

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATISTICAL DEFINITIONS

Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum  
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The Prevalence Forum evolved from the need to move the conversation on human trafficking prevalence research to a more reliable science. The first forum was held on May 20-22, 2020 and brought together close to 1,000 participants from across the world in interrogating the current human trafficking prevalence estimation methods. The specific aims of the Prevalence Forum are to:

- Identify and build the capacity of human trafficking research teams in the design, testing, and dissemination of human trafficking prevalence data
- Document the robustness of various methodological approaches in human trafficking prevalence research

The creation of this Statistical Definitions document was designed to guide the work by researchers in the Prevalence Forum project. The African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES) at the University of Georgia conceptualized the Statistical Definitions Toolkit with valuable input from the TIP Office in the US Department of State and Prevalence Forum researchers and partners. David Okech (University of Georgia) and Lydia Aletraris (University of Georgia) developed this Statistical Definitions document with technical guidance from the US Department of State. Special thanks to Lisa Johnston, Katherine McLaughlin, and Ian Fellows of the Hard-to-Reach-Populations Research Methods Group for consulting on some of the definitions and Macartan Humphreys of Columbia University and WZB Social Science Center in Berlin, Germany. Elyssa Schroeder was instrumental in formatting the document and including the graphics.

The development of this Toolkit also would not have been possible without the participation of these Prevalence Reduction principal investigators (in alphabetical order): Meredith Dank, Kareem Kysia, Yuki Lo, Grant Miller, Courtland Robinson, Sheldon Zhang, and Clifford Zinnes. Their dedication to this project was evidenced in their generous contributions and their thoughtful commentary and feedback. To them, the Prevalence Forum offers its appreciation and gratitude and looks forward to a wonderful partnership as we validate the various prevalence estimation methods in Brazil, Costa Rica, Morocco, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Tunisia. Other Prevalence Forum activities will include field-testing of at least two methods in a trafficking hot-spot within these countries, the second innovation forum to present and assess results from the field, and the production and dissemination of a book, special issue journal edition, and a meta-analysis that includes a cost-benefit analysis of the various estimation methods.

## Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum Grantees and Projects

The Freedom Fund - Child Sex Trafficking in Brazil  
*Dr. Ana Brito (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation) and Yuki Lo*

John Hopkins University - Forced Labor in Pakistan  
*Dr. Courtland Robinson*

Stanford University - Forced Labor in Brazil  
*Dr. Grant Miller*

University of Massachusetts Lowell - Domestic Servitude in Tunisia  
*Dr. Sheldon Zhang*

NORC at the University of Chicago - Domestic Servitude in Morocco  
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John Jay College of Criminal Justice - Forced Labor in Costa Rica and Domestic Servitude in Tanzania  
*Dr. Meredith Dank*

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# I. INTRODUCTION

This guidance presents statistical definitions of human trafficking that are intended to guide researchers and organizations that seek to measure the prevalence of human trafficking for research or programmatic evaluation. It can be used with a variety of estimation techniques but is chiefly targeted towards probabilistic or non-probabilistic survey-based measurements. Researchers and organizations may adapt it to other methodologies, as needed and appropriate. “Human trafficking,” “trafficking in persons,” and “modern slavery” are umbrella terms used to refer to both sex trafficking and forced or “compelled” labor. This guidance defines sex trafficking and forced labor and explains how to operationalize them for quantitative research purposes. It will also describe how to frame prevalence estimates and other useful sources of information.

Human trafficking occurs when a trafficker compels someone to provide labor or services or to engage in commercial sex, or prostitution, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, or abduction, deception, or the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or when a trafficker causes a child to engage in commercial sex (whether or not force, fraud, or coercion are used). The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological. Human trafficking can include, but does not require, movement. People may be considered trafficking victims regardless of whether they were born into a state of servitude, experienced exploitation in their home town, traveled to the exploitative situation, previously consented to work for a trafficker, or participated in a crime as a direct result of being trafficked.

This definition is based on the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, also known as the Palermo Protocol, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2000. It is also based on the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended. It is intended to be adapted in a broad variety of contexts that may implicate different laws on human trafficking. It is important to note that this statistical definition does not include organ trafficking but does include forced marriage only if it is for the purpose of forced labor or commercial sex. However, estimates of forced marriage and organ trafficking are welcome to be used alongside this estimate. This definition is targeted at the measurement of victims, not perpetrators. It uses the general framework from the Palermo Protocol whereby human trafficking comprises three elements: Acts, Means, and Purpose:

- **Acts:** recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, receipt, patronizing, or soliciting<sup>1</sup>
- **Means:** force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability
- **Purpose:** exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude.

