

# COUNTERING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a critical connector that can both facilitate and prevent human trafficking. Human traffickers exploit roadways, railways, waterways, and airways in urban, rural, and Tribal communities across the United States to recruit and transport their victims. Every year, millions of adults and children are held against their will and trafficked into forced labor and commercial sex.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) combats human trafficking by engaging public and private sector stakeholders to empower transportation employees and travelers to prevent, identify, and report suspected instances of human trafficking. Major functions of DOT's Counter-Trafficking Initiative include:



**Strategic Leadership:** Implementing a consistent, multimodal approach to counter-trafficking policy and programs across DOT informed by Administration priorities and the DOT Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking.



**Public Awareness & Education:** Providing public and private industry stakeholders with public awareness and educational resources on how to identify, prevent, and report human trafficking.



**Global Engagement:** Developing and encouraging multimodal counter-trafficking policies informed by the DOT Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking, lived experience experts, and industry.

## FUNDING

DOT awarded over \$12 million in grants through the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to support state counter-trafficking efforts through driver's license standards and programs, and \$5.4 million in transit grants through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to address public safety, including human trafficking. The Department's annual \$50,000 Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award aims to incentivize innovative solutions to combat human trafficking in the transportation industry, and to share those innovations with the broader community.



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**PUT THE  
BRAKES ON | HUMAN  
TRAFFICKING.**

# Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking

The USDOT Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking (TLAHT) initiative is comprised of transportation and travel industry stakeholders working jointly to maximize their collective impact in combating human trafficking. The partnership focuses on five key areas and connects transportation stakeholders to available resources on industry leadership, industry training and education, policy development, public awareness, and information sharing and analysis.



## Blue Lightning Initiative

The USDOT and Department of Homeland Security's Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI), trains aviation industry personnel to identify potential traffickers and human trafficking victims, and to report their suspicions to federal law enforcement. To date, over 150 aviation industry partners have trained more than 350,000 employees through BLI. Participation is open to any U.S. aviation industry organization, and to international air carriers serving the United States.



## Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking

The USDOT Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking (ACHT) develops triennial counter-trafficking reports with recommendations and best practices on countering human trafficking across the transportation sector. The 2024 ACHT report includes 123 recommendations for the U.S. Congress, USDOT, other federal agencies, States, private and local transportation entities, law enforcement, associations, non-governmental organizations, and technology companies.



## The Intersection of Human Trafficking and Transportation

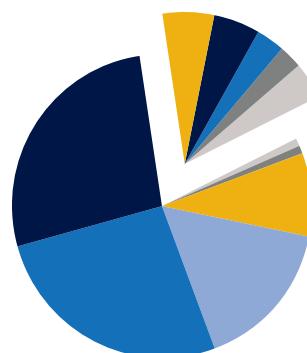
According to the International Labour Organization, 27.6 million people were victims of human trafficking in 2021, including 77 percent through forced labor and 23 percent through commercial sexual exploitation. Their average trafficking situation is 15.4 months. The majority of forced labor victims are male, and the majority of commercial sexual exploitation victims are women and girls. In the United States, adults and children are exploited through human trafficking across every state and territory, and in urban, rural, and tribal areas. In 2023, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received a total of 30,162 substantive signals across the United States and received reports of 9,619 potential human trafficking cases referencing 16,999 potential victims. Research addressing transport-specific intersections include the following studies of survivors of human trafficking:

### METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION USED TO CROSS GLOBAL BORDER POINTS

In 2020, the International Organization for Migration's Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative analyzed data from over 80,000 individuals subjected to human trafficking across 171 countries. The analysis revealed that in international human trafficking cases:

