

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-624](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Human trafficking—the exploitation of a person typically through force, fraud, or coercion for such purposes as forced labor, involuntary servitude or commercial sex—is occurring in the United States and involves vulnerable populations. Native Americans are considered a vulnerable population because of high rates of poverty and abuse, and other factors. GAO was asked to research human trafficking taking place in Indian country and trafficking of Native American persons regardless of where they are located in the United States.

This report addresses (1) the extent to which tribal and major city LEAs have encountered human trafficking in Indian country or of Native Americans, (2) factors affecting the ability of LEAs to identify and investigate this specific human trafficking, and (3) availability of services to Native American victims of human trafficking. GAO conducted surveys of all known tribal LEAs (203) as identified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; 86 major city LEAs; and 315 victim service provider organizations that received fiscal year 2015 Department of Justice or Department of Health and Human Services grants that could be used to assist human trafficking victims. Survey response rates for tribal LEAs, major city LEAs, and victim service providers were 65 percent, 71 percent, and 51 percent, respectively. The web-based surveys were deployed in September 2016 and asked about human trafficking investigations initiated or services provided from 2014 to 2016.

GAO is not making recommendations in this report.

View [GAO-17-624](#). To view the supplemental material online, click on [GAO-17-626SP](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or [goodwing@gao.gov](mailto:goodwing@gao.gov).

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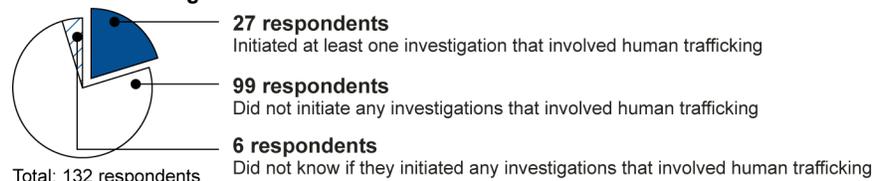
## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Information on Cases in Indian Country or that Involved Native Americans

## What GAO Found

In a survey GAO conducted, 27 of the 132 responding tribal law enforcement agencies (LEAs) reported initiating investigations that they considered to have involved human trafficking from 2014 to 2016.

#### Number of Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies that Reported Initiating Investigations Involving Human Trafficking from 2014 - 2016<sup>a</sup>



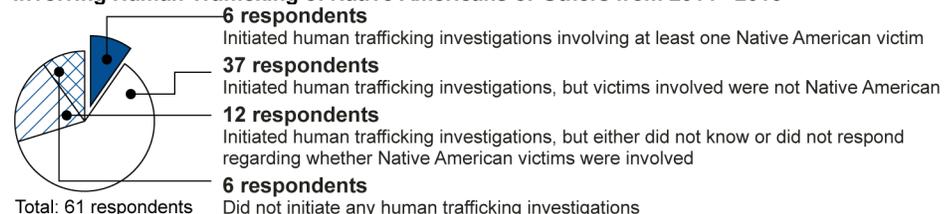
Total: 132 respondents

Source: GAO analysis of survey results. | GAO-17-624

<sup>a</sup>Surveys were deployed in September 2016. Investigations initiated between survey completion and December 31, 2016 would not be captured.

Of the 61 major city LEAs that responded to the survey, 6 reported initiating human trafficking investigations that involved at least one Native American victim during the same period.

#### Number of Major City Law Enforcement Agencies that Reported Initiating Investigations Involving Human Trafficking of Native Americans or Others from 2014 - 2016<sup>a</sup>



Total: 61 respondents

Source: GAO analysis of survey results. | GAO-17-624

<sup>a</sup>Surveys were deployed in September 2016. Investigations initiated between survey completion and December 31, 2016 would not be captured.

Tribal and major city LEA respondents indicated that unreported incidents and victims' reluctance to participate in investigations are barriers to identifying and investigating human trafficking in Indian country or of Native Americans. Nearly half of tribal LEA respondents believe that more human trafficking is occurring in their jurisdictions than is reported. Federal agencies offer training resources to assist with identifying and addressing human trafficking, some of which are specific to tribal LEAs and Native American victims.

Tribal and major city LEAs and victim service providers reported services that are available to Native American victims of human trafficking, including shelter, substance abuse treatment, and medical and mental health services. However, they also reported that victims' feelings of shame and lack of service provider resources can make it difficult for victims to obtain those services. Federal agencies offer at least 50 grant programs for which addressing human trafficking or assisting Native American crime victims is an allowable use of the funding.