



## DATA COLLECTION PROFILE

October 2023, NCJ 307345

# Human Trafficking Data Collection Activities, 2023

The Combat Human Trafficking Act of 2015 (CHTA) (34 U.S.C. § 20709(e)) requires the director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to prepare an annual report on human trafficking. The report must include information on the following:

- arrests for human trafficking offenses by state law enforcement officers
- prosecutions of individuals in state courts for human trafficking offenses
- convictions of individuals in state courts for human trafficking offenses
- sentences imposed on individuals convicted in state courts for human trafficking offenses.

At the federal level, human trafficking offenses are defined according to federal statutes that include peonage, slavery, forced labor, sex trafficking,

sexual exploitation and other abuse of children, and transportation for illegal sexual activity and related crimes. The classification of human trafficking offenses varies among state and local jurisdictions.

BJS obtains information on human trafficking in several data collections, including those on victim service providers, law enforcement, prosecution and adjudication, and corrections. The information in each data collection contributes to a general profile of human trafficking in the United States. Some differences exist across collections due to varying definitions of human trafficking, data availability, and other reasons.

This report describes the BJS data collections and activities that include various offenses that may be categorized as human trafficking, and it presents the most recent statistical findings.

## COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES DURING 2022 AND 2023

In 2022 and 2023, BJS continued to examine options to modify its existing data collections and implement new approaches to report the data required by CHTA. In addition, BJS assessed the availability of data on human trafficking among criminal justice agencies at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels.

### Law enforcement

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is required to collect human trafficking data under the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008. As a result, the FBI established the **Human Trafficking (UCR-HT)** data collection as part of its Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program in 2013.

The UCR collects data on human trafficking based on the following definitions:

- Commercial sex acts—inducing a person by force, fraud, or coercion to participate in commercial sex acts, or in which the person induced to perform such act(s) has not attained 18 years of age.
- Involuntary servitude—obtaining of a person(s) through recruitment, harboring, transportation, or provision, and subjecting such persons by force, fraud, or coercion into involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (not to include commercial sex acts).

State UCR programs and local law enforcement agencies that participate in this collection provide counts of offenses, case clearances, and arrests for human trafficking for the purpose of commercial sex acts or involuntary servitude. Law enforcement agencies document these human trafficking offenses in their record management systems.



In 2021, the FBI UCR Program transitioned from a summary-based system of offense counts to an incident-based system. Agencies report crime data, including data on human trafficking offenses, to the FBI's **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**. NIBRS collects more information on both types of human trafficking offenses than the summary-based system.

For each incident, NIBRS collects the demographic characteristics of the victims, the number of associated victims and offenders, the location and time of the incident, and whether a weapon was present. NIBRS also provides information on whether the incident was cleared by an arrest.

Beginning with the 2021 data year, national estimates of crime known to law enforcement were based on NIBRS data. To calculate national estimates, BJS and the FBI partnered with RTI International to establish a new set of statistical procedures to incorporate the NIBRS data structure and account for agencies that did not report data to the system. In October 2022, the FBI published the first set of national estimates derived from the new methodology.<sup>1</sup>

The latest data on human trafficking is available through the FBI's Crime Data Explorer at <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov>.

Crime statistics published by the FBI only represent offenses known to law enforcement, and therefore do not account for all human trafficking that occurs in the United States.

In 2019, BJS administered the **2019 Census of Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies (CTLEA)**, the first BJS data collection focused solely on tribal law enforcement agencies. The CTLEA collected data for calendar year 2018 from tribally operated law enforcement agencies; police agencies operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and the Alaska State Police, which reported for the Village Public Safety Officers, who provide services to Alaska Native villages that are under the jurisdiction of the Alaska State Police.

In 2018, nearly 10% of tribally operated law enforcement agencies made at least one sex trafficking arrest and 3% made at least one labor trafficking arrest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For more information, see *Estimation Procedures for Crimes in the United States Based on NIBRS Data* (NCJ 305108, BJS, August 2022), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/epcusbnibrstd.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>See *Tribal Law Enforcement in the United States, 2018* (NCJ 306022, BJS, July 2023), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/tleus18.pdf>.

