



Human Trafficking Statistical Report



Tennessee Bureau of Investigation

Human Trafficking Unit

2024

HUMAN TRAFFICKING BY THE NUMBERS

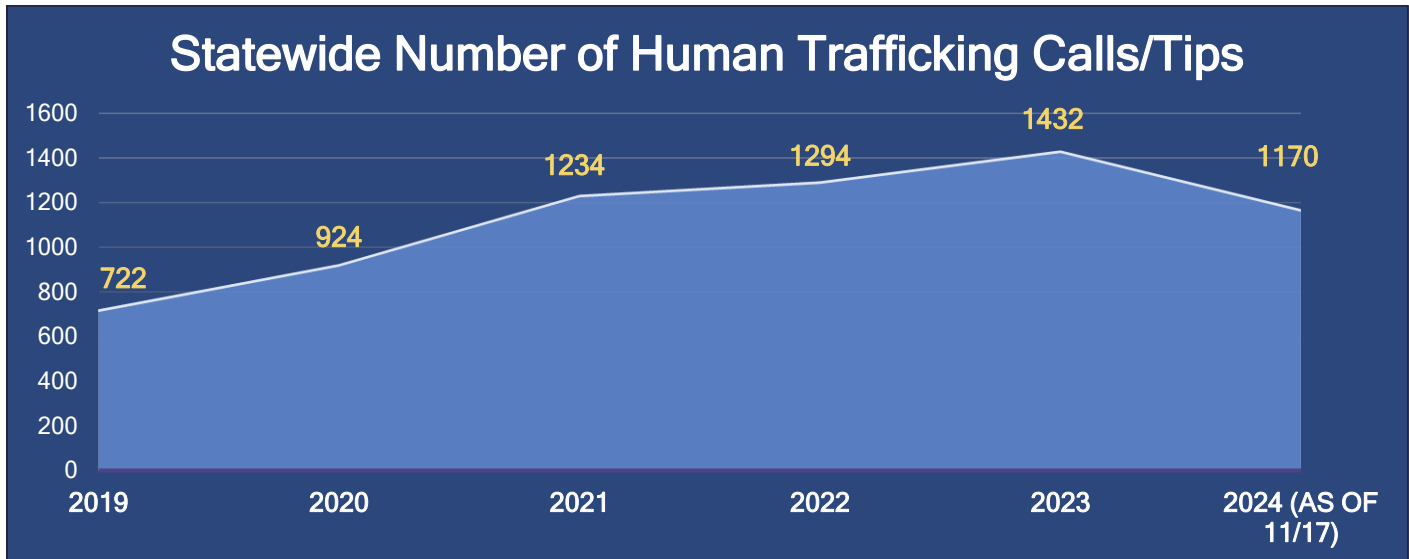
The purpose of this publication is not only to fulfill the statutory requirement set forth in Pub. Ch. 3 (2023) requiring by December 1, 2024, and by each December 1 thereafter, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) to submit a report on child and human trafficking crimes and trends in Tennessee to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Speaker of the Senate, but to give a snapshot as to the measures being taken by TBI to combat human trafficking (HT) in Tennessee.

For background, a study was conducted in 2011 by TBI and Vanderbilt University that addressed concerns regarding human trafficking across Tennessee. As a result of this study, the TBI created a Human Trafficking Unit (HTU). Furthermore, legislation was passed that gave TBI original jurisdiction over human trafficking offenses. This allows TBI to initiate criminal investigations as they present themselves. Pub. Ch. 435 was also passed in 2011 that established the Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline. In 2015, Pub. Ch. 503 provided 4 Special Agent positions specific to investigating and developing criminal cases involving HT offenses throughout TN. This also required the development of a course of instruction concerning HT designed for law enforcement and various agencies and departments likely to encounter HT & HT victims during the course of delivering services. Human trafficking training is required by Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission for certification as a police officer in Tennessee. In addition to the above legislation, the passing of Pub. Ch. 510 (2015) developed the formation of a human trafficking advisory council, led by TBI, to further develop and implement a state plan for prevention of HT that includes law makers, heads of various state agencies, non-governmental organization service provider partners that serve HT victims, a former human trafficking survivor, as well as other various organizations and agencies.

