Greece is primarily a transit and destination country for human trafficking. Victims are transported into Greece to be exploited on the mainland and surrounding islands or are transported through Greece along migration routes into Western Europe. Refugees coming into and transiting out of Greece are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. In 2021, A21 Greece observed refugees being relocated from Greek islands to the mainland, where thereafter, many leave the country. Some of these refugees in Greece were trafficked in Turkey during their migration to Europe. As many refugees have now mobilised again into subsequent European nations, this population is particularly vulnerable to being re-trafficked.

Sex trafficking is the primary form of exploitation observed by A21 Greece. In 2021, A21 observed trafficking victims in Greece originating from African countries, such as Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as from Iran, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, and domestically within Greece. While forced labour trafficking does occur in Greece, it often occurs in small, remote towns and is usually not reported due to the difficulty of identification. Since its inception, the A21 Greece Aftercare Program has provided direct services to survivors of 48 different nationalities.

The Continued Impact of COVID-19

Similar to the rest of the world, the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 continued in Greece throughout 2021. During this period, A21 Greece observed perpetrators using the economic desperation caused by high levels of unemployment to lure vulnerable individuals through false job postings and recruitment agencies.

At the outset of the pandemic in 2020, A21 Greece adapted many of its programs to be consistent with COVID-19 restrictions to ensure uninterrupted services. A21 continued to maintain many of these adaptations in 2021 as strict restrictions continued in the earlier part of the year. As Greece lifted restrictions halfway through the year, A21 Greece continued its work through a ‘hybrid’ of online and in-person engagement in 2021, ranging from general awareness events, professional training and direct services. This flexibility permitted A21 to provide options to participants, including survivors, to engage at the comfort level of the individual.

A21’S RESPONSE

Since 2008, A21 Greece has operated collaboratively with key government and non-government stakeholders to counter human trafficking. By raising awareness and facilitating prevention programs, A21 actively aims to reduce human trafficking. The A21 operated National Human Trafficking Hotline of Greece (‘1109 Hotline’) is a critical component of A21’s intervention and identification programs to disrupt ongoing criminal activity, and assist in the identification and recovery of victims. Following the identification or referral of a victim, A21 provides a holistic, trauma-informed aftercare program focusing on restoration and reintegration, alongside vital legal assistance and representation.

Prevention & Awareness

Through public awareness efforts, potential human trafficking situations can be recognised and appropriately reported. In 2020, A21 adopted the global cultural shift to online learning and continued this trend throughout 2021. Utilising social media platforms, A21 potentially reached 38,579 individuals online with prevention and awareness content. A21 also distributed 3,906 awareness-raising materials to students and other civic groups and provided 7,897 prevention materials
to refugees and asylum seekers. While COVID-19 restrictions continued in 2021, a number of in-person events were permitted with restrictions, such as mandatory masks, social distancing and display of proof of vaccination. Schools in particular expressed caution, requesting certificates of a negative rapid test prior to in-person participation at events. In total, A21 reached 580 students through three in-person events and six online events in 2021.

A21 Greece continued its partnership with a cosmetics brand to distribute over 5,000 hand sanitiser bottles, advertising the 1109 Hotline number. Through this collaboration, the 1109 Hotline number was shared five times more than in the previous year, with a focus on vulnerable communities, and school or college-aged youths.

A21 Greece actively participated for the second time at the annual ‘Raise Your Voice Festival,’ where A21 was featured on a guest speaker panel. This significant counter-trafficking event in Greece typically attracts thousands of attendees and engages both governmental and non-governmental entities with key discussions about human trafficking. In 2021, this online festival addressed the impunity of perpetrators within the criminal justice system and the complex mental health components of aftercare for trafficking survivors.

WALK FOR FREEDOM TAKES PLACE IN-PERSON
Every year, thousands of individuals participate in A21’s global awareness campaign, ‘Walk For Freedom’. In 2020, this campaign took place online due to COVID-19 public health concerns, but in 2021 the ‘Walk For Freedom’ resumed in person in hundreds of cities globally. In Greece, 459 individuals participated in this walk across six cities, resulting in the distribution of 2,749 awareness-raising resources featuring the 1109 Hotline number and its services. This call to action demonstrates a growing understanding of this crime and the role of raising awareness as part of human trafficking countermeasures.

Identification & Intervention

In the beginning of 2021, A21 and the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to train frontline professionals, namely staff working at the Thessaloniki International Airport. Staff included, amongst others, flight personnel, cabin crew, ground crew, security staff, airport employees, and employees of other involved public and private entities. The MOU also contemplates collaborating in human trafficking awareness campaigns with A21.

