



Human Trafficking Statistical Report



Tennessee Bureau of Investigation

Human Trafficking Unit

2023

HUMAN TRAFFICKING BY THE NUMBERS

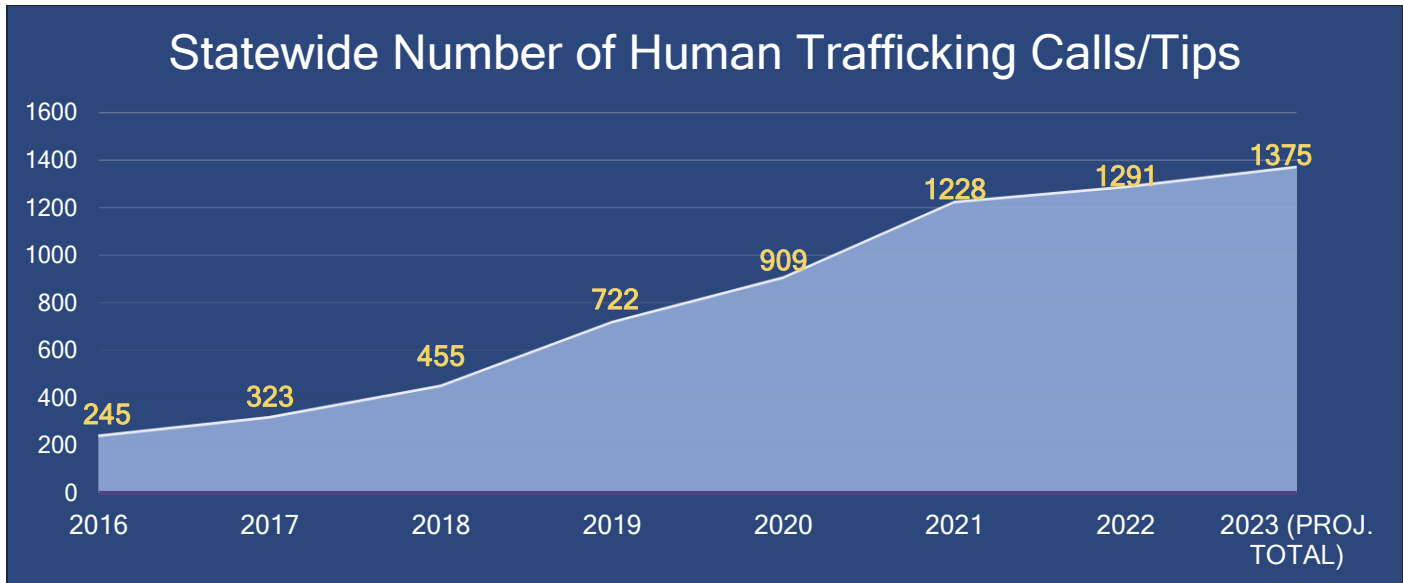
The purpose of this publication is to fulfill the statutory requirement set forth in Public Chapter 3 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2023, which requires by December 1, 2023, and by each December 1 thereafter, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) to submit a report on child and human trafficking crimes and trends in Tennessee to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Speaker of the Senate, and to give a snapshot as to the measures being taken by TBI to combat human trafficking (HT) in Tennessee.

For background, a study was conducted in 2011 by TBI and Vanderbilt University that addressed concerns regarding human trafficking across Tennessee. As a result of this study, the TBI created a Human Trafficking Unit (HTU). Furthermore, legislation was passed that gave TBI original jurisdiction over human trafficking offenses. This allows TBI to initiate criminal investigations as they present themselves. Pub. Ch. 435 was also passed in 2011 that established the Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline. In 2015, Pub. Ch. 503 provided 4 Special Agent positions specific to investigating and developing criminal cases involving HT offenses throughout TN. This also required the development of a course of instruction concerning HT designed for law enforcement and various agencies and departments likely to encounter HT & HT victims during the course of delivering services. Human trafficking training is required by Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission (POST) for certification as a police officer in Tennessee. In addition to the above legislation, the passing of Pub. Ch. 510 (2015) developed the formation of a human trafficking advisory council, led by TBI, to further develop and implement a state plan for prevention of HT that includes law makers, heads of various state agencies, non-governmental organization service provider partners that serve HT victims, a former human trafficking survivor, as well as other various organizations and agencies.