## Prosecution and adjudication

BJS has sponsored periodic data collections on criminal trial and appellate litigation in state courts since 1986. Its current collection, **Criminal Cases in State Courts (CCSC)**, is an administrative collection that gathers data on the number and attributes of cases closed in state trial courts of general jurisdiction. The CCSC is an effort to examine data on the processing of felony cases in state courts and to collect case information from electronic court records. BJS will use this collection to produce national estimates of activities in state courts and to provide information on case characteristics and outcomes.

Through the CCSC, BJS requests case-level data extracts from case management systems maintained by state courts. These case-level data contain detailed information about the matter before the court, including defendant demographic information, the type of legal representation of the defendant, the court charges at the time of both case filing and disposition, adjudication status of the case, and the sentence imposed (when applicable). The detailed data can be used to answer a variety of questions about the work of state courts and the administration of justice in those institutions.

After initial data collection and processing are complete, BJS will be able to assess the extent to which the CCSC can provide information on prosecutions, convictions, and sentences imposed by state courts for human trafficking offenses. BJS will also be able to examine the feasibility of identifying the non-trafficking criminal charges most commonly associated with human trafficking cases.

The **Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP)** compiles statistical information on defendants charged with a human trafficking offense across stages of the federal criminal justice system. FJSP collects, standardizes, and reports on administrative data received from six federal justice agencies: the U.S. Marshals Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), and U.S. Sentencing Commission.<sup>3</sup>

Human trafficking offenses are defined according to the three categories of federal statutes: peonage, slavery, forced labor, and sex trafficking, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1581-1595; sexual exploitation and other abuse of children, 18 U.S.C.

<sup>3</sup>For more information on the FJSP, see *Federal Justice Statistics, 2021* (NCJ 305127, BJS, December 2022), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/fjs21.pdf>.

§§ 2251-2251A; and transportation for illegal sexual activity and related crimes, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2422-2423.3.<sup>4</sup>

Through the FJSP, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys provides to BJS federal prosecution data, including the title and section of the U.S. criminal code (used to identify human trafficking by statute) and whether U.S. attorneys decided to prosecute the suspect. BJS also receives data from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, including the number of defendants convicted and sentenced for a human trafficking offense and the length of the imposed prison term.

The number of persons investigated and prosecuted for a human trafficking offense increased from fiscal year 2011 to 2021. A total of 2,027 persons were referred to U.S. attorneys for human trafficking offenses in fiscal year 2021 (figure 1), a 49% increase from the 1,360 persons referred in 2011. The number of persons prosecuted for human trafficking more than doubled from 2011 to 2021 (from 729 persons to 1,672 persons, respectively). The number of persons convicted of a human trafficking offense increased from 464 persons in 2011 to 809 persons in 2021.

Of the 1,197 defendants charged with any of the three types of human trafficking offenses in fiscal year 2021 (table 1)—

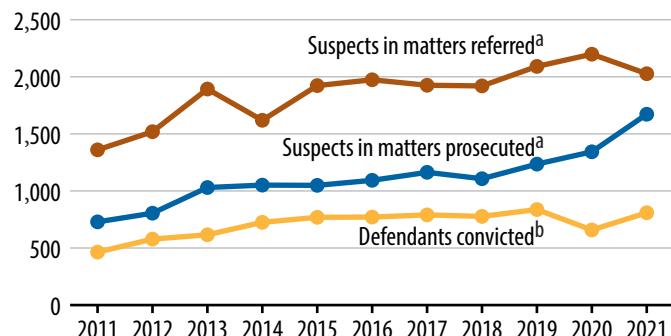
- 92% were male
- 60% were white
- 20% were black
- 16% were Hispanic
- 95% were U.S. citizens
- 68% had no prior convictions.

