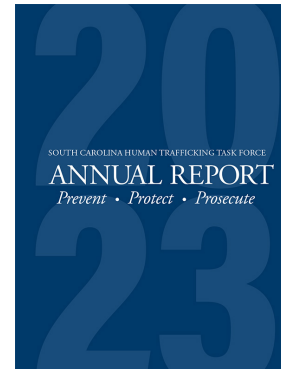


# Executive Summary

## 2023 Human Trafficking Annual Report

### Introduction

The State Task Force was legislatively mandated in 2012 under S.C. Code Ann. 16-3-2050 (B)(1). It leads a strategic, multi-disciplinary approach to combat human trafficking in South Carolina. The law dictates that the Task Force will submit annual reports, inclusive of findings and recommendations, to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate. This document summarizes the Task Force's key findings in the 2023 Annual Report.



### State Task Force Response

In 2023, the State Task Force worked with partners to update and clarify its membership composition. Our hope is to best position survivors with lived experience and representatives from professional sectors that contribute to efforts in South Carolina. We would also like to officially position the regional task forces with their much-deserved seat at the table. We are looking to clarify the membership since involvement has grown from the mandated, appointed and invited members, to include 12 subcommittees, an Advisory Council, 10 regional task forces and over 1,100 members on the State Task Force listserv.

### Financial Appropriation

In 2022, the South Carolina General Assembly appropriated \$1.7 million in recurring funds to the Office of the South Carolina Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force. These funds have allowed the task force to position staff to work directly with the subcommittees and regional task forces to help ensure coordination with the State Task Force. The funding has also allowed for outreach efforts and increased opportunities for sector specific training.



### TraffickProofSC

In partnership with SCETV, the State Task Force developed TraffickProofSC, a series of free, age-appropriate, educational videos and curricula catered to middle and high school students. This initiative serves as the first statewide human trafficking prevention education curricula highlighting the importance of teaching youth and their families on the realities of human trafficking.



The TraffickProofSC curriculum advises students how to identify different types of human trafficking and associated warning signs, methods used by traffickers to exploit victims, and what to do if they think someone is exploited. During session facilitations, educators and students are provided with tools and resources to assist those who are or who may be vulnerable to being trafficked. The curriculum includes modules on labor trafficking, sex trafficking and staying safe online.

## Determining the Magnitude of Human Trafficking in South Carolina

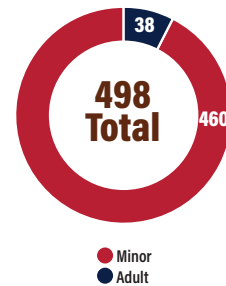
The partnership between The South Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force and The National Human Trafficking Hotline continues to emphasize the need to report potential cases of human trafficking throughout the state. The Task Force's promotion of the National Hotline streamlines a process to determine the magnitude of the crime, ensures the deliverance of information to law enforcement and prosecutors, and ultimately vets the direct service providers who protect, support, and serve victims of human trafficking. Human trafficking cases are being reported the most in Greenville, Horry, Charleston, Richland, Spartanburg, Aiken, Lexington and Orangeburg Counties. The data also shows that while situations of suspected sex trafficking are being reported at a higher rate, the number of likely victims are higher for labor trafficking than sex trafficking.



## The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division

SLED opened 357 cases (down from 440 cases in 2022) involving human trafficking. The cases included 460 minor victims and 38 adult victims, up from 399 minor victims, and 17 adults 2022. Cases were reported in 40 out of 46 counties in 2023, showing that awareness and outreach of citizens in our state is of value in countering human trafficking.

## Adult and Minor Victims

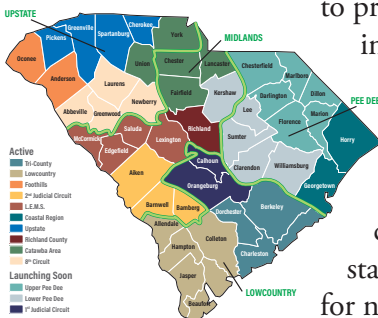


## Court Data: Pending and Closed

At the close of 2023, 31 different defendants have charges for human trafficking, some with more than one charge, totaling 65 charges of human trafficking in the South Carolina State Courts. One defendant pled guilty in 2023 to five charges of human trafficking, while five more cases were pled to human trafficking related charges. A total of 12 human trafficking charges were closed which does not account for all of the criminal sexual conduct cases and other charges relating to these trafficking situations. A total of 46 new charges were brought in 2023 representing 21 defendants in both labor and sex trafficking.

## State Task Force Subcommittee Efforts

The regional task forces worked with the State Task Force Community Outreach Subcommittee to promote TraffickProofSC. Over 3,000 backpacks with school supplies were given to young people around the state to promote this initiative. The Interfaith Subcommittee Trunk-or-Treat statewide initiative worked in partnership with the regional task forces to hand out thousands of goody bags promoting awareness and TraffickProofSC. The Legal Innovations subcommittee began work on developing a specialized family court program to address the needs of juvenile victims of human trafficking. The State Law Enforcement Subcommittee, led by SLED, convened state level human trafficking investigators from eight southeastern states. The Survivor Advisory Subcommittee had a retreat in Columbia to allow for networking amongst the members, discussion about how to align members with Task Force subcommittees, and future input on statewide initiatives.



## Task Force Initiatives

In 2024, the Task Force plans to work on certifying service providers under a legislative mandate; develop a new State Task Force Podcast; increase the emphasis on gang-facilitated trafficking; expand the TravelWatchSC campaign that is aimed at bringing awareness of human trafficking in transportation and tourism sectors; and develop an online Media Toolkit to assist in reporting about sex trafficking and labor trafficking in South Carolina and the nation.