Additionally, in 2021, A21 Greece was recognised as an implementer of the ‘Project Awareness Actions for Trafficking in Human Beings’, under the Active Citizens Fund Program, with the Bodossaki Foundation and Solidarity Now, through a European Economic Area grant. The Active Citizens Fund Program provides funding to organisations that seek to strengthen civil society, support human rights, encourage citizens to participate in civic activities and safeguard democracy. A21 received funding from this program for its ‘Project Awareness Actions for Trafficking in Human Beings’, comprised of an informative commercial about human trafficking, a new campaign to promote the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline, and the opportunity to train frontline professionals and the public on recognising human trafficking.

A21 CONDUCTS ‘HYBRID TRAINING’
A21 provides training on human trafficking intervention considerations for frontline professionals, including but not limited to law enforcement, medical and legal staff, social workers, and immigration and border officials, who often unknowingly encounter victims and potential victims of human trafficking in the natural course of their daily work. In 2021, A21 Greece provided 19 such training seminars for social workers, psychologists, and civil case managers, for a total of 283 frontline professionals. A21 conducted these training seminars in-person on-site at the inviting organisations’ facilities, online due to COVID-19 restrictions or as a ‘hybrid’. Hybrid training consisted of in-person training with simultaneous online participation to comply with social distancing requirements. In early 2021, A21 conducted hybrid training pursuant to the government mandate. Although vaccinations permitted the lifting of some restrictions, in response to its popularity, A21 continued, and will continue, to provide hybrid training.

In addition, as asylum seekers and refugees can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation, A21 Greece provided training on human trafficking, including recognising and interacting with potential victims, to the staff at the Refugee Reception and Identification Centres. The Refugee Reception and Identification Centres are primarily responsible for assisting foreign nationals entering Greece without the necessary legal documents. Consequently, these staff members are in the prime position to first come into contact with refugees who had been trafficked, are in the midst of being trafficked or are vulnerable to trafficking.
1109 NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE
The 1109 Hotline is a dedicated call centre operated by A21 Greece that connects callers with call specialists trained to respond to victims of human trafficking, receive tips about suspicious activity, and offer advice or assistance to the general public about human trafficking. The 1109 Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can respond to callers in over 200 different languages using a tele-interpreter service. In 2021, the 1109 Hotline was contacted 1,013 times, ranging from reports of suspicious incidents to requests for information. Detailed statistics from the 1109 Hotline’s operation in 2021 can be found in the attached 2021 Hotline Report.

In 2020, A21 developed live broadcasts as a promotional tool during the pandemic to replace in-person events. Following the success of these broadcasts in reaching a wide audience, A21 continued to utilise this platform in 2021. Increased awareness and training for both frontline professionals as well as the general public on recognising human trafficking, necessarily results in increased reports to the 1109 Hotline.

In October 2021, through funding from the Active Citizens Fund Program, the television network Star featured an infomercial, produced in part by A21, with the renowned actor Pygmalion Dadakarides to raise awareness about human trafficking and advertise the 1109 Hotline in Greece. The 1109 Hotline received a noticeable increase in reports during this time period. The clarity and effectiveness of the infomercial were demonstrated in the quality of calls to the 1109 Hotline. Callers, regardless of age, appeared to accurately understand the meaning of human trafficking when submitting their reports. A21 also created prevention and awareness materials to accompany the infomercial video, and distributed these materials throughout 2021.

Aftercare Services
Effective counter-trafficking strategies contemplate comprehensive aftercare for survivors leaving an exploitative situation. The A21 Greece Aftercare Program ensures that survivors receive holistic and trauma-informed care as they begin their restoration journey. Although the ease of government restrictions permitted the option of some in-person services in 2021, A21 continued remote services for survivors unable to meet in person. While the Greek government did not mandate COVID-19 vaccination, per its strong recommendation they provided vaccination at no cost to everyone, including survivors. A21 provided vaccination information to survivors in its Aftercare Program and assisted any survivor interested in receiving the vaccine. In 2021, A21 Greece assisted 60 survivors with a range of its aftercare services.

FREEDOM CENTRE PROVIDES IN-PERSON SERVICES
The A21 Greece ‘Freedom Centre’ continued to provide in-person services for survivors in 2021, observing COVID-19 public health guidelines. Social isolation can exacerbate and trigger the emotional and mental hardships endured by victims of human trafficking. By providing these in-person services, 15 survivors were able to join a trauma-informed and safe community that better supported their recovery. A21 provided survivors with access to psychological and social support, Greek language classes, creative workshops, career guidance, 

After initial stabilisation, survivors in the A21 Greece Aftercare Program can participate in ‘Life Programs’. These programs empower survivors to overcome trauma and move towards restoration and independence. In 2021, 18 survivors completed one or more A21 Life Programs, according to their individual needs, assisting them in enhancing emotional resilience and providing practical tools to support their reintegration into the community. In addition, six survivors graduated from the A21 Aftercare Program, symbolising the achievement of full independence.

