

2021

NATIONAL OUTREACH SURVEY FOR TRANSPORTATION (NOST)

A REVIEW OF NOST DATA THEMATIC TOPIC OF INTEREST: SPORTING EVENTS

Combating Human Trafficking by Listening to the Experiences,
Challenges, and Recommendations of Frontline Workers and Those
with Lived Experience



UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT SPORTING EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Human trafficking is a violation of human rights that affects people of all ages, nationalities, and backgrounds. Both labor trafficking and sex trafficking are known to occur in various settings, including large-scale events like sporting events. Traffickers exploit the high demand for labor and the influx of people during these events to profit from the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. We explore how adults and children of any nationality can become victims of labor and sex trafficking at these events, the differing perspectives on the prevalence of trafficking at these events, and the importance of helping even one victim exit this abuse.

Diverse Viewpoints on the Prevalence of Trafficking at Sporting Events

There is ongoing debate about how [widespread](#) human trafficking is at major [sporting events](#), including the trafficking of [athletes](#). “The US Department of State included trafficking in sports for the first time in their [2020 TIP Report](#).” Some believe that these events are hotbeds for trafficking activities due to the large crowds and the increased demand for both labor and commercial sex. Others argue that the numbers may be exaggerated and that trafficking at these events is not as rampant as it is often portrayed. It is also important to recognize that each sporting event may vary in its risk and occurrence of trafficking, depending on various factors like location, size, and security measures. The reality is that traffickers can exploit individuals wherever demand may be present.

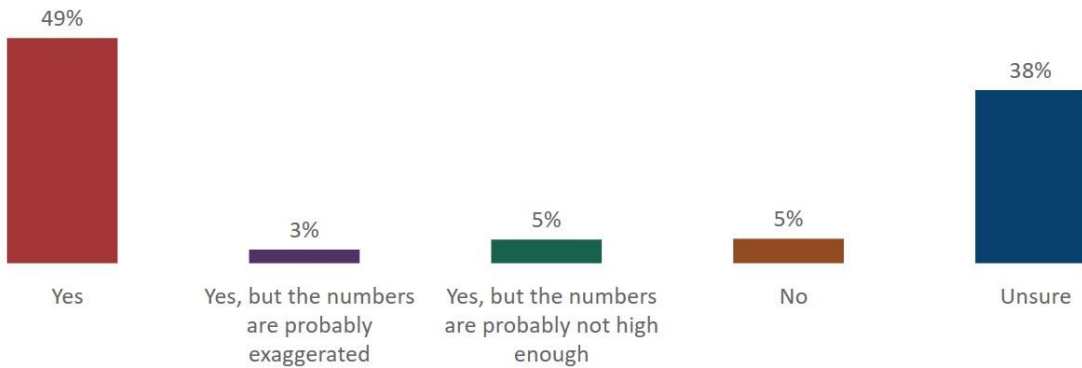


However, regardless of differing viewpoints, one thing remains clear: no matter how many victims are trafficked at these events, helping recover just one victim should always take precedence to ensure that awareness and training continue among local stakeholders surrounding these events. Every life matters, and every effort to combat trafficking is crucial.

The perspectives shared from NOST data may not necessarily reflect the views of the larger population. The findings from our survey offer valuable insights but should be interpreted within the context of the participating respondents and the unique nature of the 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation. This review draws on the perspectives of survey respondents who participated in the 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation, including human trafficking survivors, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how trafficking occurs at sporting events.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSPORTATION WORKERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT,
SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND OTHER SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Do you believe human trafficking increases during sports-related events?



QID_516 Total Respondents: 2835

Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment.
Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

57% of 2,835
survey respondents

Replied Yes



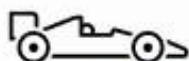
PERSPECTIVE FROM 139 TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

Please confirm if you were human trafficked at any of the following sporting events. Select all that apply.



