

# Human Trafficking

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Human trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.

## Legal Definitions

### ***Federal Law***

Sex trafficking - The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age. (22 USC § 7102)

- Commercial sex act - Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person. (22 USC § 7102)
- Coercion - Threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act that would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. (22 USC § 7102)

Labor trafficking - The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (22 USC § 7102)

- Debt bondage - The status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined. (22 USC § 7102)
- Involuntary servitude - Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. (22 USC § 7102)

Learn more about federal anti-trafficking laws [here](#).

### ***Maryland Law***

A person may not knowingly:

- Take or cause another to be taken, place, cause to be placed, harbor, persuade, induce, entice, or encourage another to be taken to or placed in any place for prostitution;
- Receive consideration to procure for or place in a house of prostitution or elsewhere another with the intent of causing the other to engage in prostitution or assignation;
- Engage in a device, scheme, or continuing course of conduct intended to cause another to believe that if the other did not take part in a sexually explicit performance, the other or a third person would suffer physical restraint or serious physical harm; OR
- Destroy, conceal, remove, confiscate, or possess an actual or purported passport, immigration document, or government identification document of another while otherwise violating or attempting to violate this subsection. (Criminal Law § 3-1102)
- In 2023, Maryland passed HB297/SB292 establishing safe harbor rules against criminal prosecution or juvenile proceedings against minors who are victims of sex trafficking and commit lower-level crimes.<sup>1</sup>

For the full Maryland sex trafficking law, please click [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Criminal Law - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response, Md. H.B. 297, S.B. 292, 445<sup>th</sup> Gen. Assemb. (Md. 2023).

## National Statistics

- In 2023, the FBI and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) located **59** minor victims of child sex trafficking and **59 missing** children, and identified or arrested **126** traffickers and suspects of child sexual exploitation in Operation Cross Country XIII—a nationwide effort targeting underage human trafficking.<sup>2</sup>
  - Operation Cross Crossing is part of the FBI’s Innocence Lost National Initiative, created in 2003, that has since resulted in over **6,600** child identifications and locations.<sup>3</sup>
- NCMEC estimates that, in 2022, of the more than **25,000 endangered** runaways reported to NCMEC, **1 in 6** of them were likely sex trafficking victims.<sup>4</sup>
- Up to **40%** of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+, and are **3-7x** more likely than their heterosexual peers to engage in survival sex: the act of trading sexual acts in order to meet basic survival needs.<sup>5</sup>
- **56%** of the active federal criminal cases in 2022 against defendants charged with sex trafficking were sex trafficking cases involving minors.<sup>6</sup>
- The National Congress of American Indians found in 2015 that, based on a survey of 4 sites, an estimated **40%** of women involved in sex trafficking identify as American Indian, Alaska Native or First Nations, despite Native women representing 10% or less of the general population in the studied communities.<sup>7</sup>
  - In 2013, Lisa Brunner of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, summarized the problem to Congress as such:  
“Native women experience violent victimization at a higher rate than any other U.S. population. Congressional findings are that Native American and Alaska Native women are raped 34.1%, **more than 1 in 3**, will be raped in their lifetime, 64%, more than 6 in 10, will be physically assaulted. Native women are stalked more than twice the rate of other women. Native women are murdered at more than **10 times** the national average. Non-Indians commit **88%** of violent crimes against Native women. Given the above statistical data and the historical roots of violence against Native women, the level of human trafficking, given the sparse data collected, can only equate to the current epidemic levels we face within our tribal communities and Nations.”<sup>8</sup>
- In Fiscal Year 2021, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received **51,073** contacts that led to the identification of over **10,000** potential human trafficking cases.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2022, there were **183** new cases of human trafficking filed in the federal court system, which is a **24%** decrease from 2021. This is the second consecutive year of a decline in federal prosecutions. **97%** of these cases involved sex trafficking.<sup>10</sup>
- For the past 23 years, the Internet has remained the most common location for recruitment of victims of trafficking and solicitation of buyers of sexual services.<sup>11</sup>
- Sex trafficking involving online exploitation reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline increased from around **400** situations to **more than 600** situations during the first 6-months of the pandemic, demonstrating how quickly traffickers adapt to challenges to find new ways of exploitation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “Operation Cross Country XIII Leads to Identification/Location of Adolescent Victims.” Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/operation-cross-country-2023>

<sup>3</sup> “Innocence Lost National Initiative and Operation Independence Day 2019.” Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/washingtondc/news/press-releases/innocence-lost-national-initiative-and-operation-independence-day-2019>

<sup>4</sup> “The Issues – Child Sex Trafficking.” National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Retrieved from <http://www.missingkids.com/theissues/trafficking>

