

Human Trafficking, Human Smuggling, and Demographic Rates

Union of Saints

White Officers Fighting Human Slavery

Agency	White Officers Data
U.S. Marshals Service	90.6% FY2020
ICE	86.8% FY2020
CBP	86.8% FY2020
DEA	87.9% FY2020
FBI	78.9% FY2020

These figures describe the racial composition of personnel in the agencies, not the racial composition of the specific officers assigned to human trafficking investigations.

Peonage, Slavery, Forced Labor, and Sex Trafficking

In FY2023, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported **183 federal defendants** charged with peonage, slavery, forced labor, and sex trafficking.

Among defendants with reported race or Hispanic origin:

Group	Defendants	Percentage
White	45	26.8%
Black	90	53.6%
Hispanic	29	17.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.6%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander	3	1.8%

Race or Hispanic-origin information was missing for 15 defendants. BJS therefore reports the percentages above based on the defendants for whom that information was available.

([Bureau of Justice Statistics](#))

Population-Adjusted Rate

The percentage of defendants alone does not account for the size of each population group. To examine the difference relative to population size, the 2023 defendant counts can be compared with 2023 U.S. population estimates.

The Census Bureau reported approximately:

- **195.4 million non-Hispanic White people**

- **42.3 million Black people**
- Approximately **65.3 million Hispanic people of any race**

in 2023. ([Census.gov](https://www.census.gov))

Using those population figures, the FY2023 federal defendants in this particular trafficking category correspond to approximately:

Group	Defendants	Approx. population	Defendants per 100,000 population
White	45	195.4 million	0.023
Black	90	42.3 million	0.213
Hispanic	29	65.3 million	0.044

On this particular measure:

- The **Black defendant rate was approximately 9.2 times the White rate.**
- The **Hispanic rate was approximately 1.9 times the White rate.**
- The White rate was approximately **0.023 federal defendants per 100,000 people.**
- The Black rate was approximately **0.213 per 100,000.**
- The Hispanic rate was approximately **0.044 per 100,000.**

FBI Human Trafficking Offenders

The FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System measures a different population. It records known offenders associated with offenses reported by participating law-enforcement agencies.

For **2018**, the FBI reported **633 human-trafficking offenders**:

Race	Offenders
Black	321
White	210
Other races	26
Race unknown	76
Total	633

Among offenders whose race was known:

- **Black: 57.8%**
- **White: 37.8%**
- **Other: 4.7%**

The FBI explains that a "known offender" does not necessarily mean the suspect's identity was known. It means that some identifying attribute, such as race, was reported. The FBI also

notes that an offender connected to multiple offense types can be counted more than once. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation](#))

FBI Changes Over Time

- **2014:** 24 White vs. 60 Black
- **2017:** 225 White vs. 195 Black
- **2018:** 210 White vs. 321 Black

The FBI data therefore show substantial variation from year to year. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation](#))

Federal BJS Data Compared With FBI Data

Two different federal datasets produce different measurements:

BJS federal defendants, FY2023

- 26.8% White
- 53.6% Black
- 17.3% Hispanic

This refers specifically to defendants charged with **peonage, slavery, forced labor, and sex trafficking**. ([Bureau of Justice Statistics](#))

FBI NIBRS offenders, 2018

- 37.8% White
- 57.8% Black
- 4.7% other

This refers to offenders associated with the broader FBI **Human Trafficking Offenses** category among offenders whose race was known. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation](#))

These numbers should not be treated as contradictory measurements of exactly the same population. BJS is measuring federal defendants, while FBI NIBRS is measuring offenders associated with reported incidents.

Human Smuggling

Human smuggling produces a substantially different demographic pattern.

The U.S. Sentencing Commission reported the following characteristics for individuals sentenced for **alien-smuggling offenses in FY2025**:

Race	Percentage
Hispanic	82%

Race	Percentage
White	8%
Black	7%
Other	2%

Additionally:

- **64% were U.S. citizens**
- 80% were men
- Average age was **33**
- 71% had little or no prior criminal history
- 4,731 alien-smuggling offenses were sentenced in FY2025. ([U.S. Sentencing Commission](#))

Therefore, **Hispanic people constituted a much larger share of federal alien-smuggling defendants than they did of the selected federal human-trafficking defendants discussed above.**

Why Population Size Matters

Simply saying that a group represents 53.6% of defendants does not tell us the rate at which members of that population appear in the defendant population.

For example, the Black population represented approximately **13.5% of the U.S. population in 2023**, while Black defendants represented **53.6% of defendants with known race/Hispanic origin in the selected BJS trafficking category**. ([Census.gov](#))

That is why a population-adjusted rate is useful.

However, the rate calculated above should **not** be described as the "crime rate" or "trafficking rate" for a racial group. The underlying data measure **federal defendants**, and federal prosecution depends on reporting, investigation, jurisdiction, charging decisions, and other factors.

Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling Are Different

Human trafficking and human smuggling should remain separate categories.

Human trafficking involves exploitation, including forced labor, slavery, peonage, or commercial sex trafficking.

Human smuggling generally involves facilitating unlawful entry or movement across borders. A smuggling case can involve additional crimes or exploitation, but smuggling and trafficking are legally distinct offenses.

The demographic data demonstrate why combining the two categories can substantially distort the picture.

For FY2025 alien-smuggling sentences, **82% were Hispanic, 8% White, and 7% Black**, while the FY2023 BJS category of peonage, slavery, forced labor, and sex trafficking was **26.8% White, 53.6% Black, and 17.3% Hispanic** among defendants with reported race or Hispanic origin. ([U.S. Sentencing Commission](#))