

THE OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

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# An Ongoing Commitment to Victims of Human Trafficking



Office for Victims of Crime

**OVC**

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), a component of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), works to enhance the Nation’s capacity to assist crime victims and to provide leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices in ways that will promote justice and healing for all victims.

As part of this mission, OVC has a longstanding commitment to ensuring all trafficking victims can access the services they need. Prior to the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), OVC conducted a focus group to learn more about the needs of trafficking victims, with the goal of developing policies, programs, and educational materials to be used by the field. The TVPA then authorized funding for OVC to support organizations in providing comprehensive services to victims of human trafficking, positioning OVC to provide national leadership in victim identification and assistance.

As of 2021, OVC manages the largest amount of funding across the Federal Government dedicated to providing services to victims of human trafficking, and supports human trafficking grantees in at least 47 states, 1 territory, and the District of Columbia. In this capacity, OVC strives to uphold the intent of the TVPA and its subsequent reauthorizations to ensure that all trafficking victims—regardless of

immigration status, gender, or form of trafficking—receive support in accessing the services they need to heal in the aftermath of crime victimization.

## Human Trafficking in the United States

Human trafficking is a crime that involves the exploitation of a person for the purpose of compelled sex or labor. The TVPA defines it as—

- a. sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- b. the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

In the United States, any person under the age of 18 who is engaged in commercial sex acts, regardless of the use of force, fraud, or coercion, is a victim of human trafficking.

There is no single profile of a trafficking victim. Victims of human trafficking can be anyone—regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, education level, or citizenship status. However, data indicates that traditionally underserved populations are highly represented; traffickers frequently prey on individuals who are impoverished, vulnerable, living in an unsafe situation, or are in search of a better life.

Trafficking in persons is a crime that denies the civil rights and agency of the

individual. Victims can be found in legal and illegal labor industries, including child care, elder care, the drug trade, personal care services, hospitality, food production and processing, and more. In some cases, victims are hidden behind doors in domestic servitude in a home. Others are in plain view, interact with people on a daily basis, and are forced to work under extreme circumstances in massage parlors, exotic dance clubs, cleaning businesses, or restaurants. These conditions exist across the United States.

## History of OVC Funding

OVC awarded the first federal grant to respond to human trafficking in 1998. Two years later, the TVPA authorized the Attorney General to make grants to victim service organizations to develop, expand, or strengthen services for victims of trafficking. In fiscal year (FY) 2002, Congress appropriated \$10 million for the Services for Trafficking Victims Discretionary Grant Program and designated OVC to administer the funding within DOJ. The following year, OVC awarded the first 12 grants under the new human trafficking program.

Beginning in 2004, OVC and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) partnered to develop, fund, and support anti-trafficking task forces. In 2010, OVC and BJA began funding the Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking, which uses a holistic approach to respond to human trafficking. The multidisciplinary task forces are designed to identify victims of all types of human trafficking, address the individualized needs of victims through quality services, and investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases at the federal, tribal, state, and local levels. As of 2020, OJP provides funding to 46 task forces across the United States.

This brief provides aggregate data across OVC human trafficking grant programs as reported in Trafficking Information Management System (TIMS) Online from July 2015 through June 2020. TIMS Online was created by OVC as a standardized data collection and reporting system used to track grant-required performance metrics and case-specific information related to all OVC human trafficking grant programs on a biannual basis. The data presented herein reflects the work of OVC-funded grantees and the clients they have served with award funds, and is not representative of all human trafficking in the United States.

