

## Foreign Owned Hotel Establishments, Human Trafficking Hubs

Source: <https://www.lodgingdevelopment.com/hotel-ownership-entities/maine/>?

**2012:** The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics defines a foreign-owned establishment as one with **at least 10% foreign ownership**. In its 2012 data, **6.1% of all private-sector employment in Maine** was in establishments with foreign ownership. That is **not** the percentage of hotels, however. **This number does not reflect modern ownership, particularly since 2019.**

- For the **accommodation and food-services sector nationally**, foreign-owned establishments **paid substantially higher average wages** than domestically owned establishments in the BLS dataset, but again this does not provide a Maine hotel ownership percentage.
- The Census Bureau's Annual Business Survey does **not distinguish U.S. residents from nonresidents**, and companies owned by other companies—including foreign companies—can fall into an “unclassifiable” category.
- Maine has a substantial number of hotel ownership entities. One industry database currently tracks **61 hotel ownership entities involved in Maine development**, but that is not a count of all hotels and does not establish nationality of ownership.

### **Call to ask for mandatory census data of Americans and mandatory census data of “foreign owned” hotel industry which should include important detailed data sets.**

- Hotels and motels are recognized **trafficking** venues and can serve as operational sites for commercial sex trafficking, making the hospitality industry a significant point of vulnerability for trafficking prevention and detection.
- Source: <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/florida/flmdce/2:2022cv00652/406631/70/> The plaintiff alleged that employees at a Best Western hotel in Naples, Florida had relationships with her traffickers and made arrangements that helped conceal the trafficking operation. The complaint alleged that employees directed her to particular rooms, that a trafficker had a relationship with the night front-desk clerk, and that employees observed numerous trafficking indicators.
- Source: <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/florida/flsdce/0:2025cv60771/688179/96/> The plaintiff alleged that a hotel employee **knew about the sex trafficking, facilitated it, and received kickbacks from traffickers**, including payments per room and per victim, in exchange for allowing the trafficking to continue. The court specifically distinguished these allegations from a situation where employees merely failed to recognize suspicious activity.
- Source: <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/california/casdce/3:2024cv00217/776986/159/> Staff had **actual or constructive knowledge**. For example, in a 2025 federal case involving Wyndham, Choice, Hilton, and other hotel defendants, the court found allegations sufficient to establish that staff observed

significant trafficking indicators, although it distinguished **constructive knowledge** from proof of **actual knowledge**.

**Key Points:**

Human slavery has taken place at hotels around the United States.

Many hotels are foreign-owned and traffickers may be foreign.

Human slavery historically been used as a weapon of war.

Census data is not currently covering the “bigger picture.”