



RESEARCH REPORT

Findings from an Evaluation of the Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Forces to Combat Human Trafficking

Evelyn F. McCoy

Paige S. Thompson

Jeanette Hussemann

William Adams

Krista White

Roderick Taylor

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Introduction

In 2000, the United States government started taking substantial steps to address human trafficking, most notably with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which provided methods for *prosecuting cases, protecting survivors, and preventing trafficking*. Since then, Congress has expanded the federal strategy to include *partnerships*, recognizing the importance of nongovernmental organizations in addressing human trafficking. In 2010, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) launched the Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking Program to help communities develop multidisciplinary task forces that employ victim-centered approaches to identify survivors, provide services, and investigate and prosecute all forms of human trafficking.

This study, the Evaluation of the Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) to Combat Human Trafficking, funded by the National Institute of Justice, sought to understand federally funded ECM task forces' impact on identifying and assisting human trafficking survivors and investigating and prosecuting human trafficking, and to analyze differences in various task force implementation models (e.g., structure, organization, and other key characteristics) to understand which task force models and features contribute most to specific outcomes. In addition, this study sought to gain insight into the investigative, prosecutorial, and victim service practices among ECM task forces, challenges and barriers ECM task forces face in addressing human trafficking, and best practices and recommendations for successfully developing and implementing ECM task forces across the United States.

First, we state the problem that illustrates the need for a deeper understanding of how places are addressing human trafficking. Second, we present our methodology and background information on the participating ECM task forces. Third, we review the study's major findings. Lastly, we review limitations and overall conclusions.

Statement of the Problem

The US criminal justice response to human trafficking has improved since the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations that have broadened the original statute, expanded enforcement measures, added services for survivors, and expanded prevention programs. Mandates have included holistic training for federal law enforcement officers and prosecutors, specialized human trafficking training and technical assistance for victim service providers, specialized techniques for investigating human trafficking, and federally funded benefits including health care and immigration assistance for foreign-born human trafficking survivors, regardless of immigration status (Wells 2019). Mainly because of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, all states have adopted laws and policies to prosecute human trafficking cases and provide services to survivors, but significant differences may exist in statutes and policies across jurisdictions (Teigen 2018). Despite legislative gains designed to bolster antitrafficking efforts and protect survivors, many challenges exist in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking cases and in providing adequate services to survivors.

Although the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States is unknown, scholars and practitioners argue that investigations are disproportionately low relative to the number of occurrences. Formal investigations occur in a low number of human trafficking cases, and among cases that are prosecuted, most are not charged as human trafficking (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008). A 2013 study found that only 18 percent of 140 human trafficking cases were prosecuted using existing human trafficking laws (Farrell, Owens, and McDevitt 2014). Misconceptions about human trafficking create additional barriers to addressing the issue. Research has shown that law enforcement and prosecutors may perceive human trafficking as rare or nonexistent in their communities or hold negative views toward survivors, judge their behaviors, view them as complicit in their victimization, or question their credibility and reliability (Aronowitz 2003; Clawson et al. 2008; Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008; Farrell, Owens, and McDevitt 2014; Farrell, Pfeffer, and Bright 2015; Newton, Mulcahy, and Martin 2008; Pourmokhtari 2015; Srikantiah 2007). Additionally, justice system responses can differ vastly depending on the type of trafficking. Notably, most law enforcement efforts have focused on the sex trafficking of US-born children (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008; Farrell, Pfeffer, and Bright 2015). Law enforcement officials struggle to identify labor trafficking, and when they do, suspects are arrested in only half the cases (Owens et al. 2014).

Challenges also exist in the coordinated delivery of services for human trafficking survivors. Reporting to law enforcement is a significant barrier, as survivors may fear law enforcement and being

deported, or have had prior negative interactions with law enforcement (Hussemann et al. 2018; Sheldon-Sherman 2012). This is complicated by the fact that survivors may be initially reluctant to self-identify as victims or seek assistance because of emotional or financial ties to the person who is trafficking them (Reid 2010).

Connecting survivors with services can also be challenging. Despite the significant amount of money dedicated to antitrafficking efforts, victim service providers, survivors, and law enforcement consistently report difficulties finding medical care, transitional and permanent housing, and mental health and substance abuse services (Clawson and Dutch 2008; Hussemann et al. 2018). Culturally appropriate services and services that offer interpreters for non-English speaking survivors are also cited as a common barrier to successful service delivery. Survivors often must rely on victim services that are not specific to human trafficking, such as domestic violence shelters, sexual assault coalitions, and other service providers not tailored to human trafficking and trauma-informed care. Further, survivors continue to interact with health care providers, local Social Security Administration offices, departments of motor vehicles, and other key agencies that are largely untrained on issues related to human trafficking and unaware of how to serve survivors of human trafficking (Clawson and Dutch 2008).

Efforts to address human trafficking have historically lacked coordination across service providers and law enforcement. To address challenges in coordinating system responses to human trafficking, OVC and BJA used funds appropriated through the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to implement a multidisciplinary task force model that was designed to “combat human trafficking by identifying, rescuing, and restoring victims (with a focus on foreign national victims); investigating and prosecuting trafficking crimes, and building awareness around trafficking in the surrounding community” (BJA and OVC 2011, 5). BJA and OVC funded 42 multidisciplinary task forces between 2004 and 2010 and subsequently decided to launch an updated task force model: the Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking (ECM). This new model took a more comprehensive approach that focused not only on foreign national victims, but on combating all forms of trafficking—sex trafficking and labor trafficking of foreign national and US citizens (male and female, and adults and minors). Under the ECM program, two separate awards are made jointly to each jurisdiction selected for funding: one award is made by BJA to a lead law enforcement agency to coordinate the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, and another is made by OVC to a lead victim service provider organization to coordinate the provision of services to all human trafficking victims identified within the geographic area covered by the task force. These two grantees, alongside partners, collaboratively implement the

ECM model and function as a comprehensive, multidisciplinary task force by coordinating its goals, objectives, and activities (BJA and OVC 2011).

This ECM program aims to support the development of effective and sustainable multidisciplinary human trafficking task forces to implement and employ victim-centered approaches to identify survivors of sex and labor trafficking, provide services to survivors, and investigate and prosecute all forms of human trafficking. A key goal of the ECM task forces is to bring together law enforcement and prosecutors at the local, state, and federal levels with service providers, mental health professionals, and labor professionals in a coordinated partnership (BJA 2019).

Relatively little research on federally funded, multidisciplinary antitrafficking task forces (including the ECM task forces) has been conducted, but initial findings suggest that federally funded task forces may be helpful in increasing the number of prosecutions of human trafficking. A 2008 study found that task forces increased federal prosecutions and improved state involvement in trafficking investigations and convictions (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008). Law enforcement officials on task forces were more likely to perceive human trafficking as a problem, have training on human trafficking and investigation protocols in place, make more arrests for trafficking, and follow through with formal charges after an arrest. Ninety-one percent of the task force's law enforcement agencies received human trafficking training and 77 percent had a specialized unit to investigate trafficking cases (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008). A 2012 study of law enforcement responses to human trafficking in sites with task forces and sites without task forces, however, found that sites with federally funded task forces were more likely to have prosecutors attend a training or conference on human trafficking but were not more likely to have greater institutional infrastructure (such as a specialized unit) dedicated to human trafficking or to have prosecutors who were more willing to take human trafficking cases (Farrell et al. 2012). Research also suggests that task forces increase communication and coordination between service providers and law enforcement. In the 2008 study, 82 percent of task force agencies, compared with 49 percent of non-task force agencies, reported that victim services were frequently or occasionally involved in building a trafficking case (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008).

In addition to challenges associated with identifying survivors and prosecuting human trafficking cases, scholars and practitioners working with human trafficking task forces have identified challenges associated with implementing, organizing, and sustaining task forces. These challenges include the temporary nature of task forces caused by grant funding cycles, competing agency allegiances and priorities, tensions across expanding federal jurisdiction and subsuming state duties by federal officers, the conflict of multiple actors operating on the same investigations, and the prioritizing of certain kinds of trafficking cases (domestic minor) over others (labor trafficking) (Farrell et al. 2012).

Methodology

This study is the first federally funded, multisite, mixed-methods evaluation to specifically assess the impact of ECM human trafficking task forces on the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking crimes and on identifying and assisting of survivors. The evaluation sought to understand which task force models and features contribute most to specific case outcomes and to gain insight into ECM investigative, prosecutorial, and victim service practices, challenges, and barriers. Six research questions guided this study:

- How are ECM human trafficking task forces providing comprehensive victim services?
- What approaches and techniques are ECM human trafficking task forces relying on to investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking?
- Which characteristics of human trafficking cases or features of the offense predict case outcomes (such as prosecution)? In addition, how does the presence of certain ECM human trafficking task force elements contribute to those case outcomes?
- What is the impact of ECM human trafficking task forces on addressing human trafficking (in terms of sex and labor trafficking survivors identified and assisted, and cases investigated and prosecuted)?
- Which types of ECM human trafficking task forces perform well and why? Which task force elements (such as task force organization, size, scope, leadership structure, and organizational location) are associated with effective task forces?
- What challenges and barriers are ECM human trafficking task forces facing?

This study relied on three major data sources: (1) in-depth, semistructured interviews with task force stakeholders, (2) closed case files of law enforcement investigations into potential human trafficking, and (3) quarterly administrative performance metrics data from the BJA Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) and the OVC Trafficking Information Management System (TIMS) data.

Semistructured Stakeholder Interviews

We conducted semistructured interviews with 143 task force stakeholders, including 60 law enforcement officials, 23 prosecutors, 55 victim service providers, and 5 other relevant task force

stakeholders (e.g., county government, communications staff) across 10 diverse ECM task forces included in this study. Interviews with task force stakeholders occurred in person during site visits in all but one site, which took place virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours. We identified respondents from each task force in conjunction with the ECM task force coordinator (or another task force point person) and included key task force members (i.e., local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors, victim service providers, task force leads and coordinators, and subcommittee leads and members). In 5 of the 10 sites, the task force lead chose to coordinate interviews across stakeholders; in the remaining 5 sites, the research team conducted direct outreach to stakeholders to arrange interviews.

During interviews, we collected information on task force roles and professional experience, agency background, survivor safety and communication, staff training and community education and awareness efforts, perceptions of the ECM task force (i.e., goals, collaboration, impact, effectiveness, successes), and best practices and recommendations. We tailored some of our questions for specific stakeholders. We asked law enforcement respondents about investigative techniques, proactive operations, referral sources, arrest of survivors, collaboration, techniques for interviewing survivors, and investigation challenges. The prosecutor interview protocol included questions on prosecutorial practices, referral sources, survivor safety and communication, collaboration, evidence criteria, length of prosecution, survivor participation for prosecution, prosecution challenges, and charging practices and outcomes. Lastly, we asked victim service providers about services provided and gaps in services, approach to human trafficking (i.e., referral sources, initial interaction, survivor safety and communication, collaboration, length of services), victim services' delivery challenges, and perceptions of law enforcement.