In 2021, Governor Bill Lee and the General Assembly provided an additional 5 Special Agent positions to aid in combatting HT across Tennessee. This brought the Human Trafficking Unit to a total of 9 Special Agents, 2 in each grand region of the state with one additional in Middle Tennessee, as well as one Assistant Special Agent in Charge. This has allowed the agents to better focus on regional human trafficking trends and continue to stay proactive. With the ever-increasing number of tips, leads, referrals, and complexity of the cases this has been instrumental in the fight against human trafficking in Tennessee.

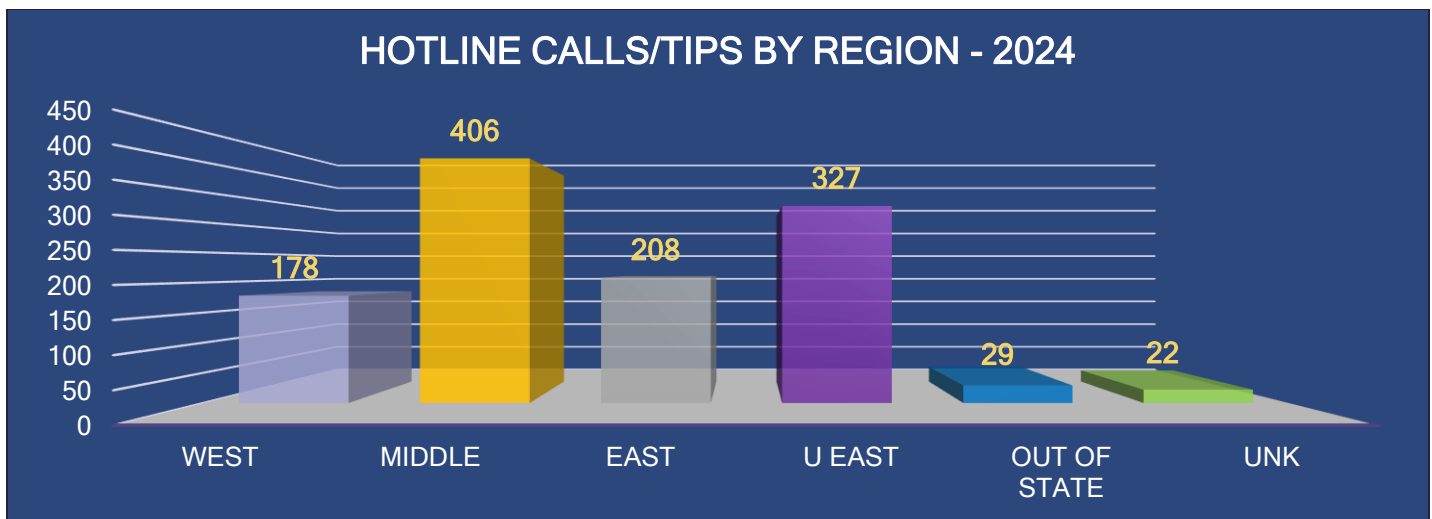
Human Trafficking Calls, Tips and Request for Investigations

The below graph identifies the number of hotline calls and tips received by the TBI's human trafficking team between 2019 and 2024. These leads were received from across the entire state of Tennessee.



