A21 NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINES REPORT 2021

ONE CALL CAN BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SLAVERY & FREEDOM.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The A21 Campaign (‘A21’) operates National Human Trafficking Hotlines in Bulgaria, Greece and South Africa. In 2021, the A21 Hotlines collectively handled 5,280 telephone and online contacts, identifying twice as many victims as in 2020. In addition, the proportion of human trafficking related contacts to all three hotlines increased significantly from the previous year, indicating an improved understanding and awareness of the Hotlines and their purpose.

Reports to the Hotlines continued to reflect the demonstrated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for a significant part of 2021, and traffickers’ adaptation of their exploitative methods to the changing environment. Data from the A21 Bulgaria and South Africa Hotlines revealed that traffickers had increased their utilisation of false job opportunities as a prominent recruitment tactic to target vulnerable individuals. In response, the A21 Hotlines provided services such as job vetting or targeting vulnerable groups with awareness materials to counter these exploitative efforts. Furthermore, reports to the A21 European Hotlines demonstrated an increase in the percentage of minor potential victims exploited, through forced begging, amongst other forms of exploitation.

A21 Hotlines both foster and rely on strong partnerships with key stakeholders, such as government, law enforcement and non-governmental organisations, to facilitate a holistic counter-trafficking approach. They participate in this collaborative effort to promote rapid and effective responses to combat human trafficking in multiple ways, such as providing evidence for the criminal justice system, arranging international repatriations, or training frontline professionals to recognise human trafficking.

Each A21 Hotline is equipped to receive calls in over 200 languages, as well as web-based reports. They are the only reporting mechanism to receive and manage reports of exclusively human trafficking in Bulgaria, Greece and South Africa, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Specially trained, trauma-informed hotline call specialists receive, manage and refer reports of suspected human trafficking from potential victims, concerned members of the community, private organisations and public institutions. In addition, human trafficking survivors who self-identify, or are otherwise identified, can contact the Hotlines to access resources from A21 or other partner organisations in their respective countries.

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About the Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline

The Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline (‘The Hotline’) is a dedicated service that supports victims of human trafficking and provides advice and assistance on human trafficking issues. A21 Bulgaria officially launched the Hotline in 2015 in partnership with the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. It is the only hotline in Bulgaria designated to handle solely human trafficking reports that is available to receive enquiries 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Hotline is accessible from every European Union Member State, with a tele-interpretation service which enables call specialists to receive calls in over 200 languages. As Bulgaria is predominantly a source country, the majority of reports to the Hotline regard potential victims of trafficking located outside of Bulgaria. Therefore, the Hotline works in close partnership with national and European institutions to ensure rapid management of every report received.

‘Thank you for your good work, I appreciate your concern and the way you communicate with the Bulgarians with a careful approach. I am glad to have found you, I feel safer with you.’
— A Hotline Caller

Overview of Data

In 2021, the Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline received 791 contacts, with the vast majority at 619 constituting human trafficking related contacts. The number of reports received online, such as through the dedicated Hotline website (www.080020100.bg), was 194% higher in 2021 than the previous year. This growth in digital reports is attributed to the general public’s increased ease in utilising online communication, especially in response to pandemic restrictions.

COVID-19 continued to impact the work of A21 Bulgaria in 2021. Border restrictions frequently changed as infection rates fluctuated, often causing difficulties for the Hotline call specialists when organising repatriations for victims of trafficking from Western Europe. Furthermore, almost all victims seeking repatriation back to Bulgaria were not vaccinated. As a result, upon their return to Bulgaria, these survivors were quarantined for several days and required to test negative for COVID-19 before continuing forth to any onward travel or placement in a care facility. For many sur-

Executive Summary

- The Hotline received a total of 791 CONTACTS
- The Hotline identified and assisted 90 VICTIMS of trafficking
- The majority of victims reported to the Hotline were FEMALE (57.8%)
- There were SIX TIMES MORE MALE VICTIMS of trafficking reported in 2021 compared to 2020
- The majority of victims reported to the Hotline were ADULTS (81.1%)
- The Hotline facilitated the repatriation of 53.3% of the victims identified from WESTERN EUROPE back to Bulgaria
- LABOUR EXPLOITATION was the main type of trafficking reported to the Hotline (54.4%)
- The most common method of control reported to the Hotline was THREATS (50%)
- The Hotline team submitted 28 HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORTS to the police
- The Hotline team conducted 100 SCREENING INTERVIEWS with potential victims of human trafficking

‘Contacts’ to the Hotline comprise all incoming enquiries to the Hotline through any manner, including but not limited to phone calls, emails, SMS messages 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 Hotline relating to a potential human trafficking situation.

