data