

Human Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors Among Homeless Youth

A Multi-City Study



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This report is dedicated to the 270 youth who candidly and at times painfully shared their stories and themselves with us. We are indebted to their candor and only hope for the very best for them and the thousands of other youth who share similar stories.

*For more information about the Field Center, please visit www.fieldcenteratpenn.org
For more information on Covenant House, visit www.covenanthouse.org*

The Field Center

The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research is an interdisciplinary collaboration of the University of Pennsylvania’s Schools of Social Policy & Practice, Law, Medicine, and Nursing, and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia dedicated to improving the systemic response to victims of child abuse and neglect. By harnessing the expertise across the University of Pennsylvania, the Field Center facilitates reform through a “think outside-the-box approach.” Our efforts result in improved policies and laws, translating research to practice, and elevating service delivery across systems of care through education and training.

Our Mission

Guided by the Schools of Social Policy & Practice, Law, Medicine, and Nursing, and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research brings together the resources of the University of Pennsylvania to enhance and assure the well-being of abused and neglected children and those at risk of maltreatment. By moving beyond traditional approaches, the Field Center utilizes an interdisciplinary model to integrate clinical care, research and education, inform local and national policy, and prepare the nation’s future leaders, for the benefit of children and their families.

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Executive Summary

The Field Center completed a three-city study as part of a larger initiative by Covenant House International to research human trafficking among homeless youth encompassing nearly 1,000 young people across 13 cities. The Field Center interviewed a total of 270 homeless youth, 100 in Philadelphia, 100 in Phoenix, and 70 in Washington, DC, to learn about the prevalence of human trafficking, and the history of child maltreatment, out of home placement, and protective factors among those who were sex trafficked or engaged in the sex trade to survive. Of those interviewed, 20% were victims of human trafficking, including 17% who were victims of sex trafficking and 6% who were victims of labor trafficking. Fourteen percent engaged in “survival sex” to meet their basic needs. A total of 36% of those interviewed reported engaging in a commercial sex act at some point in their lives.

1 of 5

were victims of human trafficking

22%

of those homeless youth who were approached for paid sex had this happen on their very first night of being homeless

17%

of those interviewed were victims of sex trafficking

95%

of those who were sex trafficked had a history of child maltreatment

67%

of sex trafficked victims had not graduated from high school

41%

of those who were sex trafficked had at least one out-of-home placement at some point in their lives, and many experienced frequent moves

Two out of three homeless females reported being solicited for paid sex. For all genders, 22% of those homeless youth who were approached for paid sex had this happen on their very first night of being homeless. Transgender youth were particularly vulnerable, with 90% of transgender youth reporting being offered money for sex.

For youth who reported that they were victims of sex trafficking, 95% had a history of child maltreatment. While 59% report telling someone that they were abused, only 36% of them report that the person they told took some action on their behalf. Among those who were maltreated, the highest percentage of youth reported being sexually abused (49%), followed by physical abuse (33%).

A total of 41% of those who were sex trafficked had at least one out-of-home placement at some point in their lives, and many experienced frequent moves. Over 50% did not have a place to live at some point prior to their 18th birthday, and 88% of youth who experienced commercial sex lived in at least one place without a biological parent. Sixty three percent reported involvement with the child welfare system.

LGBTQ youth appear to have experienced a higher level of sex trafficking, comprising 39% of those who reported being trafficked, though they represented only 15% of the total interviewed. Transgender youth are particularly vulnerable, with 60% of those surveyed reporting sex trafficking. Although the sample size is too small to generalize, it points to increased risk for these young people.

For those who were sex trafficked, when asked what could have helped prevent them from being in this situation, the most frequent response was having supportive parents or family members. Youth who lacked a caring adult in their lives were more likely to be victims of sex trafficking.

Education was also distinguished in the data. Victims of sex trafficking were 72% more likely to have dropped out of high school than the full sample of homeless youth. Of those who reported being sex trafficked, only 22% had a high school diploma and 11% had attended some college. A full 67% had not graduated from high school, compared to 41% of the total sample. Thus, graduating from high school appears to be a protective factor.

Introduction

BACKGROUND

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2014), sexual exploitation is the most commonly identified form of human trafficking ahead of forced labor. Numbers released by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center suggest this also is true in the U.S., where more than 5,500 cases of sex trafficking were reported in 2016 (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2017).

Sex trafficking is a form of Human Trafficking as defined by the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA). In the TVPA, Congress defines severe forms of trafficking as:

1. Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
2. The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through use of force, fraud, or coercion for purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (8 U.S.C. § 1101).

Victims of commercial sexual exploitation have been forced,

coerced, or otherwise manipulated into performing sex acts in exchange for something of value; contrary to popular opinion that sex trafficking is predominantly an international trade, it is increasingly prevalent in the United States (Bounds, Julion & Delaney, 2015). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2012), the official definition of a commercial sex act is one performed for exchange of anything of value given to or received by any person. Types of sex trafficking include prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution, and sex tourism. Previous studies indicate threat for sex trafficking is highest when both individual risk factors and environmental challenges collude in a young person's life, including poverty, homelessness, a history of maltreatment, low educational attainment, identifying as gender nonconforming or sexual minority, lack of work opportunities, lack of family support, and lack of connection to caring adults beyond caregivers (Finklea, Fernandes-Alcantara & Siskin, 2015; Gerassi, 2015; Tyler, 2008).

Children and young adults are particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), and national data provide insight into the scope of the

problem plaguing young people. Despite numerous attempts to estimate the annual number of child trafficking victims in the United States, the exact number of how many children in the U.S. are victims or at risk is currently unknown (U.S. DOJ, 2012). Early research estimated that between 244,000 and 325,000 children are at risk of domestic minor sex trafficking each year (Estes & Weiner, 2002). However, later reports caution that none of such estimates are based on a true scientific foundation, and thus no reliable estimates exist (Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2010). By combining estimates of youth at risk of sexual exploitation with estimates of child trafficking victims, the early estimates are likely highly inflated and the true incidence rate is unknown (Salisbury, Dabney & Russell, 2014; Fong & Cardoso, 2010; Stransky & Finkelhor, 2008).

The most commonly identified risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation of children is a history of childhood sexual abuse (Ahrens et al., 2012). For example, a National Institute of Justice (1994) report asserts minors who were sexually abused were 28 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution at some point in their lives than minors who were not

sexually abused. A history of sexual molestation was also significantly associated with increased odds of having transactional or survival sex, with gender and sexual orientation being a significant factor. Additional research has demonstrated that the younger a girl is when she first becomes involved in prostitution, the greater the likelihood that she has a history of childhood sexual abuse. In addition to a history of childhood abuse, prostituted girls are likely to have experienced other forms of family disruption (Clawson et al., 2009).

For those who enter the child welfare system, additional risks may contribute to the possibility of commercial sexual exploitation, as multiple placements and/or group homes may expose minors to further abuse or coercion into trafficking (Choi, 2015). Recent findings suggest that close to two thirds of those investigated as victims of trafficking had a significant history of child maltreatment and prior child protective services involvement (Havlicek, Huston, Boughton & Zhang, 2016).

Many victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. are vulnerable and marginalized young people who are on the street and transient (Fong & Cardoso, 2010). As such,

homelessness has also been identified as an important and malleable risk factor among young people who engage in survival sex. Several studies conducted with samples of this population have found this association. For example, Bender, Yang, Ferguson and Thompson (2015) interviewed 601 homeless youth who were seeking services in three U.S. cities. Almost 13% of the sample reported engaging in prostitution to generate income while homeless. Gwadz, Gostnell, Smolenski, Willis, Nish, Nolan et al. (2009) also interviewed a sample of homeless youth who were receiving services from providers in New York City. Nearly 34% of the sample reported trading sex for money, drugs, food or shelter. Similarly, a 1999 study examined the prevalence of survival sex among a nationally representative sample of 1,159 homeless and runaway youth in various U.S. cities (Greene, Ennett & Ringwalt, 1999). Thirty-seven percent of the sample reported engagement in survival sex.