The prevalence of human trafficking will be reported as a percent of the general or reference population in the specified geographic area, sector, and/or industry. It should also be reported in terms of the number of persons in human trafficking at the given point of time per one thousand persons. Human trafficking is not only the acts but also the coercive means and the exploitation, and if any part of the trafficking scheme is current, then it is current, and does not depend just on when the acts happened. Stock is a current estimate of the number of victims of trafficking. Flow is the number of victims of trafficking during a specific period of time. While all teams are expected to capture and provide prevalence estimates, where inappropriate, there is no requirement for teams to measure flow and stock.

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<sup>1</sup> The Acts of “patronizing” and “soliciting” only apply to the crime of sex trafficking.



For the purposes of this statistical definition, and sex trafficking in particular, sex includes genital or anal contact or penetration of a person, regardless of whether such contact or penetration is genital, oral, or manual. Sex trafficking can include virtual situations, such as when a trafficker pays to watch a trafficking victim engaging in a sex act, including self-masturbation. Sex trafficking is not limited to situations involving a third-party who profits from the act (such as a pimp or a madam), but can also occur when the victim interacts only with a customer/buyer. Commercial sex occurs when anything of value is given to or received by any person for sex. In addition to paying directly for sex, other examples of commercial sex may include paying for overpriced items in exchange for sex, or paying for or waiving school fees in exchange for sex. Prostitution is an activity that is inherently commercial and is captured in this statistical definition by the terms commercial sex. Compelled erotic performances that do not involve sex acts would be excluded from sex trafficking estimates, but may be included under forced labor estimates. In addition, many cases of domestic servitude involve sexual abuse, but would typically be classified as forced labor and not sex trafficking.

For both forced labor and sex trafficking, the trafficker can be someone who is unknown to the victim or with whom they have an intimate or personal relationship. The type of relationship between the trafficker and the victim, even if familial, is not relevant to establish an instance of trafficking in persons. Familial relationships, including involving biological parents, adopted parents, siblings, or close family members, should not prohibit an instance of trafficking from being counted.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Demographic Health Survey age categories for children are broken down into these categories: 0-9, 10-14, 15-17. When researching children, we recommend the following age categories wherever applicable: 5-9, 10-14, 15-17.

Whenever possible, the uncertainty associated with an estimate should be quantified and reported, for example by providing a confidence interval (CI), credible interval, or range of plausible values. Standard values are 95% CI and 5% margin of error.

This definition is also informed by the USAID Demographic and Health Surveys format and the “Hard to See, Harder to Count” guidelines published by the International Labor Organization in 2012.

# STATISTICAL DEFINITIONS

## II. Sex Trafficking, Child, Flow

**Definition:** Percentage of children who were recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, received, patronized, or solicited for commercial sex at some point during the specified reference period of either one year or two years. Commercial sex occurs when anything of value is given to or received by any person for sex. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18.

**Coverage:**

- *Population base:* Total population size of children during the specified reference time period.
- *Time period:* In the last year or two years.

**Calculation:** Numerator divided by denominator multiplied by 100.

**Numerator:** The total number of children who identified as having engaged in commercial sex at some point in the last year or two years.

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**Denominator:** The total number of children in the same reference time frame as the numerator.

**Handling of Missing Values:** Our goal is to make powered as well as correct inferences from the survey. A threat to this goal is missing data. Survey items with missing information should be assessed to determine, to the best of the researchers' ability, if the missingness is completely at random or if it depends in some way on the characteristics of the persons. If the missingness is completely at random, persons with missing information are excluded from both the numerator and the denominator. Otherwise, a context-appropriate procedure to adjust for missingness, such as multiple imputation, should be used. In cases where the percent missing is deemed substantial, researchers should present both unadjusted and adjusted estimates. In all cases, the percent missing as well as the pattern of missingness should be reported.

A person does not need to be excluded from a calculation when their missing survey item(s) do not impact their categorization. For example, utilizing the "Indicator Table" from section VIII, if a person has DD2=1 but has missing items for all EP categories, they would already be counted in the numerator and their responses to the EP categories do not change that. This person does not need to be excluded even though they have some missing items.

## III. Sex Trafficking, Child, Stock

**Definition:** Percentage of children who were recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, received, patronized, or solicited for the current provision of commercial sex at a given point in time. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18.

**Coverage:**

- *Population base:* Total population size of children.
- *Time period:* Current status at time of survey.

**Calculation:** Numerator divided by denominator multiplied by 100.

**Numerator:** The total number of children who identified as having engaged in commercial sex.

**Denominator:** The total number of children in the research geographic target area.

**Handling of Missing Values:** Our goal is to make powered as well as correct inferences from the survey. A threat to this goal is missing data. Survey items with missing information should be assessed to determine, to the best of the researchers' ability, if the missingness is completely at random or if it depends in some way on the characteristics of the persons. If the missingness is completely at random, persons with missing information are excluded from both the numerator and the denominator. Otherwise, a context-appropriate procedure to adjust for missingness, such as multiple imputation, should be used. In cases where the percent missing is deemed substantial, researchers should present both unadjusted and adjusted estimates. In all cases, the percent missing as well as the pattern of missingness should be reported.

A person does not need to be excluded from a calculation when their missing survey item(s) do not impact their categorization. For example, utilizing the "Indicator Table" from section VIII, if a person has DD2=1 but has missing items for all EP categories, they would already be counted in the numerator and their responses to the EP categories do not change that. This person does not need to be excluded even though they have some missing items.

## IV. Sex Trafficking or Forced Labor, Adult, Flow

**Definition:** Percentage of adults who were recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, received, patronized, or solicited<sup>2</sup> for forced labor or commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion at some point during the specified reference period of either one year or two years.



<sup>2</sup> The Acts of "patronizing" and "soliciting" only apply to the crime of sex trafficking.

**Coverage:**

- *Population base:* Total population size of persons 18 years of age or over during the specified reference period.
- *Time period:* In the last year or two years.

**Calculation:** Numerator divided by denominator multiplied by 100.

**Numerator:** The total number of persons 18 years of age or over identified as having experienced at some point in the last year, or two years:

- DD2/V2/FM3 = 1 or;
- 2 or more Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V=1 from different categories or;
- Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1 and 3 or more medium R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1; and
- Engaged in commercial sex or labor services at some point during the specified reference period.

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**Denominator:** The total number of adults in the same reference time frame as the numerator.

**Handling of Missing Values:** Our goal is to make powered as well as correct inferences from the survey. A threat to this goal is missing data. Survey items with missing information should be assessed to determine, to the best of the researchers' ability, if the missingness is completely at random or if it depends in some way on the characteristics of the persons. If the missingness is completely at random, persons with missing information are excluded from both the numerator and the denominator. Otherwise, a context-appropriate procedure to adjust for missingness, such as multiple imputation, should be used. In cases where the percent missing is deemed substantial, researchers should present both unadjusted and adjusted estimates. In all cases, the percent missing as well as the pattern of missingness should be reported.

A person does not need to be excluded from a calculation when their missing survey item(s) do not impact their categorization. For example, utilizing the "Indicator Table" from section VIII, if a person has DD2=1 but has missing items for all EP categories, they would already be counted in the numerator and their responses to the EP categories do not change that. This person does not need to be excluded even though they have some missing items.

## V. Sex Trafficking or Forced Labor, Adult, Stock

**Definition:** Percentage of adults were recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, received, patronized, or solicited<sup>3</sup> for forced labor or commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion at a given point in time.

**Coverage:**

- *Population base:* Total population size of persons 18 years of age or over.
- *Time period:* Current status at time of survey.

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<sup>3</sup> The Acts of "patronizing" and "soliciting" only apply to the crime of sex trafficking.



**Calculation:** Numerator divided by denominator multiplied by 100.

**Numerator:** Number of persons 18 years of age or over identified as currently experiencing:

- DD2/V2/FM3 = 1 or;
- 2 or more Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V=1 from different categories or;
- Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1 and 3 or more medium R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1; and
- Currently engaged in commercial sex or labor services.

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**Denominator:** The total number of adults in the research geographic target area.



**Handling of Missing Values:** Our goal is to make powered as well as correct inferences from the survey. A threat to this

goal is missing data. Survey items with missing information should be assessed to determine, to the best of the researchers' ability, if the missingness is completely at random or if it depends in some way on the characteristics of the persons. If the missingness is completely at random, persons with missing information are excluded from both the numerator and the denominator. Otherwise, a context-appropriate procedure to adjust for missingness, such as multiple imputation, should be used. In cases where the percent missing is deemed substantial, researchers should present both unadjusted and adjusted estimates. In all cases, the percent missing as well as the pattern of missingness should be reported.

A person does not need to be excluded from a calculation when their missing survey item(s) do not impact their categorization. For example, utilizing the "Indicator Table" from section VIII, if a person has DD2=1 but has missing items for all EP categories, they would already be counted in the numerator and their responses to the EP categories do not change that. This person does not need to be excluded even though they have some missing items.

## VI. Forced Labor, Child, Flow

**Definition:** Percentage of children who were recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, or received for forced labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion at some point during the specified reference period of either one year or two years. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18. We expect researchers to distinguish child work from child labor and the worst forms of child labor. For example, in many non-Western cultures, school-going children are expected to work long hours in the home, farm, or family business.

**Coverage:**

- *Population base:* Total population size of persons under the age of 18 during the specified reference period.
- *Time period:* In the last year or two years.

**Calculation:** Numerator divided by denominator multiplied by 100.

**Numerator:** Number of persons under the age of 18 identified as having experiencing at some point over the past year or two years:

- DD2/V2/FM3 = 1 or;
- 2 or more Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V=1 from different categories or;
- Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1 and 3 or more medium R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1; and
- Engaged in labor services at some point during the specified reference period.

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**Denominator:** The total number of children in the same reference time frame as the numerator.

**Handling of Missing Values:** Our goal is to make powered as well as correct inferences from the survey. A threat to this goal is missing data. Survey items with missing information should be assessed to determine, to the best of the researchers' ability, if the missingness is completely at random or if it depends in some way on the characteristics of the persons. If the missingness is completely at random, persons with missing information are excluded from both the numerator and the denominator. Otherwise, a context-appropriate procedure to adjust for missingness, such as multiple imputation, should be used. In cases where the percent missing is deemed substantial, researchers should present both unadjusted and adjusted estimates. In all cases, the percent missing as well as the pattern of missingness should be reported.

A person does not need to be excluded from a calculation when their missing survey item(s) do not impact their categorization. For example, utilizing the "Indicator Table" from section VIII, if a person has DD2=1 but has missing items for all EP categories, they would already be counted in the numerator and their responses to the EP categories do not change that. This person does not need to be excluded even though they have some missing items.

## VII. Forced Labor, Child, Stock

**Definition:** Percentage of children who were recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, or received for forced labor using force, fraud, or coercion at a given point in time. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18.

**Coverage:**

- *Population base:* Total population size of persons under the age of 18.
- *Time period:* Current status at time of survey.

**Calculation:** Numerator divided by denominator multiplied by 100.

**Numerator:** Number of persons under the age of 18 identified as currently experiencing:

- DD2/V2/FM3 = 1 or;
- 2 or more Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V=1 from different categories or;
- Strong R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1 and 3 or more medium R/EP/PL/DC/FM/DD/V =1; and
- Currently engaged in labor services.

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**Denominator:** The total number of children in a research geographic target area.

**Handling of Missing Values:** Our goal is to make powered as well as correct inferences from the survey. A threat to this goal is missing data. Survey items with missing information should be assessed to determine, to the best of the researchers' ability, if the missingness is completely at random or if it depends in some way on the characteristics of the persons. If the missingness is completely at random, persons with missing information are excluded from both the numerator and the denominator. Otherwise, a context-appropriate procedure to adjust for missingness, such as multiple imputation, should be used. In cases where the percent missing is deemed substantial, researchers should present both unadjusted and adjusted estimates. In all cases, the percent missing as well as the pattern of missingness should be reported.

A person does not need to be excluded from a calculation when their missing survey item(s) do not impact their categorization. For example, utilizing the "Indicator Table" from section VIII, if a person has DD2=1 but has missing items for all EP categories, they would already be counted in the numerator and their responses to the EP categories do not change that. This person does not need to be excluded even though they have some missing items.



## VIII. Indicator Table

The "Purpose" from the Palermo Protocol should be gathered by researchers via questionnaires. When there is not an explicit reference to labor or commercial sex within the indicator, researchers should tie that indicator to the purpose. For instance, if an individual is made to engage in illicit activities (Indicator DC3 below), it will be incumbent on the researcher to ensure through other survey questions or research design mechanisms that the illicit activities have an economic purpose. If there is no economic purpose, be it labor or commercial sex, then this indicator cannot apply towards a situation of trafficking. Resulting information will be included in the prevalence calculation.