Of the 201 defendants charged with peonage, slavery, forced labor, and sex trafficking, 77% were male and 58% were black. In comparison, of the 582 defendants charged with sexual exploitation and other abuse of children, 92% were male and 72% were white.

<sup>4</sup>For more information on human trafficking offenses, see *Federal Prosecution of Human-Trafficking Cases, 2015* (NCJ 251390, BJS, June 2018), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/fphtc15.pdf>.

## FIGURE 1

### Human trafficking suspects referred to and prosecuted by U.S. attorneys and human trafficking defendants convicted, fiscal years 2011–2021



Note: See appendix table 1 for counts.

<sup>a</sup>Includes suspects in matters whose lead charge was a human trafficking crime under a substantive federal statute or program category. The lead charge is the primary basis for referring the matter to a U.S. attorney and is usually, but not always, the charge with the greatest possible sentence.

<sup>b</sup>Includes felony defendants, Class A misdemeanants in cases handled by U.S. district judges or U.S. magistrates, and other misdemeanants in cases handled by U.S. district judges, where the most serious charge was a human trafficking crime under a substantive federal statute. The most serious offense is the one with the greatest statutory-maximum sentence at case termination, as determined by court personnel. Defendants in more than one case are counted separately.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, based on data from the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, National Legal Information Office Network System and Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Criminal Master File, fiscal years 2011–2021.

**TABLE 1****Characteristics of human trafficking defendants in cases charged in U.S. district court, fiscal year 2021**

Defendant characteristics	Total		Peonage, slavery, forced labor, and sex trafficking		Sexual exploitation and other abuse of children		Transportation for illegal sex activity	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Total</b>	1,197	100%	201	100%	582	100%	414	100%
<b>Sex</b>								
Male	1,095	91.6%	154	76.6%	534	91.9%	407	98.3%
Female	101	8.4	47	23.4	47	8.1	7	1.7
<b>Race/Hispanic origin*</b>								
White	665	60.2%	38	21.2%	388	71.7%	239	62.2%
Black	217	19.7	103	57.5	61	11.3	53	13.8
Hispanic	180	16.3	33	18.4	73	13.5	74	19.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	19	1.7	2	1.1	7	1.3	10	2.6
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander	23	2.1	3	1.7	12	2.2	8	2.1
<b>Age</b>								
18–24	174	14.6%	38	18.9%	84	14.5%	52	12.6%
25–34	404	33.8	77	38.3	195	33.6	132	31.9
35–49	418	35.0	55	27.4	217	37.4	146	35.3
50–64	175	14.6	26	12.9	81	13.9	68	16.4
65 or older	25	2.1	5	2.5	4	0.7	16	3.9
Median age	35 years		33 years		35 years		36 years	
<b>Citizenship</b>								
U.S. citizen	1,128	95.2%	181	91.0%	556	96.5%	391	95.4%
Documented non-U.S. citizen	23	1.9	7	3.5	9	1.6	7	1.7
Undocumented non-U.S. citizen	34	2.9	11	5.5	11	1.9	12	2.9
<b>Prior conviction</b>								
No prior convictions	808	67.6%	100	49.8%	416	71.6%	292	70.5%
Prior misdemeanor only	165	13.8	35	17.4	62	10.7	68	16.4
Prior felony conviction	223	18.7	66	32.8	103	17.7	54	13.0

Note: The unit of count was a defendant interviewed, investigated, or supervised by federal pretrial services. Data were missing for the following: sex (1), race/Hispanic origin (93), age (1), citizenship (12), and prior conviction (1).

\*Excludes persons of Hispanic origin, unless specified.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, based on data from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Probation and Pretrial Services Automated Case Tracking System, fiscal year 2021.

## Corrections

The **National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP)** collects person-level administrative data annually on state prisons for participating jurisdictions, including custody status, admissions, releases, and parole entries and discharges. BJS has implemented a standardized offense code for human trafficking. This code includes state offenses for sex trafficking or transport, child prostitution, forced labor trafficking, human trafficking, and similar crimes.