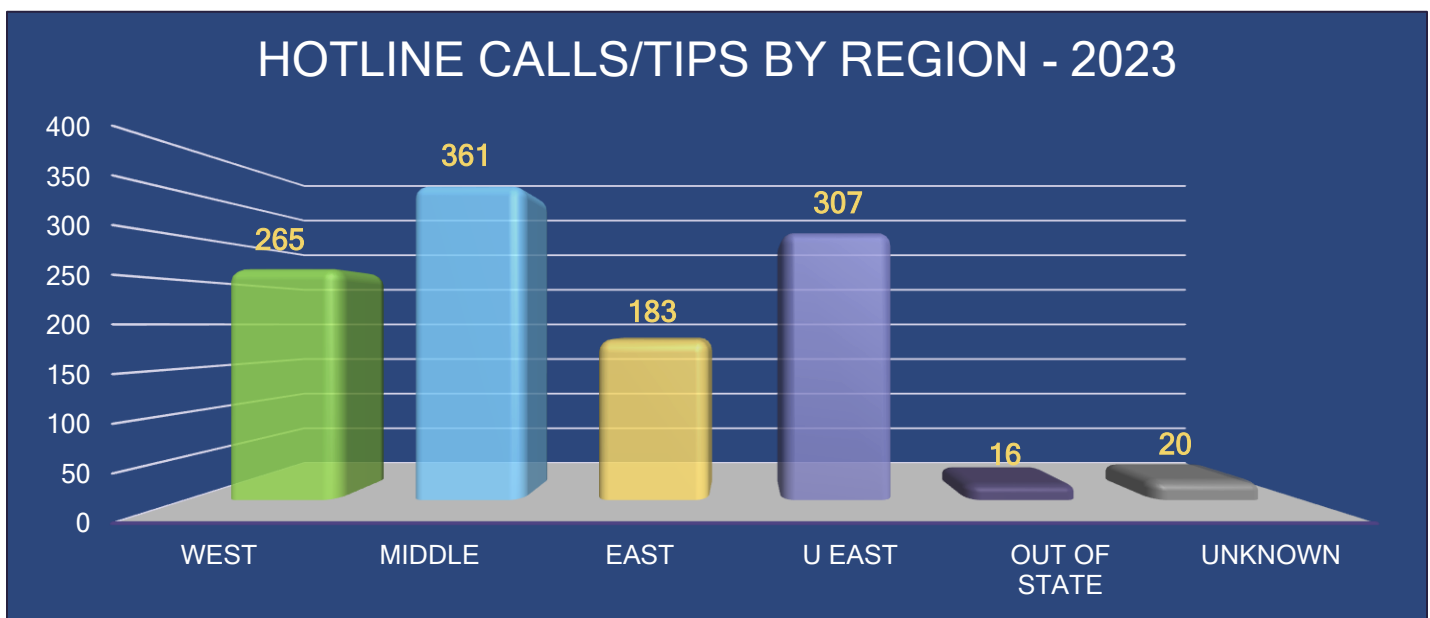
In 2021, Governor Bill Lee and the General Assembly provided an additional 5 Special Agent positions to aid in combatting HT across Tennessee. This brought the Human Trafficking Unit to a total of 9 Special Agents, 2 in each of TBI's state regions with one additional in Middle Tennessee, as well as one Assistant Special Agent in Charge. This has allowed the agents to better focus on regional human trafficking trends and continue to stay proactive. With the ever-increasing number of tips, leads, referrals, and complexity of the cases this has been instrumental in the fight against human trafficking in Tennessee.