The indicators listed below describe the "Acts" and "Means" required by the Palermo Protocol; often the Acts and Means may both be present in the same fact patterns. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. For each trafficking situation listed above in the definition, researchers will create questions that reflect the below indicators based on the given trafficking circumstance they are trying to measure. Researchers do not need to include questions for all indicators in their surveys, and should select indicators and relevant thresholds from indicators as appropriate based on formative research. Please note that the below indicators are not part of the numerator for instances of children engaged in commercial sex, and questions for such children should not focus on force, fraud, or coercion.

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
<b>Recruitment</b>	R1	Strong	Coercive recruitment (abduction, confinement during the recruitment process)
	R2	Strong	Deceptive recruitment (nature of services or responsibilities required)
	R3	Medium	Deceptive recruitment (regarding working conditions, content or legality of relevant contract, housing and living conditions, legal documentation or acquisition of legal status, location or employer, compensation/benefits, promise of marriage/love)
	R4	Medium	Paid recruitment fees
<b>Employment Practices and Penalties</b>	EP1	Strong	Had your pay, other promised compensation and/or benefits withheld and if you leave you will not get them
	EP2	Strong	High or increasing debt related to an employer or other person who controls earnings (by falsification of accounts, inflated prices for goods/services purchased, reduced value of goods/services produced, excessive interest rate on loans, etc.)
	EP3	Medium	High or increasing debt related to a recruiter, intermediary or other individual (by falsification of accounts, inflated prices for goods/services purchased, reduced value of goods/services produced, excessive interest rate on loans, etc.)
	EP4	Medium	Made to work overtime beyond legal limits
	EP5	Medium	Made to perform additional services or responsibilities (beyond what was agreed) without due compensation
	EP6	Medium	Ever not received or had withheld promised wages, benefits, or other compensation.
	EP7	Medium	Recruitment linked to debt (advance or loan)
	EP8	Medium	Absence of a formal contract
<b>Personal Life and Properties</b>	PL1	Strong	Another individual has control over any meaningful part of your personal life (i.e. blackmail, religious retribution, or exclusion from future employment, community, personal or social life, etc.)
	PL2	Strong	Another individual has transferred control over any meaningful part of your personal life.
	PL3	Strong	Made to work or engage in commercial sex for in order to repay outstanding debt or wage advance
	PL4	Medium	Made to work or engage in commercial sex for employer's private home or family
	PL5	Medium	Confiscation of mobile phones or other communication methods as a way to have control over you.

<b>Degrading Conditions</b>	DC1	Strong	Made to be available day and night without adequate compensation outside of the scope of the contract
	DC2	Medium	Made to complete hazardous and/or arduous services without proper protective gear
	DC3	Strong	Made to engage in illicit activities
	DC4	Medium	Made to live in degrading conditions e.g. housing or shelter is unclean, provides no privacy, or is otherwise insufficient in a way that harms your health
<b>Freedom of Movement</b>	FM1	Strong	Confiscation of or loss of access to identity papers or travel documents
	FM2	Strong	Constant surveillance of personal spaces by employer, recruiter, or other individuals
	FM3	Strong	No freedom of movement and communication
	FM4	Medium	Limited freedom of movement and communication i.e. supervised communication, movement restricted or surveilled during off-hours.
	FM5	Medium	Constant surveillance of place of work
<b>Debt or Dependency</b>	DD1	Strong	Had a debt imposed on you without your consent
	DD2	Strong	Tradition, birth/descent into hereditary slavery or bonded status
	DD3	Medium	Pre-existence of an intimate or dependent relationship such as romantic or familial relationship
	DD4	Medium	Unable to refuse to provide services
<b>Violence and Threats of Violence</b>	V1	Strong	Physical violence inflicted in front of you on other individuals
	V2	Strong	Ever been sold or witness ownership of another person in your situation being sold for labor or for sex
	V3	Strong	Physical violence against you or someone you care deeply about
	V4	Strong	Sexual violence against you or someone you care deeply about
	V5	Medium	Threat of denunciation to authorities against you or someone you care deeply about
	V6	Medium	Emotional/psychological abuse against you or someone you care deeply about
	V7	Medium	Threat of harm to your personal or professional reputation
	V8	Medium	Threats of violence against you or someone you care deeply about