The statistics below are exclusively drawn from substantive contacts made to the Hotline from January - December 2021 concerning human trafficking matters. This report is not a reflection of all substantive calls to the Hotline which may include calls related to other high risk crimes, labour exploitation and other non-trafficking issues.

Disaggregated data has been collected on each individual case on descriptive factors including gender, age, type of trafficking, methods of control and recruitment methods. The below data 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.

The Hotline Collaborates with the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Assist in the Successful Recovery and Repatriation of 36 Bulgarian Survivors of Agricultural Trafficking

The Consular Relations Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted the Hotline to ask for assistance for over 30 Bulgarian victims of trafficking discovered in Western Europe. Families from a Northern Bulgarian village had received an offer for seasonal work in the agriculture sector in Western Europe. In response, the Bulgarians all boarded a bus and travelled across multiple European borders in pursuit of this potential employment opportunity. Upon their arrival, these individuals were sent into the forest to pick berries without being provided the promised shelter, food or payment. A passer-by noticed the families’ exploitative living conditions and called the police. The Hotline team assisted in screening the 36 individuals, identifying them as victims of trafficking and ultimately organising their return to Bulgaria. As it was not possible to transport such a large group from a remote area by plane, the Hotline organised a bus to facilitate the repatriation of the survivors back to Bulgaria. Additionally, the Hotline team coordinated the accompaniment of a medical specialist to facilitate the PCR testing required for their re-entry into Bulgaria. This repatriation exemplifies how governments and NGOs can utilise their strengths collectively, to ensure the safe recovery of trafficking victims.

Caller Demographics

Since its inception in 2015, the Hotline has received reports from potential victims, concerned friends or family members, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), law enforcement partners, and the general public. In 2021, the largest caller demographic was friends or relatives of potential victims (37.2%). Seventeen percent of contacts came from the potential victim directly. The majority of calls originated from outside of Bulgaria, with 30% of these international calls coming from Germany. The Hotline also received reports from numerous other countries, including the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Victim Demographics

In 2021, A21 Bulgaria successfully identified and assisted 90 victims of human trafficking in response to reports made to the Hotline. A21 then facilitated the repatriation of 48 of these identified victims from Western Europe to Bulgaria.

The above chart reflects the number of human trafficking-related contacts to the Hotline.
Age and Gender

The Hotline received over four times more cases with identified adults than minors. It is not unusual for the A21 Hotline to receive fewer calls concerning minors because callers should report these cases to the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) Hotline. Interestingly though, the A21 Hotline received a significant increase (466%) in calls and contacts about minors in 2021 from 2020. In all cases involving trafficking of minors, the Hotline works in conjunction with the SACP to facilitate repatriation of minors back to Bulgaria and ultimately into the care of SACP.

During 2021, the Hotline observed a trend whereby parents of Bulgarian female minors of ethnic Roma origin appeared to be trafficking their daughters to Western Europe. In this phenomenon, families would sell a minor as a ‘bride’ to a wealthier ethnically Roma family, originally from Bulgaria but currently residing in a Western European nation, such as the United Kingdom or Germany, for financial gain. Underage marriages are common, and the parents, in some instances, even sign over their power of attorney to allow the child to travel with this more wealthy family. This puts the child at risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation or domestic servitude.

Since 2020, the Hotline has observed an increase in the percentage of identified male victims of trafficking. While the majority of victims reported to the Hotline in 2021 were female, the percentage decreased significantly from 2020. In 2020, almost all reported victims were female, constituting 93.1% of the cases reported to the Hotline, whereas in 2021, females accounted only for 57.8% reports. In 2021, men accounted for almost half of the victims of trafficking identified by the Hotline in Bulgaria, which is a significant increase. Men may have become more open to self-reporting labour exploitation, even historical exploitation.