Following data collection, we transcribed all stakeholder interviews and uploaded them to NVivo, a qualitative analysis software program. Interviews were coded based on a coding scheme derived from the study's interview protocols designed for the three main stakeholder groups: law enforcement, victim service providers, and prosecutors. In addition, 10 percent of the interviews were double coded to ensure intercoder reliability.

Closed Case Files of Law Enforcement Investigations into Human Trafficking

Another key data collection component was the review of closed case files of law enforcement investigations into potential human trafficking across task force sites. We collected and coded data from 226 closed cases (involving 257 suspects and 208 survivors) conducted by law enforcement across eight ECM task forces that agreed to provide these data.¹ For each task force, we requested access to full investigative files for a random sample of 30 to 40 cases that spanned a period before and after the task force received ECM funding. For five task forces, the research team randomly selected cases from a list of cases the task force provided, while for the other three, a law enforcement contact performed the random selection.

Case files typically included police incident reports, interview notes, records of evidence, arrest records, and criminal complaint documents. The research team developed a data collection form to record key information for each case in a standardized manner across sites. For each case file we reviewed, we collected relevant case information (e.g., type and location of human trafficking, how the incident came to the attention of law enforcement, agencies involved in the investigation, type of evidence, and whether minor survivors were involved), demographic information about suspects and survivors, and case disposition and outcome information. We conducted descriptive analyses and performed bivariate analyses (with chi-squared tests of independence) to assess relationships between case-level and suspect variables and case outcomes within task forces. In addition, we ran a multivariate predictive model (logistic regression) to determine which variables were related to the prosecution of human trafficking cases across task forces.

Quarterly Administrative Performance Metrics

To supplement the case-level analysis, we received quarterly administrative performance metrics on law enforcement investigations and prosecutions (PMT) and survivors identified and assisted (TIMS) from BJA and OVC, respectively. We used PMT data to assess the impact of the ECM task forces on the number of human trafficking investigations and prosecutions by analyzing quarterly trends. The TIMS data helped us assess the impact of ECM task forces on the number of human trafficking survivors identified and assisted since the formation of the task force.

ECM Task Force Characteristics

We selected 10 ECM diverse task forces to include in this study, which were selected in coordination with NIJ, BJA, and OVC staff and leadership. When selecting these task forces, we sought variation on several characteristics, including the lead law enforcement agency, ECM grant purpose area, funding year, organizational level (county, city, state), and geographic region. At the time of selection, 29 ECM task forces were active, therefore our sample represents about one-third of all ECM task forces at the time of selection. However, our findings are not representative of all ECM task forces and our findings can only be generalizable to the 10 ECM task forces included in the study.

The 10 ECM task forces included in this study are diverse across several domains. First, five were led on the law enforcement side by the local police department, two were led by sheriffs' offices, and three were led by the state attorney general's office. In addition, two of the task forces were independently chaired, meaning the chairperson of the task force was not an employee of the lead law enforcement agency or the lead victim services organization. All 10 task forces included police departments, prosecutors' offices, and victim service providers as key partners and stakeholders. Additional agencies or actors involved in task forces, which respondents noted were integral to antitrafficking work, included nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, health care agencies, child welfare and family services, education providers, housing and homeless agencies, LGBTQ+ organizations, probation officers, parole and corrections agencies, coalitions and community awareness groups, the governor or attorney general, and federal agencies, such as the US Department of Labor, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the US Department of Homeland Security.

Half the task forces were colocated,² allowing law enforcement, victim service providers, and prosecutors to discuss and collaborate in real time. In addition, half the task forces were newly formed under the ECM grant funding, and the other half had been previously established. The reasons the task forces were formally developed varied: some already had an organization or multidisciplinary team providing services to survivors or focused on human trafficking issues and reached out to law enforcement to collaborate and form a task force, whereas three were formed in response to a specific human trafficking case locally. Three were funded in 2015, five in 2016, and two in 2017. One was located in the Northeast, three were in the West, four were in the South, and two were in the Midwest. Five were organized at the county level, three at the state level, and two at the city or municipal level (table 1).

TABLE 1

ECM Task Force Characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
Lead organization		
Local police department	5	50%
Sheriff's office	2	20%
State attorney general's office	3	30%
ECM grant purpose area		
Purpose area 1 (newly formed task forces)	5	50%
Purpose area 2 (established task forces)	5	50%
Funding cycle		
2015	3	30%
2016	5	50%
2017	2	20%
Organizational level		
County	5	50%
State	3	30%
City or municipality	2	20%
Geographic region		
South	4	40%
West	3	30%
Midwest	2	20%
Northeast	1	10%
Colocation		
Yes	5	50%
No	5	50%
Independently chaired		
Yes	2	20%
No	8	80%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of 10 ECM task force characteristics.

Notes: ECM = Enhanced Collaborative Model. N = 10 task forces.

Task forces differed regarding how often they formally met as a team or larger group. Eight met quarterly, monthly, or bimonthly, whereas two met only semiannually. Most had formed subcommittees or working groups that communicated or met weekly or biweekly and separately from the larger task force meetings. Subcommittees provided the opportunity to focus on specific issues. Common subcommittees included law enforcement; service provision; management; training and outreach; labor trafficking; tribal engagement; legal, legislative, and public outreach; health care; and LGBTQ+ .

Types of Human Trafficking Cases

We analyzed quarterly administrative performance metrics on law enforcement investigations and prosecutions (PMT) and survivors identified and assisted (TIMS) received from BJA and OVC. We analyzed this data to understand the types of human trafficking cases ECM task forces handled and the numbers of survivors they served.

As is evident in table 2, the ECM task forces we examined varied widely in terms of the numbers of investigations into human trafficking they conducted during the study period. This is partly due to variations in the size of the task forces and the jurisdictions covered (some task forces covered entire states, whereas others focused on small counties), and partly to differences in each task force's approach to identifying potential human trafficking and how each classified what constitutes an investigation into human trafficking.³ For example, some task forces focused resources on conducting a large quantity of prostitution stings and undercover operations, whereas for others, most human trafficking investigations emerged through other methods, such as referrals from other government agencies, tips from the community or the national hotline, or through monitoring online websites and social media accounts based on intelligence. It is important to note that the numbers of investigations and prosecutions into human trafficking shown in table 2 and table 3, respectively, for each ECM task force are based on data extracted from BJA's PMT database, which reflect information entered by each task force on a quarterly basis.

According to PMT data provided for the 10 ECM task forces for the period from October 2015 to December 2019, 96 percent of human trafficking investigations were for sex trafficking, 3 percent were for labor trafficking, and 1 percent were for both sex and labor trafficking (table 2).

TABLE 2

Number of Law Enforcement Investigations, by Trafficking Type

	Sex Trafficking		Labor Trafficking		Sex and Labor Trafficking		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
ECM task force							
A	902	94.0%	39	4.1%	19	2.0%	960
B	95	97.9%	2	2.1%	0	0.0%	97
C	100	79.4%	21	16.7%	5	4.0%	126
D	61	80.3%	8	10.5%	7	9.2%	76
E	1,548	99.4%	9	0.6%	1	0.1%	1,558
F	98	89.9%	8	7.3%	3	2.8%	109
G	237	97.5%	6	2.5%	0	0.0%	243
H	69	87.3%	10	12.7%	0	0.0%	79
I	102	88.7%	11	9.6%	2	1.7%	115
J	36	97.3%	1	2.7%	0	0.0%	37
Total	3,248	95.5%	115	3.4%	37	1.1%	3,400

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Bureau of Justice Assistance Performance Measurement Tool data from October 2015 to December 2019 for 10 ECM task force grantees.

Note: ECM = Enhanced Collaborative Model.

Ninety-nine percent of prosecutions were for sex trafficking, and only 1 percent were for labor trafficking. In 4 of the 10 task forces, all the prosecutions were for sex trafficking, and they did not prosecute any labor trafficking cases (table 3). The number of prosecutions were self-reported into the PMT by each task force.

TABLE 3

Number of Prosecutions, by Trafficking Type

	Sex Trafficking		Labor Trafficking		Sex and Labor Trafficking		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
ECM task force							
A	653	97.3%	8	1.2%	10	1.5%	671
B	56	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	56
C	32	86.5%	3	8.1%	2	5.4%	37
D	12	85.7%	2	14.3%	0	0.0%	14
E	896	99.3%	6	0.7%	0	0.0%	902
F	67	95.7%	3	4.3%	0	0.0%	70
G	279	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	279
H	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	60
I	99	98.0%	2	2.0%	0	0.0%	101
J	581	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	581
Total	2,735	98.7%	24	0.9%	12	0.0%	2,771

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Bureau of Justice Assistance Performance Measurement Tool data from October 2015 to December 2019 for 10 ECM task force grantees.

Note: ECM = Enhanced Collaborative Model.

Lastly, we examined TIMS data for human trafficking survivors served (table 4), which included clients who are potential survivors and those who are confirmed survivors of human trafficking.

Seventy percent of human trafficking survivors assisted by service providers had experienced sex trafficking, whereas 30 percent were survivors of labor trafficking or both forms of trafficking. Notably, as demonstrated in PMT and TIMS data, law enforcement from ECM task forces focus on sex trafficking survivors, even though labor trafficking survivors are being identified at higher levels in communities by service providers in the same task forces (table 4). This divergence could indicate that in some task forces, law enforcement is focused more keenly on sex trafficking and targeting its investigative resources toward those cases; that labor trafficking is much harder to identify and uncover in the community; and/or that law enforcement lacks the proper infrastructure, expertise, or training to fully investigate labor trafficking. On the other hand, part of this divergence may also be explained by a reluctance on the part of labor trafficking survivors to come forward to cooperate with law enforcement for fear of deportation, and a hesitancy on the part of service providers to make the police aware of clients who are victims of labor trafficking out of concern that clients who lack citizen status may be deported.

TABLE 4

Number of Human Trafficking Survivors Served by Service Providers, by Trafficking Type

	<u>Sex Trafficking</u>		<u>Labor Trafficking</u>		<u>Sex and Labor Trafficking</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
ECM task force							
A	157	62.3%	51	20.2%	44	17.5%	252
B	243	86.2%	34	12.1%	5	1.8%	282
C	62	73.8%	13	15.5%	9	10.7%	84
D	22	62.9%	4	11.4%	9	25.7%	35
E	152	65.0%	59	25.2%	23	9.8%	234
F	296	81.1%	23	6.3%	46	12.6%	365
G	65	48.9%	35	26.3%	33	24.8%	133
H	72	57.1%	53	42.1%	1	0.8%	126
I	75	48.7%	72	46.8%	7	4.5%	154
J	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	42
Total	1,186	69.5%	344	20.2%	177	10.4%	1,707

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Office for Victims of Crime Trafficking Information Management System data from July 2015 to December 2019 for 10 ECM task force grantees.