Concurrent with other comprehensive aftercare services, A21 offers an employment preparation program at the Freedom Centre. Safe employment builds confidence, allows survivors to pursue financial independence, and simultaneously reduces the chance of re-victimisation. Eleven survivors participated in a career guidance program. Despite the ongoing challenges to finding employment during a pandemic, 11 survivors obtained jobs in 2021. In addition, A21 Greece’s support enabled four survivors to attend vocational training courses in the hospitality industry.

In response to the economic hardship and ongoing isolation experienced by many survivors, A21 delivered 420 emergency care packages across Greece. These care packages included food, clothing, and shoes. This consistent provision of care allowed A21 Greece to maintain communication with more remote and isolated survivors, further enhancing their recovery and mental well-being.

A21 continues repatriation services throughout 2021
The needs of each survivor vary, and domestic relocation or international repatriation may be the safest option for an individual’s recovery. When a survivor requests this service, the A21 aftercare staff arranges a safe and secure plan which may include translation services, financial provision, safety screenings, purchase of a bus or plane ticket and/or pre-departure assistance. In 2021, A21 Greece supported a combined total of 12 individual international repatriations and domestic relocations within Greece. International repatriations included travel back to countries within Europe such as Romania, Albania, Lithuania and Belgium. Once safely at their new location, A21 provides remote aftercare services and if required, referral to local aftercare services to ensure the survivor receives ongoing support.

Access to Justice
A21 Greece provides survivors in its Aftercare Program with legal services correlated to each survivor’s needs. A21 provides every survivor in its Aftercare Program expected to testify in criminal prosecutions of their traffickers in Greece, with a victim’s attorney. Prosecutions in Greece can be arduous for survivors, often spanning years with numerous court delays with notice only provided on the hearing day. Additionally, the court system does not assist survivors with travel back to the court, or other logistics, even for repatriated survivors. Attorneys provided by A21 work with A21 aftercare staff to support all these logistical concerns, as well as the necessary emotional and psychological support for survivors to testify. Each conviction brings justice for survivors and can be instrumental in their recovery process. Significant prison sentences also prevent the exploitation of others. Attorneys hired by A21 not only represent survivors’ interests during prosecutions, but also assist in a range of civil legal matters.

Survivors of human trafficking can have complex civil legal matters that require professional assistance to navigate. Many of the civil cases supported by A21 Greece involve assisting foreign national survivors in their asylum or residency permit applications. Foreign national survivors may not have full access to public support services or employment opportunities until resolution of their immigration status. Securing legal presence in Greece increases a survivor’s stability and resilience against re-victimisation. In one civil case, a survivor’s filing of divorce from her trafficker not only practically decreased her vulnerability to re-trafficking, but also constituted a psychologically empowering step for her. In 2021, A21 Greece provided legal assistance in collectively 25 civil and criminal cases.

In 2021, the Greek government amended a significant number of provisions in both the Greek Criminal Code and the Greek Criminal Procedure Code to increase the period of imprisonment for those convicted of a human trafficking offence. The Greek government also reinstated the crime of adult pimping as a criminal offence. Both legislative changes signal an improved understanding of the seriousness of human trafficking offences. A21 anticipates that these 2021 amendments will increase the rate of convictions for future human trafficking cases.

In 2021, a felony court in Athens convicted eight defendants for the sex trafficking of six victims, after a lengthy trial spanning four months. A21 represented three of the six victims during this prosecution. In adjudicating these criminal convictions, the court found all six victims to be victims of trafficking under the law. Law enforcement first referred these cases to A21 in 2019, after the initial arrest of the perpetrators and the discovery of the victims. The perpetrators had recruited the three victims represented by A21 from Eastern Europe through promises of employment and better quality of life. Upon arriving in Greece however, their traffickers forced the victims to provide sexual services in a number of different brothels. Evidence supported that each of the perpetrators played a distinct role in the human trafficking scheme and that each perpetrator had deliberately and willfully engaged in force, threats, and continuous surveillance of the victims to continuously sexually exploit them. The evidence also supported that the perpetrators had confiscated the victims’ legal and travel documents.

Although the criminal trial commenced in November 2020, the complex nature of the case, the multiple defendants implicated and the required testimony of all three survivors resulted in a lengthy process requiring eleven court hearings spanning numerous months. In March 2021, the court convicted all eight defendants for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings or aiding and abetting in the human trafficking scheme. Throughout this process, A21’s victims’ attorney provided in-court representation, and A21’s staff provided supporting aftercare services for three of the survivors as they bravely testified in this prosecution despite numerous adjournments, arduous travel, and mental illness and emotional hurdles from testifying. The combined sentences for the defendants for all offences resulted in over 60 years of imprisonment. While many human trafficking prosecutions involve multiple defendants, as it is highly unusual for so many charged defendants to be convicted of a human trafficking offence, this particular criminal case sets a remarkable precedent for future human trafficking prosecutions in Greece.
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 utilizes 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

Overview of Data¹

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.

**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 to the 1109 Hotline 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.

**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

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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.

Greece Hotline Report 2021