

Pennsylvania 2018 Pre-Election Poll on Policy and Governance



School of Public Affairs

Criminal Justice

More than 8 out of 10 PA residents believe human trafficking is a problem in Pennsylvania

Summary: Most Pennsylvanians recognize human trafficking is a problem in Pennsylvania, but identifying human trafficking remains challenging.

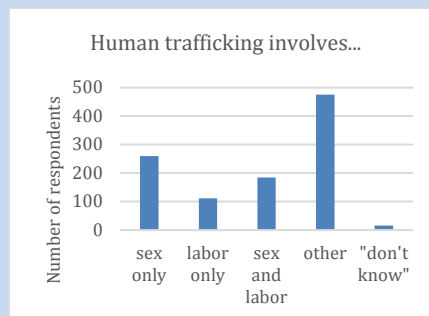
Human trafficking

In 2017, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received 562 calls for service, resulting in 199 reported cases, in Pennsylvania alone (see <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/pennsylvania>). In the past 10 years, the Hotline received almost 4,000 calls about human trafficking from Pennsylvania and over 40,000 cases of human trafficking nationwide. The public's understanding of what human trafficking encompasses is important.

Citizens have the power to encourage leaders to prioritize developing solutions to respond to and prevent victimization. However, human trafficking is a crime that many find hard to define. Often, human trafficking is only thought of as sex trafficking, and many perceive it as a new term for prostitution. However, this is not the case.

Human trafficking is defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 as (a) the recruitment, harboring, transporting, supplying, or

obtaining a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of involuntary servitude or slavery; or (b) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform sex acts is under 18 years of age. To determine whether Pennsylvanians relate this definition to human



trafficking, 1,047 residents responded to the question, "When you think of human trafficking, what comes to mind?"

As shown in the figure above, the poll found that more than half of Pennsylvania residents identified human trafficking as sex, labor or both, in line with the Trafficking Victims

Another 46 percent defined human trafficking as something else, and 1.5% were unsure what it is. Definitions of human trafficking differed between genders, with women significantly more likely than men to include sex in the definition. Conversely, men were more likely to include labor, or give another definition, than were women. Additionally, differences existed among educational attainment. Respondents with a college degree or graduate work were more likely to identify human trafficking as sex, labor or both, while those with some college or a high school degree or less were more likely to offer another definition. However, there were no variations by region, age, race or income level.

Size of Problem

Only a small portion of Pennsylvanians perceive human trafficking is a rare event (12.7 percent) or does not happen (1.3 percent) in the Commonwealth.

Size of Problem (continued)

More than 7 in 10 Pennsylvanians believe human trafficking happens sometimes or more often, with about 10 percent responding that it happens “all the time”.

Younger people (those age 18-34) were more likely to report that human trafficking “never happens” (4.5 percent, compared with 0.7 percent of respondents over the age of 34) or happens “rarely” (24.6 percent, compared with 14.1 percent of respondents over the age of 34). Similarly, respondents over the age of 34 were more likely to report human trafficking happens “all the time” in the Commonwealth (14.9 percent, compared with 7.6 percent of respondents between 18 and 34 years). There were no regional variations or differences by sex, race, income or educational attainment.

After reviewing the definition of human trafficking, as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, respondents were asked, “Based on this definition, is human trafficking a problem?” Over 17 percent reported human trafficking “is a problem in my local area”. Just over half of the respondents believed “it is a problem in Pennsylvania, but not in my local area”. Another 15 percent identified that human trafficking is “a problem in the United States, but not Pennsylvania”. One person claimed “No, human trafficking does not happen in the United States”. Almost 17 percent still were unsure.

White respondents were less likely than nonwhite residents to identify human trafficking as a “problem in my local area” (20.0 percent of white

respondents compared to 27.3 percent of nonwhite respondents) and as “a problem in the United States, but not Pennsylvania” (17.0 percent of whites, compared to 27.3 percent of nonwhites). Likewise, the majority of whites (63.0 percent) claimed human trafficking “is a problem in Pennsylvania, but not in my local area” compared to 44.2 percent of nonwhites.

There also were noticeable differences among response trends by educational attainment. Respondents with a high school diploma or less education were more likely to report that human trafficking “is a problem in the United States, but not Pennsylvania” (26.6 percent, compared to 14.9 percent of all others) and that “human trafficking does not happen in the United States”. Most residents who have completed at least some graduate work believe human trafficking is a problem in Pennsylvania (57.7 percent) and in their local area (32.7 percent); fewer than 1 in 10 Pennsylvanians with at least some graduate work believe human trafficking is a problem in the United States, but not Pennsylvania. There were no significant differences by region, sex, age or income.

Conclusion

Most Pennsylvanians recognize that human trafficking is a problem in Pennsylvania, but only half identify human trafficking as sex or labor exploitation. It is pertinent that the public understand the all-encompassing definition of human trafficking to better identify potential cases within the Commonwealth.

Resources

If you are a survivor of human trafficking and need assistance, please call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1.888.373.7888, text 233733 or visit their website at:

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org>.

Methodology

Data consist of responses from 1,047 randomly selected adult Pennsylvania residents, who participated in the School of Public Affairs Pennsylvania Pre-election Poll on Policy and Governance. This was an omnibus self-administered web survey through the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg between August 1 and September 2, 2018. The Center employed a quota-based invitation system to produce a final dataset that is representative of Pennsylvania’s population by region and, separately, by age/sex combined categories. The survey response rate was calculated using the American Association of Public Opinion Research’s Response Rate (RR3) formula. The final survey response rate was 1.4 percent. Responses were not weighted. Margin of error is +/- 3.0 percentage points with 95% degree of confidence.

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