



## THE VULNERABILITY OF LGBTI INDIVIDUALS TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals around the world often experience discrimination and elevated threats of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In 2016, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Association (ILGA) reported that 73 countries had laws that criminalize people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTI persons face elevated threats of violence and discrimination in employment, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Some family members have ostracized LGBTI relatives from their homes. The cumulative effects of homophobia and discrimination make LGBTI persons particularly vulnerable to traffickers who prey on the desperation of those who wish to escape social alienation and maltreatment.

Governments and NGOs have made progress in identifying LGBTI trafficking victims and highlighting the vulnerability of LGBTI persons to crimes such as human trafficking. For example, in 2016, NGOs working in Israel reported some Palestinian LGBTI individuals were vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because of their legal status and legal restrictions on work eligibility for Palestinian nationals in Israel. An NGO in Lima, Peru reported police often harass transgender women in prostitution, some of whom may be unidentified trafficking victims. Transgender individuals from Brazil are reported to be forced into prostitution locally, as well as in Spain and Italy. Syrian refugees continue to be highly vulnerable to human trafficking, including Syrian LGBTI individuals in Lebanon who are coerced into prostitution by Lebanese traffickers.

As part of the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017, U.S. agencies have committed to gathering information on the needs of LGBTI victims of human trafficking. NGOs in the United States estimate LGBTI homeless youth comprise 20 to 40 percent of the homeless youth population; these youth are at particularly high risk of being forced into prostitution.

Some countries have enacted anti-discrimination laws or conducted sensitivity training for law enforcement to protect LGBTI rights. Law enforcement agencies and service providers have benefitted from partnerships with organizations that have expertise on LGBTI issues to expand their service referral networks and learn how to develop inclusive environments for LGBTI victims. Governments can further strengthen their efforts by enhancing partnerships, especially with LGBTI survivors of trafficking whose input is invaluable on training content and measures to strengthen understanding and improve support services.