Note: ECM = Enhanced Collaborative Model.

Case Characteristics across Task Forces

Beyond the PMT and TIMS data, we collected and coded data from 226 closed cases,* identified as human trafficking investigations conducted by law enforcement across eight ECM task force sites, of which 92 percent were sex trafficking cases, 6 percent were labor trafficking cases, and 2 percent were both sex and labor trafficking cases (figure 1). This distribution of trafficking types varied across task forces; two exclusively had sex trafficking investigations, whereas one had one-third of its cases involve labor trafficking. The low numbers of labor trafficking cases in this random sample illuminates a fundamental challenge that nearly every task force is facing: figuring out how to more effectively uncover, investigate, and respond to labor trafficking in the communities they serve.

We collected and coded these data to further understand case characteristics across task forces, including the following:

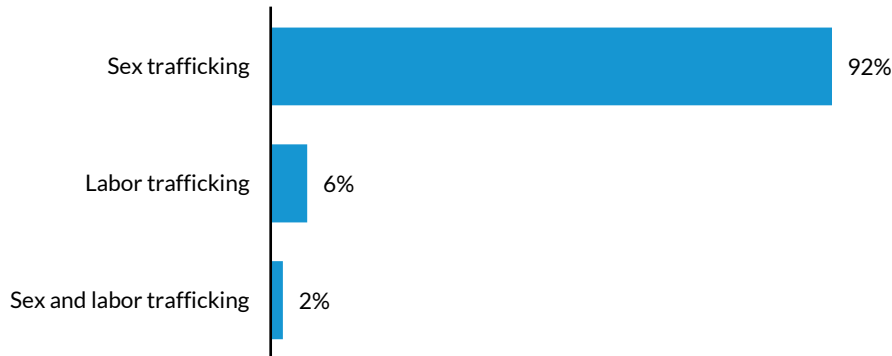
- type of trafficking involved
- how the incident was identified by law enforcement
- venue/location of the incident
- agency conducting the investigation
- whether other investigative agencies were involved in the investigation
- whether a minor survivor was involved
- survivor and suspect demographics
- types of evidence collected
- information about the arrest, indictment, and prosecution of trafficking suspects

Closed cases resulted in one of the following three outcomes: (1) a suspect was arrested and prosecuted (on state or federal charges) for human trafficking or other offenses, (2) a suspect was arrested but no charges were filed and the investigation was subsequently closed, or (3) no suspects were arrested or prosecuted and law enforcement closed the investigation.

* “Cases” refers to law enforcement investigations into potential human trafficking. To be clear, the “case file” reviews that we conducted were reviews of law enforcement files and records pertaining to *investigations into possible human trafficking* that law enforcement conducted.

FIGURE 1

Closed Human Trafficking Cases, by Trafficking Type



Source: Urban Institute.

Note: N = 226.

Methods of Identification

The data showed that potential human trafficking was most often identified by law enforcement through undercover sting operations (31 percent). The second-most-common method was through tips to law enforcement (21 percent), which included tips from the community, service providers, families, and the national human trafficking hotline. The latter is a more reactive method of identification that occurred for a greater share of labor trafficking cases than sex trafficking cases. This is understandable, given the hidden nature of labor trafficking and the fact that most law enforcement agencies do not investigate labor trafficking.

Potential trafficking was also commonly identified through online sources (e.g., Facebook, Backpage ads), occurring in 17 percent of cases, whereas referral from other actors in the justice system (e.g., probation, juvenile justice agencies, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) occurred in 14 percent of cases. Referrals from other system actors occurred for a greater share of labor trafficking cases (33 percent) and constituted the most common identification method for this type of exploitation. Other methods of uncovering human trafficking (including patrol or traffic stops, referrals from ongoing investigations, and self-reports by survivors) occurred less frequently (each occurred in 5 to 7 percent of cases).

Location of Incident

We also collected information about the venue or location where the incident took place. Several were physical locations, such as hotels, residences, and businesses (restaurants and bars), but the most

common venue was not a physical space but the internet (44 percent), where survivors were identified by law enforcement. In these situations, though, the arrests of suspects and the identification of survivors usually occurred in other locations, such as a residence. After the internet, the next most common venues for human trafficking cases identified by these task forces were hotels (19 percent), residences (19 percent), and the street (13 percent).

Investigative Agencies Involved

In 60 percent of the cases we reviewed, the agency conducting the investigation was the local police department. Sheriffs' offices led 26 percent of the investigations, and the state attorney general's office was the lead agency for 7 percent. Interestingly, for the cases we reviewed, state attorney generals' offices were responsible for investigating a larger share of labor trafficking cases (21 percent) than sex trafficking cases (6 percent). Other law enforcement entities that led human trafficking investigations for the task forces included statewide law enforcement investigative agencies and federal law enforcement components. In about one-third of cases reviewed, the law enforcement agency conducting the investigation received assistance from another agency. This rate of collaboration was higher for labor trafficking cases (50 percent) than for sex trafficking cases (32 percent).

Evidence

Law enforcement collected evidence (physical or digital) in 78 percent of human trafficking investigations. The type of evidence most frequently collected was digital communications (e.g., text messages or videos), which was gathered in 63 percent of investigations. Seized cell phones (56 percent) and recordings of conversations with suspects and survivors (44 percent) were also collected in many cases. Other types of evidence included proof-of-purchase records such as credit card receipts from hotels (31 percent of cases) and surveillance footage (8 percent of cases).

Prosecution

Across all task forces, 62 percent of the human trafficking cases we reviewed went forward to prosecution. The share of sex trafficking cases that went forward to prosecution (65 percent) was much higher than the share of labor trafficking cases that did (21 percent), but this finding should be interpreted with caution because the number of cases involving labor trafficking (19) was small. Cases were prosecuted more frequently in state court than in federal court. Federal prosecution was rare for the sample of cases we analyzed, with just 2 percent of investigations resulting in federal prosecution.

Survivor Characteristics

Across the 226 investigations, we collected detailed information for 208 survivors. Half of these survivors were white, 41 percent were Black or African American, 4 percent were Asian, and 4 percent were of other races. In terms of ethnicity, 18 percent were of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin. Ninety-six percent were female, 3 percent were male, and 2 percent were transgender.[†] Twenty-six percent were noncitizens, and the average age was 21. Differences in survivor characteristics across trafficking types are shown in table 5. Eighty-nine percent of human trafficking survivors in the cases we analyzed were sex trafficking survivors (185 of 208). Sex trafficking survivors were mostly split between white people (47 percent) and Black or African American people (44 percent), though 4 percent of survivors were Asian, and 5 percent were of other races. Only 15 percent were of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin. Fifty-four percent were younger than 20, 35 percent were ages 20 to 29, and 11 percent were 30 or older. The average age of a sex trafficking survivor was 21 (labor trafficking survivors were 24, on average). A minor survivor was involved in 44 percent of the human trafficking investigations we reviewed. Minors were involved in all types of trafficking cases, and they were involved in similar shares of sex trafficking investigations (43 percent) and labor trafficking investigations (43 percent).

Although the number of labor trafficking survivors identified in the set of cases we analyzed was small (17), the characteristics of these survivors differed from those of sex trafficking survivors, particularly on gender and citizenship. Labor trafficking survivors were 35 percent male (versus 0 percent for sex trafficking survivors), and 69 percent were noncitizens (versus 21 percent for sex trafficking survivors).

[†] Our primary source of data for this analysis classified the categories male and female as categories of gender, and this is reflected in some of the findings we present in this report. The authors acknowledge this classification is inaccurate and does not reflect the full gender spectrum of human trafficking survivors.

TABLE 5

Survivor Characteristics

	Sex trafficking (n = 185)	Labor trafficking (n = 17)	Sex and labor trafficking (n = 6)	Total (n = 208)
Race (n = 186)				
White	47.2%	64.7%	83.3%	50.0%
Black or African American	44.2%	23.5%	16.7%	41.4%
Asian	3.7%	11.8%	0.0%	4.3%
Other	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Ethnicity (n = 137)				
Hispanic	15.4%	26.7%	40.0%	17.5%
Non-Hispanic	84.6%	73.3%	60.0%	82.5%
Sex (n = 198)				
Male	0.0%	35.3%	0.0%	3.0%
Female	98.9%	58.8%	100.0%	95.5%
Transgender	1.1%	5.9%	0.0%	1.5%
Citizen (n = 163)				
Citizen	78.7%	31.3%	83.3%	74.2%
Noncitizen	21.3%	68.8%	16.7%	25.8%
Age (n = 204)				
< 16	13.3%	5.9%	16.7%	12.8%
16–17	26.5%	29.4%	33.3%	27.0%
18–19	13.8%	11.8%	0.0%	13.2%
20–29	35.4%	17.7%	33.3%	33.8%
30–39	8.3%	29.4%	16.7%	10.3%
≥ 40	2.8%	5.9%	0.0%	2.9%
Average age	21	24	21	21

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

Notes: Percentages shown are based on nonmissing cases. "Hispanic" is used in this table to indicate a person of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin.

Lastly, 22 percent of the cases ($n = 50$) did not indicate survivors involved. In 15 percent of cases ($n = 34$), no real survivors were involved because the investigations were undercover sting operations where law enforcement, as a method of identifying potential suspects, posed online as a woman selling sex. Another 7 percent of cases ($n = 16$) contained no survivors because they involved tips of reported claims of suspected human trafficking that were followed up and investigated by law enforcement but could not be substantiated or corroborated.

Suspect Characteristics

Across the 226 investigations, we collected detailed information for 257 suspects. Most suspects (91 percent) were from sex trafficking cases, 7 percent were from labor trafficking cases, and 2 percent were from investigations that involved both sex and labor trafficking. Sixty-six percent of human trafficking

suspects were Black or African American. Eighty-five percent of suspects in human trafficking investigations were male, and 96 percent of survivors were female. There was little difference regarding the gender of suspects across trafficking types (males made up 84 percent of sex trafficking suspects and 83 percent of labor trafficking suspects), nor regarding ethnicity (19 percent of sex trafficking suspects were of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin versus 24 percent of labor trafficking suspects). But there was variation regarding race, citizenship, and age by trafficking type. Sixty-nine percent of sex trafficking suspects in the cases we reviewed were Black or African American, whereas 44 percent of labor trafficking suspects were Black or African American and half of all labor trafficking suspects were white.

There were also differences by citizenship status. Ninety-six percent of sex trafficking suspects were citizens, and 80 percent of labor trafficking suspects were citizens. But citizenship information was missing for more than half the sample, so these statistics should be interpreted with caution. Labor trafficking suspects (average age is 42) were generally older than sex trafficking suspects (average age is 30).

