SOUTH AFRICA ANNUAL HOTLINE REPORT 2022

ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) in South Africa is a dedicated service that supports victims of human trafficking and provides advice and assistance on human trafficking issues. Operated by A21 South Africa (A21), the NHTH works in partnership with law enforcement, key government entities, and public sectors across South Africa. The NHTH is available to receive reports of suspected trafficking 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through phone calls and electronic means. Reports are handled by call specialists specifically trained in the area of human trafficking, utilising a trauma-informed and victim-centred approach. Call specialists are equipped to respond to calls in English, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Afrikaans and Shona, plus an additional 230 languages through a tele-interpreting service. The NHTH also offers a ‘job vetting’ service through which call specialists research potential job opportunities to determine their validity. The NHTH then provides potential applicants with feedback on their research findings, as well as safety advice to avoid being defrauded or otherwise exploited.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRENDS IN 2022

False job opportunities remain the most prevalent recruitment method for the third straight year. Of the human trafficking cases reported to the NHTH in 2022, 60% were confirmed trafficking cases involving recruitment by fraudulent means, either through false job opportunities or false promises. Recruitment through ‘false promises’ involves situations where traffickers lure victims into trafficking initially through promises to improve their current life circumstances. This type of recruitment can manifest in several ways so long as a victim leaves home to travel in reliance on that false promise. One victim confronted with health issues relocated to a different province under the belief that her medical expenses would be sponsored, only to be sex trafficked upon arrival. Other examples of false promises involve ‘free’ education opportunities such as scholarships or study abroad. The NHTH has received several requests to ascertain the validity of a number of study opportunities and scholarships.

Reports to the NHTH showcase a pattern of traffickers using the recession and economic instability in South Africa to lure desperate South Africans with employment opportunities which are actually exploitative. The South African government department ‘Statistics South Africa’ (Stats SA) released data that revealed that by the fourth quarter of 2022, 7.8 million persons in South Africa were unemployed and actively seeking employment.¹ In 2022, the NHTH researched 51 ‘job vetting’ requests of potential employment opportunities with 37 (72.6%) determined to be fraudulent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The NHTH received 3,374 CONTACTS IN 2022
- 76.6% of contacts were HUMAN TRAFFICKING RELATED, an 18.7% increase from 2021
- SEX TRAFFICKING remained the most common form of exploitation reported at 49.5%
- MALES accounted for 20% of confirmed cases, an increase from 5.3% reported in 2021
- 391 POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING were reported to the NHTH
- 42.7% of all contacts were from the GENERAL PUBLIC
- 35.5% of contacts to the NHTH originated from GAUTENG PROVINCE, with 30.9% from the WESTERN CAPE
- 72.6% of all jobs vetted were identified as FRAUDULENT
- The NHTH identified and assisted 50 VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING
- 60% of trafficking victims identified were recruited by FALSE PROMISES OR JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Contacts to the National Human Trafficking Hotline comprise all incoming enquiries to the NHTH through any means, including but not limited to phone calls, emails, SMS and online web submissions. These enquiries include all reports on potential human trafficking, various crimes both related and unrelated to human trafficking, and queries about human trafficking generally, as well as requests for various types of assistance related to human trafficking, such as safety planning or job vetting.

‘Reports’ only include contacts to the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline relating to a potential human trafficking situation.

The statistics below are exclusively drawn from substantive contacts made to the NHTH from January - December 2022 concerning human trafficking matters. This report is not a reflection of all substantive calls to the NHTH which may include calls related to other high-risk crimes, labour exploitation, and other nontrafficking issues.

Disaggregated data has been collected on each individual case based on descriptive factors including gender, age, type of trafficking, methods of control and recruitment methods. The data contained herein is based on the cases where the information was available. In the majority of cases, the call specialists were unable to glean full or specific details about the case. Therefore the data below is based on cases where the specified information was made available.
OVERVIEW OF DATA
In 2022, the NHTH received 3,374 contacts via phone, email, SMS and online web submissions. The number of contacts related to human trafficking increased by 18.7% from 2021 to 76.6% indicating an increase in the understanding of the NHTH’s purpose and its services. Consistent with prior years, contacts decreased towards the end of the year as the holidays approached.

CALLER DEMOGRAPHICS
The general public account for the highest percentage (42.7%) of contacts to the NHTH, suggesting community members’ comfort with reporting human trafficking-related matters to a non-law enforcement body. Other explanations may include the willingness of the NHTH to accept anonymous reports and a lack of public confidence in local law enforcement. Unfortunately, there is a general fear of official complicity. Moreover, in several cases reported to the NHTH, victims have faced obstacles or a lack of support when reporting suspected trafficking cases directly to the local police station.