<sup>5</sup> “The Typology of Modern Slavery.” Polarisproject.org, Polaris, Mar. 2017, [polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris-Typology-of-Modern-Slavery.pdf](https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris-Typology-of-Modern-Slavery.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Lane, Lindsay et. al. Federal Human Trafficking Report. Human Trafficking Institute, 2022. Retrieved on October 13, 2023. [https://traffickinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2022-Federal-Human-Trafficking-Report-WEB-Spreads\\_compressed.pdf](https://traffickinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2022-Federal-Human-Trafficking-Report-WEB-Spreads_compressed.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Tribal Insights Brief, Spring 2016, Human & Sex Trafficking: Trends and Responses across Indian Country. National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center, 2016. Retrieved on January 13, 2020 <http://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/TraffickingBrief.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Kane-Hartnett, Liza. Trafficking in Tribal Nations: the impact of sex trafficking on Native Americans. Human Trafficking Search, 2018. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/traffickingofnativeamericans>

<sup>9</sup> “National Report for 2021.” National Human Trafficking Hotline. Retrieved from <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/resources/2021-national-report>

<sup>10</sup> Lane, Lindsay et. al. Federal Human Trafficking Report. Human Trafficking Institute, 2022. Retrieved on October 13, 2023. [https://traffickinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2022-Federal-Human-Trafficking-Report-WEB-Spreads\\_compressed.pdf](https://traffickinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2022-Federal-Human-Trafficking-Report-WEB-Spreads_compressed.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> “Sexual Exploitation During the Pandemic, A Snapshot: April 2021.” Polaris Project. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Sexual-Exploitation-During-the-Pandemic.pdf>

## Human Trafficking in Maryland

Sex trafficking in Maryland occurs in a variety of locations, including rural and urban areas, and many of these venues operate in plain sight. Maryland's central location makes it a prime destination for human traffickers, as well as a pass-through state between major cities such as Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and New York. With heavy transportation along I-95, many truck and rest stops, and major airports, it is easy for sex traffickers to operate.

In 2021, The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) identified approximately **118** cases of human trafficking in the state of Maryland, **97** of which were reported to involve incidents of human sex trafficking.<sup>13</sup>

Between June 2013 and July 2022, there were **931** reports of child sex trafficking screened by Maryland DSS CPS Screening Units.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to Maryland's Safe Harbor law, between 2010 and 2020, there were **1098** arrests in Maryland of young people ages 21 and under for Prostitution and Commercialized Vice.<sup>15</sup> Of these arrests, **110** were of minor children (ages 17 and under), including **33** arrests for prostitution of children 15 years old and younger.<sup>16</sup>

## Human Trafficking Resources in Maryland

- To report a tip or receive services, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-888-373-7888**, or text **HELP** or **INFO** to **233-733**.
- MCASA's Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) provides direct legal services for survivors of sex trafficking. For more information, contact SALI at **301-565-2277**, or toll-free at **877-496-SALI**.
- Rape Crisis & Recovery Centers offer multidisciplinary teams of professionals to support and respond to sexual violence. To find your local Rape Crisis Center, visit: <https://mcasa.org/Survivors/Find-a-Rape-Crisis-Center-or-Maryland-211>.

## MCASA's Involvement

Historically, MCASA coordinated a statewide initiative with rape crisis centers across Maryland, referred to as the Coordinated Action Against Sex Trafficking (CAAST), to build statewide capacity to provide services to sex trafficking survivors. Six rape crisis centers were part of the inaugural CAAST initiative and since then, the project grew to include 11 rape crisis centers, covering 18 jurisdictions across the state. The rape crisis centers in the original CAAST network now each have an in-house human trafficking coordinator. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, MCASA's role has evolved to a focus on helping service providers grow and sustain their programs for survivors through expert trainings, technical assistance, and continued development of best practices and approaches.

Please visit [MCASA's Human Trafficking](https://www.mcasa.org/Providers/Resources-on-Specific-Topics/Human-Sex-Trafficking) webpage for more information about human sex trafficking in Maryland: <https://www.mcasa.org/Providers/Resources-on-Specific-Topics/Human-Sex-Trafficking>.

<sup>13</sup> "Maryland." National Human Trafficking Hotline. Retrieved from <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics/maryland>

<sup>14</sup> 2013-2021 Child Electronic Social Services Information Exchange (CHESSIE), Child Juvenile & Adult Management System (CIAMS); DHS- SSA, as analyzed and reported by the Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative, University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work.

<sup>15</sup> 2013-2021 Child Electronic Social Services Information Exchange (CHESSIE), Child Juvenile & Adult Management System (CIAMS); DHS- SSA, as analyzed and reported by the Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative, University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*