Given the hidden nature of domestic minor sex trafficking, the difficulties in documenting occurrence, and the plethora of overlapping risk factors, the present study examines the prevalence of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation

among homeless youth in multiple cities and investigates child maltreatment, child welfare, and out-of-home placement experiences as well as resilience factors for victims of trafficking and other forms of commercial sex.

More than 5,500 cases of sex trafficking were reported in 2016 to the National Human Trafficking Hotline

Project Overview

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are twofold:

1. To examine the prevalence of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation among homeless youth in multiple cities through replication of an earlier study utilizing the previously validated Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM-10), and
2. To gain insight into the child maltreatment, child welfare and out of home placement experiences as well as resilience factors for victims of child sex trafficking.

DEFINITIONS RELATED TO THE HTIAM

Following the lead of the universities who conducted similar studies in different locations (i.e., Fordham University in New York City; Loyola University New Orleans in New Orleans) prior to our study, we draw our definitions for Human Trafficking, Labor Trafficking, and Commercial Sex from the U.S. Victims of Trafficking & Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (TVPA).

Human Trafficking — (A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age or (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery. Human trafficking thus includes both sex trafficking (part A) and labor trafficking (part B).

Commercial Sex — Any sex act in which anything of value is given or received by any person. Commercial sex includes sex trafficking and survival sex as well as commercial sex that does not fall under these categories.

Sex Act — Although the TVPA does not define “sex act,” consistent with Fordham and Loyola University New Orleans, we relied on the definition provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (2012): Prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution, and sex tourism.

Survival Sex — Consistent with Fordham and Loyola University New Orleans’ use of the “popular” definition for “survival sex,” we defined “survival sex” as involving individuals who trade sex acts to meet the basic needs of survival (e.g., food, shelter, etc.) without overt force, fraud or coercion of a trafficker, but who felt that their circumstances left little or no other option.

Method

DESIGN AND OVERVIEW

The University of Pennsylvania's Institutional Review Board approved this study, which had two components. The first was quantitative and explored prevalence of human trafficking, commercial sex, and survival sex, as well as potential child welfare risk factors for engaging in any of the behavior. The second component was qualitative and sought to elicit: 1) an in-depth understanding of the young people's lived experiences, 2) risk factors for becoming a victim of human trafficking or engaging in commercial sex or survival sex, and 3) potential protective factors that could have prevented the young people from engaging in these behaviors. Given the nature of the information shared by the young people, the research team obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, which protected the identity of research participants, such as through disclosure of information in legal proceedings.

PARTICIPANTS

A non-probability, purposive sampling procedure was used for this study. Daniel (2012) suggests that such sampling procedures are advantageous for populations with characteristics that are difficult to locate or for whom a sampling frame is not available, such as marginalized and vulnerable young people involved in human trafficking. A total of 270 young people who sought homeless services were interviewed across the three cities (Philadelphia, PA n=100; Phoenix, AZ n=100; Washington, DC n=70).

As shown in Figure 1, participants were 57% male, 38% female, 4% transgender, and 1% other. The majority of participants reported being heterosexual (80%), followed by 10% bisexual, 6% homosexual, and 4% pansexual (Figure 2). Almost 40% reported earning a high school diploma. Twenty-five percent reported dropping out of high school, 20% reported completing some college, 13% reported still being in high school, and 3% reported completing their GED, as shown in Figure 3. All participants spoke English as their primary language and almost 100% of participants reported being U.S. citizens. All participants were over the age of 18 at the time of the interviews and their average age was 20.7 years old (SD=2.0). The majority were African-American (56%); White (14%) and Multiracial (14%) were the next two largest groups.

Figure 1

GENDER

Male	57%
Female	38%
Transgender	4%
Other	1%

Figure 2

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Heterosexual	78%
Homosexual	6%
Bisexual	10%
Pansexual	4%
Refused to answer	3%

Figure 3

EDUCATION

College	20%
High School Diploma	39%
GED completed	3%
Still in High School	13%
Dropped out of High School	25%

PROCEDURES

Recruitment. The Field Center visited three U.S. cities (Philadelphia, PA, Phoenix, AZ, and Washington, DC) with the goal of interviewing approximately 100 homeless youth in each city. Five shelters and youth-service organizations participated as host sites for the research study: Covenant House in Philadelphia and Washington DC, and Tumbleweed, Native American Connections and One-n-Ten in Phoenix.

The Field Center provided training to shelter or program site staff on the research approach and recruitment protocols. An Administrative Study Liaison was designated at each location to schedule youth for interview appointments and screen for eligibility to participate in the study. Any English-speaking homeless youth aged 18 and older receiving services at the program or shelter site was eligible to participate. Children under the age of 18 were excluded as there was no parent or legal guardian to provide consent to participate in the research study.

Each of the programs and organizations received a Site Guide to orient them to the research purpose and process. Program staff received a script to inform clients of the opportunity to participate in a research study about their experiences that have led them to seek services. Youth were informed that the purpose of the study is to help identify victims of work exploitation rather than a study of human trafficking experiences in order to avoid bias.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and whether youth chose to participate or not, the services that they received were not affected in any way.

During training, site staff was directed to refer as many on-site or available clients as possible on each scheduled date of interviews, regardless of their trafficking status. It was stressed that recruitment of participants should not be based on known or suspected trafficking status, in order to gain the most representative data.

The Field Center provided recruitment posters for organizations to display at the program sites to advertise the study. Clients were notified that they would be given a \$10 gift card as an incentive for their participation, and that snacks would be provided during the interviews.

The researcher conducting the interviews (“the interviewer”) developed a schedule with the Administrative Study Liaison that met the needs of both the research study and the program site. Interviews in Philadelphia took place during once-weekly scheduled research days over a 6-month period. Interviews in Washington, DC and Phoenix occurred during scheduled multi-day visits ranging from two to six consecutive research days.

The Administrative Study Liaison served as the primary contact between the Field Center and the individual program site for the duration of the study. Each day, the Liaison reminded program staff and clients of the interviews and encouraged more people to participate in the study. The Liaison assigned each youth who completed the interview a unique participant ID number and ensured that the Field Center did not duplicate any interviews.

Throughout each research day, the interviewer informed the Liaison when interviews were completed and the next scheduled client could begin his or her interview session.

Enrollment. Upon agreeing to be scheduled for the study, prospective participants met with the interviewer in a private room at the shelter or program and were read an informed consent form. Participants were verbally informed by the interviewer of all information necessary to give informed consent. Participants were reminded of their right to choose not to participate in the interview, to skip any questions they don't want to answer, and to end the interview at any time. If they chose to end the interview because of discomfort, participants still received the gift card.

If they chose to participate, youth were notified that everything said in the interview will be kept confidential. Youth were informed of the exception to confidentiality if reportable child abuse or neglect or the intention to harm oneself or others were disclosed.

The interviewer explained to participants that they would be asked questions about their experiences that have led them to seek services from the organization where the interview was taking place, specifically, about their past work and life experiences. It was clarified that youth did not need to have had any work experiences in order to participate in the study.

To ensure that participants understood the consent form, they were asked a series of questions about the purpose of the study,

what information the study was requesting, how much time would be required to participate in the study, compensation and risks, circumstances that would warrant breaching confidentiality, and whether participation would affect their services. Youth had to demonstrate understanding of their rights as a research participant in order to be enrolled in the study.

Each youth was provided with a copy of the informed consent form, which included contact information for the Principal Investigators and the Office of Regulatory Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as instructions for withdrawing from the research study. A copy of the understanding of consent form labeled with the participant's unique ID number was retained by the interviewer.

Once the appropriate consent forms were completed, the participants were formally enrolled in the study and the interview began.

Interview Process. All of the interview sessions occurred in a private room at the shelter or program, away from caseworkers and staff offices, with only the interviewer present. The interviewer used a paper survey with printed questions, for note-taking. Each survey was labeled with the participant's unique ID number. All interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. No names were associated with audio recordings.

The Field Center interviewer utilized the Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM-10), which has been validated by

Fordham University in New York City. This tool is designed to detect and identify victims of human trafficking, specifically, victims of commercial sexual exploitation and labor trafficking.

