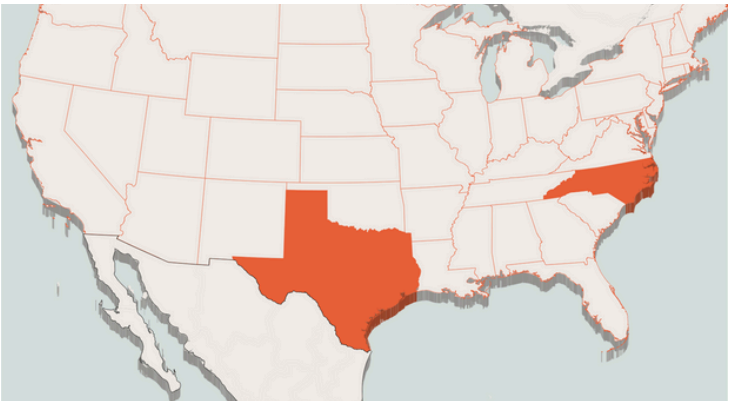
IMPACT REPORT 2024

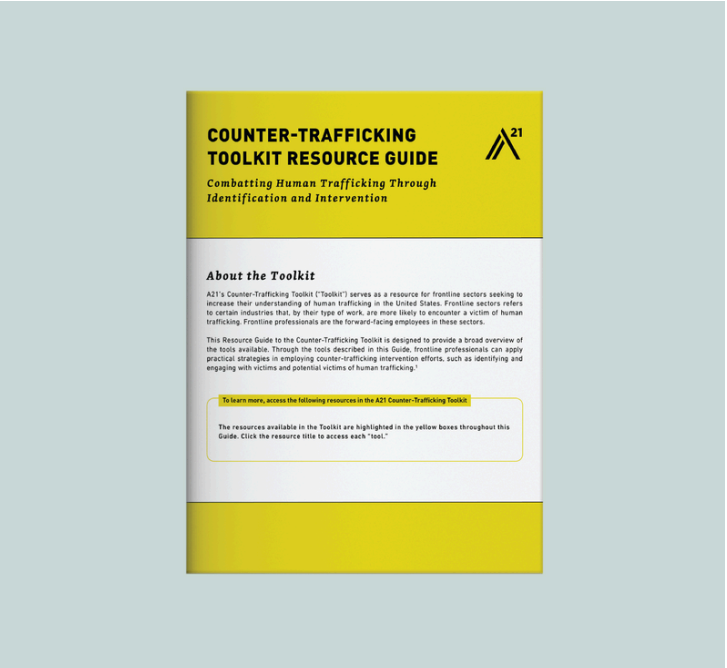
USA



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES

The issue of human trafficking remains a key priority for the United States. As a source and destination country, the United States relies upon the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 (recently reinstated in 2017) as a guidepost in classifying the issue as a federal crime. This statute ensures that US law addresses the core components of trafficking form, purpose, and tactics the perpetrator uses to hold traffickers accountable. Sex and labor trafficking remain the most common forms of trafficking observed, with the National Human Trafficking Hotline highlighting tips received from all fifty states, totaling 26,872 trafficking situation reports in the most recent assessment.[1]

With a national focus on prevention, awareness, and education alongside direct survivor services located in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, A21's experience reflects that witnessed by the US government and the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The rise of labor trafficking reports has been noted by A21 for the last few years, as there are continued trends with primarily foreign national individuals being victimized for purposes such as agricultural, factory, and illicit massage parlor work. A more emerging trend of 2024 was the increase of sex trafficking cases tied to cartel involvement. Through the promise of a false job listed in their home country, A21 has seen a notable increase in young women being trafficked for sexual purposes, with their perpetrators being tied to broader gangs with bases across the Americas.



A21'S RESPONSE

PREVENTION, EDUCATION, AND AWARENESS EFFORTS

A21's prevention, education, and awareness work continues to have far-reaching impacts across the United States. It offers a library of interactive and age-appropriate resources to individuals across numerous ages, demographics, languages, and socio-economic statuses. These resources directly reached tens of thousands of vulnerable children and adults in 2024. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports that the average age of a child sex trafficking victim listed missing is 15 years old. This aligns with local data on A21's operations from the Charlotte Metro Human Trafficking Task Force, of which A21 North Carolina is a member.[2]