The Hotline surmises that these male victims and potential victims may have been encouraged by awareness campaigns sponsored by the Hotline in certain Facebook groups focused on potential employment opportunities targeted at Bulgarians, such as ‘jobs in Germany’, ‘jobs for people without language requirements in the Netherlands’, and the like. Many of the participants in these Facebook groups are Bulgarian men looking for work abroad or already living and working abroad. Callers to the Hotline confirmed their awareness of the Hotline’s existence and services through the Hotline’s Facebook advertisements.

Victim Nationality

Ninety-seven percent of victims reported to the Hotline were Bulgarian nationals. Over half of these reported victims were Bulgarian nationals of ethnic Roma origin, constituting 54.4% of all human trafficking-related cases received by the Hotline.

These figures are not unusual as the ethnic Roma are the most vulnerable ethnic group in Bulgaria. Interestingly though, the Hotline did receive more reports of trafficking of non-Roma Bulgarian nationals in 2021 (42.2%) than the previous year (34.5%).

Exploitation Type

In 2021, the Hotline observed a significant increase in the number of trafficking victims of labour exploitation reported to the Hotline. As sexual exploitation typically accounts for most reported cases, this increase in labour exploitation represents a remarkable shift.

While the reason for the increase is not definitive, A21 attributes the increase in any reports of labour exploitation to the Hotline as a direct result of the ongoing promotion of the Hotline on social media in online groups which offer jobs abroad. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, widespread unemployment increased in Bulgaria throughout the past two years, exacerbating job seekers’ vulnerabilities to labour exploitation.
exploitation. Fraudulent job postings are appealing to those in vulnerable circumstances as they may require no experience, have no language requirements, but offer a large salary. Typically, these false advertisements require travel abroad and impose debt bondage on the applicant upon arrival, requiring the individual to pay back the 'debt' of their travel to, and accommodation for, the 'job.' False job opportunities may be in agriculture, factories, construction, or caring for the elderly. Individuals who seek temporary jobs abroad are especially vulnerable to exploitation, particularly when unaware of human trafficking.

Information provided to the Hotline supported that the COVID-19 pandemic caused sexual exploitation to become an even more hidden and consequently underreported crime. According to reports to the Hotline, when COVID-19 caused the closure of brothels in some European countries, victims were commercially sexually exploited in private homes and Airbnbs. Later, when restrictions eased, they were trafficked in hotel rooms. During restrictions, victims were rarely exploited in clubs, brothels or off the street, but mainly advertised online.

Recruitment Methods

Human traffickers use recruitment tactics that deceive and coerce victims into exploitative situations. According to Hotline data, the leading recruitment method utilised by perpetrators in 2021 was through false job opportunities, as reported in 63.3% of cases. This figure is consistent with previous reports from Bulgaria, where the socio-economic status of many is often lower than the rest of the European Union, particularly for the ethnic Roma community. After false job opportunities, Hotline data identified the ‘loverboy’ method as the next main type of recruitment scheme, accounting for the main recruitment tactic in 20% of cases. In ‘loverboy’ schemes, traffickers groom and manipulate victims into a false romantic relationship in order to exploit them. The Hotline also noticed the increased use of online grooming as traffickers exploited the internet as a recruitment tool.

Other recruitment methods reported to the Hotline include the promise of a better life (8.9%) and being sold by family members (4.4%). Other unreported unknown tactics could also be used as Hotline data does not capture the whole picture of this hidden crime.

Methods of Control

Human traffickers use complex control methods to manipulate and force victims into staying in an exploitative situation. The methods of control reported here include threats, isolation, emotional, physical, sexual, or economic abuse, and the withholding or destruction of personal identification documentation.

Data from reports to the Hotline in 2021 support the use of threats as the most common primary method of control, involved in 50% of the cases reported to the Hotline, particularly in cases of labour exploitation. Traffickers threaten to harm the victim, their family members, or other loved ones to extract compliance from the victim. In many cases reported to the Hotline, the trafficker will know the location or phone number of the victim’s family. Other reported methods of control are economic, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and isolation. Based on data received through the Hotline, traffickers rarely utilise a singular method of control, but rather employ a complex variety of different methods to coerce and manipulate victims.