Participants who identified that they engaged in any commercial sex act were then administered the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey (CWSS) containing additional questions pertaining to potential child welfare risk factors for engaging in commercial sex and potential protective factors. This supplemental instrument developed by the University of Pennsylvania's Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research asks victims of human trafficking and youth who have engaged in commercial sex about their history of child maltreatment, involvement in the child welfare system, social support networks, living situation, and preparation for independent living.

Both instruments were designed to elicit the self-report of human trafficking experiences and child welfare risk and protective factors, and were administered once per participant through a semi-structured interview format. There was no follow-up contact with the participants after the interview.

At each of the shelters or program sites, caseworkers or clinical staff were available to counsel research participants in case of need. The interviewer made direct referrals to the Administrative Study Liaison if a participant shared non-confidential information about child abuse or the intention to harm oneself

or others. In the instance that a participant self-identified as a victim of human trafficking, they were encouraged to inform their caseworker so that appropriate follow-up services could be provided. The interviewer did not disclose such personal information to caseworkers without the participant's explicit permission.

Interviews of homeless youth took place in Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington, DC between September 2016 and March 2017. The interview length varied from 20 minutes to two hours, depending on the circumstances of the participant. One interviewer conducted all of the interviews with the participants. The interviewer completed the CITI Human Subjects Protection course and was a Master's level Social Worker with extensive experience working directly with high-risk young adult populations. The questions on the HTIAM-10 encouraged participants to share their experiences related to commercial sex and labor exploitation. A discussion about work, survival strategies, and homelessness allowed the interviewer to build rapport with the participants before asking more personal questions about illegal activities and/or commercial sex. Participants varied in their willingness to discuss sexual activity and it often proved useful to ask repeat questions in a different manner later in the interview.

It was helpful to repeat questions as some participants provided different answers as the survey progressed

and trust was established. The interviewer used normalizing statements and conveyed understanding and empathy to communicate to participants that homeless youth often used a variety of strategies to survive. It was also found to be helpful to remind participants frequently of their confidentiality.

Participants often had a hard time viewing many of their survival strategies as work, which was the language used in the assessment tool, so additional probing questions were asked to generate discussion around the items in the HTIAM-10. Work was clearly defined as involving both legitimate and non-legitimate/illegal activities. Youth who had limited or no legal or formal work experiences spent less time speaking with the interviewer and thus had less of a relationship in place when the questions about commercial sexual activity were asked.

Some of the participants were assertive about their own boundaries regarding what they felt comfortable sharing. Youth who chose to skip questions or entire sections were validated and respected. Participants on occasion became emotionally upset as the subject matter resulted in their recalling prior difficult experiences. The interviewer provided support to each youth who experienced stress during the interview, and participants were reminded of their right to terminate the interview at any time. Youth experiencing distress were referred to the on-site counselor, always with their consent.

At the end of each interview, the interviewer debriefed with the participants and expressed gratitude for the youth's willingness to participate in the research study. With the exception of youth referred directly to the liaison, participants returned to regular site programming after completing the interview.

Case Review. Each of the audio-recorded interviews was transcribed. Next, the interviewer carefully read every transcript to identify incidences of commercial sex or labor trafficking. For participants who engaged in commercial sex, the interviewer used the definitions to assess whether the participant was a victim of human trafficking, either by trading sex while under age 18 or by engaging in commercial sex under force, fraud or coercion. Commercial sex was further explored to assess if the sex act was traded for money or another item of value, such as shelter, food, or drugs. The interviewer also identified (1) whether the participant disclosed survival sex and (2) described that sexual activity was the only way to obtain what they needed.

Many of the cases included clear indications of sex or labor trafficking due to the force of a third party or receiving money for a sex act while still a minor. However, some cases, especially those where commercial sex occurred voluntarily after age 18, required a more thorough assessment, as participants' descriptions of their experiences may not have provided a clear

designation regarding their status as a trafficked person or whether the items received in conjunction with a sex act constituted a trade.

For each of the transcripts in which the interviewer was unable to determine trafficking status or sought further review, cases received a second level review with the full research team. The team convened for second-level review on three occasions, devoting one meeting to each of the three cities in the research study. Forty-three cases were subjected to second-level review overall. There were 12 cases in DC requiring follow up, 13 in Philadelphia, and 18 in Phoenix.

MEASURES

Human Trafficking Interview & Assessment Measure (HTIAM-10), (Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013). We used the HTIAM-10, which was originally developed and validated by researchers at Fordham University, including material from the Vera Institute of Justice, with study participants served by Covenant House New York. The HTIAM-10 was designed specifically to assess trafficking victimization among clients served by Covenant House. Since its original development by Fordham, the HTIAM-10 has been used in trafficking studies led by Loyola University New Orleans.

The HTIAM-10 is designed as a semi-structured interview protocol. Therefore, participants were asked each question in a one-on-one, face-to-face interview format. This allowed for additional probing and follow-up by the interviewer.

The HTIAM-10 evokes stories from participants regarding their labor and sexual exploitation experiences that would indicate whether they had been victims of human trafficking. The questions focus on “force, fraud, or coercion,” which are the trademarks of human trafficking and also assess the age at which a participant might have engaged in commercial sex acts. The HTIAM-10 also collects data on demographics (age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, education, citizenship status, and parenting status), and immigration status.

For this study several questions were added to the HTIAM-10 at the request of Covenant House International to probe additional areas not included in the validated instrument. These included questions about experience with homelessness, experience with trading sex, and the use of the internet to promote sale of sex (e.g., Backpage & Craigslist).

Child Welfare Supplemental Survey (CWSS). The research team collaboratively developed the CWSS after first reviewing currently available survey tools from ongoing child welfare and wellbeing studies including the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, the National Study of Child & Adolescent Wellbeing (NSCAW), the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), and the Longitudinal Studies on Child Abuse & Neglect (LONGSCAN). Through a series of team meetings, which included discussion of the purpose and goals of the supplemental survey and question development, we leveraged our collective experience as child welfare researchers and practitioners to design a tool that captures maltreatment experiences, child welfare system involvement, living situation, preparation for independent living, and support systems.

ANALYTIC PROCEDURES

Quantitative. Quantitative data were analyzed through means and frequencies. Where comparing groups, for example, of characteristics of those who were victims of sex trafficking with those who were not, bivariate tests were utilized: t-tests for continuous variables and chi-square and Fisher's exact tests for categorical data.

Qualitative. For the qualitative portion of the study, a conventional content analysis approach was utilized to guide data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This involved using an a priori coding structure applied to the transcribed interview data based on the themes of interest for this study: (1) anything that could have prevented a young person from being in a victimization and/or exploitation situation or how others could have helped them avoid these situations, (2) advice a young person would give to others who are going through similar, (3) what a young person would tell his/her younger self in the midst of these experiences, and (4) any

assistance or information that a young person was not given that s/he wishes they were given to help them learn to live independently. After coding for these sub-themes, we used an iterative, inductive process to identify concepts and themes within each sub-theme to better understand the experiences of homeless youth who experience victimization and exploitation, as well as what could have prevented these experiences from happening from their perspective. The last step involved an effort to identify exemplary codes and construct a more parsimonious understanding of the data.