According to recent reports, the average age of minor victims in Charlotte has been steadily decreasing. While the historically recognized average age of victimization was around 14.5 years, similar to that of national data, recent 2024 data now shows it has dropped to 13.9 years old. In the course of its work, A21 has observed the concerning and rapid increase of online exploitation and trafficker recruitment utilizing online apps. In response, A21's resources are designed to address the key issues of human trafficking in age-appropriate ways with children, beginning as early as three years old and ranging through to adulthood. A21's K-12 Human Trafficking Education Curriculum aims to provide students with knowledge about how to identify and respond to situations where they may otherwise be vulnerable to exploitation or are aware of someone else's vulnerability. The curriculum is aligned with education standards to fit seamlessly into the existing curriculum and is currently represented in 11 states thus far (Florida, Michigan, Texas, Georgia, Kentucky, Arkansas, Washington, Missouri, Colorado, Montana, and is represented and aligned to state standards for North Carolina). With thousands of educators trained and an estimated 600,000+ students reached, the curriculum resulted in multiple trafficking reports being made and led to the federal prosecution of a perpetrator responsible for victimizing minors and harboring over two terabytes of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Material.



CYSM? IN TIMES SQUARE

A21's awareness campaign, Can You See Me? offers regionalized, accurate portrayals of human trafficking and can be implemented across various outlets. In collaboration with the FBI, Homeland Security Investigations New York, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, LAMAR, Outfront, Amtrak, and Omni Hotels, A21 hosted a press conference and human trafficking training for the re-launch of Can You See Me? presented in Times Square, other venues of New York City (subway, ports, buses), and across the United States around the Thanksgiving holiday and key traffic time-periods. Nearly 100 people attended the event and live-streamed to over 500 viewers. A survivor of human trafficking whom A21 had assisted shared her story at the event, speaking to her experience of being trafficked extensively in New York City from the time she was a teenager. As a result, the campaign reached over 221 million impressions in New York City and was picked up by over 800 news outlets. Additional outreach through key partnerships, such as with LAMAR, resulted in billboards across the US, culminating in 40,000,000 impressions monthly. Amtrak continues to play a pivotal role in taking action and added another 11 kiosks across eight stations to their outreach work, resulting in 12,500,000 impressions monthly.



LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

A21 USA was honored to assist a survivor in the prosecution of her trafficker. With an extensive history of violent and criminal behavior, the trafficker was sentenced to 22.5 years in federal prison. The judge added additional conditions to the defendant's release stipulations, including no contact, direct or indirect, with the victim-witnesses in the case, no contact with minors under the age of 18, and registration as a violent sex offender for the rest of his life. The judge ruled that a restitution amount totaling $128,000 was allocated between the two survivors.

The survivor showed incredible strength and resilience in participating in the court proceedings. In addition to providing case management over the past two years, A21 was able to support this survivor by assisting her in drafting her victim impact statement, support in selecting and purchasing court-appropriate attire, facilitating transportation to and from airports and around the court city, traveling with the survivor for emotional support, providing meals and other necessities, and communicating with the United States Attorneys Office (USAO) on the survivor's behalf to help make the process as easy and smooth as possible. After a long and emotional day in the courtroom, the survivor verbally and physically expressed what being able to attend the sentencing meant to her. After hugging each support team member, the survivor exited the courthouse, threw open her arms, and shouted, "I'm free!"

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

In collaboration with the US Department of Justice, A21 in North Carolina hosted a Can You See Me? training for over 150 frontline professionals. Stakeholders from across the Eastern District of North Carolina came together to highlight cases and trends happening within the region. This experience provided valuable insights and best practices to inform future similar events in the area, helping to strengthen the counter-trafficking network and response amongst providers.



AWARENESS EVENT AND TRAINING WITH THE US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

US COUNTER-TRAFFICKING RESOURCES

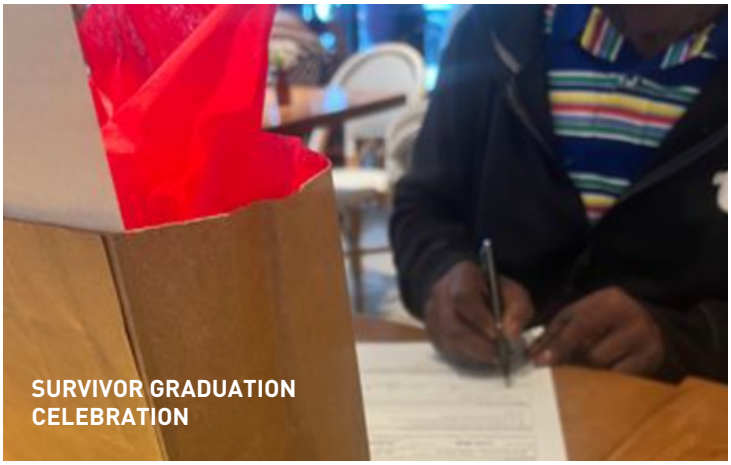
A21's Counter-Trafficking Toolkit, released in 2023, continues to serve frontline professionals with accurate, regionalized portrayals of human trafficking indicators for the United States. This year, A21 released a public resource as part of the Toolkit to champion the broader community in identifying and reporting potential trafficking cases. In conjunction with A21's other community resources, the public can visit A21's website for support and a library of tools, ranging from topics such as safe employment, online and digital safety, tips for child safety, and many others.