In 8.9% of cases, the primary method of control was withholding or destroying the victim’s legal documents. Without official identification, victims can be prevented from obtaining safe employment, getting their own residence, or travelling freely, forcing a dependency on the trafficker. As previously noted, the Hotline routinely assists Bulgarian trafficking victims exploited outside of Bulgaria. Often, by the time these victims have reached out for assistance, they no longer have their official documents to enable their travel back to Bulgaria. In these instances, A21 will work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain a temporary, one-month passport for the individual to travel to safety.

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1 Threats include threats of harm to the victim, the victim’s family or other individuals; to the victim’s reputation, or to report the victim to a government authority.
2 Isolation may include physical isolation or deprivation of liberty, denying access to medical support, surveillance or control of the victim in public, isolating the victim by moving the victim frequently from place to place.
3 Economic abuse includes situations of debt bondage or where traffickers limit the finances of the victim either in whole or in part.
The Hotline Successfully Assists in the Repatriation of 9 Survivors of Trafficking from Northern Ireland to Bulgaria

The Hotline received a call from a Northern Irish organisation asking for assistance in repatriating nine Bulgarian human trafficking survivors. A trafficker had used social media (Facebook) to deceive the men with a false job, offering work on a farm in Northern Ireland. The trafficker promised a good weekly wage, accommodation, and transportation. However, the men were charged a debt for their travel expenses that was fifteen times higher than the actual cost of the ticket. Additionally, the trafficker withheld their identification documents and debit cards. The men were only paid £30 per week and worked between 4-16 hours a day. The living conditions were poor, and the trafficker threatened them every day. After five months, one of the victims seized the opportunity to contact the local police. The police successfully conducted a raid and assisted the Bulgarian victims to safety. Despite this successful raid and extraction, the trafficker continued to threaten the victims and their families via phone calls. The survivors were temporarily supported by an organisation helping migrants in Northern Ireland but urgently needed to return to Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Embassy in Northern Ireland was informed about the case, and a few days later, the Hotline safely repatriated the survivors back to Bulgaria, where they entered A21’s Aftercare Program. An investigation is currently ongoing.

As a service situated to support those in exploitative situations, the Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline is at the forefront of understanding emerging human trafficking trends in Bulgaria and the European Union. Each year the Hotline commits to expanding its networks and partners across Bulgaria to ensure that an accurate scope of trafficking is reflected in the data collected. The Hotline welcomes new partners interested in counter human trafficking efforts in Bulgaria. 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 Hotline across Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline 00359 800 20 100
info@080020100.bg
www.080020100.bg

The observations contained in this report are limited to information communicated to the Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline during the reporting period. Nothing arising from the data should be interpreted as showing the full extent or prevalence of human trafficking in Bulgaria.
About the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline

The ‘1109’ National Human Trafficking Hotline (1109 Hotline) is a resource dedicated to supporting victims of human trafficking in Greece. Trained call specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide advice, assistance and access to victim support services. Callers may also submit reports about potential human trafficking. The 1109 Hotline utilises a tele-interpreting service that enables Greek and English-speaking call specialists to handle calls in over 200 languages. These specially trained call specialists work closely with national institutions to ensure the fastest and most effective response to each case.

‘It is always great to work with the 1109 Hotline. They are quick to respond and available 24/7.’
— Police officer, Athens Anti-Trafficking Headquarters

‘Dear 1109 team, I want to thank all of you from my heart for your email and safety planning. My family and I will carefully read all of the information you provided and try to inform my brother of the best possible way. For any update on the case, we will be in contact with you.’
— Caller to the 1109 Hotline

Executive Summary

- The 1109 Hotline team handled 1,013 CONTACTS, including 636 specifically related to human trafficking
- The majority of reports to the 1109 Hotline related to FEMALE VICTIMS (80.9%)
- The 1109 Hotline received reports of 163 POTENTIAL VICTIMS of trafficking from 27 different nations
- ONLINE REPORTS almost doubled from 2020
- The 1109 Hotline identified and assisted at least 38 confirmed VICTIMS of human trafficking, 31 of whom entered the A21 Aftercare Program
- COMMUNITY MEMBERS and NGOs constituted 65.2% of contacts to the 1109 Hotline in 2021
- MINOR VICTIMS accounted for 25.8% of the reports to the 1109 Hotline, up from just 8% in 2020

Overview of Data

In 2021, the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline received 1,013 contacts. While these contacts include both phone calls as well as electronic communication, such as emails, web forms, or social media messages, online reports almost doubled from 2020, reflecting the general trend in increased online communication.

