

The Human Trafficking Institute

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Human Trafficking in the United States: How Does Wisconsin Measure Up?

Wisconsin ranked 11th in the United States in 2018 for the number of active criminal human trafficking cases making their way through federal courts with 16 cases. Of these cases, 93.7% (15) involved sex trafficking and 6.3% (1) involved labor trafficking.

These findings derived from data the Human Trafficking Institute compiled for the 2018 Federal Human Trafficking Report. The Report is a continuation of the Institute's efforts to provide comprehensive data about every human trafficking case that federal courts handle each year.

Human trafficking is an economically-motivated crime where traffickers compel people to work or to engage in commercial sex acts. U.S. federal law criminalizes the trafficker's exploitive conduct and provides protections for victims. An effective public justice system is an essential part of a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach to handling trafficking cases.

The statistics listed for Wisconsin are numbers related to federal cases only.

State of Wisconsin Federal Report Highlights

- Wisconsin ranked **10th** in the United States for the number of *new* criminal human trafficking cases in 2018 with five initiated cases—meeting the national average of five new cases per state/territory.
- Wisconsin ranked **15th** in the United States for the number of convictions in human trafficking cases in 2018 with six convicted defendants—just below the national average of seven convictions per state/territory.
- Wisconsin ordered three of the defendants convicted in 2018 to pay restitution to their victim(s), ranking the state **12th** in the nation for the number of restitution orders.

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National Findings

- In 2018, 680 active criminal human trafficking cases, involving 1,217 active defendants, were making their way through the United States federal court system.
- Of these cases, 171 were *new* criminal cases initiated in 2018 by the federal government in 36 different states and territories.
- Federal courts convicted 346 defendants in criminal human trafficking cases in 2018.
- Of defendants convicted in cases involving at least one victim of trafficking, federal courts ordered only 31% (97) to pay restitution to their victim(s), even though restitution is mandatory under the federal human trafficking statute.

Performance Among the States & Territories

- Federal courts in almost every state and territory—with the exception of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Wyoming—handled at least one active criminal human trafficking case in 2018.
- Nineteen states and territories did not initiate a single *new* criminal human trafficking prosecution in 2018.
- Forty-eight states and territories convicted at least one defendant in a criminal human trafficking case in 2018.

The 2018 Federal Human Trafficking Report’s findings are not a prevalence estimate of human trafficking in the United States, but instead serve as an objective summary of what the federal justice system has done to hold traffickers accountable. The Report does not capture data from state prosecutions, state civil suits, or unreported human trafficking cases.

The Institute compiled this Report through a comprehensive examination of public court documents in human trafficking cases, as well as a detailed review of news stories and agency press releases. The Report includes all federal cases from 2016 to 2018 that involved a human trafficking offense under Chapter 77, as well as human trafficking cases charged or resolved outside of Chapter 77 if there was substantial evidence of compelled or coerced labor, services, or commercial sex. The Institute additionally requested a review of the identified case list from U.S. Attorney’s Offices, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit in the Civil Rights Division and the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section in the Criminal Division, as well as the Human Trafficking Legal Center.

The complete report can be downloaded at www.TraffickingMatters.com.

The Human Trafficking Institute exists to decimate modern slavery at its source by empowering police and prosecutors to stop traffickers. Working inside criminal justice systems, the Institute provides the embedded experts, world-class training, investigative resources, and evidence-based research necessary to free victims. For more information, visit www.TraffickingInstitute.org.

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