AFTERCARE SERVICES

From first intervention and assisting survivors in exiting their trafficking situation to providing holistic, long-term support, A21's services are tailored to the unique needs of each survivor. In 2024, A21 USA welcomed 13 new survivors into the Aftercare program. Combined with another 48 individuals actively participating in the program, Caseworkers in North Carolina and Texas supported 61 survivors and their families. Similarly to other trends noted in 2023, sex trafficking remained the most common form of exploitation in 2024, accounting for 62% of intakes.

The remaining survivor population had been trafficked primarily for labor purposes, with one case of Online Child Sexual Exploitation represented. The primary support needs requested by these individuals included basic needs, legal support, case management, and familial support.

A challenge noted by many service providers in the US is the lack of appropriate survivor accommodation, which is consistent with what many survivors in A21's program experience. A21 offered accommodation support to 25% of survivors participating in the Aftercare program. Addressing this barrier enables survivors to work toward their goals and achieve pivotal traction toward vulnerability reduction, such as gaining secure employment, attained by 17% of A21's survivor population in 2024. Supporting these milestones is a foundational component of A21's program, serving survivors in their pursuit of achieving independence.



SURVIVOR GRADUATION CELEBRATION

The Freedom Center is the heart of A21's Community Model, which operates as a safe space for survivors to work on their goals and needs with A21 Caseworkers, but also to connect with one another through engaging events and programs. Life Programs are the core of A21's Aftercare, and are utilized by Caseworkers as guidance in championing the survivor's independence. Life Program topics include core skills such as budgeting, job readiness, and health and well-being, among others. A21 also hosts tailored courses based on the needs of the current survivor population being served, such as offering English as a Second Language (ESL) lessons throughout 2024. Events at the Freedom Center are filled with laughter and fun, with A21 team and program participants coming together to celebrate an upcoming holiday, do a craft project together, or play games. Many survivors in A21's program express strong enjoyment for the events and the ability to relax and have fun in a safe environment.



ACTIVITY TIME AT THE FREEDOM CENTER

Each component of A21's Aftercare program is designed to support the goals of a survivor, to reduce vulnerabilities that could lead to another trafficking experience, and to assist them toward graduation, ultimately attaining independence and security. A21 uses the Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO) tool from the International Justice Mission to determine vulnerability reduction. Six years of ASO data demonstrates that US survivors participating in A21's Aftercare program display high levels of restoration at case closure, with low vulnerability to re-victimization.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: THRIVE

Thrive is an A21 peer support group program that assists male survivors of human trafficking to develop strength, resilience, and perseverance as they establish themselves in their freedom and independence. As a result of the program, survivors in North Carolina have shared many emotional breakthroughs and reflected on the restorative work within them. One participant noted, "I have been able to practice self-compassion. Accept what happened and reframe the situation by talking back to myself kindly. This week, I cried and then stood up and continued." These insights demonstrate the profound personal growth and healing through A21's restorative care, where survivors address past trauma and build resilience and self-compassion to move forward.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: ADVOCATING FOR COMMERCIALLY SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH IN TEXAS

A21 was honored to receive an invitation from the Office of the Governor in Texas as part of the Advocacy Program for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) in 2024. Through this program, A21 will serve assigned counties in North Texas with direct survivor services to minors identified as trafficking survivors or those representing a clear concern for sexual exploitation. Collaboration alongside the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, law enforcement, Child Advocacy Centers, and other key stakeholders is critical in supporting any identified children with the proper support, and A21 in Texas is preparing to launch full services in early 2025.

"I am deeply grateful for A21 and all that you have done for me. Sometimes, I sit back and think about what would have happened if you had not stepped in. You have done tremendous work, and I am very thankful."

—A21 Survivor at their Graduation

ENDNOTES

1. Analysis of data from 2020-2022; Hotline-Trends-Report-2023. https://polarisproject.org/resources/us-national-human-trafficking-hotline-statistics/
2. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. (n.d.). Child sex trafficking. https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking
3. Charlotte Mecklenburg Human Trafficking Task Force. (2024). Exploitation in the Queen City. https://drive.google.com/file/d/10ErLjXCu_y2rqZ0z39AzxgHcz9mZJAMa/view