America's Cup
(sailing)

6%



Formula One
(car racing)

6%



Kentucky Derby
(horse racing)

7%



Kentucky Oaks
(horse racing)

7%



Masters
(golf)

10%



NBA Finals
(basketball)

10%



NCAA Games
(basketball)

4%



Olympics
(varied sports)

4%



PGA Tour Championship
(golf)

3%



Stanley Cup
(hockey)

2%



Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
(motorcycle)

4%



Super Bowl
(football)

5%



Tour de France
(cycling)

1%



U.S. Open
(tennis)

4%



UEFA Champions League
(football/soccer)

2%



Wimbledon
(tennis)

3%



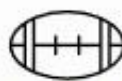
World Beach Games
(varied sports)

1%



World Cup
(cricket)

2%



World Cup
(rugby)

2%



World Series
(baseball)

3%



X Games
(extreme sports)

2%

None of the
above

61%

QID_305 Total Respondents: 139

Note: Statistics include responses from participating survivors of labor and/or sex trafficking and may not represent any larger population segment.

Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)



HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT SPORTING EVENTS

Labor Trafficking

Labor trafficking involves the exploitation of individuals who are coerced into working under abusive conditions under force, fraud, or coercion. These victims can be adults or children and are often lured into these situations by false promises of legitimate employment, whether they are U.S. citizens or foreign nationals.

Event Preparation and Construction:

- Construction and Setup: Large sporting events require significant infrastructure, including stages, temporary seating, and other facilities. Labor trafficking victims are sometimes brought in to perform these tasks.

- Transportation and Accommodation: Victims are often transported to the event location under false pretenses, with their identification documents confiscated to prevent them from leaving. They are typically housed in overcrowded, substandard accommodations, further increasing their vulnerability.

Survivors were asked how they were human trafficked at the sporting events.

- 40% said labor trafficking
- 53% said sex trafficking
- 13% said both labor and sex trafficking

Source: 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (QID_307)

Event Operations:

- Food and Beverage Services: Temporary staff is needed to cater to the large crowds at sporting events. Labor trafficking victims, including children, may be forced into working in kitchens, concession stands, or as servers under threats of violence or other forms of coercion.
- Merchandise Sales and Cleaning Services: Victims may also be forced to sell event merchandise or perform cleaning tasks. These individuals are often subjected to grueling hours and unsafe working conditions, with little or no compensation.

Post-Event Breakdown:

- Dismantling and Clean-Up: After the event, workers may be required to break down temporary structures and clean the venue. Like those involved in the setup, these workers can continue to face exploitation until the event's conclusion and even afterward.

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking at sporting events is a critical issue, as traffickers exploit the high concentration of people and the demand for commercial sex. It includes the force, fraud, or coercion of adults; however, for cases involving minors, it is not necessary to prove force, fraud, or coercion. Victims can be from any nationality, and traffickers often move them across state or national borders to evade detection. Traffickers often take advantage of the chaos and anonymity provided by large events to profit from the sexual exploitation of vulnerable individuals.



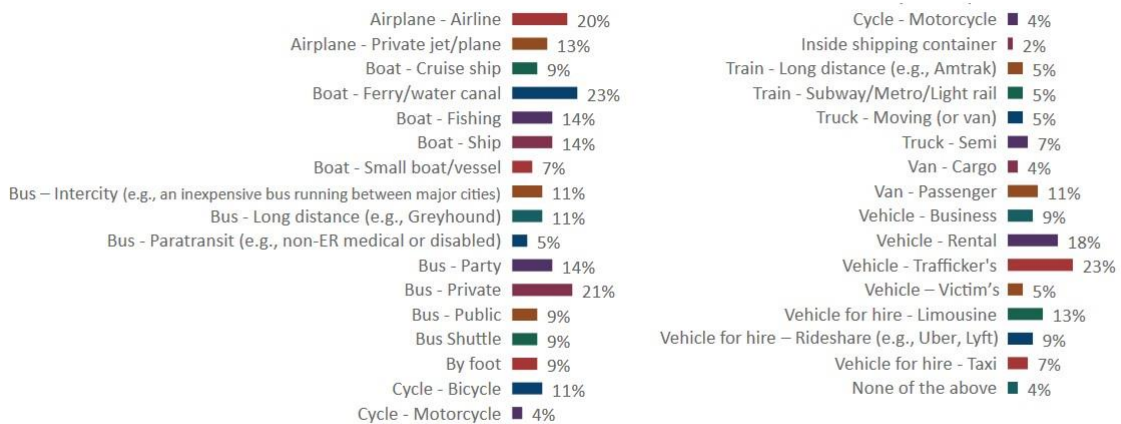
Recruitment and Transportation:

- **Targeting Vulnerable Individuals:** Traffickers prey on vulnerable individuals, including children, young adults, and those facing economic hardships. They may deceive them with promises of love, security, or legitimate work, only to force them into environments of sexual exploitation.

- **Movement to Event Locations:** Sporting events draw large crowds, making them prime targets for traffickers. Victims are often transported to these locations in secret, where they are isolated from support networks and controlled by their traffickers. The mobility of these operations, moving from one event to another, makes it difficult for law enforcement to track and intervene.

Among 56 survivors who participated in the NOST and were trafficked at sporting events, there were multiple methods used to transport them, including trafficker's vehicle and ferry boat (each 23%), private bus (21%), and airplane (20%) (QID_306). Survivors identified aviation, maritime, railway, roadway, transit, and other modes used for transporting them to the events.

What transportation method(s) was used to take you to the sporting event(s)? Select all that apply.



QID_306 Total Respondents: 56

Note: Statistics include responses from participating survivors of labor and/or sex trafficking and may not represent any larger population segment.

Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

Exploitation During the Event:

- **Hotels and Private Accommodations:** Traffickers often use hotels, motels, and short-term rentals near event venues to exploit their victims. Adults and children may be forced into sexual exploitation, with encounters arranged through online advertisements or directly with event attendees. In some cases, traffickers can bribe or coerce hotel staff into assisting them.

- **Public Spaces and Venues:** Some victims are forced to solicit clients directly within or around the event venues, such as in parking lots, bars, or other social areas. Victims can be forced or coerced into engaging in commercial sex acts with little to no means of escape.

Coercion and Control:

- Violence and Threats: Traffickers use various forms of coercion, including physical violence, psychological manipulation, and threats against the victim or their loved ones, to maintain control. This coercion is often intensified when victims are isolated in a foreign country or far from home, with no access to support.

- Debt Bondage: Victims may be forced into a cycle of debt bondage, where they are required to "pay off" fabricated debts for transportation, lodging, or basic necessities. These debts are often inflated or impossible to pay off, ensuring that the victim remains under the trafficker's control.

Post-Event Exploitation:

- Continued Exploitation: After the event, victims of sex trafficking may be moved to the next location or forced into other forms of exploitation. This continued abuse can have long-lasting effects on their physical and mental health, making recovery and reintegration into society more challenging.

Supply Chains

In today's globalized economy, companies and subcontractors bear a significant responsibility to ensure that their operations and supply chains are free from forced labor and sex trafficking. As consumers and stakeholders increasingly demand transparency and ethical practices, it is crucial for businesses to prioritize the integrity of their workforce and supply chain.

It is vital to regularly review the internal policies within their supply chain to ensure contractors are compliant and avoid human rights violations. NOST data shows that 83% of 244 planning and safety workers said they support a zero-tolerance policy for external partners who use forced labor in their supply chain (QID_134). Perpetrators who are found to abuse those violations should be reported to proper authorities for the judicial process to begin, and so efforts can help any victims exit their abuse and be connected with resources.

When was the last time your organization reviewed policies and procedures to ensure forced labor is not occurring among vendors in the supply chain?

- 67% Unsure
 - 20% Never to my knowledge
- QID_132



Moreover, companies must adopt proactive measures, such as regular audits, training programs, and clear reporting mechanisms, to prevent forced labor. These steps not only help in identifying and addressing potential violations but also foster a culture of transparency and accountability within the organization. By prioritizing ethical practices and holding all levels of the supply chain to the same high standards, businesses can contribute to the global fight against human trafficking, including at any large-scale event. This approach protects workers' rights and enhances the company's reputation and trust among consumers, who increasingly demand ethical sourcing and corporate responsibility.