TABLE 6
Suspect Characteristics

	Sex trafficking (n = 234)	Labor trafficking (n = 18)	Sex and labor trafficking (n = 5)	Total (n = 257)
Race (n = 239)				
White	23.6%	50.0%	80.0%	26.8%
Black or African American	68.5%	44.4%	20.0%	65.7%
Asian	3.2%	5.6%	0.0%	3.4%
Other	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	41.9%
Ethnicity (n = 179)				
Hispanic	18.5%	23.5%	40.0%	19.6%
Non-Hispanic	81.5%	76.5%	60.0%	80.4%
Sex (n = 245)				
Male	84.2%	83.3%	80.0%	85.1%
Female	15.8%	16.7%	20.0%	15.9%
Citizen (n = 118)				
Citizen	96.4%	80.0%	100.0%	96.8%
Noncitizen	3.6%	20.0%	0.0%	4.2%
Age (n = 249)				
16–18	12.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.7%
19–20	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%	7.2%
21–29	30.7%	29.4%	50.0%	30.9%
30–39	32.9%	17.7%	25.0%	31.7%
40–49	11.4%	17.7%	25.0%	12.1%
≥ 50	4.4%	35.3%	0.0%	6.4%
Average age	30	42	32	31

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

Notes: Percentages shown are based on nonmissing cases. “Hispanic” is used in this table to indicate a person of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin.

In 11 percent of the cases we reviewed ($n = 24$), no suspect was identified or found. Some of these investigations were undercover prostitution stings where law enforcement sought to uncover possible trafficking situations by posing online as someone willing to pay for sex. In these instances, the law enforcement officer would arrange to meet the person at a hotel but upon further investigation determined that the person was not being trafficked by anyone, so there was no suspect. In addition, some investigations were initiated based on tips about possible trafficking situations that could not be substantiated or corroborated by law enforcement.

Suspect Arrest and Prosecution

Seventy-six percent of the suspects in the cases we reviewed were arrested, and 77 percent of those arrested were indicted on criminal charges (either state or federal), with most being indicted on state charges. The most common type of charge was compelling or promoting prostitution (31 percent), which included pimping and pandering offenses. This finding is consistent with a strategy that several task forces in our study adopted to try to identify human trafficking in their communities: conducting undercover prostitution stings. In those situations, evidence of human trafficking was sometimes uncovered and was sometimes not. In addition, for some of the cases for which a charge of compelling or promoting prostitution was the primary offense, human trafficking may have occurred but was determined to be too difficult to prove because of evidentiary challenges and/or a lack of willingness from the survivor to participate in the case.

Forty-four percent of prosecuted suspects were prosecuted on human trafficking–related charges, which include human trafficking, human trafficking of a minor, labor trafficking, sex trafficking, and sex trafficking of a minor. Other charges included prostitution (10 percent), sexual exploitation offenses (4 percent), and other offenses, including assault, child abuse, kidnapping, and drug and weapons charges (9 percent).

TABLE 7

Types of Charges Filed for Suspects in Human Trafficking Cases Prosecuted

Primary charge	Share of suspects prosecuted
Compelling or promoting prostitution	31%
Human trafficking	15%
Human trafficking of a minor	8%
Labor trafficking	11%
Prostitution	10%
Sexual abuse	2%
Sexual exploitation	4%
Sex trafficking	1%
Sex trafficking of a minor	9%
Other	9%
Total	100%

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

Notes: N = 150. "Other" charges include assault, child abuse, conspiracy, drug, robbery, and weapons offenses.

Goals of and Approaches to Addressing Human Trafficking

As part of our study, we aimed to understand task force stakeholders' goals and their approaches to addressing human trafficking. Task force goals and objectives varied depending on the respondent's role. Law enforcement and prosecutors most frequently cited the task force's overarching goal as implementing traditional criminal justice responses to human trafficking—that is, arresting and prosecuting human trafficking cases.

I'd like to say strong prosecutable cases. I think we're all out to get the bad guy. —Law enforcement official

In addition to traditional criminal justice goals, law enforcement officials and prosecutors identified goals for collaborating with victim service providers to ensure that survivors receive services.

From what I perceive it to be is that our goal is to bring the various—our goal is to—identify as many victims as possible, victims of human trafficking, and try to get them the services and the assistance they need and also try to locate and arrest and take out of the system as many human traffickers as possible. Add the mission of trying to locate, assist, and get as many victims and arrest as many traffickers as possible, working as a collaboration between the units. We're no longer just different branches. We're not just law enforcement over here, victim services over here, prosecution over here, different federal entities over here, state entities over here; that work as a collaboration, that we work well together, that we interact well with the same goal as far as victim—locating victims, assisting victims, rescuing victims and locating traffickers, that we do that as a joint as opposed to individual entities. —Prosecutor

Victim service providers also articulated task force goals as identifying and connecting survivors to services that will assist in their healing, as well as building collaborative, multidisciplinary relationships across agencies and organizations to more effectively address human trafficking by identifying service gaps, strengthening handoffs between law enforcement and victim service providers, and creating approaches that reduce trauma for survivors.

I would say the goal or mission of the task force now is to really have a group of people who can look at it from their lens and say, "Okay, these are the things that we're seeing, and these are the gaps." That's really what I feel like the task force is doing, is trying to identify the gaps in services and saying, "What can we do? How can we address those various gaps?" —Service provider

Goals articulated by task force members closely mirrored their respective professional roles, however, stakeholders across all task forces shared a common goal of building relationships and working to support survivors.

Comprehensive Victim Services

Victim service providers affiliated with the ECM task forces provided a wide array of services to survivors of sex and labor trafficking and to domestic and foreign-born survivors. The most commonly provided services were housing, counseling, case management, and crisis response. Additional services included financial assistance, education and employment support, and medical services or referral to medical services. Many service providers also offered direct legal services or legal support or advocacy to survivors involved in the criminal justice cases in addition to regular case management services.

We've gone out of state to trial with them if they've had to go, and then it's doing things like prepping, making sure they have a room to go to at the courthouse that's by themselves. I had one girl that was testifying as a victim, but she was in detention and they wanted her shackled. I was advocating like, "No, she's going to this as a victim, not a criminal. What does that do having her walk in to testify in shackles? That just helps them; so, stop." It really is just going through the process and educating and advocating on their behalf to make sure that they feel safe and comfortable. We'll go through grounding exercises they can do. We've had the conversation of "I'll be in the courtroom if you get stuck. Look at me or pretend you're talking to me the whole time like no one else is there." We talk about what is appropriate in court, what's not, which I need my own reminders. It's very formal. —Service provider

Despite the wide array of services offered across each of the ECM task forces, respondents still noted gaps in services. The most frequently cited service needs for survivors included housing, behavioral health services, transportation, employment services, and services for the LGBTQ+ community. With regard to housing, in particular, barriers included a shortage of emergency housing and housing options that can accommodate people of all gender identities and the unique needs of human trafficking survivors (in other words, housing that will accept survivors of human trafficking and employ staff trained on issues of human trafficking).

No, I would say there's always a need for housing. Housing or the proper housing is usually the challenge. I think we struggle with—you know, clients vary. Their needs vary, and I think we struggle with having placements that do not understand the population and their needs and where they're coming from. I think the trauma-informed approach is definitely needed when working with our clients, but also they don't have—we don't have a lot of placements, or they require certain things, or their criteria does not fit what our client either needs or has at the moment, so we're constantly struggling with placement services. —Service provider

Victim service providers reported several avenues for receiving referrals of human trafficking survivors. Referral streams were cited 151 times in our interviews. The four most frequently cited referral streams were law enforcement (20.5 percent); other victim service providers (15 percent); medical providers, including emergency rooms, sexual assault nurse examiners, and hospitals (12.6 percent); and community organizations and members, including peer survivors, schools, and faith communities (11.9 percent). Once a referral was received, 9 of the 10 task forces reported using an

initial screening and assessment process to determine whether the person had experienced human trafficking, unless the referral came from law enforcement or a prosecutor. In these cases, victim service providers began formal intake processes to begin services immediately. In cases in which a survivor has been referred to or sought out an organization for help, but may not fall within the organization's service population, the providers included in this study would offer emergency services (as needed) and a warm hand-off to an appropriate service provider. Most service providers had few eligibility criteria that survivors had to meet to receive services, including reporting to law enforcement, with the exception of organizations that worked with specific target populations, such as youth, the LGBTQ+ community, or foreign-born survivors.

When a survivor is identified, victim service providers conduct a victim-centered comprehensive assessment to identify service needs, starting with basic needs, such as immediate safety planning and shelter, food, clothing, and financial assistance. After identifying and assisting survivors with their immediate needs, victim service providers continue to work with survivors to identify needs and goals as they develop or present themselves. Service providers we interviewed indicated that service duration can vary depending on survivors' needs. Some survivors may be looking for assistance for only a few days or weeks and with their immediate needs, whereas others may want or need years of services and support. In addition, service duration may be longer for foreign-born survivors involved in drawn-out immigration processes or for survivors involved in court cases, which may last years.

Years, years. For some individuals, it might be their entire—case managers are prepared to essentially work with them their entire life if they need to. I know there's some clients that people have been working with for 10 years. Sometimes it'll be maybe just a check-in every now and then, but for some, it goes through waves where they just need a lot more support. It's challenging because of the trauma. —Service provider

Investigating Human Trafficking Cases

Law enforcement investigations into human trafficking focused on sex trafficking across all ECM task forces. In only one task force did law enforcement investigate labor trafficking cases.

When asked about proactive investigative techniques used to address sex trafficking, law enforcement respondents most frequently reported relying on using fake online ads, via Craigslist, Backpage, Spotlight, Skip the Games, and CityXGuide, to proactively identify people purchasing sex and potential sex trafficking survivors. In these instances, law enforcement will pose as a person who identifies as female and who is selling sex, arrange a date and location (typically a hotel) to meet with the person interested in purchasing sex, and arrest them. Law enforcement will also pose as a person

identifying as a male trying to purchase sex from a person identifying as a female, arrange a date and location, and arrest the suspect. The female will usually also be arrested for prostitution in these situations (see further discussion below).

It's really online. The girls are posting ads online. There's 100 different websites you can go to and, hey, this girl's posting an ad. She says she's available in [place], so through confidential means, we contact them and basically arrange to meet up with them. We can either meet with them at their location, and our team will set up, and the undercover will meet the girl at the door, and the rest of the team eventually makes their way in, and we take her up from there. Or we get a room, and they come to—they walk right into our room. Now, the girls really aren't the focus of our—of this task force. It's the people who are trafficking and pimping them. That's the easy part, gettin' them into a room or getting into their room. We're more concerned with the guy that's waiting in the next room or in the bathroom or in the car outside. That's where havin' this task force and havin' other guys that—who know what to look for, they can pick that stuff out. That's how we can generate a case. That's how I've been getting my cases. It's exactly that same way, just off the internet. I'll find one that looks young or indicators that—or that they're being trafficked or pimped. We'll just start a conversation with 'em. Sometimes they talk for a little bit, and they fall off. Sometimes they never respond. It's like fishing. You just hit up as many as you can and see who bites, and then we go from there. —Law enforcement official

In addition to using online platforms, law enforcement reported other techniques, such as routine traffic stops and reviews of restaurant and bar violations.