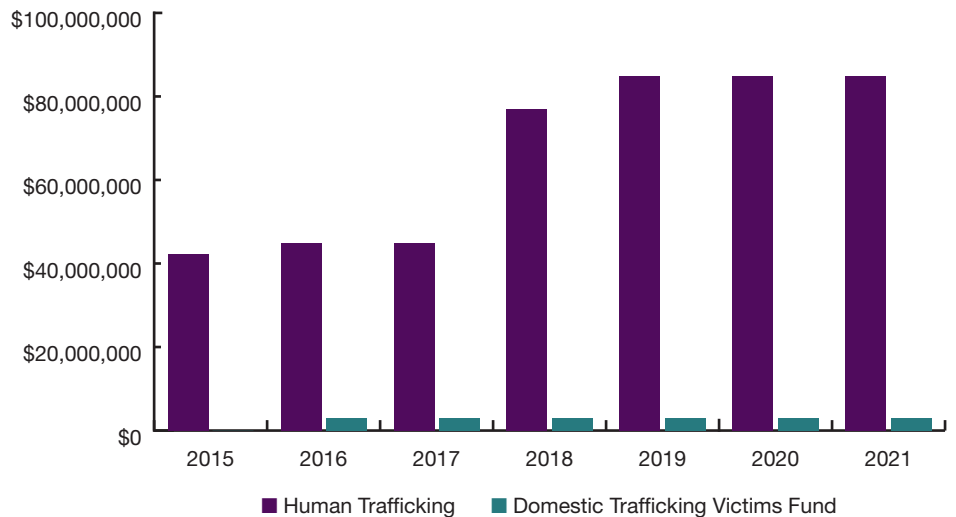
In June 2020, OJP consolidated all law enforcement, juvenile justice, and victim services human trafficking initiatives at BJA and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention into a new Human Trafficking Division housed within OVC. By merging OJP's law enforcement, juvenile justice, and victim services human trafficking work into one dedicated division, OJP is modeling the same multidisciplinary approach that has worked so well with the human trafficking task forces—one that best addresses the needs of trafficking victims and more effectively integrates a victim-centered approach into the criminal justice system.

The amount of human trafficking grant funding that DOJ receives has increased substantially, from \$10 million in FY 2002 to more than \$85 million in FYs 2020 and 2021. The majority of this funding supports services to trafficking survivors. As of December 2020, OVC manages approximately \$270 million in anti-trafficking funding, representing approximately 400 awards.

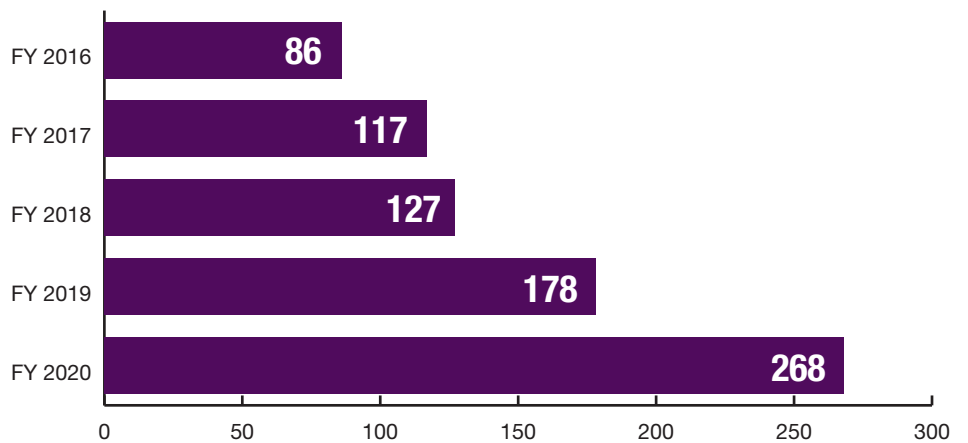
OVC funding supports the delivery of direct services such as case management, housing, and legal assistance, as well as multidisciplinary collaboration and state-level approaches to identifying and serving victims of human trafficking. In addition, through contracts and cooperative agreements, OVC manages a broad array of training and technical assistance for victim service providers, law enforcement and allied professionals, with a focus on enhancing the quality and quantity of services available to trafficking victims and grants to build capacity. To enhance anti-trafficking programming and policies, OVC engages in ongoing interagency and intra-agency collaboration and seeks out opportunities to learn from survivors, service providers, and other frontline stakeholders throughout the country.

