



5th Human Trafficking Research Network Conference

“Reframing Trafficking - Knowledge, Policy, and Practice at a Crossroads”

18-19 June 2026

School of Law, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK

Call for papers

The [Human Trafficking Research Network](https://ulster.ac.uk/htrn) (HTRN) is a network open to academics and practitioners engaged in research and/or practice on the broad theme of human trafficking. The HTRN encourages a multidisciplinary research environment with opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

The HTRN invites abstracts for its 5th annual conference, which will take place on 18 and 19 June 2026 in Newcastle (UK). The conference will be an interdisciplinary gathering for critical reflection, research exchange, and policy engagement on human trafficking and modern slavery. This year’s theme, “Reframing Trafficking – Knowledge, Policy, and Practice at a Crossroads,” responds to the growing recognition that we cannot overlook that the prevailing anti-trafficking frameworks are under pressure, conceptually, institutionally, and politically. In addition, the theme also draws focus to the politics of knowledge production in shaping anti-trafficking agendas and asks how new research, methodologies, and coalitions can challenge prevailing paradigms.

As the global anti-trafficking landscape evolves, shaped by migration governance, neo-liberalism, anti-blackness, labour market shifts, technological transformations, and political discourse, the conference seeks to explore how responses can be reimagined in more inclusive, evidence-led, and contextually grounded ways. The conference aims to create a space to reassess policy tools, interrogate knowledge practices and production, and forge new collaborations between researchers, practitioners, advocates, policymakers and persons with lived experience.

As such, we welcome proposals from professionals in the anti-trafficking/modern slavery/exploitation field (academics, pracademics, activists, advocates) and across disciplines (law, critical migration studies, sociology, criminology, international relations, history—including legal history—, anthropology, ethnography, political science, and beyond) that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

1. New directions in national, regional, and international anti-trafficking law and policy
2. Intersections of trafficking with migration and bordering practices
3. Epistemic (in)justice: how and by whom knowledge is produced and used
4. Survivor-led and community-based approaches human trafficking research and service design
5. Critical approaches, such as feminist and queer theory, Critical Race Theory, Third World Approaches to International Law, etc.
6. Labour exploitation, precarious work, and corporate accountability
7. Intersections of trafficking with sex work, sexuality and gender
8. The impact of technology and digital platforms in human trafficking
9. Institutional accountability - the role of NGOs, donors, and global governance
10. Public narratives and media framings
11. Ethical dilemmas in fieldwork and policy engagement

We particularly welcome contributions that adopt critical approaches (especially approaches that may challenge the neutrality of the law), practice-informed, empirically grounded, or methodologically innovative, including participatory, community-based and survivor-led approaches.

Submission of abstracts

Please submit abstracts (200 words max), indicating, if applicable, which of the above themes the work falls under, as a Word document containing a paper title, presenter name(s), titles and affiliations (if applicable), as well as short presenter bios (50 words max) to htrn@ulster.ac.uk by **20 February 2026**. If you are going to require a letter of confirmation for funding or visa purposes, please include a note to this effect in your abstract document.

Papers will be selected based on quality, fit with the conference theme and fit with other papers. You will be notified of paper acceptance by 20 March 2026.

Conference practicalities

The conference will take place at the School of Law of Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK, on 18 and 19 June 2026. We aim to secure funding to support mobility grants for panellists who may not have access to institutional funding. Attendance is free of charge. Further details will be provided in due course.



Law School