Law enforcement respondents also reported learning about potential human trafficking cases via referrals. Referral streams were cited 157 times in our interviews. The four most frequently cited referral streams included hotlines or tip lines, such as Polaris, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and local tip lines (33.1 percent); other law enforcement agencies (24.2 percent); victim service providers (13.4 percent); and nonjustice government agencies, including county government and departments of family and children services (10.2 percent).

Few law enforcement respondents referenced formal procedures for investigating possible human trafficking cases, as many noted that each case can look different and requires flexibility in approach to achieve the best outcome.

It's not kind of a cookie-cutter approach. It's just, let's put our brains together. How can we best get this done? That's pretty much the model we follow. People will come, and they ask, "All right, so what do I do?" It's like, "I have a manual for you, but just follow along, and we'll show you the ropes, and then you're gonna develop your own way of how you want to do things," cause everyone's different in their methodology and how they approach their cases. —Law enforcement official

Half the ECM task forces indicated that they may arrest a survivor as part of an investigation. Task forces that arrest survivors indicated that the practice is a strategy for ensuring survivors' safety and leverage for cooperation in investigations. Two task forces indicated that a person must identify

themselves to law enforcement as a survivor of trafficking to avoid arrest, to be released from jail, or to receive services. Notably, three task forces indicated that there had been a change in practice or state law that had resulted in officers no longer arresting sex trafficking survivors. Yet survivors in those jurisdictions may still be arrested for trafficking-related offenses, such as drug possession or probation violations stemming from prostitution charges.

It's how do you keep them safe but not criminalize them at the same time. [Because] your gut instinct is to keep 'em locked up because then I know they're safe, right? That's not always the nice thing to do either. —Law enforcement official

When interacting with survivors of human trafficking upon arrest and through investigations, law enforcement reported implementing their own interpretations of victim-centered and trauma-informed practices. Some law enforcement agencies indicated that they will interview a survivor immediately, whereas others will schedule the interview for another time. Three task forces have soft rooms⁴ available at their police stations or offices for use when interviewing survivors. In addition, law enforcement agencies reported involving female investigators when interacting with survivors who identify as female, having them dress in civilian clothes, and using the survivor's terminology when discussing the trafficking situation.

Law enforcement respondents noted leaning heavily on victim service providers during the first interaction with survivors if service providers are involved in an operation. They also relied on service providers throughout the investigation to ensure that the survivor's needs are being met, to ensure they are safe, and to keep them engaged after they are initially identified. Law enforcement emphasized that addressing a survivor's most basic needs was key to engaging with them and occurred before starting the interview process. Basic needs may include food, a safe place to rest, and medical attention. After the initial interaction, if law enforcement officials feel that the survivor's safety is at risk, they work with victim service providers to find housing or shelter for the survivor or may arrest the suspect (if evidence permits) or the survivor, as previously discussed.

Notably, law enforcement officials frequently commented on the impact that their involvement in the ECM task forces has had on how they interact with survivors and investigate human trafficking cases. Most law enforcement officers are trained on issues related to human trafficking through their departments and offices, and they are supported to attend state and national trainings and convenings. Trainings, along with added funding and capacity to focus on human trafficking cases, has changed how law enforcement officials approach and investigate human trafficking cases, specifically sex trafficking. In particular, law enforcement agents have begun to perceive human trafficking cases as requiring more time and labor than they may have previously thought.

Some of these agencies go out and do a proactive prostitution sting and arrest all of the victims and charge them with prostitution, which we found through our methodology that it doesn't work. You're taking someone who is a victim not by choice and charging them, you're putting them further into debt and further into the need to be bailed out and keeps them in the game. The methodology now is to put them at the center of our work. Treat the criminals as criminals, not the victims. —Law enforcement official

Prosecuting Human Trafficking Cases

Prosecutors most frequently reported receiving referrals of human trafficking through law enforcement, but they might also learn about potential cases through a tip line, a victim service provider, or another community organization.

Once a case is received, the decision about whether to prosecute depends on the evidence available to support the case and whether the survivor is willing to participate. The most common types of evidence prosecutors look for are cell phones, text messages, videos, photos, surveillance, purchase receipts, website ads, and money wires. Three of the 10 ECM task forces indicated that they can move forward with prosecuting sex trafficking cases without survivors' participation, but respondents across all task forces agreed that survivors' testimony is helpful in securing a prosecution.

We're dead in the water without being able to have the victim tell the jury their story. —
Prosecutor

In cases lacking evidence or survivor participation to prove human trafficking in court, prosecutors reported leaning on other charges to secure convictions. These charges include sexual or physical violence charges, drug possession or drug trafficking charges, child-related offenses (e.g., child pornography or child sexual exploitation), weapons charges, charges of pimping and promoting prostitution, and kidnapping charges. Respondents indicated that federal prosecution criteria and sentence severity influence whether a case is prosecuted at the federal or state level.

Part of this decisionmaking is to get the biggest conviction. In some cases, we prosecute in either the federal or state first and then charge other violations in another level. That's not double jeopardy. The determination is largely based upon the prosecutors and what they consider to be a good case...Judges are different. Prosecutors are aware of the judges that they have before them and what the judges believe are worthy cases and how they rule in the courts in certain things. —Law enforcement official

Three of the 10 ECM task forces indicated that most sex trafficking cases are referred to federal prosecutors, 6 task forces refer most cases to state prosecutors, and 1 task force said that sex trafficking cases are evenly referred to state and federal prosecutors. Task forces that reported

investigating labor trafficking cases indicated that these cases are typically referred to the federal prosecuting agency.

With respect to interacting with survivors, prosecutors indicated spending a significant amount of time with survivors to build rapport and to prepare them for court proceedings. Prosecutors across seven ECM task forces indicated that they also relied heavily on victim advocates employed by their own office or external service providers to engage with and communicate with survivors during the case. But respondents also mentioned that the ways they communicate with survivors may differ depending on how the case was referred to their office, the survivor's preferences, and with whom the survivor has already established rapport, which may be law enforcement.

If the victim comes in to us through law enforcement, then I generally rely on that law enforcement officer to maintain the relationship with the victim as they've been trained to do, so that the victim continues to assist us in the investigation. For trafficking victims pretrial, I try and check in with some regularity just to make sure that they're doing okay. That they understand what's going on with the case since they're essential to prosecution. It depends. Some victims want more and need more from our side of things. Some need less. —Prosecutor

Factors Leading to Arrest and Prosecution

Another component of this study was to assess relationships between task force elements and case characteristics and arrest and prosecution.

Task Force Elements and Arrest and Prosecution

To understand which task force elements were related to case outcomes in the sample of closed cases we reviewed, we conducted bivariate analyses that examined the relationship between the task force elements and these outcomes. We analyzed

- task force organizational level or coverage area (based at the state level, county level, or city level),
- law enforcement leadership (led by a police department, sheriff's office, or state attorney general's office),
- colocation of the task force,
- task forces that were and were not independently chaired, and
- ECM grant purpose area (purpose area 1 for forming new task forces, purpose area 2 for enhancing established task forces).

We found several task force characteristics to be related to the arrest and prosecution of suspects in cases investigated by law enforcement (table 8). The following characteristics were statistically significant at the bivariate level, to arrest and/or prosecution:

- The organizational level or coverage area was related to both arrest and prosecution. County-based task forces had higher rates of arrest (90 percent) than did statewide and city-based task forces (59 to 60 percent). In terms of prosecution, statewide task forces had significantly lower prosecution rates (40 percent) than the county- and city-based task forces (85 to 87 percent).
- Task forces led by police departments and sheriffs' offices had higher arrest and prosecution rates than did task forces led by state attorney generals' offices.

- Colocation was not related to arrest, but it was related to prosecution. Colocated task forces had a prosecution rate of 86 percent, and task forces that were not colocated had a prosecution rate of 62 percent.
- The task forces in purpose area 2 (for enhancement of established task forces) were more likely to have closed cases resulting in prosecution than task forces in purpose area 1 (for development of newly formed task forces).

TABLE 8
Bivariate Analyses of Task Force Elements and Arrest and Prosecution

Task force characteristics	Arrested (n = 196/257)	Prosecuted (n = 150/196)
Organizational level or coverage area		
Statewide	59%**	40%*
County	90%	85%
City or municipality	60%	87%
Law enforcement leadership model		
Police department	75%*	78%*
Sheriff's office	85%	85%
State attorney general's office	63%	46%
Colocation		
Yes	78%	86%*
No	74%	62%
Independently chaired		
Yes	74%	78%
No	83%	72%
ECM grant purpose area		
Purpose area 1 (newly formed task force)	73%	68%*
Purpose area 2 (established task force)	80%	85%

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

Notes: ECM = Enhanced Collaborative Model. Percentages shown are based on nonmissing cases.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Case Characteristics and Arrest and Prosecution

To better understand the factors associated with arrest and prosecution, we conducted bivariate analyses (table 9). Several case-level factors and one suspect characteristic were related to arrest:

- Sex trafficking suspects were more likely to be arrested than labor trafficking suspects.
- Suspects in cases where physical or digital evidence was collected were more likely to be arrested than in cases where it was not.

- Involvement from other law enforcement agencies on the investigation and the presence of minor survivors was not statistically related to arrest.
- Black or African American suspects were more likely to be arrested than suspects of other races.
- All other suspect demographics we examined (i.e., ethnicity, sex, and citizenship) were not statistically related to whether the suspect was arrested.

We also analyzed the relationships between case-level and suspect characteristics and prosecution at the bivariate level:

- Suspects in cases where physical or digital evidence was collected were more likely to be prosecuted.
- Suspects in cases where law enforcement collaborated with other agencies in the investigation were more likely to be prosecuted.
- Prosecution was more likely in cases where the survivor was willing to participate and provide testimony.
- No suspect characteristics were statistically related to the prosecution outcome for the cases we examined, however.

TABLE 9

Bivariate Analyses of the Relationship between Case Factors and Arrest and Prosecution

	Arrested (n = 196/257)	Prosecuted (n = 150/196)
Case factors		
<i>Trafficking type</i>		
Sex trafficking	95%*	77%
Labor trafficking	33%	67%
Both sex and labor trafficking	80%	75%
<i>Physical or digital evidence</i>		
Yes	91%*	80%*
No	41%	44%
<i>Other agencies involved in investigation</i>		
Yes	78%	82%*
No	73%	66%
<i>Minor survivor involved in case</i>		
Yes	76%	73%
No	73%	74%
<i>Survivor willing to provide testimony</i>		
Yes	87%*	90%*
No	65%	67%
Suspect characteristics		
<i>Race</i>		
Black or African American	82%*	79%
White or other	64%	70%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	77%	81%
Non-Hispanic	73%	73%
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	78%	77%
Female	69%	70%
<i>Citizenship</i>		
Citizen	80%	77%
Noncitizen	68%	78%
<i>Age at offense</i>	30	30

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

Note: "Hispanic" is used in this table to indicate a person of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin.