OVC also administers two Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) formula grant programs

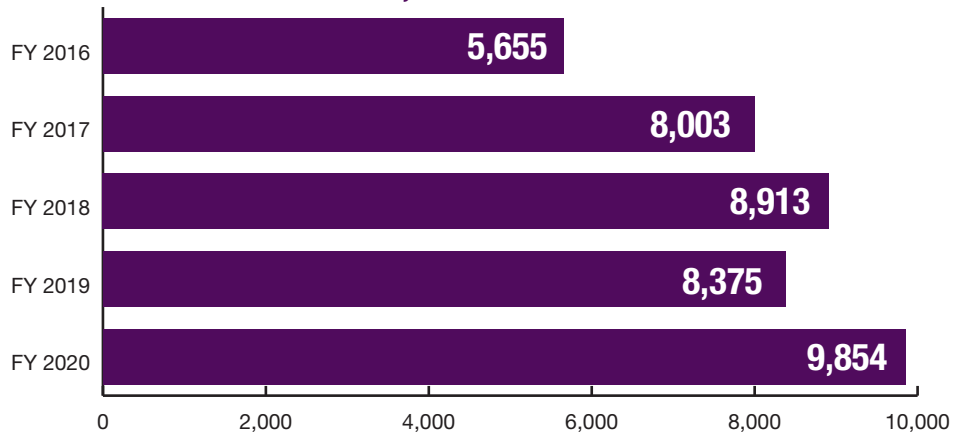
### Human Trafficking Funding History



### Number of Active Victim Services Grants, FYs 2016–2020



### Number of Clients Served, FYs 2016–2020



that support crime victim compensation and assistance—the cornerstones of support for victims throughout the Nation. The programs are supported by the Crime Victims Fund, which serves as a major funding source for victim services throughout the Nation, and which supports a broad array of programs and services that focus on helping all victims, including survivors of human trafficking,

in the immediate aftermath of crime and continuing to support them as they rebuild their lives. In FY 19, VOCA victim assistance programs supported 184 subawards to organizations that provided services for more than 21,000 trafficking victims<sup>1</sup> and VOCA victim compensation programs paid 287 compensation claims that were related to human trafficking, totaling \$352,143.

## Expanding Access to Services

OVC supports victim service organizations in providing a broad range of trauma-informed and victim-centered services to victims of human trafficking. Over time, the number of grantees providing services has increased steadily. From July 2015 to June 2020, OVC achieved a three-fold increase in the number of active grantees delivering services to trafficking survivors.

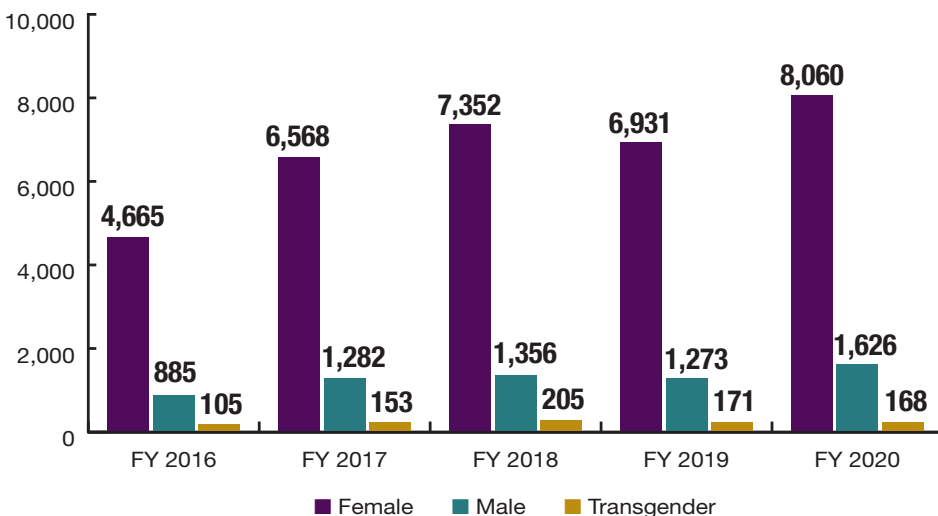
Service providers also reported a corresponding increase in the number of clients served—due, in large part, to the increase in funding that expanded OVC's direct services capacity. During the 5-year reporting period, OVC-funded grantees nearly doubled the number of human trafficking clients they served, from 5,655 in FY 2016, to 9,854 in FY 2020.<sup>2</sup>