Human Trafficking Calls, Tips and Request for Investigations

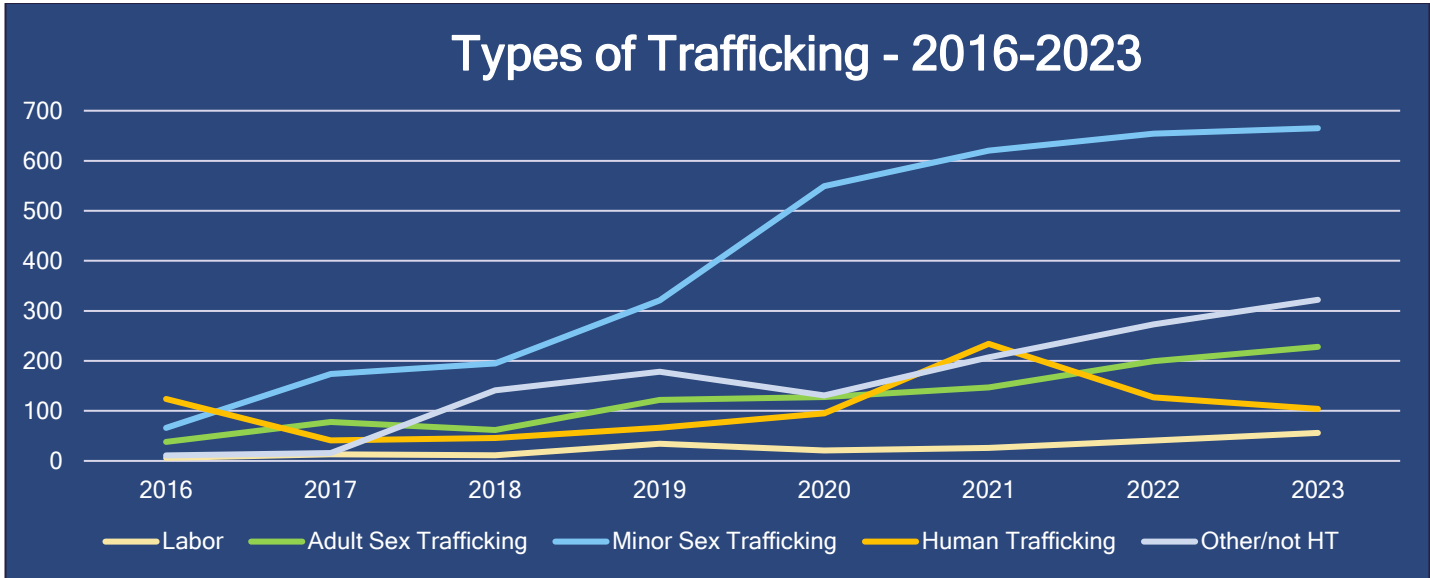
The below graph identifies the number of hotline calls and tips received by the TBI's human trafficking team between 2016 and Nov 5, 2023. These leads were received from across the entire state of Tennessee.



The following chart splits the above figure into regions, highlighting which areas are generating the most tips and calls.

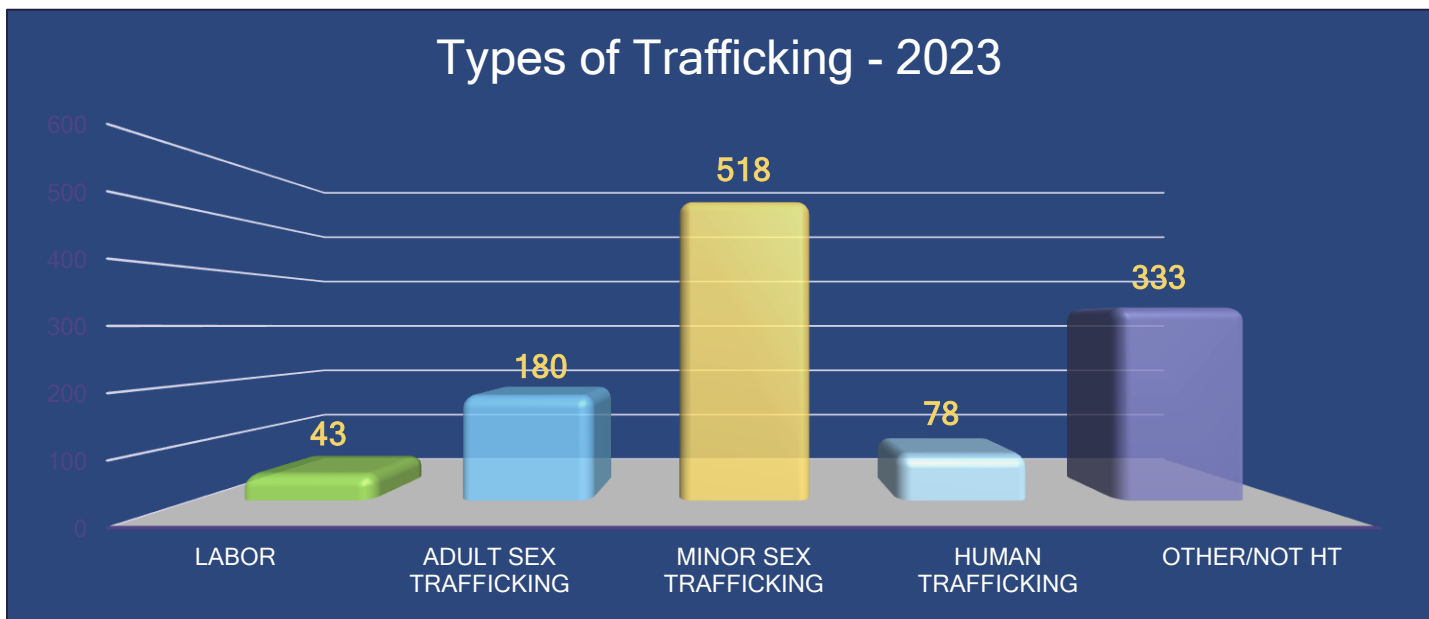


In addition to tracking where tips/leads are generated from within the state, the type of trafficking reported is also identified. Over the course of the last 8 years, minor sex trafficking reports have dramatically increased from 66 in 2016 to over 600 by 2021.

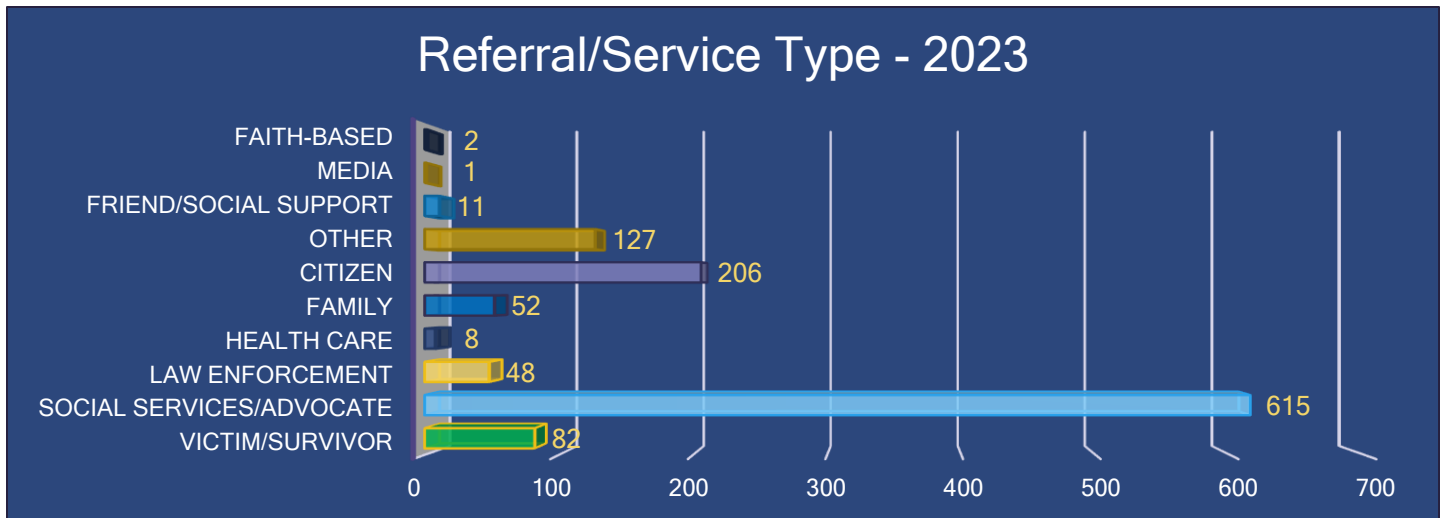


*includes projected totals for 2023

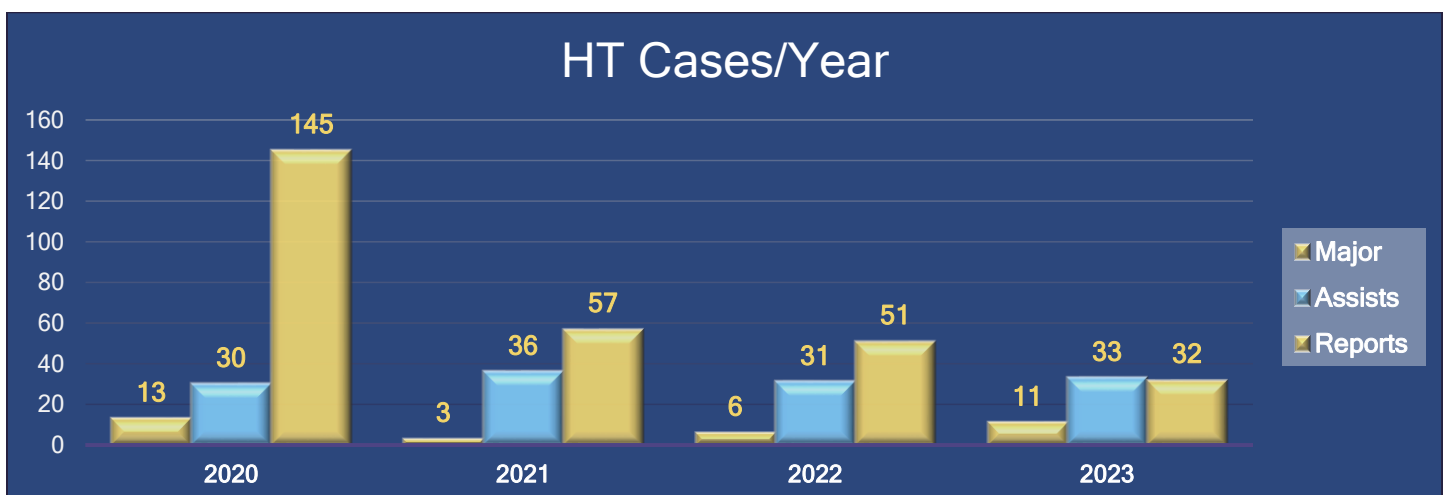
In 2023, minor sex trafficking far exceeds the other forms of trafficking reported. As can be seen below, there are 518 reports of minor sex trafficking as of November 5, 2023.



The vast majority of tips that come into the TBI regarding Human Trafficking are via social service organizations/advocates. This can be largely attributed to the relationship fostered with the Department of Child Services (DCS) who provide referrals specific to human trafficking on a weekly basis to the TBI for review and further investigation.