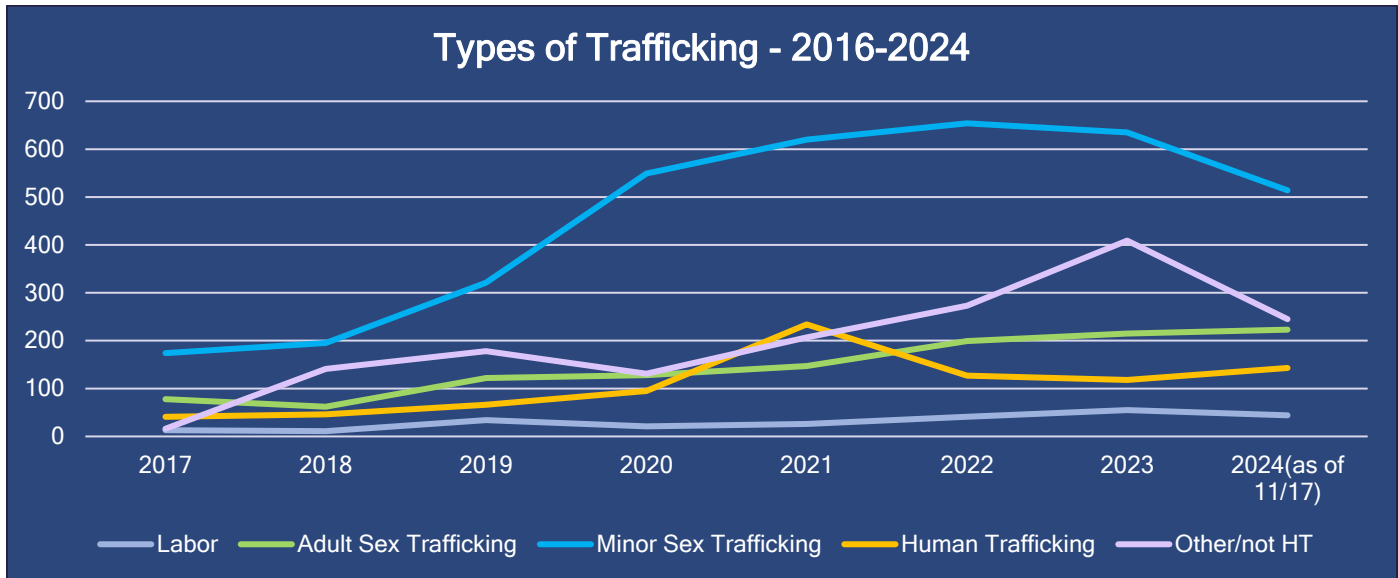
*All totals above are for calendar year as of Nov 17, 2024.

The following chart splits the above figure into regions, highlighting which areas are generating the most tips and calls.



*The above totals are as of 11/17/2024.

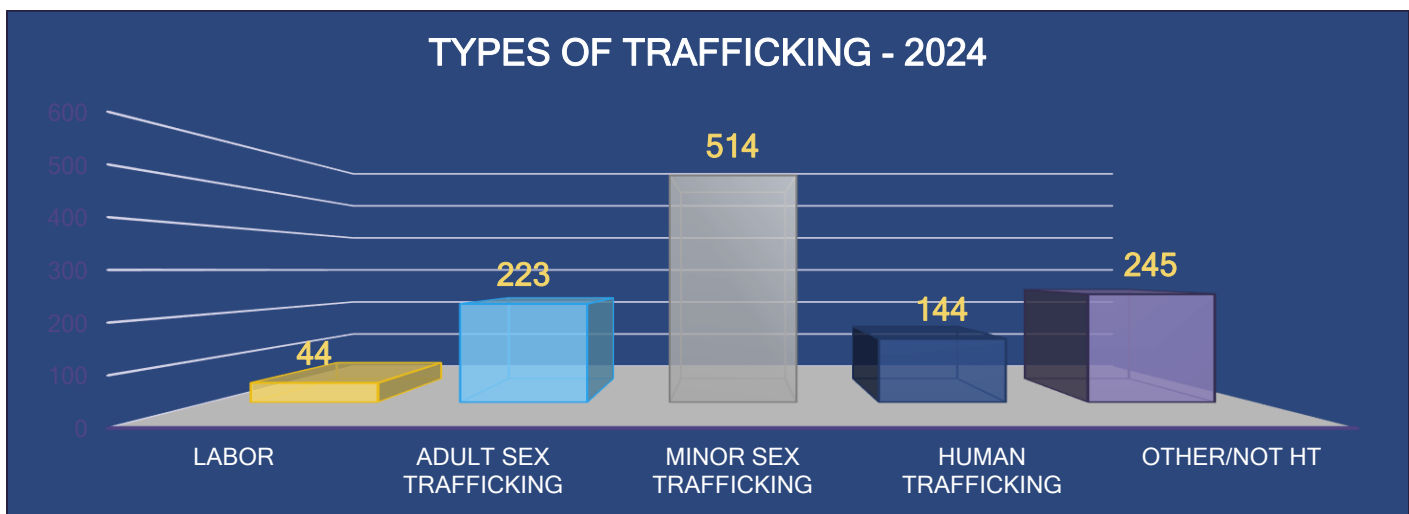
In addition to tracking where tips/leads are generated from within the state, the type of trafficking reported is also identified. Over the course of the last 8 years, minor sex trafficking reports have dramatically increased from 66 in 2016 to surpassing 600 by 2021.



*The above totals are as of 11/17/2024.

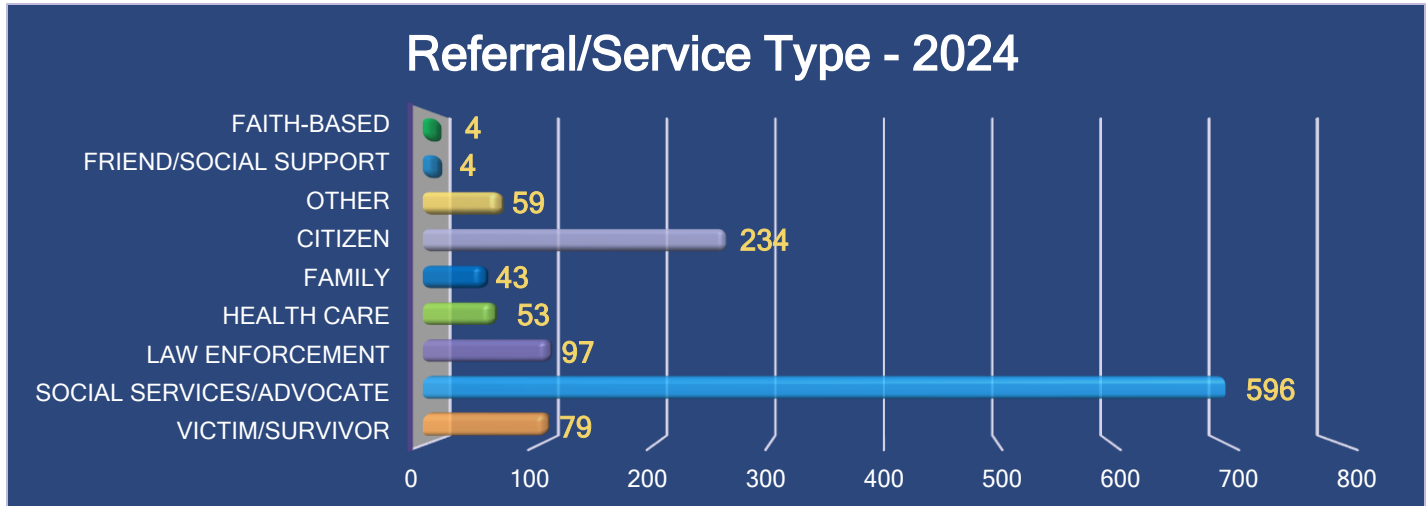
Tips that fall under the Human Trafficking type are those that have a HT nexus where the age of the victim is unknown.

In 2024, minor sex trafficking tips/leads far exceeds the other forms of trafficking reported. As can be seen below, there are 514 reports of minor sex trafficking as of November 17, 2024.



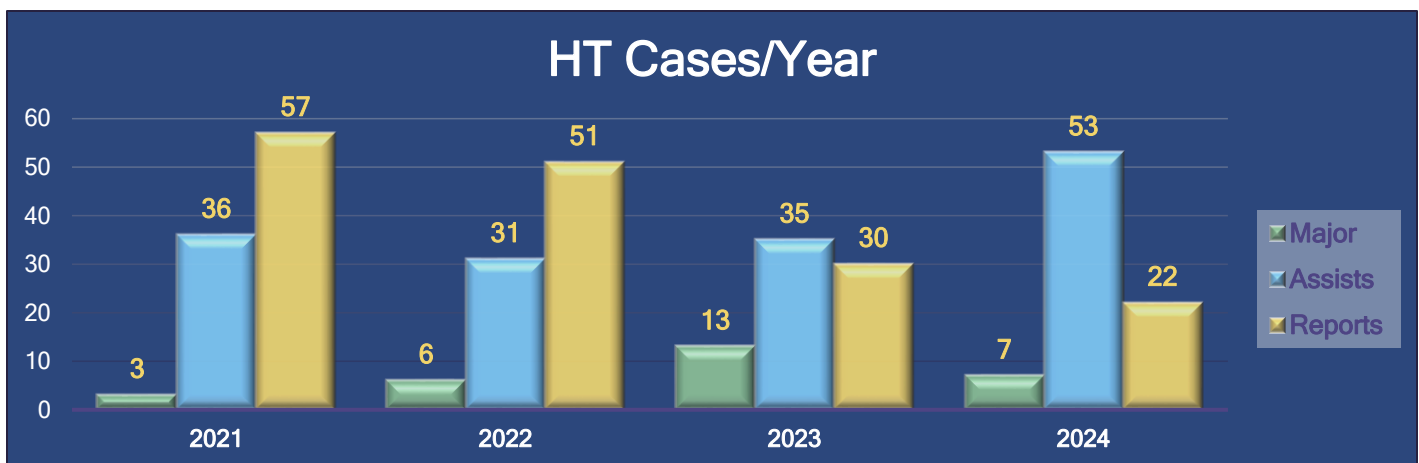
*The above totals are as of 11/17/2024.

The vast majority of tips that come into the TBI regarding Human Trafficking are via social service organizations/advocates. This can be largely attributed to the relationship fostered with the Department of Child Services (DCS) who provide referrals specific to human trafficking on a weekly basis to the TBI for review and further investigation.



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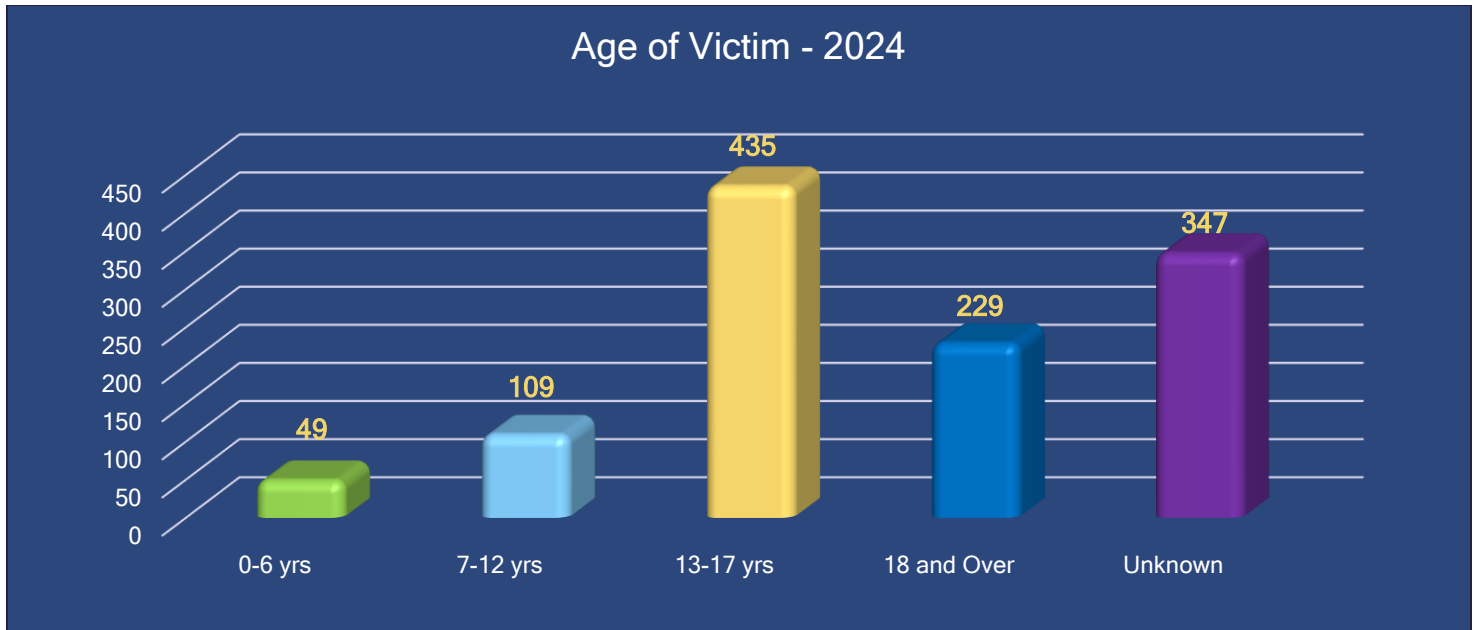
While all tips and calls are reviewed, not all develop into a TBI case. This is due to various reasons, some of which include jurisdictional issues, veracity of claims made, and the amount of verifiable information provided. For example, many cases of suspected trafficking are passed to local agencies who can better address an issue in an expedient manner. Other tips cannot be pursued due to the lack of information provided by a caller. Regardless, many of the calls/tips do generate cases and the following chart identifies those figures over the course of the last 4 years. In the chart below, major cases are TBI-led HT investigations, assists are local law enforcement-led with TBI HTU assisting, and Reports are intelligence-based reports.



* The above totals are as of 11/17/2024.

Age of Trafficking Victims

The TBI's HTU receives tips regarding potential victims within the state of Tennessee across all ages. Minor victims are tracked with the most specificity and range in age from 5 months to 17 years old. The chart below shows the breakdown of tips by age of victim based on tips received in 2024. The majority of tips dealing with minor victims (45%) involve children between the ages of 13 and 17 years old. It should be noted that 47% of all the tips received by the TBI HTU involving minors originate with DCS/CPS.



* The above totals are as of 11/17/2024.

Training Statistics

The TBI has trained a number of individuals in human trafficking related courses over the last 8 years. While the largest number of individuals trained are law enforcement personnel, there is training dedicated to civilian groups as well.

Types of Groups Trained

- Law Enforcement
- State Agencies
- Court Personnel
- Colleges/Universities
- Faith Based Groups
- Victim Service Groups

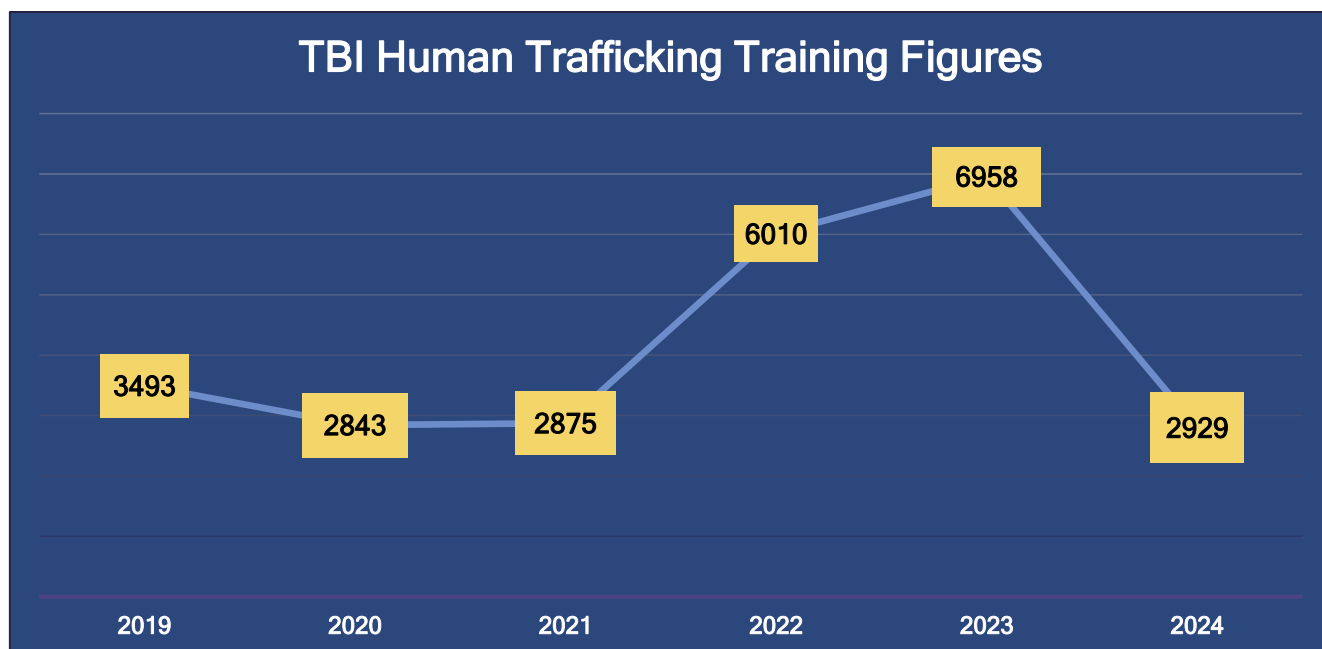
Between March 2016 and November 14, 2024, a total of **13,242** individuals were trained via the **TBI LEARN Program**.

The total number of **civilians** trained in 2024 totals **1,641**.

The total number of law enforcement taught in 2024 via **The Law Enforcement Training Academy/In Service** is **1,236**.

The below graph captures the total number of individuals trained by the TBI since 2019. This figure is current to November 14,

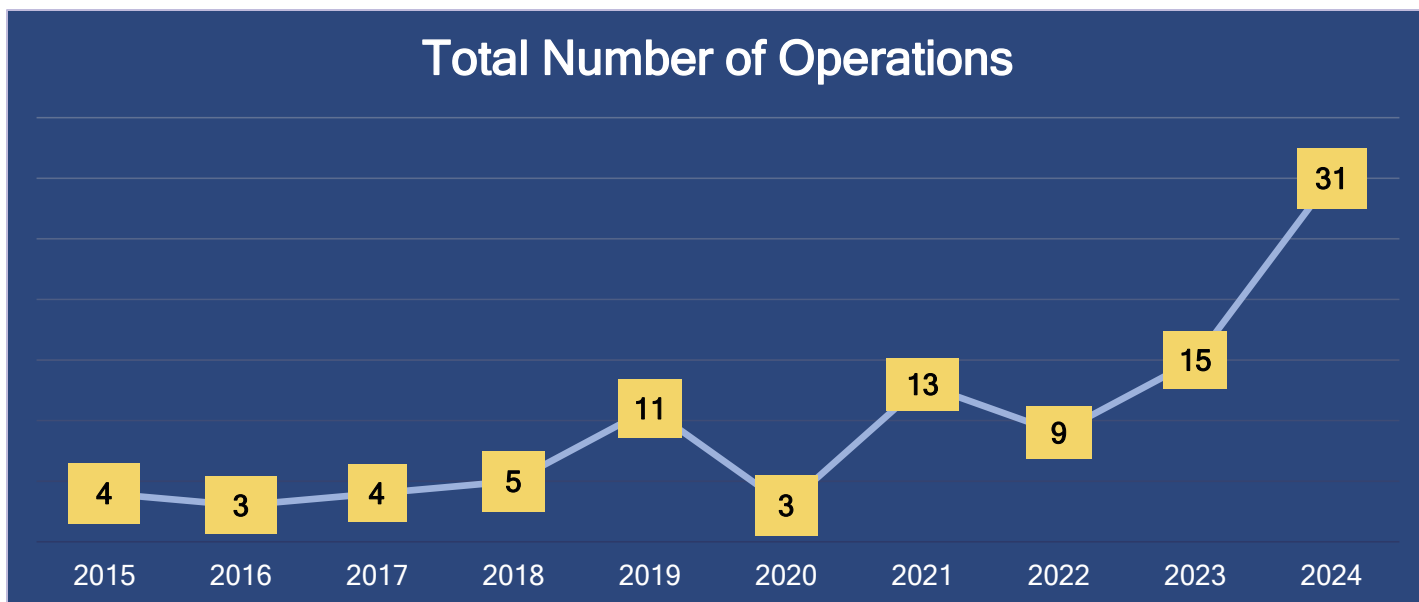
2024. The total number trained since 2016 is **45,028**.



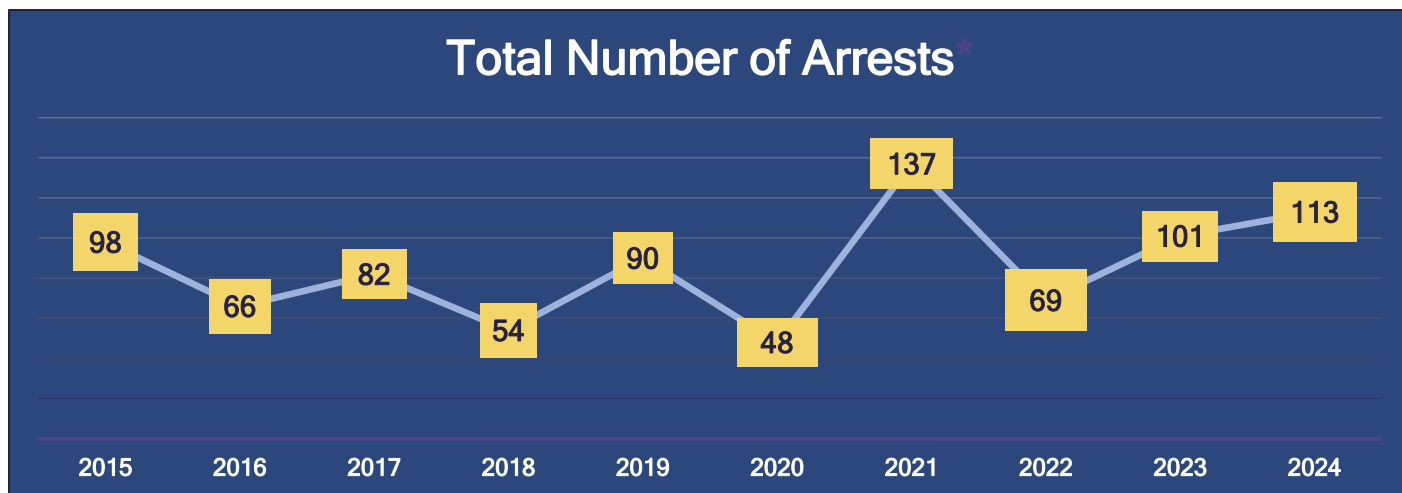
Operation Statistics

HTU has been doing proactive operations since 2015. These operations target those who are seeking to engage in commercial sex with a minor, as well as focus on identifying any individuals that are being trafficked and the recovery of those persons. The number of operations conducted each year continues to increase. Based on the results from these types of operations and the evolving trends of the state of human trafficking in Tennessee, the HTU has adapted by branching out to other types of proactive operations. These types of operations include the targeting of illicit businesses that are involved in both sex and labor trafficking, high-risk juvenile recovery operations, rescue and recovery of potential sex trafficking victims, and other proactive operations. These all serve to disrupt and dismantle the human trafficking market as well as rescue victims. In 2024, HTU recovered 57 victims of human trafficking.

The following chart looks at the total number of operations conducted by the TBI over the last 9 years.



The below arrest figures are based on proactive operations as well as enforcement activities initiated by Special Agents from tips, leads and referrals.



Additional Facts/Figures

Online Escort Ads

When conducting operations or seeking information on potential trafficking victims, TBI HTU researches a wide range of sex advertisement websites. Concerning the number of ads posted statewide in 2024, there were **385,924 ads from 82,329 profiles**. Though this is a massive number, it is important to note that not all sex advertisements involve possible trafficking victims. Regardless of the exact accuracy of the number of results, the HTU monitor posts regularly with extreme detail to identify possible trafficking victims.

Missing Children

While not all missing children are trafficking victims, the runaway population is particularly vulnerable to exploitation. These children are often without the basic needs such as food and shelter. Due to their age, circumstances, and needs, they are vulnerable to manipulation and force that often can lead to being in a trafficking situation. Consequently, the TBI makes every effort to identify those with a possible human trafficking nexus or who are high-risk for falling victim to human trafficking. The TBI HT Unit, TBI Missing Persons Unit, Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) HT Unit, and local partners continue to conduct joint recovery operations across the state focusing on these high-risk runaways

and juveniles. These multi-disciplinary teams work these high-risk/at-risk juvenile HT cases as they are reported or identified.

Additionally, the HTU also noted an increase in National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reports received concerning unaccompanied minors (juveniles who arrive at the U.S. border and are then placed with a sponsor). NCMEC is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation whose mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization. Many of these minors are from Central and South American Countries and are placed with a sponsor in Tennessee, then the minor is reported missing. The HT Unit works closely with DCS and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to locate these juveniles and ensure they are in a safe place and receive qualified services.

Improvements and Investments

The TBI greatly appreciates Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly for the improvements made in the laws on human trafficking in recent years, as well as the considerable investments in the Bureau's Human Trafficking Unit. Stricter punishments for traffickers and additional resources for victims are two invaluable tools in the fight against human trafficking. The additional special agent positions allocated to the TBI have helped the unit rescue more trafficking victims, specifically in proactive rescue/recovery undercover operations.

For undercover operations to work in a way that is most optimal, however, the unit needs a sustained number of human trafficking intelligence analysts to examine the thousands of online advertisements to identify potential victims, their location, information on any sex trafficker controlling the victim, and dangers associated with a recovery effort.

For years, Tennessee has led the way nationally in enacting the policies and rallying the stakeholders needed to address the issue of human trafficking from all sides. Our work, however, is not finished: There are still victims to recover, survivors to support, and buyers and traffickers to hold accountable. The TBI stands prepared to lead in the ongoing fight and looks forward to ongoing conversations with all stakeholders about the resources, policies, best practices, and laws needed to continue this important work in Tennessee and beyond.