Almost 80% of substantive contacts to the 1109 Hotline related to human trafficking, indicating that most Hotline users understand its purpose. This can be attributed to a variety of efforts, including correctly communicating the purpose of the 1109 Hotline, A21 hosted frontline professional training sessions, a week-long televised promotion of the 1109 number, and hotline awareness campaigns with other local non-government organisations (NGOs). Furthermore, callers may be increasingly familiar with the 1109 Hotline as it has maintained a continuous and consistent support service for victims of human trafficking in Greece since 2012.

Contacts’ to the 1109 Hotline comprise all incoming enquiries to the 1109 Hotline through any manner, including but not limited to phone calls, emails, SMS messages 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 1109 Hotline relating to a potential human trafficking situation.

The statistics below are exclusively drawn from substantive contacts made to the 1109 Hotline from January - December 2021 concerning human trafficking matters. This report is not a reflection of all substantive calls to the 1109 Hotline which may include calls related to other high risk crimes, labour exploitation and other non-trafficking issues.

Disaggregated data has been collected on each individual case on descriptive factors including gender, age, type of trafficking, methods of control and recruitment methods. The below data 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.

¹ To ensure data integrity, the data presented is extracted from reports submitted to the 1109 Hotline consisting of those identified as victims and likely potential victims of trafficking. This report takes a conservative approach in presenting the 1109 Hotline’s data and analysis, omitting reports of potential victims of human trafficking which were unable to be minimally substantiated.
**Caller Demographics**

The 1109 Hotline receives reports of suspected human trafficking from potential victims, concerned friends or family members, NGOs, law enforcement partners, and community members. While community members still constituted the largest demographic of callers in 2021 at almost 35% of all contacts, this nonetheless reflects a decrease from the previous year’s 45.5%.

Rather, this year the 1109 Hotline experienced an increase in contacts from official public sector stakeholders such as law enforcement, public hospitals, and government organisations, accounting for 16.9% of contacts in 2021, up from just 6.4% in 2020. These contacts include crucial reports from law enforcement as half of the survivors who entered the A21 Aftercare Program in 2021 benefitted from law enforcement assistance to safely exit their trafficking situation. NGOs and intergovernmental organisations also accounted for a significant portion of callers, resulting in the 1109 Hotline receiving numerous reports from partner organisations working predominantly with migrant and refugee communities.

The 1109 Hotline received the fewest contacts from ‘clients’ of sexual services, potential victims, and friends or family members of potential victims (1.7%, 2.5% and 3.4%, respectively). This may be attributed in part to the continued closure of brothels for parts of 2021 due to the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the 1109 Hotline received a noticeable number of reports from ‘clients’ of brothels.

*Public sector includes government agencies and law enforcement; frontline professionals includes those in the medical, legal or social work profession (not specific to NGOs).*

**Victim Demographics**

In 2021, the 1109 Hotline received reports relating to 163 potential victims of trafficking. Through further investigation, the 1109 Hotline successfully identified and assisted 38 confirmed victims of trafficking, 31 of whom entered the A21 Aftercare Program, representing a 55% increase in survivors entering A21’s Aftercare Program from the previous year.

**Age and Gender**

While adults still accounted for the majority of potential victims reported to the 1109 Hotline at 64.4%, reports involving minor victims increased to 25.8%, from just 8% in 2020. Notably, a significant number of reports to the 1109 Hotline related to forced begging, of which 71.4% involved minor victims.

The overwhelming majority of potential victims reported were females (80.9%), exploited predominantly through sex trafficking, followed by forced begging. Almost half of the reported cases relating to male victims (51.9%) involved forced begging. In addition, 29.6% of reported males were victims of other labour trafficking. Forced begging is a form of exploitation that often targets vulnerable minors where children are forced to beg on the streets and hand over any money collected to the trafficker. As observed in cases the 1109 Hotline has handled, forced begging often implicates familial trafficking, where parents facilitate the trafficking of their children.
Exploitation Type

Reports of sex trafficking comprised more than half of the reports to the 1109 Hotline in 2021. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of suspected sex trafficking in Greece were predominantly related to brothels. However, despite government-mandated brothel closures during the pandemic, reports to the 1109 Hotline revealed the operation of illegal brothels within private residences and temporary accommodations, supporting the theory that commercial sexual exploitation, rather than ceasing during the pandemic, merely continued in a more discreet manner. This increased hurdle in detection may explain in part the significant decrease in reports of suspected sex trafficking specific to brothels to the 1109 Hotline compared to pre-pandemic years.