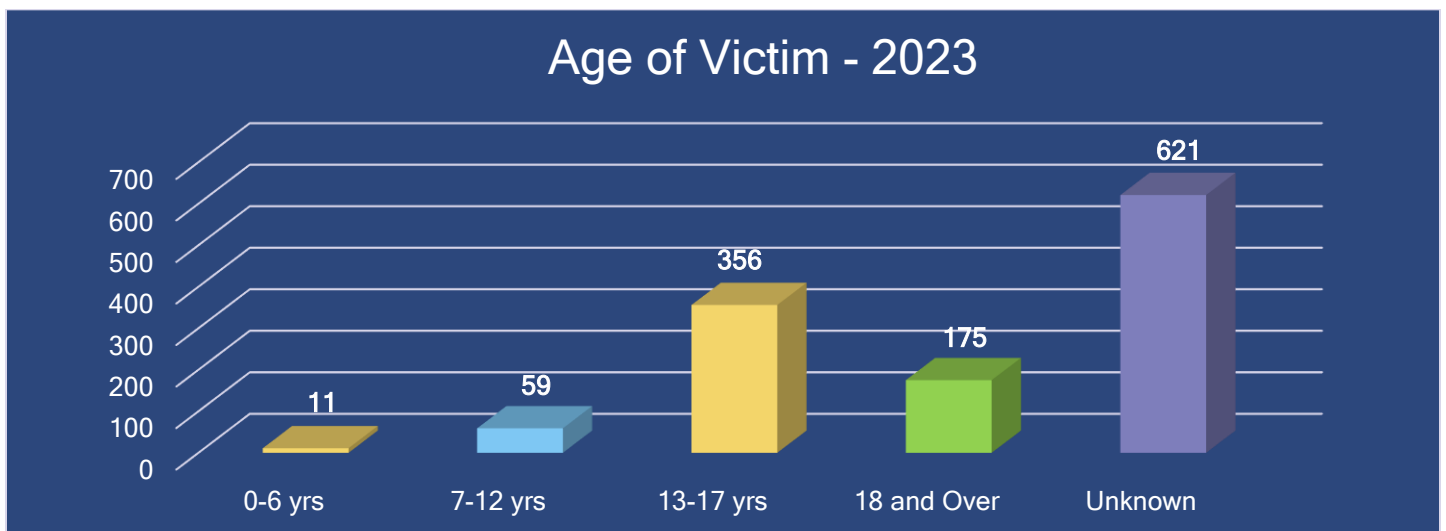


While all tips and calls are reviewed, not all develop into a TBI case. This is due to various reasons, some of which include jurisdictional issues, veracity of claims made, and the amount of verifiable information provided. For example, many cases of suspected trafficking are passed to local agencies who can better address an issue in an expedient manner. Other tips cannot be pursued due to the lack of information provided by a caller. Regardless, many of the calls/tips do generate cases and the following chart identifies those figures over the course of the last 4 years (current to November 5, 2023). In the chart below, major cases are TBI-led HT investigations, assists are local law enforcement-led with TBI HTU assisting, and Reports are intelligence-based reports.



Age of Trafficking Victims

The TBI's HTU receives tips regarding potential victims within the state of Tennessee across all ages. Minor victims range in age from 5 months to 17 years old. The chart below shows the breakdown of tips by age of victim based on tips received in 2023. The majority of tips dealing with minor victims (45%) involve children between the ages of 13 and 17 years old. It should be noted that 47% of all the tips received by the TBI HTU involving minors originate with DCS/CPS.



Training Statistics

The TBI has trained a number of individuals in human trafficking related courses over the last 8 years. While the largest number of individuals trained are law enforcement personnel, there is training dedicated to civilian groups as well.

Types of Groups Trained

- Law Enforcement
- State Agencies
- Court Personnel
- Colleges/Universities
- Faith Based Groups
- Victim Service Groups
- Hotel/Hospitality Staff
- Miscellaneous organizations

Between March 2016 and November 5, 2023, a total of **13,184** individuals were trained via the **TBI LEARN Program**.

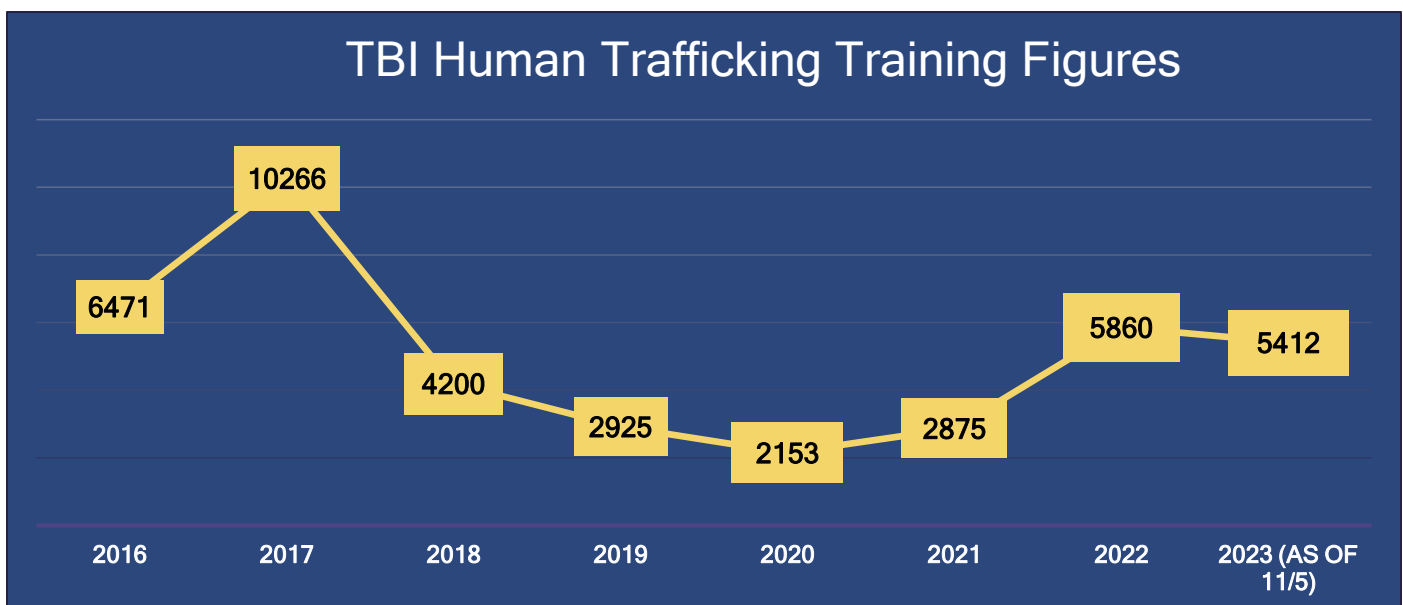
The total number of **civilians** trained in 2023 totals **2,473**.