Beyond Profits – No Matter the Industry

Ensure workers are not
getting exploited



Men, women, boys, girls,
disabled, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+
populations are exploited –
which includes domestic and
foreign nationals

Review Supply Chain
Management,
Address Recruitment Practices



Prices for products created
through forced labor
undercut those of
legitimate businesses

Reflects poorly on
entire industries



Electronics, garment,
chocolate, seafood
sectors, diamonds, bricks

SPORTING EVENTS: MEDIA REPORTING

When reporting on forced labor or sex trafficking at sporting events, journalists hold significant power in shaping public understanding and policy. The language they use, and the accuracy of their reporting can either clarify the realities of trafficking or perpetuate harmful myths.

The choice of words is vital. Journalists should avoid terminology that dehumanizes or blames victims. For instance, labeling someone as a "prostitute" rather than a "victim of trafficking," or "adult having sex with a minor" instead of "child rape," or even "child pornography" versus "[child sexual abuse material](#)" can obscure the exploitation they face. Using terms like "survivor" or "individuals experiencing trafficking" respects the dignity of those affected and highlights the coercion involved.

Accuracy is equally important. Large sporting events, such as the [Super Bowl](#) or the [Olympics](#), are often surrounded by claims about spikes in different forms of human trafficking. While these events may create opportunities for traffickers, it's crucial to rely on credible sources and statistics instead of amplifying myths. Journalists should focus on data from reputable organizations to give the public a well-informed perspective.

Moreover, using clear, everyday language helps make the complex issue of trafficking more understandable to a broad audience. Simplifying the subject not only educates but also empowers readers to recognize and respond to trafficking in their communities.

[Journalists](#) and the media play a critical role in reporting on trafficking at sporting events. By carefully choosing their words, prioritizing factual reporting, and using accessible language, they can help combat trafficking, support victims, and shape a more accurate public narrative.

Human Trafficking Toolkits for Journalists

(click below)

[OSCE & Astra](#)

[UDODC](#)

[Global Investigative
Journalism Network](#)

Recent Media Coverage of Large-Scale Events



**Sturgis Rally sex sting
shows local predators
active during bike week**

By Tom Hanson
August 13, 2024
[Access the article here](#)



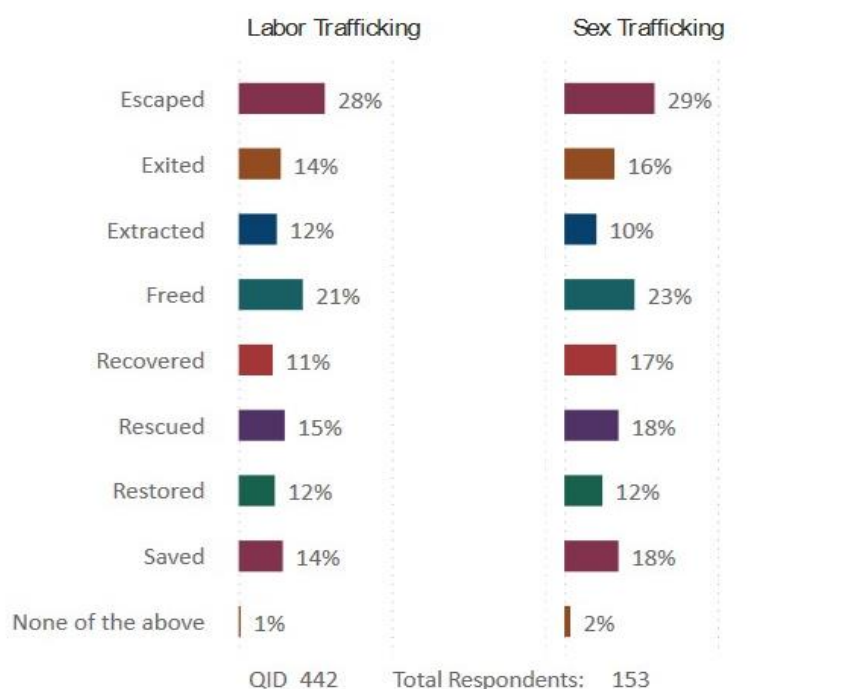
**14 sex buyers arrested,
10 victims recovered in
human trafficking sting
at Comic-Con**