The most recent NCRP data available are for the year 2021. For the 46 states that reported for that year—

- 36 states reported at least one person with a human trafficking offense admitted to, held in, or released from custody or post-custody community supervision
- 570 state prison admissions were for a human trafficking offense
- 490 persons were released from state prison after serving a sentence for a human trafficking offense
- 1,657 persons were in the custody of a state prison serving a sentence for a human trafficking offense at yearend

- 171 persons who had been imprisoned for a human trafficking offense began a term of post-custody community supervision
- 136 persons who had been imprisoned for a human trafficking offense exited their term of post-custody community supervision.

Thirty-six states reported to the NCRP at least one prison admission involving a human trafficking offense for each year between 2017 and 2021. The percentage of admissions related to human trafficking increased each year during this period (**table 2**).

**TABLE 2**  
**Admissions to state prison for human trafficking in 36 states, 2017–2021**

Year	Number	Percent	Total admissions
2017	474	0.08%	584,013
2018	544	0.10	563,942
2019	627	0.12	508,648
2020	398	0.13	300,506
2021	570	0.16	356,642

Note: Includes admissions for the 36 states that reported at least one prison admission involving a human trafficking offense for each year from 2017 to 2021.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP), 2017–2021.

## PREVIOUSLY RELEASED BJS REPORTS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- *Human-Trafficking Offenses Handled by State Attorneys General Offices, 2018*, NCJ 254803, March 2021
- *Federal Prosecution of Human-Trafficking Cases, 2015*, NCJ 251390, June 2018
- *Federal Prosecution of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Cases, 2004–2013*, NCJ 250746, October 2017

## APPENDIX TABLE 1

### Numbers for figure 1: Human trafficking suspects referred to and prosecuted by U.S. attorneys and human trafficking defendants convicted, fiscal years 2011–2021

Fiscal year	Suspects in matters referred <sup>a</sup>	Suspects in matters prosecuted <sup>a</sup>	Defendants convicted <sup>b</sup>
2011	1,360	729	464
2012	1,519	805	578
2013	1,893	1,030	616
2014	1,619	1,051	725
2015	1,923	1,049	769
2016	1,974	1,093	771
2017	1,926	1,163	790
2018	1,920	1,107	777
2019	2,091	1,235	837
2020	2,198	1,343	658
2021	2,027	1,672	809
Percent change, 2011–2021	49.0%	129.4%	74.4%
Percent change, 2020–2021	-7.8%	24.5%	22.9%

<sup>a</sup>Includes suspects in matters whose lead charge was a human trafficking crime under a substantive federal statute or program category. The lead charge is the primary basis for referring the matter to a U.S. attorney and is usually, but not always, the charge with the greatest possible sentence.

<sup>b</sup>Includes felony defendants, Class A misdemeanants in cases handled by U.S. district judges or U.S. magistrates, and other misdemeanants in cases handled by U.S. district judges, where the most serious charge was a human trafficking crime under a substantive federal statute. The most serious offense is the one with the greatest statutory-maximum sentence at case termination, as determined by court personnel. Defendants in more than one case are counted separately.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, based on data from the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, National Legal Information Office Network System and Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Criminal Master File, fiscal years 2011–2021.



The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring crime, criminal victimization, criminal offenders, victims of crime, correlates of crime, and the operation of criminal and civil justice systems at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. BJS collects, analyzes, and disseminates reliable statistics on crime and justice systems in the United States, supports improvements to state and local criminal justice information systems, and participates with national and international organizations to develop and recommend national standards for justice statistics. Kevin M. Scott, PhD, is the acting director.

This report was written by Amy D. Lauger. Danielle Kaeble and Mark Motivans contributed to this report. Stephanie Mueller verified the report.

Stephanie Eckroth edited the report. Jeffrey Link produced the report.

October 2023, NCJ 307345



NCJ 307345

**Office of Justice Programs**  
**Building Solutions • Supporting Communities • Advancing Justice**  
[www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov)