

Babel Street Solutions Help Detect Human Trafficking

BABEL STREET INSIGHTS

Human trafficking destroys the lives of its victims, unravels communities, and increases crime worldwide. Victims — up to 28 million at any one time, including nearly six million children¹ — are enslaved for forced or bonded labor. They toil under abusive conditions in domestic service, in agriculture and manufacturing, and in cybercrime operations. Women are often forced into sex work. The youngest victims are used to create child sexual abuse materials.

Human traffickers employ a broad array of techniques to lure victims. They “adopt” from impoverished villages, promising parents a better life for their children. Online, they advertise well-paying overseas jobs. They pose as potential love interests on dating sites. They forcibly abduct victims.

The variety of techniques used merges with societal issues to make trafficking hard to spot and prosecute. Traffickers prey on vulnerable people who may never be officially listed as “missing.” (Those living in extreme poverty and politically unstable regions are favorite targets, as are those living through natural disasters.) Traffickers typically work in complex rings operating across jurisdictions and nations — challenging investigators and prosecutors. Finally, victims often hesitate to report the crime: they blame themselves for their predicament.

What’s at risk?

Human trafficking devastates individuals and their communities, while increasing crime on the world stage. Individual communities suffer from:

- Loss of workforce — This can deflate local economies
- Increased debt — Families incur debt they cannot repay to find trafficked loved ones
- Heightened vulnerability — Traffickers often force victims to recruit from their home communities

Since human trafficking victims are often forced to commit additional crimes, the practice also leads to increased instances of cyber scamming, identity theft, shoplifting, drug trafficking, and prostitution.

How Babel Street can help

Babel Street Insights rapidly aggregates structured and unstructured data from thousands of online sources published in an array of languages. Leveraging natural language processing and machine learning algorithms, it analyzes terabytes of data across the surface web, social media sites, the dark web, illicit forums, and other sources.

Capabilities include:

Media monitoring and mapping — Traffickers use social media for planning, recruitment, and to advertise “services” provided by victims. Babel Street Insights quickly and persistently searches social media platforms worldwide for the type of language that telegraphs human traffickers at work.



While traffickers prefer encrypted chat applications, they also communicate on searchable social media sites, in instant messaging apps, and on gaming platforms. Investigators can search for the coded language traffickers use to plan and discuss operations. This includes emojis that have specific meaning to human traffickers, such as flower blossoms, school bags, candy, and similar images. Similarly, investigators can find ads designed to recruit victims.

Once communications are detected, Babel Street Insights Synthesis can quickly map traffickers' social networks, providing valuable insight into relationships among ring members. Law enforcement can then use Babel Street technologies to link online personas to real-world entities.

Similar capabilities help law enforcement monitor general news sites for human trafficking. General news monitoring aids officials in pinpointing trafficking hotspots, tracking emerging tactics, and learning more about recent cases.

Dark web monitoring — Babel Street provides continuous monitoring of the dark web forums and chatrooms where human traffickers plan operations and sell human beings, and where “buyers” seek people to exploit. Insights parses information in multiple languages to detect transactions, transportation methods, money laundering, and other trafficking-related activities.

Real-time alerts — With customizable dashboards, law enforcement agencies can track and receive alerts about specific chat rooms, users, and key terms in near real-time — enabling rapid response.

Location-based intelligence — Available to approved government and law enforcement agencies, Babel Street's location-based intelligence technology can pinpoint key locations, such as safe houses, used along human trafficking routes.

Managed attribution — To protect the identity of investigators, as well as the security of law enforcement networks and infrastructure, Babel Street offers the Secure Access managed attribution platform. This platform shields users and their IP addresses through a hardened proxy network that provides in-country access to internet sites worldwide.

With investigative tools from Babel Street, law enforcement professionals can maximize the use of open-source information to spot human traffickers — the first step in prosecuting them.

¹ International Labour Organization, “Data and research on forced labor,” accessed February 2025, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/statistics/lang--en/index.htm>

Babel Street is the trusted technology partner for the world's most advanced identity intelligence and risk operations. The Babel Street Insights platform delivers advanced AI and data analytics solutions to close the Risk-Confidence Gap.

Babel Street provides unmatched, analysis-ready data regardless of language, proactive risk identification, 360-degree insights, high-speed automation, and seamless integration into existing systems. We empower government and commercial organizations to transform high-stakes identity and risk operations into a strategic advantage.

Learn more at babelstreet.com