By Anthony Robledo
August 1, 2024
[Access the article here](#)

WORDS MATTER: SURVIVORS VIEWPOINT

Listening to human trafficking survivors and respecting the language they choose to describe their experiences is crucial for ethical and compassionate engagement. Each survivor's experience is deeply personal, and the terms they prefer reflect their individual journey toward healing and empowerment. Whether they identify as a "survivor," "victim," or another term, honoring their choices empowers them and validates their autonomy.

Thinking about the moment you were extracted/escaped from human trafficking, which word(s) do you prefer to be used in describing that moment? Select all that apply.



Note: Statistics include responses from participating survivors of labor and/or sex trafficking and may not represent any larger population segment.

Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

For journalists, advocates, and anyone involved in the anti-trafficking movement, it's essential to listen to these preferences to avoid retraumatizing survivors and to convey their narratives accurately. This approach strengthens advocacy efforts, shows respect, and fosters a more authentic public dialogue about trafficking. Incorporating language preferred by survivors enhances our understanding of the diverse experiences within trafficking, challenging generalized perceptions and fostering a more nuanced, empathetic dialogue. By centering on the needs and voices of survivors, we can build a more just and supportive environment for those who have endured these profound injustices.

If you suspect signs of human trafficking, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-3737-888 or your local police immediately. Your actions could help save a life.

A SURVIVORS JOURNEY: NOMINATED AS A TORCHBEARER FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN PARIS 2024



Image Source: BBC

Survivors of labor and/or sex trafficking have shared their experiences of being exploited at sporting events and other large-scale events. As they rebuild their lives and the long journeys ahead, many step into leadership and volunteer positions to help combat this horrific crime.

At the 2024 Olympics in Paris, one survivor was honored for his relentless efforts in volunteering at every major sporting event in London in recent years.

Mohammed Zaman carried the Olympic torch in Paris 2024. He is unsure who nominated him, but it was a welcomed and well-deserved honor.



Usually August is the time of year that I feel most sad, because it reminds me of when I arrived in the UK and that my situation remained the same,” he told me as we headed to the French capital. “But not this year. Everything has changed dramatically. I have my Leave To Remain, I’m about to run with the Olympic torch in Paris, it’s a big honour.”

Read the original article, “Slavery survivor fulfils Olympic torch dream in Paris,” by Anna O’Neill. The original article can be found [here](#).

Shared by Freedom United, “Modern slavery survivor’s journey ends with carrying the Olympic Torch” on August 29, 2024. The blog post can be found [here](#).



United Against Slavery (UAS) developed a Collaborative Research Model and a comprehensive frontline data collection methodology and repository to collect, maintain, and publish human trafficking data from frontline workers. The data identifies what is and is not working in counter-trafficking efforts in more than 20 sectors.

www.UnitedAgainstSlavery.org

National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST) 2021

The following NOST Question Identification Numbers (QID) were used in this Sporting Event data review: QID_516, QID_305, QID_307, QID_306, QID_134, QID_132, and QID_442.

To access the NOST Report and supporting tools:

<https://www.unitedagainstsavery.org/nost-2021>

Wigle, C., & Baglin, C. (Eds.). (2023). *National Outreach Survey for Transportation: Combating Human Trafficking by Listening to Experiences, Challenges, and Recommendations of Frontline Workers and Those with Lived Experience (2021)*. United Against Slavery.

[<https://files.unitedagainstsavery.org/s/d/NOST-2021-Final-Report>]