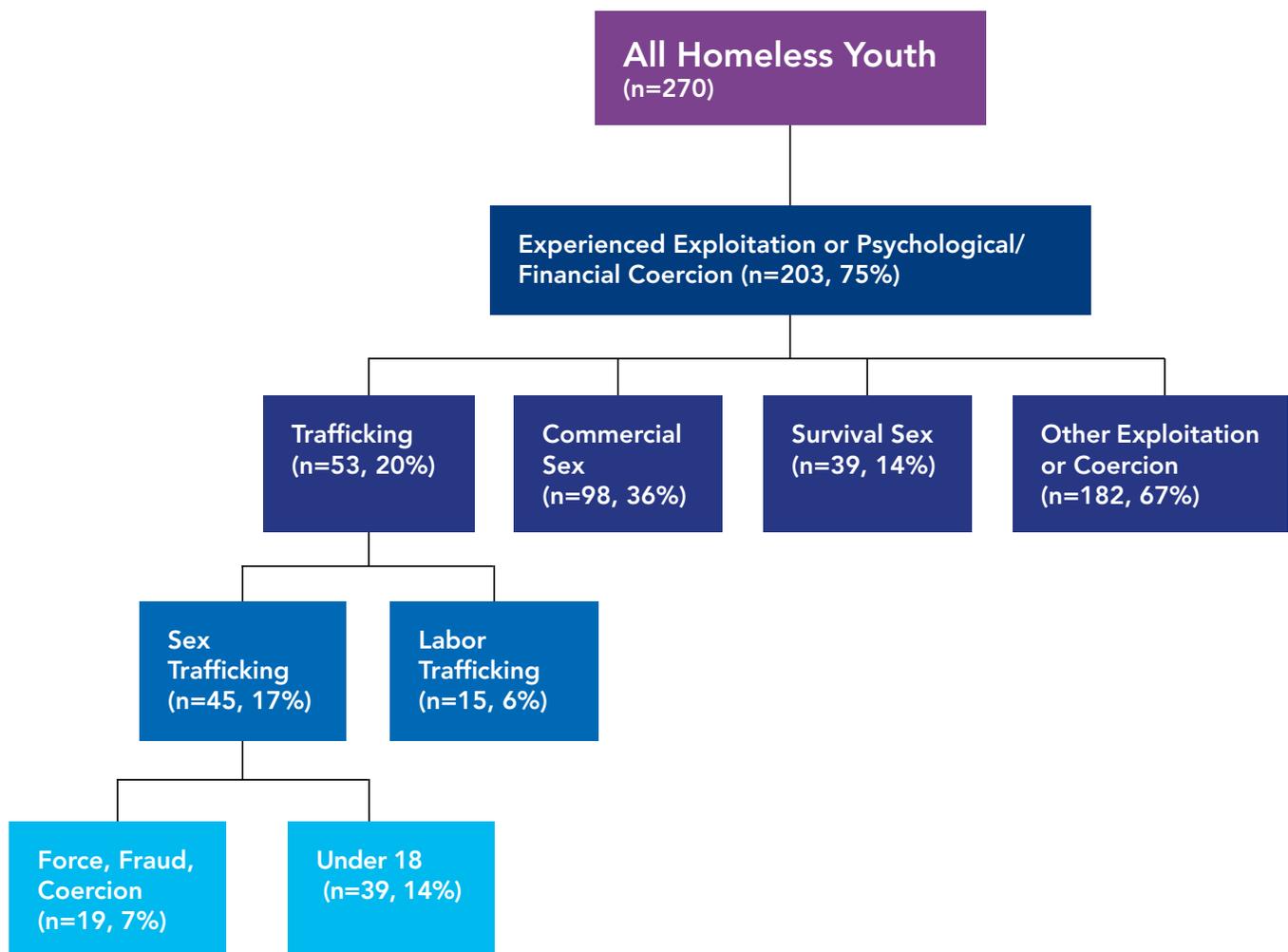
Results

Results are presented in two parts: HTIAM-10, and CWSS. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative HTIAM-10 and CWSS data, exemplary quotations from participants pertaining to each finding are included.

HTIAM-10. The following section presents overall results from the HTIAM-10 for the three cities. Data are presented on sex trafficking, labor trafficking, overall human trafficking, commercial sex, and survival sex rates by demographic characteristics.

Figure 4

BREAKDOWN OF EXPLOITATIVE EXPERIENCES AMONG HOMELESS YOUTH (N=270)



Categories are not mutually exclusive (i.e., an individual can be both a victim of trafficking and have engaged in commercial sex, and would be counted in both boxes).

Percentages represent the share of all homeless youth (270)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Fifty-three (20%) of the 270 homeless youth reported being a victim of human trafficking. This section provides some understanding of the characteristics and life experiences of those who experienced trafficking.

Figure 5 provides the breakdown of the rates of human trafficking types. Eighty-five percent (45) of the 53 people who experienced human trafficking were victims of sex trafficking. Most of them (38) experienced only sex trafficking, while seven were victims of both sex and labor trafficking.

As shown in Table 1, victims of trafficking of any type were more likely to be female (53%) or transgender (11%) relative to the rest of the sample (38% and 4%, respectively). They were also less educated, being 72% more likely to have dropped out of high school than the full sample of 270. Although the small sample sizes of some racial and ethnic groups make it difficult to draw meaningful inferences, there were some patterns. Whites were underrepresented among trafficking victims. They were also more likely to be Latino or multiracial, and much less likely to be African-American. They were also more than twice as likely (23% vs 10%) to be bisexual than non-trafficking victims.

Figure 5

HUMAN TRAFFICKING BY TYPE



TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS COMPARED TO FULL SAMPLE OF HOMELESS YOUTH

	Any Trafficking		Labor Trafficked		Sex Trafficked		Full Sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender								
Male	19	36%	11	73%	14	31%	155	57%
Female	28	53%	4	27%	25	56%	103	38%
Transgender	6	11%	0	0%	6	13%	10	4%
Other	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%
Race								
White	5	9%	1	7%	5	11%	38	14%
Black or African American	24	45%	6	40%	20	44%	153	57%
American Indian & Alaska Native	2	4%	1	7%	1	2%	11	4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	2%	1	7%	1	2%	2	1%
Latino	9	17%	1	7%	9	20%	23	9%
Multiracial	9	17%	3	20%	7	16%	36	13%
Other	2	4%	1	7%	2	4%	5	2%
Refused to answer	1	2%	1	7%	0	0%	2	1%
Highest level of education								
Some high school/Dropped out	23	43%	2	18%	20	44%	67	25%
Some high school/Still attending	8	15%	2	18%	7	16%	35	13%
HS diploma received	12	23%	4	36%	10	22%	106	39%
GED completed	3	6%	0	0%	3	7%	8	3%
Some college	6	11%	3	27%	4	9%	51	19%
College completed	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%	3	1%
U.S. Citizen								
Yes	51	96%	14	93%	44	98%	260	96%
No	2	4%	1	7%	1	2%	10	4%
Sexual Orientation								
Heterosexual/straight	34	64%	13	87%	27	60%	210	78%
Homosexual/gay/lesbian	2	4%	0	0%	2	4%	15	6%
Bisexual	12	23%	1	7%	12	27%	26	10%
Pansexual	4	8%	1	7%	3	7%	11	4%
Refused to answer	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%	8	3%
	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD
Age	20.09	2	20.02	1.9	20.13	2.1	20.7	2

SEX TRAFFICKING

Seventeen percent of the 270 homeless youth interviewed reported that they were victims of sex trafficking; Table 1 provides demographic information on this group. Sex-trafficking victims were more likely to be female (56% of all sex trafficking survivors vs. 38% of overall sample) and Latino, and less likely to be African American. They were less likely to be straight or gay, and more likely to be bisexual (27% vs. 10%). The small sample sizes in these categories influence our capacity to dependably compare across groups, but the patterns are noteworthy.

Education also appeared to play a role, as did gender and sexual orientation. Forty-four percent of sex trafficked youth had dropped out of high school and only 11% completed at least some college, compared to 20% of all 270. Those who received a GED or dropped out of high school were also overrepresented among sex-trafficked youth compared to the rest of the sample. Bisexual and transgender participants were overrepresented among the sex-trafficked survivors. If we look at prevalence rates within subgroups, sixty percent of transgender youth were sex trafficked, compared to 24% of females and 9% of males. Identifying as bisexual was the next strongest predictor (46%), more than triple the rate of straight and gay participants, and nearly twice the rate of those who identified as pansexual.

Of those respondents who identified as transgender, many reported negative coming-out experiences, which led to their homelessness. Without the physical, financial, and emotional support

of a family, transgender teenagers sometimes resorted to trading sex for money or other needs. One transgender participant, who was a sex trafficking victim by virtue of engaging in commercial sex acts while under the age of 18, was kicked out of her family's home after coming out when she was a teenager. She was homeless and living alone on the streets, so she turned to prostitution as a way to survive. She reported it as a horrible experience, saying "When I don't want to do [the sexual] things they want, they pull my hair, they slap my face, they threaten me with a gun."

