

The vast reach of global human trafficking

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Human trafficking for forced labour, sexual exploitation and the illegal organ trade amounts to a criminal industry generating untaxed and untaxable revenues of some \$32 billion, according to a paper published this month in the *International Journal of Public Law and Policy*.

The study by Katherine Taken Smith of Murray State University, in Kentucky, USA, and her colleagues suggests that human trafficking is rife in nations with high levels of corruption but that governmental and other corruption is not the only factor. "Ultimately, ending human trafficking requires changing peoples' attitudes and actions," the researchers say. "Human trafficking exists because there is a demand for the products and services connected to it." The phrase human trafficking is a limp euphemism for what is actually the modern slave trade. Victims, slaves, are exploited across the globe in the developing world and in the so-called developed world, where there is serious corruption and in countries where the corruption that exists is not so obvious or blunt.

The researchers point out that about half of victims of human trafficking are children and almost three-quarters are female. Estimates for the number of slaves being exploited right now across the globe put the figure as high as 30 million, but given the clandestine nature of the exploitation this is nothing more than an informed guess on a lower limit. The USA has been identified, they say, as the "transit and destination country" for many thousands of victims – up to 17,500 people ever year, in fact. Ironically, one might say, The US Department of State has labelled human trafficking as one of the greatest human

rights challenges of our time.

"There is relatively little public outcry about the millions of people for sale in the world today. Stopping this travesty requires acknowledging the gravity of [human trafficking](#) and then combining the efforts of all members of a civilised society, caring citizens, businesses, law enforcement, and government leaders," the researchers conclude.

More information: "Human trafficking: a global multi-billion dollar criminal industry" in *Int. J. Public Law and Policy*, 2014, 4, 293-308

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