**80% use official crossings:**

- 34% Bus
- 33% Train
- 20% Airplane
- 11% Car
- 1% Boat
- 1% Other

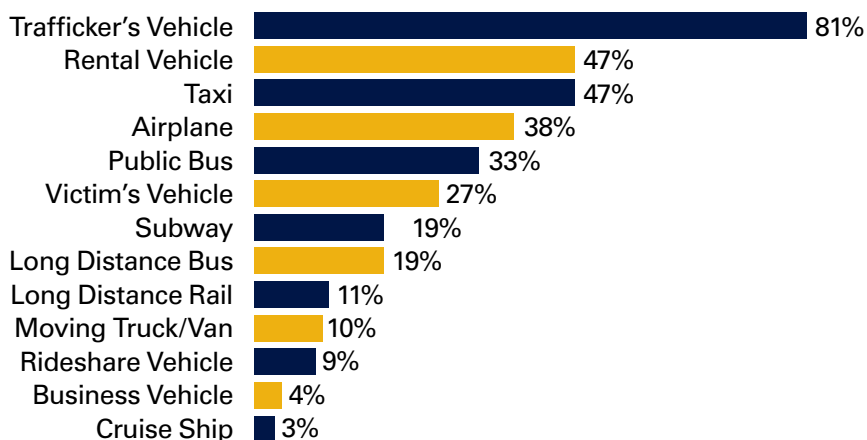


**20% use unofficial crossings:**

- 28% Car
- 26% Bus
- 15% Train
- 12% Boat
- 19% Other

### METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION USED DURING EXPLOITATION

A 2018 Polaris study of 104 survivors found that during their experience, the victims or traffickers used these modes of transportation:



### SURVIVOR TRANSPORTATION USE

Survivors of human trafficking report being subjected to the crime through all modes of transport. The NGO United Against Slavery conducted a National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST) in 2021. The 107 survivor respondents utilized transportation:

**81%**  
During Recruitment

**76%**  
During Course of Exploitation

**52%**  
During Exit or Escape From Situation

# National Human Trafficking Hotline

## 1-888-373-7888 | Text 233733 or BEFREE

24/7 · Toll-Free · Confidential · 200+ Languages

Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline to report a tip regarding a suspected human trafficking incident, connect with a service provider in your area, or to request training, technical assistance, or access resources. The Hotline provides confidential help regardless of immigration status.

To report an incident to law enforcement, **call 911 for immediate danger**, or call the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line at 866-347-2423.



### **Learn the Signs** ▶ [www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/indicators](https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/indicators)

Understand the risk factors, recruitment, types, and indicators of human trafficking. Human trafficking victims are often overlooked because people do not recognize signs of the crime. When travelers and transportation employees know what to look for, they can serve as a community's eyes and ears. Recognizing the indicators of human trafficking is the first step in identifying potential victims.



### **Report a Tip** ▶ [www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/report](https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/report)

Report suspected instances of human trafficking based on multiple, objective indicators. Human trafficking victims can be of any age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, religion, national origin, education level, or citizenship status. Our reporting page provides information on reporting guidelines and hotlines.



### **Become a Partner** ▶ [www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/TLAHT-pledge](https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/TLAHT-pledge)

Take an organizational stand against human trafficking by signing the TLAHT pledge and committing to train your employees, raise awareness, and track data. To make your stakeholders aware of your intention and actions and call your organization to act, you can create a counter-trafficking video and make a statement to set an example for your employees and stakeholders.



### **Access Resources** ▶ [www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/TLAHT-campaign](https://www.transportation.gov/stop-human-trafficking/TLAHT-campaign)

The TLAHT bilingual training and awareness campaign aims to educate and empower travelers and employees across all modes of transportation to recognize and report suspected instances of human trafficking.

#### **TRAIN YOUR TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES**

Empower your employees through training to learn common human trafficking indicators and methods of reporting. The bilingual TLAHT "Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector Awareness Training" underscores the intersection of human trafficking and transportation, provides general and transport-specific indicators of human trafficking, and how to report a tip.

#### **RAISE AWARENESS**

Raise awareness among the traveling public using bilingual TLAHT Awareness Campaign materials that are tailored for use in airplanes and airports, buses and bus stations, trains and rail stations, rest areas and travel centers, ports, and other places where human trafficking may occur, and include a QR code linking to mode-specific indicators and reporting methods.



**Scan this code to learn more.**

**Visit:** [www.transportation.gov/TLAHT/campaign](https://www.transportation.gov/TLAHT/campaign)

**Contact:** [trafficking@dot.gov](mailto:trafficking@dot.gov)



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