

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-325](#), 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. Traffickers seek out persons perceived to be vulnerable. Native Americans (i.e., American Indians or Alaska Natives) are considered to be a vulnerable population. DOJ, DHS, and the Department of the Interior investigate human trafficking crimes. Primarily, DOJ and HHS provide grants to fund victim services.

GAO was asked to examine Native American human trafficking. This report focuses on federal efforts to address human trafficking, including the extent to which (1) agencies collect and maintain data on investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking in Indian country or of Native Americans regardless of location and (2) federal grant programs are available to help address such trafficking, and how many Native American trafficking victims have received assistance through these programs. GAO reviewed human trafficking investigation and prosecution data from fiscal years 2013 to 2016; reviewed solicitations for human trafficking-related grant programs; and interviewed grant program officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOJ require its grantees to report the number of human trafficking victims served and, as appropriate, the Native American status of those victims. DOJ partially concurred with the recommendation. GAO clarified the recommendation and maintains action is needed.

View [GAO-17-325](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwin@gao.gov.

March 2017

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Action Needed to Identify the Number of Native American Victims Receiving Federally-funded Services

What GAO Found

All four federal agencies that investigate or prosecute human trafficking in Indian country—the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAO)—are required to record in their case management systems whether a human trafficking offense was involved in the case. With the exception of ICE, these agencies are also required to record in their case management systems whether the crime took place in Indian country. ICE officials explained that the agency does not record this information because, unlike BIA and the FBI, ICE is not generally involved in criminal investigations in Indian country. Typically, ICE would only conduct an investigation in Indian country if specifically invited by a tribe to do so. Further, with the exception of BIA, these agencies do not require their agents or attorneys to collect or record Native American status of victims in their cases due to concerns about victim privacy and lack of relevance of the victim's race to the substance of the investigation or prosecution.

The Departments of Justice (DOJ), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Homeland Security (DHS) administered at least 50 grant programs from fiscal years 2013 through 2016 that could help address Native American human trafficking. For example, 21 of these grant programs, which were administered by DOJ and HHS, could be used to provide services to Native American human trafficking victims. However, the total number of Native American victims who received services under these grant programs is unknown. HHS is developing a data collection tool that grantees can use to report information on human trafficking victims served, including Native American status of victims. DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) requires grantees to report Native American status of victims served, but not by type of crime. DOJ's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) do not require grantees to collect and report Native American status of victims served. However, in fiscal year 2017, OVC began providing recipients of human trafficking-specific grant programs the option to report the race or Native American status of victims served. While Native American status may not generally be a factor for determining whether a victim can receive services, it may be a factor for determining how best to assist this particular demographic. According to the 2013-2017 Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States, expanding human trafficking data collection and research efforts for Native Americans and other vulnerable populations is an area for improvement for the federal government. Additionally, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that quality information should be used to achieve objectives based on relevant data from reliable sources. Without collecting data on the Native American status of victims served, federal agencies will not know the extent to which they are achieving government-wide strategic goals to provide and improve services to vulnerable populations, including Native American human trafficking victims.