The 1109 Hotline also received reports of suspected trafficking amongst the refugee and migrant population, namely reports of suspected sex trafficking in refugee camps, and both sex and labour trafficking in the agricultural fields staffed by refugees. The 1109 Hotline received reports of only 11 potential victims of labour trafficking, which took place in factories or the agricultural sector.

Victim Nationality

The 1109 Hotline identified and assisted potential victims from 27 different nations in 2021, including Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia. This represents a 68.8% increase in distinct nationalities identified by the 1109 Hotline compared to the 16 nationalities identified in the previous year. Although the most reported nationality of potential victims remained Greek (15.3%), the majority of all other victims assisted by the 1109 Hotline were foreign nationals. Furthermore, 1109 Hotline data revealed that the recruitment of these potential victims occurred in at least twenty different European, African and Middle-Eastern nations.

Recruitment Methods

Human trafficking recruitment methods involve deceiving, coercing or forcing victims into exploitative circumstances. For example, a false job opportunity may lure a potential victim with deceptive terms of an agreement to travel to another city, where upon arrival the victim is then trapped in debt bondage. The so-called ‘lover boy’ scheme is a more complex, drawn-out process whereby a trafficker grooms and manipulates a victim into a false romantic relationship which ultimately turns exploitative. In many cases reported to the 1109 Hotline, the actual recruitment methods are unknown. However, in reports where a method was identified, the most prominent tactic used to recruit individuals was the promise of a better life, often in another country. Other recruitment methods reported by victims included false job opportunities and false relationships. Additionally, the 1109 Hotline observed an increase in reports involving familial trafficking, which involves the sale or other commercial exploitation of minors by family members.
Methods of Control

Reports received by the 1109 Hotline revealed psychological abuse as the most common primary method of control used by traffickers. However, traffickers rarely use only one method of control, but rather use a combination of various tactics to coerce and manipulate victims. Other reported tactics utilised by traffickers to control their victims include sexual, physical, and emotional abuse; denied freedom of movement; threats to the individual; and withholding of personal identification documents.

As a service situated to support those in exploitative situations, the 1109 Hotline is at the forefront of understanding emerging human trafficking trends in Greece. Each year the 1109 Hotline commits to expanding its networks and partners across Greece to ensure that an accurate scope of trafficking is reflected in the data collected. The 1109 Hotline welcomes new partners interested in counter human trafficking efforts in Greece. 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 1109 Hotline across Greece.

The 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline

The observations contained in this report are drawn solely from information communicated to the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline during the reporting period. Nothing arising from the data should be interpreted as showing the full extent or prevalence of human trafficking in Greece.
About the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) is a dedicated service to support victims of human trafficking and provide advice and assistance on human trafficking issues. Operated by A21 South Africa, the NHTH works in partnership with law enforcement, key government entities and public sector partners throughout South Africa and various regions of Africa. The NHTH is available to receive reports of suspected trafficking 24 hours a day, seven days a week through calls and electronic means. Reports are handled by call specialists, specifically trained in the area of human trafficking and responding in a victim-centred manner. The complement of call specialists are able to converse in English, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Afrikaans, and Shona. Additionally, the NHTH is able to manage calls in over 230 languages through a tele-interpreting service.

Since its inception in 2016, the NHTH has received over 27,000 calls, text messages, and online submissions from across South Africa, bordering African nations, and as far as the United Kingdom or Oman. Through these reports and resulting identifications, the NHTH is able to understand the nature of trafficking and trends emerging in South Africa. Not only does the NHTH assist in providing effective responses to cases, it also informs counter-trafficking efforts in South Africa for A21 and its partners alike.

