



Department of Justice



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HIGH NUMBERS OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS FOUND IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH

WASHINGTON – The Office of Justice Program’s National Institute of Justice (NIJ) today announced a report released by San Diego State University that reveals 38,458 victims of human trafficking in San Diego County, CA. This number represents 31 percent of unauthorized Spanish-speaking workers in San Diego County who have experienced an incident that meets the official definition of human trafficking. The definition of trafficking was based on U.S. statutes—i.e., the events described by the respondents were violations of U.S. law.

The study, “Looking for a Hidden Population: Trafficking of Migrant Laborers in San Diego County” by Dr. Sheldon X. Zhang, had two principal objectives: to provide statistically sound estimates on the nature and prevalence of trafficking and to provide statistics on labor victimization among unauthorized laborers in San Diego County. For purposes of this study, human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or sex slavery.

The study, which highlighted the author’s unique access to unauthorized laborers, also identified the six largest labor sectors where unauthorized workers find jobs: agriculture, construction, landscaping, janitorial/cleaning services/ food processing, and manufacturing. The three industries with the most violations were construction, food processing and janitorial/cleaning.

In general, violations and abuses inflicted during transportation were far less common than those inflicted by employers at the workplace. Of those who traveled with migrant smugglers, 6 percent reported experiencing violations compared to 28 percent who reported violations in the workplace. Examples of violations and abuses included laborers who were forbidden to leave, whose ID was confiscated, who were forbidden to contact family member and who were subjected to physical and sexual violence.

The report, funded by NIJ, is available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/240223.pdf>

To learn more about human trafficking and to report a potential trafficking case, contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-3737-888 or online at <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/the-nhtrc/overview>

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