Other transgender respondents reported commercial sexual exploitation as children that were unrelated to homelessness or their gender. An adult female currently completing a gender transition at the time of the interview, was molested and raped by a family friend as a male child at the age of 13. Her abuser then began coercively exploiting her for money, stating that "he let other guys come in and touch me and I gave them blow jobs. He got paid for it."

Sex trafficked youth entered the sex trade under markedly different circumstances, compared to those who engaged in non-trafficking commercial sex. They were more likely to have been approached for sex (85% vs. 75%), and slightly

On the same night that she left her mother's house, she met a man on the street who became her pimp. The pimp kept her hidden and out of school, and forced her to have sex with adult men for a year before police discovered her at age 11.

41% of sex trafficked youth were approached for sex on their very first night of homelessness.

more likely (62% vs. 57%) to be approached while homeless. Of this subgroup, 41% were approached for sex on their very first night of homelessness.

It was especially common for female respondents to report frequent offers of money in exchange for sex. One young woman reported that while she was homeless and on the streets, she was approached “numerous times.” Cars pulled over while she was simply walking down the street and offered her a ride, a hotel room, or help if she performed a sex act for them. Another female says she was approached for sex “everywhere.” One time it happened when she was 15 and working at a fast food restaurant. An older man asked if she would give him oral sex for some money. Although this time she declined and reported the situation to her manager, the continued offers of money for sex acts eventually changed her mind, and a man she initially believed to be her boyfriend exploited her.

Respondents who were exploited by traffickers as children often had vulnerabilities making them easier targets for those looking to take advantage of them. When one female respondent was repeatedly raped as a young child by her mother’s boyfriend, she eventually ran away from her mother’s home at age 10. On the same night that she left her mother’s house, she met a man on the street who became her pimp. The pimp kept her hidden and out of school, and forced her to have sex with adult men for a year before police discovered her at age 11. Despite her eventual rescue, she later cycled through experiences of homelessness, psychiatric hospitalization, prostitution and

incarceration during her teenage years, before finally seeking services at a youth shelter.

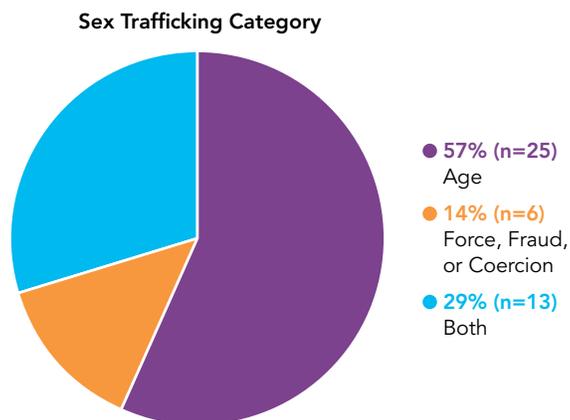
Although understanding the rates and characteristics of sex trafficking victims is important, it is equally valuable to understand the differences in the two ways in which participants were categorized as having been victims of sex trafficking. As seen in Figure 6, 19 of the 45 sex trafficking victims were all victims of force, fraud, or coercion, two-thirds of them while also underage.

The physical force used by pimps and traffickers ranged from violent assaults to threats of murder. One female participant met her trafficker at a party when she was 14 years old. After entering into a relationship with him that she believed to be based on love, he began pressuring her to sleep with other men to prove that she loved him. Once she began prostituting for him, he threatened to kill her if she ever stopped. She eventually learned that he was pimping out many other women as well, advertising the girls for sex on Backpage, and she often observed him violently beating them when they didn’t obey his orders. Although she lived with her mother and father while prostituting, she says her family never asked questions or realized what was going on.

Another female respondent talked about how quickly her relationship with her exploiter changed, stating:

The physical force used by pimps and traffickers ranged from violent assaults to threats of murder.

Figure 6



Respondents who reported drug addictions were particularly vulnerable to the force, fraud, or coercion of a third party.

"I know a couple of days after when I started crying, he used to act like he cared at first. And like, 'Oh, it's okay. I understand. You just need to calm down. You're grown now. You got to do what you got to do. You're on your own.' But by the end of that week it was him choking me up, 'You need to do what the guys tell you to do.' It was either I did it or he would grip me up, smack me up, or beat me—like he used to beat me with a belt like literally."

Respondents who reported drug addictions were particularly vulnerable to the force, fraud, or coercion of a third party. These youth often had burned bridges with other caring adults, leaving them few options to support their physical needs or battle their addiction. A female respondent shared that while she had begun prostituting at age 17 because of a drug addiction, she didn't experience exploitation at the hands of a third party until later when she was a legal adult. She had entered into a romantic relationship with her dealer, who began selling her for sex without her knowledge or consent while she was high, sometimes when she was semi-conscious. Eventually he threatened to kill her and her family if she ever left him. She finally escaped her trafficker when she was placed directly into a drug rehab program from a hospitalization.

Another female reported moving into a homeless shelter when she was 21 because she was addicted to drugs and didn't have family support. While in the shelter, she was recruited into prostitution by a man in his 60's. She described him as a "father figure," saying, "He would take care of the girls like me so that, you know, junkies, druggies won't mess with us.

Basically what I had to do was either run errands for the person or sell drugs or have sex with somebody and get the money." She eventually agreed to work for him because he offered her protection.

For participants who were trafficked through force, fraud, or coercion in ongoing situations, fear for their physical safety, either through violent repercussions or having no other resources, was a big factor in remaining with their exploiter. A young lady who was exploited by her violent boyfriend for about a year finally got the courage to call her estranged mother and begged to return home. Although her relationship with her mother didn't last, and she ended up at a youth shelter, she never returned to her abusive exploiter:

"I realize now that I was completely depressed in it because I felt like I couldn't do anything. I was powerless like I couldn't do nothing. I can't eat, I can't sleep, if I don't have this man, he's not taking care of me, I'm not going to be able to live, point blank, period."

One female participant who was unhappy at home was exploited through most of high school by the man she believed to be her boyfriend. If she tried to leave him, she "would be killed or beaten really bad. I always watch like witness protection movies and could have been involved in the witness protection program." She finally escaped by lying about physical abuse in her biological family to child protective service workers and her probation officer, resulting in her being removed and placed in out-of-home care.

Predators and exploiters may take advantage of very young children who not only cannot legally consent to a sexual act, but also are lacking the developmental maturity to understand the implications of their actions.

The remaining 57% of the 45 were categorized as sex trafficking victims based entirely on age, meaning that while victims could not legally consent to commercial sexual activity because they were under 18, they did not engage in commercial sex as a result of force, fraud, or coercion.

Predators and exploiters may take advantage of very young children who not only cannot legally consent to a sexual act, but also are lacking the developmental maturity to understand the implications of their

“When I was younger, I was raped and molested so it was like I always thought it was okay to go out and have sex with different people because this happened.”

actions. One bisexual male who traded sex for money on and off throughout his life recalls that he was first approached for sex when he was 9 years old. A complete stranger he met in the neighborhood offered him \$200 for oral sex, and he accepted, as the money seemed too much to pass up.

Other participants who entered into the sex trade during their teenage years were able to identify gaps in their existing resources and prior experiences that led them to sell sex. A transgender respondent said that she was living in foster care and felt bad asking her foster mother for things, so she began prostituting at age 15. A woman she met online on a dating app suggested the idea to her, so she began seeking her own dates online and in person. Despite being currently connected with services, she still occasionally sells sex as a way to bring in quick money. She said:

“When I was younger, I was raped and molested so it was like I always thought it was okay to go out and have sex with different people because this happened, and then I just became very promiscuous and I started doing all these things and then getting all the money and stuff like that, so I thought it was okay. Am I trying to stop it? Yes.”

Another female respondent identified poverty and wanting to support her family as the deciding factor in selling sex, while still a minor at age 17. Her mother was struggling in a difficult low-wage job and her father was not helping. She said:

“I did what I had to do. My brother did what he had to do. He started selling drugs. I started [selling sex].”

For most of the youth who were both sex and labor trafficked, violent and traumatic childhoods were common, and respondents often engaged in illegal activities and forced sexual acts at the demands of family members or other trusted adults.

Nobody knew that cause I kept it to myself. Me and my brother knew we was doing things that we wasn't supposed to, but at the end of the day we didn't care cause we was bringing money to the table and my little brother and sister were good. Me and my brother had the mentality that we could survive. We pretty much knew we don't wanna do this. This is not our type of lifestyle but we have to do it for our younger brother and sister cause, at the end of the day, if we don't do it, nobody wasn't gonna do it."

For most of the youth who were both sex and labor trafficked, violent and traumatic childhoods were common, and respondents often engaged in illegal activities and forced sexual acts at the demands of family members or other trusted adults. One male respondent reported that he moved into his father's house, which was frequented by drug users, sellers, partiers, and violent criminals, when he was 11 years old. He was immediately taught how to prepare and sell drugs. At first he reported feeling scared, but he didn't want his father to put him out, so he agreed. Starting around age 12, older women ranging in age from 17 to 50 began offering him money for sex. He went along with it because he didn't want to be teased by his family.

Another male joined a gang for protection when he was 13 and, as part of his commitment to the

gang, he was forced to sell drugs. He quickly progressed to making money in other ways, accepting money from both women and men for sex when offered, and was pimping women by the time he was 16. Eventually the violent gang lifestyle caught up with him and after an assault that almost killed him, he decided to leave the gang forever. Reflecting back on his teenage years, he reported:

"From the age of 13 through the age of 21, I would literally go back and forth between homies' houses but then I would get picked up by females. I'd be walking up and down the street slinging [drugs] and they'll come and pick me up. They'll ask me where I'm going. I'd say 'well, I'm going to go drop off something over here,' and they'd be like 'oh well, we'll take you.' Next thing you know they're paying me for sex."

The categorization of sex trafficking (force, fraud, or coercion vs. age) was highly correlated with demographic and background characteristics. Most notably, victims of force, fraud, or coercion were more than twice as likely to be female than those categorized as sex trafficking victims based on age (79% vs. 36%), although the average age at which youth were first sexually exploited was the same for men and women (17). Sex trafficking victims experiencing force, fraud, or coercion were 20 percentage points more likely to

have dropped out of high school (58% vs. 38%) and 14 percentage points more likely to be either bisexual or pansexual (48% vs. 34%) compared to minor sex trafficking victims.

There was a strong relationship between sex trafficking victimization and commercial sex. Forty-six percent of those who engaged in commercial sex were victims of sex trafficking, compared to 54% who were not. Most of that 46% exchanged sex for money, as opposed to other goods or necessities. Sex trafficking was also associated with survival sex: 46% of those who engaged in survival sex were sex trafficking victims, while 11% of those who did not engage in survival sex were sex trafficked. In addition, labor trafficking was associated with sex trafficking, with 47% of labor trafficking victims also experiencing sex trafficking.

Eighty-four percent of those who were sex trafficked were approached by someone wanting them to sell sex, compared to 82% of those who were engaged in commercial sex but not sex trafficked. The timing of that approach—whether or not someone was homeless when approached, and how soon after homelessness someone was approached—was not related to sex trafficking rates.



SURVIVAL SEX

Fourteen percent of the sample, or 39 youth, reported engaging in survival sex. Youth received a variety of items in exchange for sexual activity. The most commonly reported item received by youth who engaged in survival sex was shelter or a place to stay, cited by 30 participants. Many youth reported that staying in the homes of adults who could meet their needs was preferable to living on the streets, even when they demanded sexual acts in exchange for housing.

This study utilized a narrow definition of survival sex to describe the trading of a sex act for a basic need that the respondent could not find a way to otherwise meet. Although many youth reported trading sex for money or other items of value after age 18, they are excluded here if they did not trade sex to meet a basic life need, such as food and shelter.

Compared to others that engaged in commercial sex, these 39 were more likely to be female (49%), as shown in Table 2, although other demographic groups did not vary much. The youth who engaged in survival sex were more likely to be approached for sex while they were homeless (62%) than those who engaged in only non-survival commercial sex; nine (45%) were approached for sex on their very first night of homelessness. They were also more likely to report extensive histories of family dysfunction, often having been put out or left to survive on the streets as children. One male participant stated, "I wasn't born in a stable

house. I was in the beginning but it broke down early so I got kind of used to it. I used to get kicked out when I was real young. I'm talking about when I was probably like 11." For many young men like him, turning to illegal activities was a common way to meet one's needs. Unfortunately, criminal justice involvement, convictions, and serving prison time made it even harder for these youth to succeed in legitimate work upon their reentry. He summarized his reentry process, saying: "I can always find how to get money. But coming home from prison without supportive family, meeting a girl to provide necessities like housing was a good way to survive."

Of those who engaged in survival sex, 25 reported receiving both money and other non-monetary items of value in exchange for a sexual act. While in and out of homeless shelters, one participant reported using social media and dating apps for the explicit purpose of finding sexual partners who would provide him with needed items, such as money, food, and hotel rooms.

Eleven of those who engaged in survival sex traded sex for a non-monetary item only. One young man reported that while he was running away from various foster homes, an adult woman who worked as a school counselor took him in. She was initially kind and welcoming, but gradually began to ask for sex in exchange for allowing him to stay in her home. He reported that he felt uncomfortable engaging in sex with an adult, but

One young person reported trading sex to help her take care of her daughter as a single mother, stating, "It was quick and easy and I needed to get my daughter some milk."

TABLE 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO ENGAGED IN SURVIVAL SEX COMPARED TO FULL SAMPLE OF HOMELESS YOUTH

	Survival Sex		Full Sample	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	15	38%	155	57%
Female	19	49%	103	38%
Transgender	4	10%	10	4%
Other	1	3%	2	1%
Race				
White	7	18%	38	14%
Black or African American	22	56%	153	57%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0	0%	11	4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0%	2	1%
Latino	4	10%	23	9%
Multiracial	6	15%	36	13%
Other	0	0%	5	2%
Refused to answer	0	0%	2	1%
Highest level of education				
HS diploma received	12	31%	106	39%
Some college	7	18%	51	19%
GED completed	3	8%	8	3%
Some high school/Still attending	5	13%	35	13%
College completed	0	0%	3	1%
Some high school/Dropped out	12	31%	67	25%
U.S. Citizen				
Yes	39	100%	260	96%
No	0	0%	10	4%
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual/straight	23	59%	210	78%
Homosexual/gay/lesbian	5	13%	15	6%
Bisexual	6	15%	26	10%
Pansexual	3	8%	11	4%
Refused to answer	2	5%	8	3%
Age				
	Average	SD	Average	SD
	20.2	1.9	20.7	2

One female participant explained that she constantly feared for her physical safety. She strategically dated and engaged in sex acts with men at the shelter for the purpose of having a bodyguard around.

his friends encouraged him, and he needed a place to stay. "This lady let me stay at her house. I kind of explained my story to her but I don't think she really cared. She just really wanted me to stay for sex."

Three participants traded sex for money when they were in a desperate situation and had no other way to meet their needs. One young person reported trading sex to help her take care of her daughter as a single mother. She would contact men she thought of as "friends with benefits" and would engage in sex acts with them in exchange for money. "It was quick and easy and I needed to get my daughter some milk."

The reasons for engaging in survival sex were more limited than reasons expressed by participants for engaging in commercial sex. Unlike commercial sex, in which money was the primary motivator, shelter was the most common reason (77%) participants reported for engaging in survival sex, followed closely by money and food. Drugs (26%) were a less frequently cited reason for survival sex. One notable difference was that those who engaged in survival sex were more likely to do so because they were running from abuse (13%) than those who engaged in commercial sex.