Executive Summary

- The NHTH received a total of 3,476 CONTACTS
- 30.8% INCREASE in the proportion of HUMAN TRAFFICKING related contacts compared to 2020
- 236 POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING were reported to the NHTH in 2021
- FEMALE victims constituted 67.1% of the cases reported
- SEX TRAFFICKING comprised 55.5% of all cases reported to the NHTH
- COMMUNITY MEMBERS remain the primary callers to the NHTH, totalling 54.4% of contacts
- 41.1% of contacts to the NHTH originated from Gauteng province with 28.8% from the Western Cape
- MINORS accounted for 30.1% of all potential victims reported to the NHTH
- The NHTH identified and directly assisted 19 VICTIMS out of trafficking
- Victims assisted out of trafficking by the NHTH were predominantly SOUTH AFRICAN (69.9%)

Human Trafficking Trends in 2021

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NHTH has observed an increase in false job opportunities being utilised by traffickers as a prominent recruitment method. Forty-two...
per cent of human trafficking cases identified by the NHTH in 2021 involved the use of false job opportunities, up from just 20% last year. Additionally, in 2021 the NHTH observed an increase in job vetting requests to ascertain the legitimacy of a possible employment opportunity. In an effort to address the increase of false job advertisements, the NHTH implemented an internal vetting system and liaised with private entities to report misuse of online platforms.

**Overview of Data¹**

Between 1 January and 31 December 2021, call specialists managed a total of **3,476** contacts through the NHTH, of which **2,242** contacts related to human trafficking. While the number of contacts decreased overall from 2020, the percentage of all contacts specifically related to human trafficking increased for the second consecutive year. In 2021, **64.5%** of contacts were related to human trafficking, a **30.8%** increase in the proportion of human trafficking related contacts from the prior year. This increase is likely in part due to a higher number of job vetting requests, a trend that began in 2020 in response to COVID-19’s adverse impact on the economy.

**Caller Demographics**

Community members again constituted the largest caller group accounting for 54.4% of all contacts in this reporting year. In 2021, a sizeable number of community members who contacted the NHTH did so as a consequence of online searches, demonstrating the importance of social media and the NHTH website in raising awareness about the NHTH’s services. Frontline professionals, individuals most likely to encounter potential victims of trafficking during the course of conducting their duties, also accounted for a significant number of submitted reports. Such professionals include those from NGOs, the public sector (such as law enforcement) and the private sector (such as airlines). This is likely a result of A21’s training of **280** frontline professionals in 2021, on recognising human trafficking and services provided by the NHTH. Partnerships formed between A21 and these key stakeholders play an important role in the referral of potential victims to the NHTH. Upon receiving a referral, the NHTH conducts telephonic screenings to identify potential human trafficking and then reports the case to the necessary partner organisation, such as law enforcement or NGO service providers, for further investigation or other follow up.

*The interaction between myself and the hotline was direct and helpful. I also felt safe and comfortable sharing my experience with the lady. Her questions were not intrusive and she allowed me to feel at ease when answering them.*

—Survivor in A21’s Aftercare Program

*The above chart reflects the number of human trafficking-related contacts to the NHTH.*

¹ 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.
Victim Demographics

In 2021, the NHTH managed a total of 146 cases of trafficking in persons, involving a collective total of 236 potential victims. After conducting a trafficking assessment, the NHTH directly assisted 19 confirmed victims out of trafficking in these cases. These 19 survivors subsequently entered A21’s Aftercare Program, were referred to government services or were further assisted by other NGOs.

Age and Gender

Females comprised 67.1% of the cases reported to the NHTH, with males comprising 24%. While females still accounted for the majority of reported victims to the NHTH, this was a decrease from the 82% reported in 2020. Reports involving minor victims were comparable to the preceding year, at 30.1% of cases.

Victim Nationality

The majority of human trafficking-related cases reported involved South African victims. South Africans are vulnerable to being trafficked due to systemic factors such as high unemployment, which has increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. A large number of reports, mainly from concerned friends and family, involving South Africans who had applied for jobs in other countries were also reported this past year. Through further investigation, the NHTH discovered that the majority of those job opportunities were likely fraudulent or otherwise exploitative. This year 69.9% of the total potential victims of trafficking reported were South African in comparison to 48% in 2020. Nationalities of potential victims in other cases reported, amongst others, include Nigerian, Thai, Zimbabwean, Ethiopian and Congolese.