### Types of Clients Served

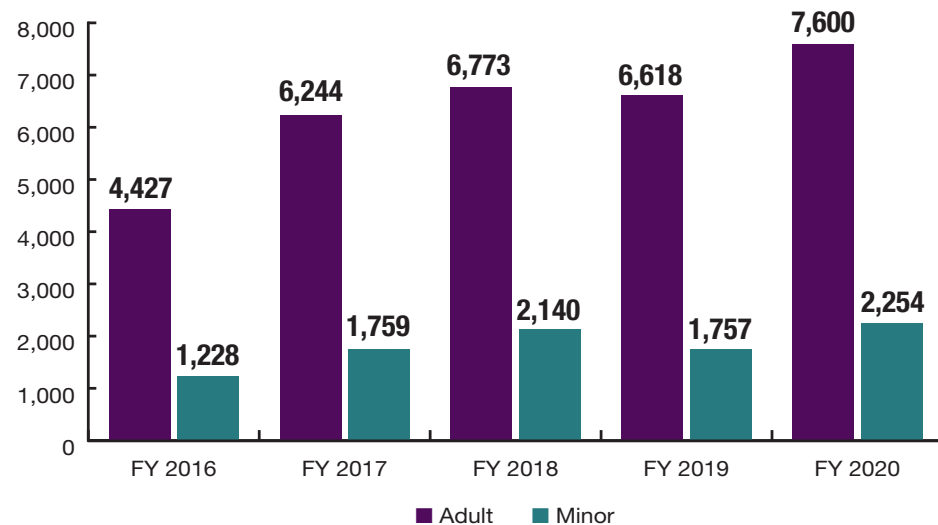
OVC grantees provided services to diverse groups of clients, including potential and confirmed victims of human trafficking. On average, from July 2015 to June 2020, OVC human trafficking grantee clients were victims of sex trafficking (64 percent), followed by labor trafficking (23 percent). These numbers are higher if you consider that victims of sex and labor trafficking are counted as a separate category, accounting for 6 percent of clients served. Grantees categorized 8 percent of clients served as victims of an unknown form of trafficking.

Twenty-nine percent of clients were Hispanic and Latino, followed by White and Caucasian clients (24 percent) and Black and African American clients (23 percent). The remaining clients served were Asian American (11 percent), bi-racial or multi-racial (5 percent), American Indian or Alaska Native (2 percent), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1 percent), and other races (5 percent).

### Number of Clients Served in FYs 2016–2020, by Gender



### Number of Clients Served in FYs 2016–2020, by Age



<sup>1</sup> There may be an overlap in client data reported by grantees that receive VOCA subawards and OVC funding.

<sup>2</sup> In FY 2020, there was a major uptick in the quantity of services overall, most likely due to the pandemic.

## Types of Services Provided

Currently, the services that grantees provide are reported as time-based and incident-based, allowing for different ways of measuring the quantity of services provided. From July 2015 to June 2020, OVC human trafficking grantees provided a total of 1,035,307 incident-based services. The incident-based services most frequently provided to clients included housing and rental assistance, personal items (e.g., food, clothing, and personal hygiene), transportation, mental health treatment (including emergency and long-term treatment), and education.

From FY 2019 to FY 2020, the number of incident-based services provided increased by 290 percent. The largest increases occurred in housing and rental assistance (up 620 percent), other services (up 420 percent), interpreter/translator services (up 310 percent), personal items (up 290 percent), and medical services (up 290 percent).

From July 2015 to June 2020, OVC human trafficking grantees spent 738,937 hours providing time-based services. The time-based service most frequently provided was ongoing case management, followed by emotional and moral support, and legal services, including civil and immigration advocacy. During that time, the number of housing placements provided to human trafficking victims also doubled, with a clear shift away from emergency housing placements and towards long-term and transitional housing.