Some of the "other" reasons that youth reported trading sex were transportation and protection. One female participant explained that, prior to meeting her current boyfriend and finding an abandoned house to stay in, she lived in a public shelter where she

constantly feared for her physical safety. She strategically dated and engaged in sex acts with men at the shelter for the purpose of having a bodyguard around. She stated, "It's just like you protect me and I'll give you what you want."

Youth who resorted to survival sex conveyed a sense of desperation, using what amounted to their last resorts to get by and make it to the next day. Participants demonstrated clear awareness of the choices they were making while also expressing disappointment in their lives.

One transgender youth began prostituting to save for surgery to complete a medical transition from male to female, sharing that:

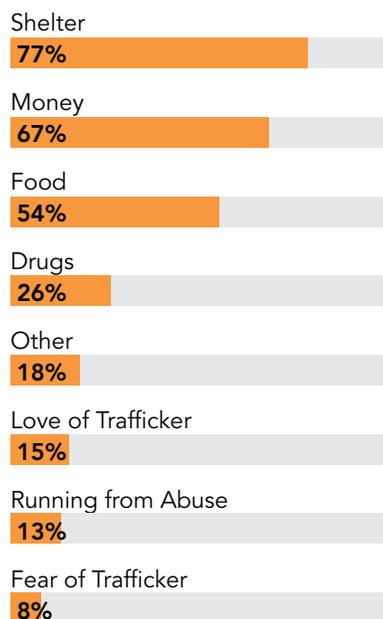
"This whole entire sex thing is based around my transitioning. My goal is to become a part of society without even having second guesses on me, just being able to participate with everyone else not even getting looked at twice."

A respondent shared that after being sexually abused for several years in foster care, she left on her own and began trading sex with those who offered love, money, food, and a sense of safety. She said:

"There's been a couple of times where I slept with people that I knew and some people that I didn't know just to get by. It's not the fact that I wanted to choose this. It's like I felt like I was at my end-road. I didn't know what to do or where to go or who to turn to."

Figure 7

REASON BEGAN TRADING SEX, AMONG SURVIVAL SEX VICTIMS



A respondent shared that after being sexually abused for several years in foster care, she left on her own and began trading sex with those who offered love, money, food, and a sense of safety.

SEX TRAFFICKING “CLOSE CALLS”

In addition to the 45 respondents who reported trafficking, there were two additional participants who reported traumatic encounters with traffickers but were able to escape or avoid commercial sexual exploitation. The data do not capture these participants, yet their experiences demonstrate attempted human trafficking. Their stories illustrate circumstances that very well could have resulted in sex trafficking, underscoring the scope and prevalence of the problem, and for these reasons we describe them here.

One young woman reported that when she was 9 years old, her mother “sold her to a pimp” for some drugs.

At age 15, one female participant was invited by another girl with whom she was in a group home to see what life on the road was like for someone in the music industry. Instead, she was brought to a hotel room where the girl was working for a pimp. After she arrived, she was kept captive in the hotel room with two other women for a month. The very first night the pimp raped her. He choked her and forced himself on her. Although the other girls were forced to work as prostitutes, this woman was never let out of the pimp’s sight. She said, “He wouldn’t let me leave the room

because he knew how scared I would be and he didn’t want me going out and telling on them. I would have to sit in the room with the other girl’s pimp and him.” She witnessed the pimp violently physically and sexually assaulting her friend, including putting hot curling irons inside of her, while threatening to do the same to her. She finally escaped by getting a text message to a friend’s mom, knowing that she would likely be killed if she was caught doing so. The police eventually raided the hotel room, arrested those involved in trafficking, and rescued this respondent.

Another young woman reported that when she was 9 years old, her mother “sold her to a pimp” for some drugs. She watched her mother exchange something with a man on a street corner, and then her mother left her with an adult male stranger. He took her to a house where other young girls were waiting, dressed up in heels and makeup. She watched him assault another young girl and then forced her to dress up. He brought a group of girls to a corner where a 13-year-old girl told her they were supposed to “go have sex.” As soon as she heard this, she started running and eventually made it to her grandmother’s house.

At age 15, one female participant ... was kept captive in a hotel room with two other women for a month. The very first night the pimp raped her.

TABLE 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL SEX COMPARED TO FULL SAMPLE OF HOMELESS YOUTH

	Commercial Sex		Full Sample	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	43	44%	155	57%
Female	47	48%	103	38%
Transgender	7	7%	10	4%
Other	1	1%	2	1%
Race				
White	16	16%	38	14%
Black or African American	49	50%	153	57%
American Indian & Alaska Native	2	2%	11	4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1%	2	1%
Latino	11	11%	23	9%
Multiracial	16	16%	36	13%
Other	2	2%	5	2%
Refused to answer	1	1%	2	1%
Highest level of education				
HS diploma received	27	28%	106	39%
Some college	21	21%	51	19%
GED completed	6	6%	8	3%
Some high school/Still attending	14	14%	35	13%
College completed	3	3%	3	1%
Some high school/Dropped out	27	28%	67	25%
U.S. Citizen				
Yes	96	98%	260	96%
No	2	2%	10	4%
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual/straight	64	65%	210	78%
Homosexual/gay/lesbian	7	7%	15	6%
Bisexual	17	17%	26	10%
Pansexual	7	7%	11	4%
Refused to answer	3	3%	8	3%
	Average	SD	Average	SD
Age	20.2	2.1	20.7	2



COMMERCIAL SEX

Thirty-six percent of the sample (98 youth) reported engaging in commercial sex. One female participant in her early 20's, currently residing at a program for homeless youth and engaging in services, reported thinking of becoming an escort because she was unsuccessful in finding or maintaining stable income elsewhere. She was scared and embarrassed, but had been researching escorting on the Internet to learn if it was something she wanted to do. She was so ashamed to admit that she was considering escorting that she waited until the interview was over and the recorders were turned off before asking the interviewer if she could share this information.

One female participant in her early 20's, currently residing at a program for homeless youth and engaging in services, reported thinking of becoming an escort because she was unsuccessful in finding or maintaining stable income elsewhere.

Table 3 presents demographic characteristics for the 98 youth who reported engaging in a commercial sex act at some point in their lives. Compared to the overall sample, these 98 were

10 percentage points more likely to be female (48% vs. 38%), 6 percentage points more likely to have not finished high school, (48% vs. 41%) and 7 percentage points (17% vs. 10%) more likely to be bisexual. There were no significant differences between the age, race, or citizenship of participants.

This disproportionality represents statistically significant differences in participation rates across groups, with marginalized groups facing the highest risks. Seventy percent of transgender participants engaged in commercial sex, compared to only 46% of females, 28% of males, and 50% who identified as "other." Similarly, 65% of those who engaged in commercial sex were bisexual, as compared to 64% who were pansexual, 47% who were gay, and 30% who were straight.

The lines between commercial sex, survival sex, and human trafficking as discussed previously, are often blurry, with participants frequently moving between categories and often inhabiting multiple categories at once—like a 17-year old selling sex, thus both engaging in commercial sex and being a victim of sex trafficking.

Respondents who engaged in overt prostitution, or the act of having sex in exchange for money, after the age of 18 without force, fraud or coercion or due to desperation had a variety of reasons and justifications for their behavior, including peer pressure, pleasure, and financial payoff. Even when they knew they were making unsafe or dangerous choices, youth often found it difficult to walk away from the opportunity to profit from sexual activity.

75% of those who engaged in commercial sex were approached by someone else wanting them to sell sex. For more than half, this occurred while they were experiencing homelessness.

Participants varied greatly in the circumstances that led them to exchange sex for money or other needs. Seventy-three participants, representing 75% of those who engaged in commercial sex, were approached by someone else wanting them to sell sex. For more than half (47), this occurred while they were experiencing homelessness, and this often occurred early in their homeless experience. Nearly half of the 47 (19), representing more than two-thirds of those who remembered the timeline of their commercial sex work, were recruited within the first week of becoming homeless. Fourteen were recruited into selling sex on their very first night of homelessness. More than half of all youth who engaged in commercial sex (51) felt some level of coercion to engage in this activity.

