

# 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 (USDOT) combats human trafficking by engaging public and private sector stakeholders to empower transportation employees and travelers to identify and report suspected instances of human trafficking. Major functions of USDOT's Counter-Trafficking Initiative include:



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



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



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

## FUNDING

USDOT 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 and crime prevention, including human trafficking. The Department's annual Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award provides cash prizes 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 HUMAN  
BRAKES ON | 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. TLAHT pledge commit to train their employees, raise public awareness, and track data. The survivor-informed TLAHT training and awareness campaign empower travelers and employees across all modes of transportation to recognize and report suspected instances of human trafficking. TLAHT Awareness Campaign materials include person-centered signage in addition to mode-specific posters, pocket cards, visor cards, social media graphics, logos, PSAs, toolkits, and an infographic that emphasize reporting methods and include QR codes where viewers can learn more, including mode-specific indicators.



## Blue Lightning Initiative

The USDOT and Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI), trains aviation industry personnel to identify potential traffickers and human trafficking victims, and to report their suspicions to DHS' Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line. To date, BLI partners have trained 150 aviation industry partners have trained over 400,000 employees. BLI's interactive training video includes anonymous in-flight and on the ground reporting methods, indicators, a pocket guide, an indicator card, and an awareness poster for employee break rooms. Participation is open to any domestic and international aviation industry organization.



## 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

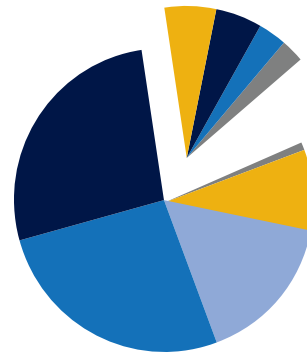
According to the International Labour Organization, 27.6 million people were victims of human trafficking in 2021, including 77 percent through forced labor and 23 percent through commercial sexual exploitation. Their average trafficking situation is 15.4 months. The majority of forced labor victims 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 2024, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received a total of 32,309 substantive signals across the United States and received reports of 11,999 potential human trafficking cases referencing 21,865 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

The International Organization for Migration's Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative analyzed data between 2002 and 2024 from over 80,000 individuals subjected to human trafficking across 178 countries. The analysis revealed that in international human trafficking cases:

**80% use official crossings:**

- 31% Bus
- 28% Airplane
- 24% Train
- 14% Car
- 1% Boat

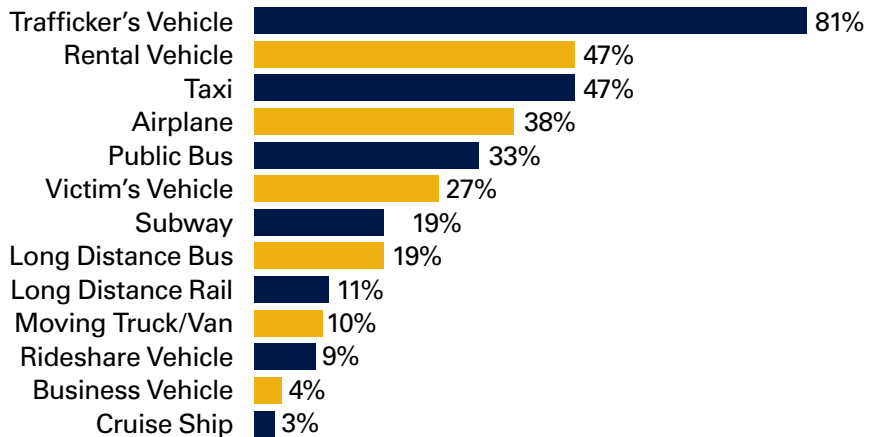


**20% use unofficial crossings:**

- 66% Car
- 17% Bus
- 2% Train
- 4% Boat

## 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:



# National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call: 1-888-373-7888 | Text: 233733 or BEFREE

Chat: [humantraffickinghotline.org/chat](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/chat)

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

**For immediate danger, call 911.**

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.



## **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, sex, race, ethnicity, ability, 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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