Throughout 2022, the NHTH focused on building relationships and networking with partner organisations and local law enforcement. As a result, there has been a 151.9% increase in contacts from law enforcement and government departments, as well as a 49.3% increase in contacts from the nongovernmental organisation (NGO) sector compared with 2021. This second consecutive increase for these groups since 2020 amounts to a 78.7% overall increase from 2020 to 2022. This is a result of an increased focus on partnerships both with long-standing partners of the NHTH network as well as establishing new relationships within the civil society sector and key government stakeholders across all nine provinces in South Africa and neighbouring countries. This concentrated focus has directly contributed to the increase in referrals to the NHTH and resulted in more victim identifications in 2022.

VICTIM DEMOGRAPHICS
Three hundred ninety-one potential victims were reported to the NHTH in 2022 across 110 human trafficking cases. Call specialists screened each report to identify elements of human trafficking and, as a result, directly assisted 50 confirmed victims out of trafficking situations. Once victims are identified, the NHTH refers the individual to A21 aftercare or the appropriate partner services provided in each province. Seventeen of the 50 survivors assisted out of trafficking in 2022 entered A21’s Aftercare Program.

AGE AND GENDER
Traffickers in South Africa continue to prey on women and children, some of the most vulnerable groups in the country. A common theme emerged in reported cases involving minors in 2022; families forced their children to work to provide for their household, a possible reflection of the current economic circumstances in South Africa. For example, two foreign national minors from a neighbouring African country were sent by their parents to work in Gauteng with...
the understanding they would receive wages for their family’s basic needs. However, upon arrival, the siblings were forced to sell bread without pay, and subjected to abuse by their perpetrator.

Although the majority of victims reported to the NHTH remain female, there has been a rise in the number of male victims reported. In the current reporting year, males accounted for 20% of confirmed cases, which is a significant increase from the 5.3% reported in 2021. This is likely a result from an increase in labour exploitation related cases being reported as men have typically been the commonly reported victims of labour rather than sex trafficking. For example, the NHTH received a forced labour tip where a man was forced to work on a farm in a small town in the Western Cape. He was unpaid and received only sufficient food for one meal a day. The NHTH conducted a telephonic screening, before referring the case to the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI), the Department of Social Development (SDS), as well as the Department of Labour (DOL), who extracted the victim and found him safe accommodation. Through this report, the NHHT became aware of more widespread labour trafficking in this town and was able to utilise this situation to build relationships with different stakeholders there. These relationships ultimately led to an opportunity to host an awareness event in that community on human trafficking generally, and more specifically in recognising trafficking.

**VICTIM NATIONALITY**

In 2022, South Africans constituted the majority (69.13%) of victims reported to the NHTH. Nonetheless, there has been a surge in reports of foreign national victims, consistent with pre-COVID-19 trends, with reports of victims recruited from different countries including China, Zimbabwe, Congo and Nigeria.

In November 2022, the DPCI requested the NHTH’s assistance in screening a large number of Chinese nationals discovered working in a factory, for labour exploitation. The factory that housed more than 50 Chinese nationals primarily specialised in producing steel resources for various machinery and construction equipment. More than 50 Chinese nationals worked either to maintain the machinery or as cleaners at the factory.

The NHTH call specialists screened a total of 32 potential Chinese victims, willing to be interviewed, using a tele-interpreting service and discovered the potential victims were either recruited through a company in China or heard about this factory position in South Africa from family or friends. The potential victims worked between nine and twelve hours a day, and lived in crowded, unhygienic dorms designed for one or two people, with at least five other people. A senior employer purchased food for the workers, but the workers were required to seek permission to eat. Pay was unequally distributed, and workers were forced to remain in the factory even when there was a pause in the available work. Although the employer promised to arrange their return to China, the employer withheld their visas and passports, preventing them from leaving the situation.

Many of the potential victims appeared apprehensive during the screening and provided limited information. Based on the limited information provided, the NHTH ultimately identified at least ten victims of trafficking. Although services were offered to the ten confirmed victims, they expressed a reluctance to be separated from the other potential victims, and declined direct services. Consequently all the victims and potential victims were detained and deported back to China.

**EXPLOITATION TYPE**

While sex trafficking remained the most common form of exploitation reported to the NHTH accounting for 49.5% of all cases reported, it decreased from 2021 when it constituted 55.5% of cases. Forced labour accounted for 7.3% of cases reported in 2022, an increase from 5.5% from the prior year. Domestic servitude cases reported to the NHTH rose to 3.7% in 2022, a significant increase from only 0.7% reported in the previous year. Vulnerable individuals desperate for employment accept opportunities only to later discover themselves in an exploitative situation. In 2022, a case was reported to the NHTH regarding a woman recruited from South Africa to the Middle East to work as a domestic worker. Upon arrival, she was assigned to a family and worked for them for a few months. She worked long hours without pay, had no access to health care, and was not regularly provided food. Upon expressing her desire to leave, she was told of her obligation to repay the cost for her travel. She eventually received money from her family to give to her ‘employer’ so she could leave. Upon her return to South Africa, the NHTH provided the survivor with a referral for direct services.