The total number of law enforcement taught in 2023 via **The Law Enforcement Training Academy/In Service** is **930**.

The below graph captures the total number of individuals trained by the TBI since 2011. This figure is current to November 5, 2023.

The total number trained since 2016 is **40,162**.

TBI Human Trafficking Training Figures



Operation Statistics

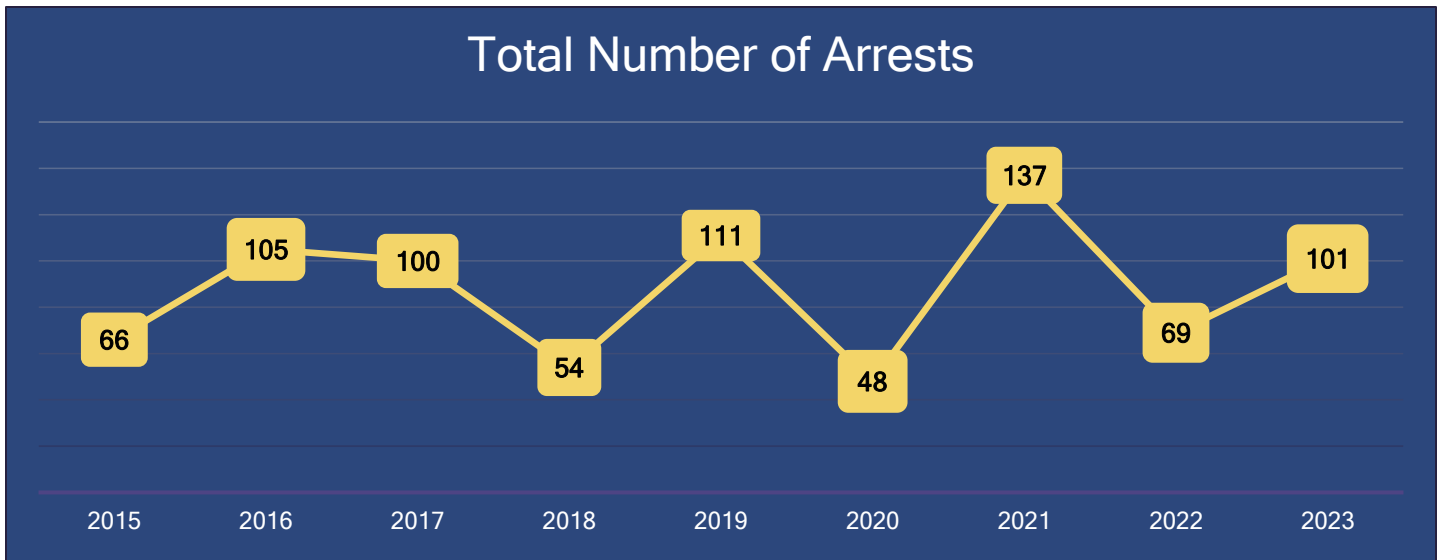
HTU has been doing proactive operations since 2015. These operations target the multiple facets of the commercial sex industry. The goal is to identify the traffickers, the buyers, and recover the victims. The number of operations conducted each year continues to increase. Based on the results from these types of operations and the evolving trends of the state of human trafficking in Tennessee, the HTU has adapted by branching out to other types of proactive operations. These types of operations include the targeting of illicit businesses that are involved in both sex and labor trafficking, high-risk juvenile recovery operations, rescue and recovery of potential sex trafficking victims, and other proactive operations. These all serve to disrupt and dismantle the human trafficking market as well as rescue victims.