To further evaluate which case characteristics, suspect characteristics, and task force elements were associated with prosecution when considered together, we constructed a multivariate predictive model using logistic regression. The logistic regression model included six case characteristics as predictors, six suspect characteristics as independent variables, and task force characteristics to assess their impact on prosecution (table 10).

TABLE 10

Case, Suspect, and Task Force Characteristics Predicting Prosecution

Case characteristics as predictors	Suspect characteristics as independent variables	Task force characteristics to assess impact on prosecution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trafficking type (labor trafficking versus sex trafficking) ▪ Physical or digital evidence collected ▪ Other agencies involved in investigation ▪ Minor survivor involved ▪ Survivor willing to provide testimony ▪ Survivor interviewed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Race ▪ Ethnicity ▪ Sex ▪ Citizenship ▪ Age ▪ Criminal history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizational level (statewide versus county based versus city based) ▪ Law enforcement leadership model (led by police department versus sheriff's office versus state attorney general's office) ▪ Colocation of task force ▪ Independently chaired task force

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

The results of the logistic regression model predicting prosecution are displayed in table 11. In terms of goodness of fit, the model had a -2 log likelihood of 142.83, which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, and a pseudo R^2 of 0.27. The pseudo R^2 is a proportional reduction in error measure that assesses improvement in prediction that the model adds. Results show the following:

- Two case characteristics were related to prosecution: the presence of physical or digital evidence and whether the survivor was willing to provide testimony.
- The presence of physical or digital evidence had an odds ratio of 8.34, meaning that cases that included these forms of evidence had about 8 times the odds of being prosecuted as cases that did not.
- Cases where a survivor was willing to provide testimony were also more likely to result in prosecution (14.59 times the odds of cases that did not have a survivor willing to provide testimony).
- There were no statistically significant differences in terms of trafficking type: sex trafficking cases were no more likely to be prosecuted than labor trafficking cases, among the closed case files we reviewed.
- The odds of prosecution among cases involving a suspect with a criminal history were 8 times the odds of prosecution among cases where the suspect had no criminal history.
- Cases from statewide task forces had lower odds (0.013 the odds) of being prosecuted than cases from county- or city-based task forces.

- Though law enforcement leadership and colocation were two task force elements that were statistically significant at the bivariate level, they were not statistically significant in the multivariate model that incorporated other case characteristics as controls.

We must caution that the logistic regression analysis presented here is more suggestive than conclusive. Given the small number of task forces included ($n = 8$) and the limited number of cases in certain task forces, a multilevel modeling approach (e.g., hierarchical linear modeling), which would have been preferred, was not feasible, as certain assumptions could not be met. However, to address this limitation, we included task force-level variables in the logistic regression analysis to model their fixed effects. We must emphasize that the results of this model are not representative of all ECM task forces in the country; they are only representative of the eight task forces that were analyzed.

TABLE 11
Logistic Regression Model Predicting Prosecution

Predictors	Odds ratio
Case characteristics	
1 Trafficking type (labor trafficking)	0.82
2 Physical or digital evidence	8.34**
3 Other agencies involved in investigation	0.90
4 Minor survivor involved	0.39
5 Survivor willing to provide testimony	14.59**
6 Survivor interviewed	0.29
Suspect characteristics	
7 Race (Black or African American)	0.68
8 Ethnicity (Hispanic)	0.78
9 Sex (male)	1.04
10 Citizenship (citizen)	5.56
11 Age	1.03
12 Criminal history (yes/no)	7.74*
Task force characteristics	
14 Organizational level/coverage area (statewide)	0.013**
15 Law enforcement leadership: State AG office	5.962
16 Law enforcement leadership: Sheriff's office	1.595
17 Colocation of task force (yes/no)	0.85
18 Independently chaired task force (yes/no)	0.69
Pseudo $R^2 = 0.27$	
-2 log likelihood = 142.828**	

Source: Random sample of 226 law enforcement case investigations of human trafficking conducted by the 8 Enhanced Collaborative Model task forces that participated in this part of the study. Case file data were coded and analyzed by the Urban Institute.

Note: AG = attorney general.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

The Impact of ECM Task Forces on Addressing Human Trafficking

Task force stakeholders noted that collaboration improved antitrafficking efforts by removing barriers to information sharing, breaking down misconceptions about each other's work (specifically, law enforcement and victim service providers), and increasing willingness to collaborate. Task force members in colocated areas were particularly appreciative of the value that physical closeness contributed to collaboration potential, yet even members in areas without colocation felt the professional ties of a task force improved collaboration.

I think quite a bit [of impact]. I think the people we share with, I think our federal partners—our cases, if they leave our immediate jurisdiction and we go into some of our smaller municipality, areas that the partnerships with them are strong. We can make a phone call and reach out to them for assistance, or they'll help us with whatever we need. I think the partnerships have grown tremendously. —Law enforcement official

Respondents also noted how ECM task forces increased awareness about human trafficking. Increased awareness occurred within respondents' own organizations, the criminal justice system, public service organizations such as hospitals, and across communities and states.

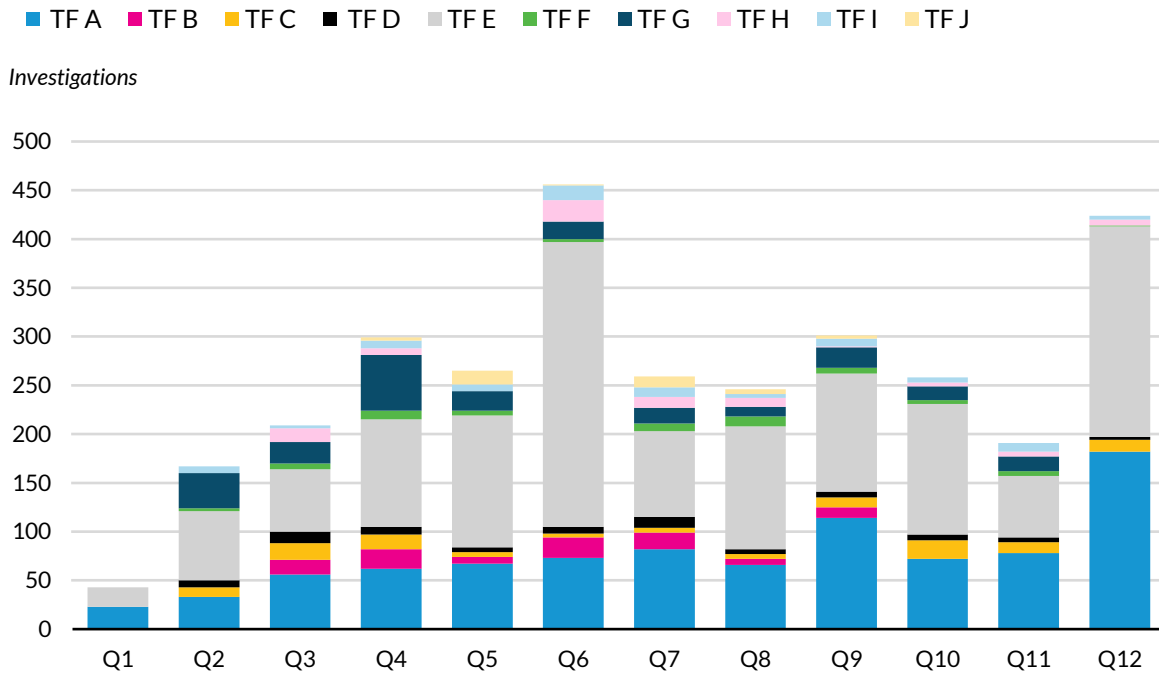
Reports from people in the community and not just social workers has gone way up. You can really see this very quantifiable increase in change and everything in awareness. I mean, it's really been amazing what we've been able to accomplish in just [number of] years. —Prosecutor

In addition to collaboration and increased awareness, respondents focused on the more concrete impact that the task forces have had on their ability to focus on human trafficking cases, including increasing capacity and building the infrastructure to identify and respond to potential cases. Respondents noted that since receiving ECM task force funding, they have established protocols and procedures that guide how potential human trafficking cases are handled among stakeholders, increased or hired new personnel to focus on human trafficking cases, secured additional funding to support local antitrafficking efforts, and developed committees to discuss human trafficking cases and issues.

Furthermore, to assess the impact of ECM task forces on prosecutions and investigations, we examined quarterly trends for PMT data. The number of investigations rose steadily over the first six quarters, increasing from 43 investigations in quarter 1 (Q1) to 456 investigations in Q6 (a ninefold increase). The number of human trafficking investigations remained robust from Q7 through Q12, reaching 424 investigations in Q12. These trends show that after the first few quarters, the task forces

reached high levels of human trafficking investigations initiated (at least 250) for each quarter except one for the duration of the four-year ECM-funded period.

FIGURE 2
Quarterly Numbers of Human Trafficking Investigations Initiated by the 10 Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Forces

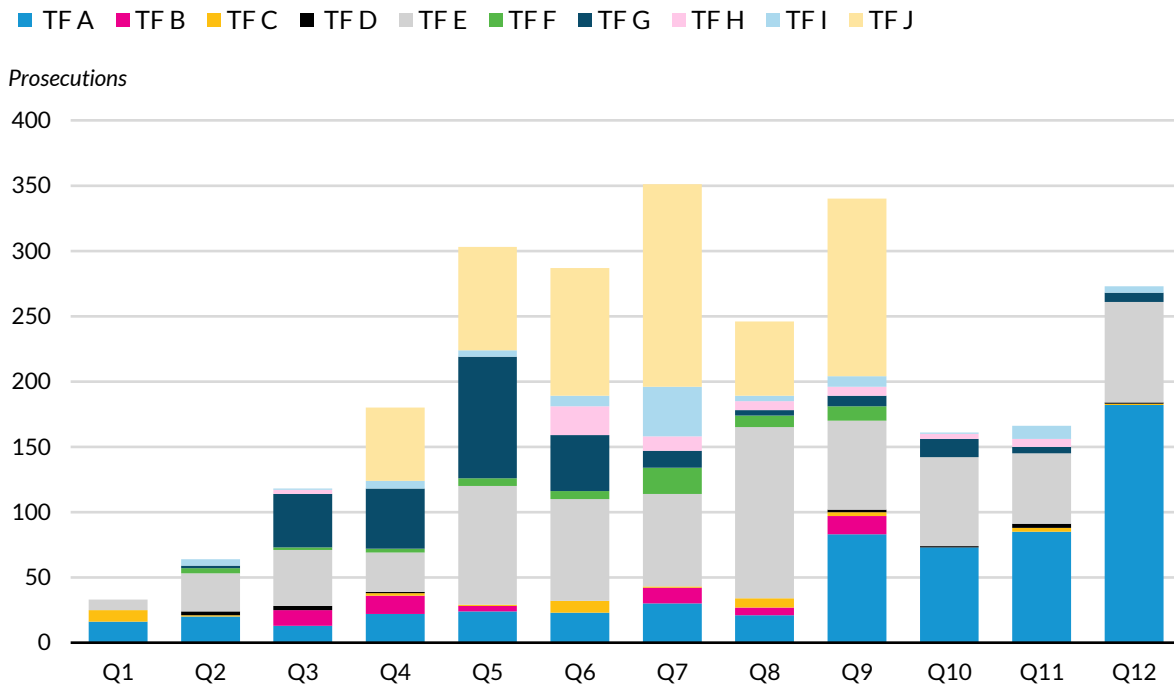


Source: Urban Institute analysis.
 Note: Q = quarter; TF = task force.