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**VICTIM NATIONALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Victims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC Congo</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
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<td>Tanzania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXPLOITATION TYPE**

- **Sex Trafficking**: 49.5%
- **Forced Labour**: 7.3%
- **Domestic Servitude**: 3.7%
- **Organ Harvesting**: 0.9%
- **Sex and Labour Trafficking**: 2.8%
- **Not Specified**: 34.9%
Traffickers use various methods to control a victim recruited into a trafficking situation. Data captured by the NHTH show the most prevalent methods of control to be sexual abuse (34%), induced substance abuse (10%), isolation (16%) and the withholding or destruction of documents (24%). In all confirmed sex trafficking cases reported to the NHTH, perpetrators forced victims to take drugs before forcing them to participate in commercial sex. Consequently, victims often form a drug dependency, thereby compelling them to remain in the exploitative situation.

Withholding and destruction of victims’ documents as a method of control, most commonly utilised by traffickers in labour exploitation cases, has increased by 352.8% in 2022. This significant increase is most likely a result of the increase in labour trafficking cases reported to the NHTH. Through withholding of documents, primarily of foreign national victims, traffickers are able to increase their control of victims. Victims are restricted not only from returning to their home country, but also from moving freely in the country of exploitation, hindering their ability to seek assistance or escape.

The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the South African economy since 2019, has caused a significant number of job losses and a lack of employment opportunities. Traffickers have been deceiving individuals with false job opportunities to lure them into an exploitative situation. Based on data from confirmed human trafficking cases, false promises (32%) and false job opportunities (28%) are the most prevalent recruitment methods. The percentage of recruitment based on false promises has increased by 102.5% since 2021. The NHTH has seen a wide-array of false job opportunities, including modelling, call centre agents, administrative roles as well as domestic worker jobs.

The most prevalent provinces traffickers recruit from remain Gauteng (35.5%) and Western Cape (30.9%). The NHTH has noted a common trend in 2022 whereby victims are recruited from various regions throughout South Africa and specifically brought to Brooklyn, Western Cape to be sex trafficked. In 2022 alone, the NHTH handled six cases involving sex trafficking of victims recruited from provinces such as Gauteng, North West, and Mpumalanga and brought to the Brooklyn area of Cape Town.

South African (22.3%) and Nigerian (19.6%) perpetrators continue to account for the highest number of suspected traffickers in cases reported to the NHTH. A 42% increase in South African perpetrators compared to 2021 may be linked to the rise in cases involving victims sold by family members. In confirmed cases of trafficking, there has been a 100% increase in victims sold by family members compared to 2021. These cases primarily occurred in poverty-stricken communities where families lacking resources for basic necessities, ultimately sold their children to gang members in their local community.
NEW YEAR’S EVE INTERVENTION

On New Year’s Eve of 2021, the NHTH received a third-party tip regarding a sexually exploited minor female. The information provided in the tip advised a woman had tricked a 17-year-old girl minor victim into travelling to an apartment in Gauteng province where traffickers were operating an illegal brothel. There, the minor victim was forced to engage in commercial sex acts by her trafficker, a Nigerian man. In addition to being trafficked in the illegal brothel, the trafficker also trafficked the minor victim in night clubs. The trafficker held her in an apartment where she had no freedom of movement, was abused regularly, and was forced to take drugs before being sold for sex.

According to the third-party tip, they feared official complicity as the traffickers, also alleged drug dealers, had been arrested multiple times but had been released each time due to what the caller believed was bribery. The NHTH reported the case to the DPCI, the law enforcement entity responsive to complaints of official complicity. The DPCI responded immediately by conducting a raid of the premises within a day or two of being contacted by the NHTH, where they arrested four perpetrators. During the raid, not only did the DPCI safely extract the minor victim, but also discovered another adult victim of sex trafficking. Both victims were thereafter placed in shelters, and the four perpetrators were charged with contravening the Trafficking in Persons Act 7 of 2013 for sexual exploitation.

ENDNOTES

2 To ensure data integrity, the data presented is extracted from reports submitted to the NHTH consisting of those identified as victims and likely potential victims of trafficking. This report takes a conservative approach in presenting hotline data and analysis, omitting reports of potential victims of human trafficking which were unable to be minimally substantiated.
3 Isolation may include physical isolation or deprivation of liberty, denying access to medical support, surveillance or control of the victim in public, and isolating the victim by moving them frequently from place to place.

As a service situated to support those in exploitative situations, the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline is at the forefront of understanding emerging human trafficking trends in South Africa. Each year the NHTH commits to expanding its networks and partners across South Africa to ensure that an accurate scope of trafficking is reflected in the data collected. The NHTH welcomes new partners interested in counter human trafficking efforts in South Africa. Partnerships are vital not only to provide services to identified trafficking survivors and communities requesting training, but also to increase awareness about the services provided by the NHTH across South Africa.