

INVISIBLE CHAINS: HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF FOREIGN NATIONALS IN FLORIDA

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**HONORS IN
THE MAJOR**

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Abstract

Human trafficking remains a widespread form of modern-day slavery, with an estimated 27 million victims worldwide and hundreds of thousands in Florida alone. Florida's large agricultural, hospitality, and tourism industries create conditions that traffickers exploit, particularly through seasonal labor demands and vulnerable populations. This project focuses on foreign nationals and examines how domestic policies and structural vulnerabilities increase their risk of exploitation. Through the analysis of recent cases, qualitative interviews, and policy trends, the study aims to identify gaps in prevention and victim protection while raising awareness and informing more effective, victim-centered policy solutions.

Methodology

This project examines human trafficking of foreign nationals in Florida by analyzing domestic policies, international conditions, and structural vulnerabilities that increase the risk of exploitation. It aims to identify laws, procedures, and institutional shortcomings that may unintentionally enable trafficking while also assessing gaps in victim protection services. To accomplish this, the research uses a mixed-methods approach that includes open-source intelligence (OSINT), semi-structured qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, and structured surveys of anti-trafficking organizations.

Literature Review

Human trafficking was formally defined internationally through the Palermo Protocol, the first legally binding agreement aimed at preventing trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting traffickers. Inspired by this framework, the United States enacted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which focuses on protection, prevention, and prosecution while expanding services and immigration protections for victims. Despite these efforts and the U.S. being ranked as a Tier 1 country in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, human trafficking remains widespread due to high profits, low detection rates, and strong demand for cheap labor in industries like agriculture and hospitality. Foreign nationals are particularly vulnerable because factors such as immigration status, language barriers, social isolation, and fear of deportation make them less likely to report exploitation, even though protections like the T visa exist to support trafficking victims.



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