We also used the PMT data to examine trends in the number of human trafficking cases prosecuted by the 10 ECM task force over the same 12-quarter period (figure 3). The number of prosecutions between Q1 and Q7 steadily rose from 33 prosecutions to a peak of 351 prosecutions, a 963 percent increase. The number of human trafficking prosecutions remained fairly high for the remainder of the period (rising from 246 prosecutions in Q8 to 273 prosecutions in Q12). After the first two or three quarters, they reached and maintained a high level of human trafficking prosecutions (between 160 and 340) through the end of the ECM-funded period.

FIGURE 3

Quarterly Numbers of Human Trafficking Cases Prosecuted by the 10 Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Forces



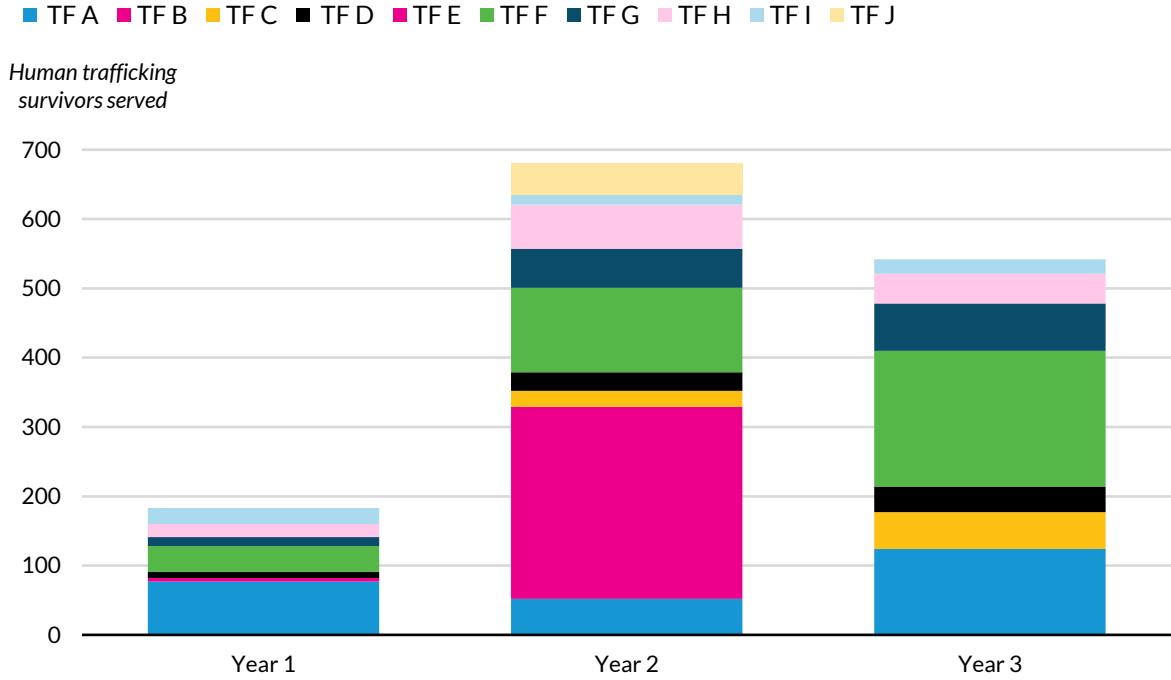
Source: Urban Institute analysis.

Note: Q = quarter; TF = task force.

Finally, we analyzed OVC’s TIMS data on the number of human trafficking survivors served by victim service providers that are part of the 10 ECM task forces (figure 4). These data are organized as yearly counts for years 1 through 3, for each of the 10 task forces. The number of survivors served by the task forces increased from 183 in year 1 to 681 in year 2 (a 272 percent increase) and then remained at a high level (543 survivors served in year 3).

FIGURE 4

Yearly Numbers of Human Trafficking Survivors Assisted by the 10 Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Forces



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Source: Urban Institute analysis.

Note: TF = task force.

ECM Task Force Challenges and Barriers

All respondents reported that the ECM task forces had positively affected antitrafficking work in their cities, municipalities, counties, and states, but stakeholders noted several challenges to implementing and sustaining the task forces and carrying out antitrafficking work. Key challenges included the time required to investigate and prosecute cases, securing survivors' cooperation and keeping them engaged throughout the process, identifying labor trafficking, collaborating and coordinating across stakeholders, and a lack of resources and capacity to investigate human trafficking and to provide services.

Investigating and Prosecuting Human Trafficking Cases

Law enforcement officials and prosecutors both noted challenges related to investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases. A primary challenge was the time required to investigate cases, as well as securing survivors' participation and keeping them engaged throughout the investigation and prosecution. Law enforcement officials and prosecutors both described human trafficking cases as complex, lengthy, and emotionally draining.

Another challenge is the length of time it takes a case from the time a suspect is arrested to the time of adjudication. Our cases in [place] on the really low end could take a year and a half. On the high end, we're looking at three years or longer before the cases are actually tried, and trying to keep a victim on board, stabilized, secured through this whole process when it takes that many years and they can't put it behind them, is really difficult. —Law enforcement official

You've gotta have a million hours on your hands to dig into just the sheer volume of evidence. I've said this to other presentations I've given, other meetings I've been in, that I legitimately feel that any one of my trafficking cases is gonna be more evidence—assuming it's a big case that's filed correctly, that we have everything we need, I could spend years going through—just statistically, years going through the amount of phones, the amount of social media content, the amount of just sheer evidence. —Prosecutor

Given the time it can take to investigate cases, prosecutors and law enforcement officials perceived maintaining survivor engagement and cooperation as a significant challenge, as survivors may move away from the city or state where the trafficking occurred, become unreachable, return to a trafficking situation, or decide they want to move on from the situation and not continue to pursue a criminal justice response. Respondents noted that survivors who experience mental health or substance use

issues may be difficult to keep engaged. Youth survivors can also be challenging to work with if they have run away from their home environment and require parental or guardian approval for case involvement. Finally, law enforcement respondents, in particular, noted challenges to working with survivors because they may not trust law enforcement, may not be willing or able to divulge information relevant to the case, or may not be ready to leave their trafficking situation.

Who wants to come forward? A lot of times they're afraid to come forward to say that they are a victim. They're fearful of their trafficker, their pimp, so they don't divulge the information. Sometimes they feel they're—they're so loyal to that person as well, they don't wanna divulge that information to authorities. It can be difficult. —Law enforcement official

Lastly, prosecutors noted that it is challenging to prosecute cases with judges and jury members who are not educated on human trafficking (including not understanding that human trafficking affects people across the United States and within their local communities) and holding stereotypes about survivors who are involved in human trafficking cases.

It's everywhere. Yeah. I think it's problematic...The narrative is complicated by race issues and by the fact that people want—it is easier for people to accept a trafficking victim who is in no way complicit with her own abuse. They want that tie, that person in a cage, who was taken against her will from her family. That's generally not how it happens. You have to educate the jury. That's what your expert is there to do. You have to—but it's hard. I think the more the message can get out there that like, "Look, people are victims via coercion and via fraud. You don't have to have the force all the time to get people to fall in line." That takes a lot of work to get people to understand that. —Prosecutor

Labor Trafficking

A significant challenge disclosed by the ECM task forces was law enforcement's and prosecutors' limitations in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting labor trafficking cases. Law enforcement officials in all 10 task forces indicated that their antitrafficking work overwhelmingly focused on sex trafficking. According to the task force respondents we interviewed, the most prominent barriers to responding to labor trafficking cases were as follows:

- a lack of knowledge among law enforcement officials and prosecutors about labor trafficking (prosecutors from 9 of the 10 task forces indicated that they had little to no experience prosecuting labor trafficking cases)
- the complexity of labor trafficking cases
- a lack of survivor identification and cooperation caused by fears of deportation

With labor trafficking, since, primarily, your victims are going to be foreign nationals, they're already going to be—and a fair component of them are going to be in the country without authorization. It kind of goes hand in hand. Not always. A lot of times, you'll have, like I said, the H-1Bs and so on, but percentage-wise, there is going to be a fair number of them that are in the country without authorization, and that makes 'em very reluctant to cooperate with us. —Law enforcement official

Notably, law enforcement respondents identified building knowledge about labor trafficking as an issue they either were trying to address or had established as a future goal.

Collaboration and Coordination

Although respondents across all ECM task forces indicated that the task forces have affected collaboration on issues related to antitrafficking work, they also noted challenges to collaboration and coordination. These included staff turnover, lack of communication, differing goals, task forces that are too large and unproductive, staff burnout, and personality clashes.

Notably, service providers from all three state-organized ECM task forces expressed significant geographic challenges to working with stakeholders in different counties and coordinating among different law enforcement agencies, as well as engaging with survivors. For instance, service providers struggled to work across state borders; provide outreach, support, and services across all counties in the state; reach rural areas; and ensure that survivors had access to transportation to receive services.

If we have someone who's in another part of the state, it really limits the ability to just run out and check in or offer for them to come into the office 'cause we're an hour, two hours, two and a half hours away, so that makes it difficult. Also when you're going to meet with someone who's two hours away, that's most of your day to meet with that individual, so that certainly has an effect on availability for others, and it feels different, I think, when they no-show 'cause if you drive up to somebody's house 10 minutes away, and they're not home, or you're waiting in the office, and they don't come in, and you're like, "Ah, I'll just get on with something else," but when you drive a couple of hours, it's a challenge when that person's like, "Oh, sorry double-booked," and you're like, "Hmm, okay." —Service provider

Resources

Task forces offered various services to human trafficking survivors. But all sites noted that gaps in services still existed, particularly for emergency, temporary, and long-term housing; behavioral health services; and services that focused on human trafficking survivors (not domestic violence survivors). Additionally, 8 of the 10 task forces indicated that they do not have sufficient resources to investigate

and prosecute all human trafficking cases. Respondents noted that the low number of cases that are prosecuted can be a barrier to securing funding to support additional antitrafficking work.

