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### Human Trafficking Hits Record High in US

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It comes as crackdowns in California and the Super Bowl help shed light on the widespread undercover practice.

Cases of human trafficking have been skyrocketing in the United States according to numbers from the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The year 2016 saw an increase of more than 5,000 cases from the previous year, with California experiencing the biggest surge.

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The hotline said that 7,500 cases of human trafficking were reported last year, a 35 percent increase from 2015. California had more than 1,300 reports, more than double of any other state. Texas came in second with 670, followed by Florida with 550 cases reported to the hotline.

And, of course, untold numbers of cases go unreported “due to its covert nature, misconceptions about its definition and a lack of awareness about its indicators,” the hotline said via its website.

Human trafficking was heavily tied to sex and labor work within agriculture and domestic jobs, which commonly helped to fuel and harbor the practice. Women were more likely to be victims of human trafficking and 76 percent of cases involved some sort of sex trade.

The nonprofit organization said that cases of human trafficking have been identified in brothels, gangs and organized crime, employers of domestic servants and factory workers, but also in

small business and through partners and family members and even the Super Bowl.

“Large sporting events such as the Super Bowl are a prime venue for human trafficking. Traffickers, pimps, handlers - whatever you want to call them - cash in in a big way during these sporting events,” Ashley Anderson from anti-sex trafficking group Well House, told AL.com.

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“Ultimately, traffickers exist because human trafficking remains highly lucrative. There are two primary factors that drive human traffickers: high profits and low risk,” the hotline explained.

In late January, a police crackdown across California arrested 474 people in relation to human trafficking and helped to rescue dozens of victims including 28 children. Globally, almost 21 million people are victims of human trafficking, according to the UN International Labour Organization.

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