Exploitation Type

Sex trafficking was the most prevalent form of trafficking reported to the NHTH (55.5%), with a noticeable number of reports in 2021 related to the operations of illegal brothels in South Africa. This may explain the high percentage of female victims generally reported to the NHTH, as the reported sex trafficking cases all involved female victims. Notably, reports of domestic servitude cases decreased by 2.1 percentage points from last year to account for only 0.7% of the human trafficking cases reported in 2021.
**Methods of Control**

There are various methods of control that traffickers use to exploit victims, such as threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and withholding of personal identification documentation. Survivors assisted out of human trafficking by the NHTH reported the use of the following control tactics by their traffickers: sexual abuse (42.1%), destroying/withholding documents (5.3%), forced substance misuse (10.5%), isolation (10.5%) and physical abuse (10.5%).

In instances of sex trafficking, the trafficker often exerted extreme control over their victims, inhibiting their freedom of movement and only permitting them to leave the premises to service a ‘client’, which the trafficker also supervised in some manner. Where traffickers used physical abuse as the primary means of control, they often exerted severe physical force against their victims when the victims did not comply with the trafficker’s demands. In such cases, the trafficker’s threats are sufficient to prevent victims from reporting the exploitation and reaching out for assistance.

**Recruitment Methods**

Traffickers use various recruitment methods to lure victims into trafficking situations. Common methods reported since the inception of the NHTH include false job opportunities, being sold by a family member, the ‘loverboy method’ (false intimate relationships), debt bondage, and abduction. Approximately 42% of survivors assisted out of trafficking by the NHTH in 2021 reported they were initially recruited through false job opportunities. The NHTH observed a significant increase in the percentage of false job opportunities as the main recruitment method for trafficking from the prior year. This increase is likely due to high unemployment levels and ensuing financial desperation; the South African government reported a half percentage point increase in unemployment rates to 34.9% by the end of quarter three in 2021. In addition, the large number of cases involving minors (30.1%) mirrors the high rate in unemployment and emphasises the resulting desperation. Reports of parents from mainly poverty-stricken areas selling their children to gang members for money or basic necessities have been received by the NHTH. In one particular case, a health clinic reported a noticeable trend of parents forcing pregnancy on their children to receive government grants.

In 15.8% of cases, recruiters made false promises to victims to lure them into trafficking. These false promises could be promises of a better life through money, housing, education or travel. Consistent with previous years, the ‘loverboy’ method continued to be a common recruitment method, accounting for 10.5% of cases of screened survivors who had exited their trafficking situation. Through these false intimate relationships, traffickers can coerce victims after gaining their trust. A typical example of this type of recruitment may involve grooming a young woman for months before forcing her to have sex with a trafficker’s accomplices and associates in exchange for money or drugs.

**Case origin**

A large number of cases reported to the NHTH were from Gauteng (41.1%) and the Western Cape (28.8%). Consistent with 2020, these provinces have continued to make up the majority of cases reported to the NHTH.
Perpetrator Demographics

In many cases reported to the NHTH, the perpetrator’s nationality is unknown, as criminal investigations remain pending. However, in cases where the suspected trafficker’s nationality was reported, the NHTH identified South African, Bangladeshi, Nigerian, Vietnamese, Indian, Chilean and Congolese perpetrators. In 2021, similar to 2020, the majority of alleged traffickers were reported to be Nigerian.

Historical NHTH Reports Assist in the Identification of a Trafficker

The NHTH received a call from the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) regarding a suspected trafficker in custody. The NPA had requested additional information to strengthen the case against the suspect for the bail hearing. The NHTH searched its database against known addresses and aliases of this potential perpetrator. Through this search, the NHTH discovered multiple relevant reports submitted from the general public over a period of several years. Each report had many similarities, such as the location, make and model of the suspect’s car, and suspicious activity observed. By extracting reports spanning a number of years, the NHTH provided tangible evidence which established a clear connection between the suspected trafficker and the human trafficking offence for use in the criminal prosecution. Such records demonstrate the importance of reporting suspected trafficking even if details are limited. Although the initial report did not result in the immediate arrest of the suspected trafficker, the collective reporting resulted in tangible and reliable evidence to ultimately support the trafficking prosecution at a later date.

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.

The observations contained in this report are limited to information communicated to the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline during the reporting period. Nothing arising from the data should be interpreted as showing the full extent or prevalence of human trafficking in South Africa.