Yeah. That's always a challenge is getting resources devoted to it. The hard part on that is—you start talking about case numbers. They're very, very small. You can go a year without a human trafficking case. Then you can go a year where you've got two, and that's a huge resource commitment just to do two of those kinds of cases. You compare that to drug cases where we're doing scores of drug cases a year. Kind of justifying the expense and the commitment is—that's a challenge, but you just have to stay on it. —Prosecutor

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge this study's limitations. First, this study included 10 ECM task forces as evaluation sites. Selection of these 10 ECM task forces was made when there were 29 active ECM task forces, therefore our sample constitutes approximately one-third of the universe of ECM task forces. However, findings are generalizable only to those 10 task forces and are not nationally representative of all ECM task forces. But we did try to recruit task forces that varied across several factors, including geography, funding cycle, ECM grant purpose area, lead law enforcement organization, and organizational or coverage area.

Across qualitative and quantitative data, the inclusion or addressing of labor trafficking was very limited. Specifically, qualitative stakeholder interviews revealed a dearth of respondents who worked on labor trafficking investigations and with labor trafficking survivors. We faced similar challenges with the quantitative analysis, which also heavily focused on sex trafficking. Case files reviewed for this study were drawn from a random sample of human trafficking investigations pursued by law enforcement in each task force. Apart from one task force, this approach resulted in very few labor trafficking cases ending up in the sample. Whenever possible, we stratified the sample to ensure that some labor trafficking cases would purposefully be included. But seven of the eight task forces that contributed case-level data simply had few labor trafficking cases (several did not have any) that we could include in our sample of cases. It is possible, however, that the 10 ECM task forces selected for this evaluation were unusual in this regard, and that an entirely different set of task forces would have included more labor trafficking cases.

The investigative case files provided to the research team were cases that were identified as investigations of human trafficking by the ECM task forces, not by the research team. Also, the investigative case files we analyzed varied in terms of the quality of information included and completeness, both within and across task forces. This made it challenging to collect data elements comprehensively. Furthermore, case-level data analyses used case information only from the eight ECM task forces that provided these data. Bivariate and multivariate results presented are not nationally representative of all ECM task forces and can be generalized only to this set of eight task forces. In addition, only closed case files were used for the case-level analysis, so these cases were not representative of all human trafficking cases investigated by these task forces, but only those that had been resolved or closed. Ongoing investigations that were open for an extended period and remained opened at the time of our review were not included in the study sample.

Lastly, qualitative interviews were only conducted with task force members. Though some interviewees were survivor advocates, we did not interview survivors (at least not knowingly), who could have different perspectives on the task forces' approaches and practices. In retrospect, it would have been worthwhile to include survivors' perspectives.

Conclusion

The Office for Victims of Crime and the Bureau of Justice Assistance launched the Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking in 2010 to foster a multidisciplinary approach that brought together law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers in communities to work together on a coordinated response to address all forms of human trafficking. Until this report, limited research had been conducted regarding the impact and effectiveness of these ECM task forces. This study was undertaken to help fill that knowledge gap.

We conducted a comprehensive, mixed-methods examination of 10 diverse ECM task forces around the country to learn about the different approaches these task forces were taking to address human trafficking, understand which strategies had been effective, and assess the impact of the task forces on investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases and on identifying and assisting human trafficking survivors. This evaluation provides an in-depth understanding of these task forces and the challenges they face in achieving their goals. The findings of this report contribute to the growing body of knowledge about ECM task forces and, we hope, will lead to supportive improvements.

The major findings that emerged from this evaluation are summarized below.

The ECM model has helped task forces obtain resources to address human trafficking, including augmented law enforcement staff (i.e., more detectives and support staff dedicated exclusively to human trafficking) and, in certain places, the establishment of hubs to coordinate work among stakeholders in one location. These additional resources have made a considerable difference in jurisdictions' capacity to do this type of work more effectively, but jurisdictions still need additional resources.

Most of the ECM task forces evaluated for this study are primarily focused on identifying and investigating sex trafficking. The most common investigative method used for uncovering sex trafficking is undercover sting operations for prostitution. During the course of these operations, law enforcement determines whether people are being trafficked or engaging in prostitution through their own free will (except when people are younger than 18, in which case it is defined as human trafficking, by law).

Most investigations into suspected sex trafficking resulted in arrest (95 percent) and prosecution (77 percent), but only 33 percent of these cases were prosecuted using human trafficking charges. There are three reasons for this. First, some cases did not include elements of human trafficking even

though human trafficking was suspected. Second, survivors were not willing to cooperate, so the prosecutor determined that trafficking charges would be difficult to prove. Third, nontrafficking charges were used as a way to secure a plea and avoid potential survivor testimony.

Nearly all ECM task forces are struggling with their response to labor trafficking. Task forces are investigating few labor trafficking crimes, even though labor trafficking victimizations are occurring in their jurisdictions and being reported by victim service providers. Several task forces did not focus on labor trafficking. Law enforcement components of the task forces are generally not well positioned, organizationally or structurally, to effectively address labor trafficking. Most human trafficking investigators at police departments and prosecutors' offices are situated within sex crimes or vice units, so they tend to focus almost entirely on sex trafficking.

Collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders is crucial for task forces to be effective. Facilitating task force collaboration involves creating an organizational culture where task force members understand and respect each other's roles; perceive their roles, and the roles and contributions of others, as valuable and critical for meeting the task force's shared goals; communicate openly; and work through conflicts. In the task forces we studied, the ECM model proved largely effective at connecting various stakeholders and increasing collaboration across the continuum of interactions that system actors (e.g., law enforcement investigators, prosecutors, and service providers) have with survivors. But these benefits have come with challenges, such as the need for improved communication between service providers and law enforcement and better and more meaningful collaboration with federal partners. Some local stakeholders we interviewed expressed the need for federal partners to be more involved and engaged in task force activities. Members from several task forces reported wanting to receive greater support from federal partners and said that they sometimes struggled to get federal entities (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the US Attorney's Office) to participate. In certain task forces, this disconnect between federal and local partners resulted from differing perspectives about the types of human trafficking investigations the task force ought to focus on.

Colocation of task force members and agency partners is valuable. Colocation facilitates collaboration and promotes relationship building among task force members. A shared space where task force members (including federal and local law enforcement, victim service providers, and stakeholders from other agencies) work together in the same building a few days a week facilitates collaboration and creates certain efficiencies and economies of scale. Colocation boosts morale among stakeholders. They get to know each other well and can quickly solve problems that may have taken several days to solve before. Task forces that are colocated tend to perform better in terms of

investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases. Colocation is not feasible for all task forces, however, and depends on their structure and coverage area (i.e., colocation is not possible in statewide task forces).

Statewide task forces struggle the most with collaboration and service provision. Because of their geographic scope, statewide task forces face special challenges (logistic and financial) in supporting collaboration among task force members from across the state (the time and costs required to travel across the state to engage in task force work are significant hurdles). It can also be difficult for statewide task forces to provide appropriate services for certain types of survivors that might be available only from agencies on the other side of the state. Special consideration should be provided to statewide ECM task forces to help with these challenges.

Half the ECM task forces included in this study indicated that they may arrest a survivor as part of the investigation. Task forces that arrest survivors indicated that the practice was used as a strategy to ensure survivors' safety and leverage for cooperation in investigations. Three task forces indicated that there had been a change in practice or state law that had resulted in officers no longer arresting sex trafficking survivors. Yet, survivors may still be arrested for trafficking-related offenses, such as drug possession or probation violations stemming from prostitution charges.

People who were suspected of and arrested for human trafficking were disproportionately Black or African American. Our case file review of closed law enforcement cases across ECM task forces indicated that 66 percent of suspects in sex trafficking cases and 44 percent of suspects in labor trafficking cases were Black or African American. But it is important to situate this finding in a large body of research demonstrating that Black people are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than white people, even when controlling for such factors as the seriousness of the offense and the suspect's prior record (Hinton, Henderson, and Reed 2018).

More and better housing options are needed for human trafficking survivors. Adequate housing for survivors (both short-term and long-term housing) was identified in nearly every task force we visited as an unmet need of survivors. Victims need secure housing that will keep them safe. Task force stakeholders reported that alternative housing strategies, such as domestic violence shelters or group homes for incarcerated youth, are mostly ineffective for meeting the needs of human trafficking survivors. In certain task forces, we learned that law enforcement arrested and detained human trafficking survivors as a means of keeping them safe (because secure housing options were scarce).

The task forces want more targeted training on labor trafficking. The task forces indicated that they lacked information and knowledge about labor trafficking, including how to identify when and

where labor trafficking was occurring. Some task forces were trying to reach out to other ones to gain insights about their approaches to addressing labor trafficking. All task forces indicated an interest in additional training to build their capacity to conduct labor trafficking investigations.

Notes

- ¹ Two of the eight ECM task forces did not provide access to law enforcement data.
- ² In this context, colocation means a task force had a common space in one building where task force members from different agencies and organizations (e.g., local law enforcement, federal law enforcement, victim service providers) could embed and work together for part or all of the week on task force activities but could still return to work at their parent organization as needed. Colocation does not mean that entire agencies or organizations shared one location.
- ³ Each task force determined what constituted “investigations into human trafficking” and reported that information into the PMT database. The research team did not make this determination.
- ⁴ Soft rooms are a designated room designed to enhance comfort and reduce trauma of survivors of crime during the interview process with law enforcement. Soft rooms are typically decorated with calming colors, comfortable furniture, natural light, and accessories such as diffusers, artwork, or weighted blankets that will help a survivor feel at ease during the interview process.

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About the Authors

Evelyn F. McCoy is a senior training and technical assistance manager in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where she leads research, evaluation, and technical assistance projects related to correctional programming and practice, alternatives to incarceration, reentry, gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches in the justice system, and human trafficking.

Paige S. Thompson is a research associate in the Justice Policy Center, where her research focuses on police technology, community perspectives of police legitimacy and procedural justice, human trafficking, and interventions and policies focused on preventing and reducing gun violence.

Jeanette Hussemann is a former principal research associate in the Justice Policy Center, where she led research on human trafficking and other forms of victimization, access to justice, and experiences in systems of justice and with community-based service provider agencies.

William Adams is a principal research associate in the Justice Policy Center, where he conducts research on the federal criminal justice system, federal sentencing and corrections policies, and the criminal justice system response to human trafficking.

Krista White is a policy program associate in the Justice Policy Center, where her research focuses on victimization, human trafficking, workforce development, and youth alternatives to justice involvement.

Roderick Taylor is a former research analyst in the Justice Policy Center, where he works on projects related to criminal justice reforms, human trafficking, and victimization. Before joining Urban, he worked at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Institute for Urban Research and Analysis.

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