From FY 2019 to FY 2020, the number of time-based services provided increased by 230 percent. The largest increases occurred in family reunification services (up 610 percent); social service advocacy and explanation of benefits, entitlements, and availability (up 420 percent); housing and shelter advocacy (up 310 percent); protection and safety planning (up 300 percent); and employment services (up 290 percent).

Overall, the reporting data captured by TIMS underscore the need for a wide

range of services, as well as flexibility and planning in advance of victim identification, to ensure that service providers can effectively meet the needs of this diverse victim population.

## Expanding Understanding

Victims of human trafficking are often identified and served by individuals who do not consider themselves experts or specialists in the field of human trafficking.

Rather, they are working with related victim or vulnerable populations in fields such as healthcare, education, child welfare, juvenile justice, or worker and immigrant rights, and recognize signs of human trafficking within the population they serve. OVC supports ongoing training and technical assistance (TTA) for its grantees, including human trafficking grantees, for those working with victims, and for the Nation at large.

From July 2015 to June 2020, OVC human trafficking grantees conducted 9,601

### The incident-based services most frequently provided were—



#### Housing and Rental Assistance

(302,634 incidents)



#### Mental Health Treatment

(103,450 incidents)



#### Personal Items

(260,726 incidents)



#### Education

(84,665 incidents)



#### Transportation

(148,178 incidents)

### The time-based services most frequently provided were—



#### Ongoing Case Management

(248,099 hours)



#### Employment Assistance

(53,006 hours)



#### Emotional and Moral Support

(163,521 hours)



#### Housing and Shelter Advocacy

(30,740 hours)



#### Legal Services

(133,040 hours)

trainings on topics such as identifying human trafficking victims, highlighting services that are available to victims, and elucidating the local and regional dimensions of human trafficking. A total of 334,806 professionals attended these trainings, including educators, medical and public health providers, victim service providers, and social services providers. OVC human trafficking grantees also conducted 17,699 outreach initiatives during that period, including 4,274 direct/street outreach events, 3,973 community meetings, 1,819 awareness presentations, and 1,042 table and booth displays.

In 2020, OVC launched the ***Understanding Human Trafficking*** online training, which offers foundational learning on trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches to human trafficking. The modules are designed so that a wide audience can benefit, including victim service providers, first responders, government organizations, teachers, students, and members of the general public. As of January 2021, a total of 14,307 users had completed the online training.

Through its **cadre of TTA providers**, OVC provides practitioner-driven, evidence-based TTA that is responsive

to the particular needs of victim service providers and system stakeholders, their communities, and the victims they serve. These providers strengthen the victim assistance responses to human trafficking (housing, employment, legal services, responses to labor trafficking) and support multidisciplinary task forces as they build capacity and leadership in identifying human trafficking victims and connecting them to services.

## **Aligning Efforts and Improving Outcomes**

Human trafficking is a complex issue. Many victims of human trafficking have significant histories of trauma and have often experienced polyvictimization. OVC supports the alignment of services designed specifically for victims of human trafficking with those in the larger victim services field, building upon knowledge, resources, and existing systems.

OVC maximizes its role and resources to broker relationships and build strategic partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to better support victims. Coordination and collaboration among federal agencies, and between public and private partners, is needed to continually

develop and sustain a comprehensive and trauma-informed service network for victims of human trafficking.

OVC has convened groundbreaking survivor forums and listening sessions to ensure those who have been victimized by human trafficking are at the center of our response to this crime. OVC has worked alongside survivor advocates to gather survivor perspectives on effective, strategic, and meaningful ways to engage the survivor community and incorporate survivor feedback into federal anti-human trafficking initiatives.

OVC's human trafficking programs have evolved over the years as the anti-human trafficking field has grown in the United States. The data gathered has helped OVC to better respond to the needs of grantees and clients, and has informed and enhanced OVC's outreach efforts and response to the field. The variety and breadth of OVC's human trafficking funding today best positions it to use every means at its disposal to support DOJ's efforts to serve trafficking victims and bring traffickers to justice. OVC's human trafficking programs will continue to evolve to meet the needs of survivors, victim service stakeholders, and all those who are working to combat it.