In 2023, the HTU conducted **15 total operations**. In addition to the proactive covert hotel-based operations, **2 operations** focused specifically on juveniles who were high-risk of sex trafficking based on known risk factors. These operations had two objectives. First, to contact those identified as high-risk for the purpose of interrupting or preventing victimization. Second, to recover those who were missing and ensure they receive the proper services. During these operations, a total of **17 juveniles** were located/recovered.

The following charts look at the total number of operations conducted by the TBI over the last 9 years.



The below arrest figures are based on proactive operations as well as enforcement activities initiated



by Special Agents from tips, leads and referrals.

Additional Facts/Figures

Online Escort Ads

When conducting operations or seeking information on potential trafficking victims, TBI HTU researches a wide range of sex advertisement websites. Concerning the number of ads posted statewide in 2023, there were **877,000 ads from 128,171 profiles**. Though this is a massive number, it is important to note that not all sex advertisements involve possible trafficking victims. It is also important to note that the same ad could be posted on numerous sites, resulting in duplicate results. Additionally, there are often fake ads created by 'bots' designed to take advantage of those individuals seeking to engage in commercial sex acts. Regardless of the exact accuracy of the number of results, the HTU monitors posts regularly with extreme detail to identify possible minors.

Missing Children

While not all missing children are trafficking victims, the runaway population is particularly vulnerable to exploitation. These children are often without the basic needs such as food and shelter. Due to their age, circumstances, and needs, they are vulnerable to manipulation and force that often can lead to being in a trafficking situation. Consequently, the TBI makes every effort to identify those with a possible human trafficking nexus or who are high-risk for falling victim to human trafficking. The HTU identified 107 juveniles since February 2022 who met such criteria. The TBI HT Unit, TBI Missing Persons Unit, Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) HT Unit, and local partners have conducted joint

recovery operations across the state focusing on these high-risk runaways and juveniles. These multi-disciplinary teams continue to work these high-risk/at-risk juvenile HT cases as they are reported or identified.

Additionally, the HTU also noted an increase in National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reports received concerning unaccompanied minors (juveniles who arrive at the U.S. border and are then placed with a sponsor). NCMEC is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation whose mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization. The HTU noted 112 such unaccompanied minors since April 2022. Many of these minors are from Central and South American Countries and are placed with a sponsor in Tennessee, then the minor is reported missing. The HT Unit works closely with DCS and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to locate these juveniles and ensure they are in a safe place and receive qualified services.

Improvements and Investments

The TBI greatly appreciates Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly for the improvements made in the laws on human trafficking in recent years, as well as the considerable investments in the Bureau's Human Trafficking Unit. Stricter punishments for traffickers and additional resources for victims are two invaluable tools in the fight against human trafficking. The additional special agent positions allocated to the TBI have helped the unit rescue more trafficking victims, specifically in proactive rescue/recovery undercover operations.

For undercover operations to work in a way that is most optimal, however, the unit needs a sustained number of human trafficking intelligence analysts to examine the thousands of online advertisements to identify potential victims, their location, information on any sex trafficker controlling the victim, and dangers associated with a recovery effort.

For years, Tennessee has led the way nationally in enacting the policies and rallying the stakeholders needed to address the issue of human trafficking from all sides. Our work, however, is not finished: There are still victims to recover, survivors to support, and buyers and traffickers to hold accountable. The TBI stands prepared to lead in the ongoing fight, and looks forward to ongoing conversations with all stakeholders about the resources, policies, best practices, and laws needed to continue this important work in Tennessee and beyond.