The average age of a respondent's first commercial sexual encounter was 17.3 years (SD=1.7). Responses ranged from the age of 8 to 24, with a modal age of 19 (15 responses). Three-quarters of the responses (73) clustered between 15 and 20 as the age of their first exploitive sexual encounter. Participants

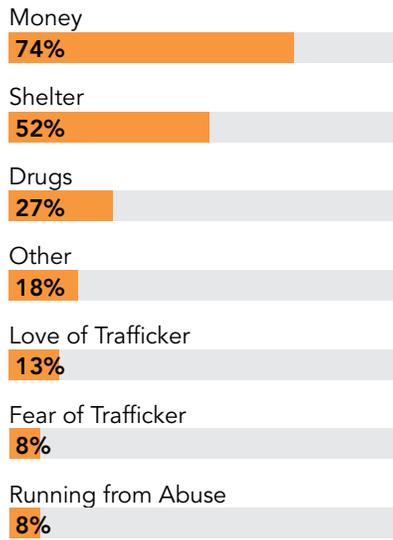
also described a range of paths into commercial sex. When asked to name the person who most encouraged them to get into the sex trade, the most common answer (20) was himself/herself; followed by significant other (18) and acquaintance (15).

Participants felt compelled into commercial sex as the result of a wide range of circumstances and reasons. When asked about their main reasons for beginning to trade sex, the most frequent answer—common to three-quarters of everyone that engaged in commercial sex—was money. Following that, people traded sex for shelter or money for shelter (52%) or for drugs (27%). Smaller percentages responded that their commercial sex was primarily compelled by either positive or negative emotions or circumstances regarding another individual. Thirteen percent participated out of expressed love for a trafficker or exploiter, and 8% were either running from abuse or acted out of fear of the person pushing them into commercial sex.

More than half of all youth who engaged in commercial sex felt some level of coercion to engage in the activity.

Figure 8

MAIN REASONS BEGAN TRADING SEX, AMONG THOSE ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL SEX



One transgender female reported that she and a group of friends, all legal adults, were hanging out at a gay bar and, after some encouragement and peer pressure from the group, she agreed to participate in “selling themselves” to people driving by. She received \$40 for having sex with a complete stranger. She said it was “a weird experience” and dangerous because “you don’t know these people and you’re going to a different location.”

A male participant shared a story from when he was 19 years old. While hanging out at a restaurant, he was approached by a complete stranger, an older woman, who propositioned him for sex and promised to pay him \$500. He was reluctant at first, but eventually he and a friend agreed to go with her, as the \$500 seemed too lucrative to pass up. After the sex exchange, the woman refused to pay the money,

and his friend began threatening her with a knife. Instead of receiving payment for sex as promised, this young man was arrested when a third party called the police.

Of the youth who engaged in commercial sex, 61% engaged in commercial sexual intercourse or other sex acts where sex was traded for a non-monetary item of value, most frequently drugs or housing. One bisexual man who had been hitchhiking around the country described his attempts at “freeganism,” a lifestyle of living without money. Throughout his travels he would meet men who provided him with a place to stay, and often places to party, in exchange for sex. He was very clear that it was voluntary and consensual, but that sex was a requirement for the invitation to go home with them.

Even for youth who did not engage in any physical sex acts, there was awareness that one’s sexuality could be a strategic way to obtain needed items. One female respondent bartered sex videos that she sent to a male she met in school in exchange for him driving her wherever she needed to go.

Another youth worked as a phone sex operator, which she generally enjoyed because she made good money and never had any trouble with the employing company or payment structure. Others sold pornographic photos online, receiving payment yet maintaining a feeling of safety and anonymity, as they never met the purchasers of their photos.

Employment in strip clubs was a common source of income for the homeless youth in this survey, including both legal clubs as well as underground or illegally operating establishments. For youth who were

not underage at the time of their employment as a stripper or those who did not feel forced into it by a third party or desperation, their commercial sex activity was only included in the non-trafficking, non-survival sex prevalence statistics in this section.

One gay male worked at gay show clubs when he was running low on money. He reported being bullied by other dancers at the club for making more money than them, often up to \$500/night, but he never had any problems with managers or employers; overall he described it as fun. A female participant differentiated stripping from other commercial sex, stating, “It’s not like you’re giving up sex, you’re just dancing.” Some female respondents reported leaving employment as strippers only due to getting pregnant. One explained, “I don’t want that to be brought to my son like ‘hey, I seen your mom dancing at the club.’ That’s embarrassing for a child.”

For the young men who reported receiving something of value in exchange for a sex act, there was often a sense of pride or accomplishment in being able to obtain income for an activity they found pleasurable in the first place. They were more likely to report feeling in control of the situation or the ability to make money with little effort.

There was a certain bravado displayed by some of the male respondents, easily adhering to society’s expectation for men to be desired or experienced lovers. One adult male told the interviewer, “I’ve been using females for money if I don’t really want them. They just like to be around me. I do something sexual and the next thing they just give me some money.”

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Another young man said, “I love the money. Especially like if I’m having sex, I’m making money and I’m getting pleasure. A man can’t beat that.” The feeling of enjoyment was not ubiquitous among male respondents. One straight male reluctantly shared that during his meth addiction he was approached by a neighbor who offered him “a bunch of money to let him touch me.” Despite initially saying no, after repeated pressure and offers of money and drugs, he accepted.

The female respondents who engaged in commercial sex not due to a survival strategy or trafficking victimization showed more hesitancy than men overall in endorsing commercial sex. For example, one participant began working at restaurants like Hooters and progressed to working at well-established strip clubs in major cities. She and other female respondents were generally critical of the commercial sex trade. Although she was never forced into any work, she said stripping “scared me at first. I just wanted to cry because I was not used to that kind of stuff.” Although she made a great deal of money,

sometimes up to \$1,000/night, she was never happy doing the work and eventually left the sex industry altogether.

Other females who received non-monetary items in exchange for sex spoke about their choices rather dryly, conveying a sense of necessity rather than enjoyment in the sex act. One respondent says that at age 19, "I wasn't addicted but my relief was weed, and my drug dealer made me sleep with him. I was only using sex to get the weed. It was what calmed me. It's what helped my PTSD."

Female respondents were intimately aware of the dangers of trading sex but, due to the frequent traumas they were experiencing in other aspects of their lives, they were not often deterred from entering such arrangements. One participant reported using social media and dating apps to meet men to drive her home after work in exchange for flirting or kissing. She coldly described getting raped one night by a male who was driving her home and threatened to drop her off in the middle of nowhere in the dark if she didn't have sex with him. "He pulled up to a random place and it was really scary. He just did it, and that was my first time. I was like damn, I can't believe I did that." Even after this night, she continued trading sex and sex acts with strangers for transportation.

Seventy-one percent (42) thought about leaving the commercial sex trade at some point. The circumstances of their exits, or the conditions that forced them to consider leaving, varied widely. A few respondents mentioned pregnancy as the driving force in leaving the commercial sex trade. They spoke about how becoming pregnant changed their outlook on

life or said that they simply could not continue lucrative commercial sex, such as stripping, with a pregnant woman's body.

Many of those who were exploited as minors cited financial reasons for their choices. A female respondent stated that she never wanted to trade sex, but her homelessness and lack of support left her with few options:

"I'm going to keep it real. I started selling my body. I was going from pillar to post, and when you going from pillar to post it's a lot. You do a lot of things to keep money in your pocket to eat, all those type of things, so yeah. I've stripped before. I didn't really like doing those things cause it wasn't something that I enjoyed cause as I was telling you it was always just for the money."

Another female respondent admitted that despite having previously looked down on commercial sex and never picturing herself doing it, she had traded sex not long before the interview. "I'm going to be honest with you, I probably did it like three weeks ago, but I didn't get money. I needed somewhere to go." Even though she recently traded sex, she expressed that she wishes she could stop. "I lost a lot of friends because of me doing what I was doing. But I feel like, damn, you don't understand, you got y'all parents out here, y'all got people that wanna look out for you. I don't have nobody but myself."

Some respondents elaborated on wanting to leave the sex trade but continually getting pulled back. One female who sold sex both for herself and a third party while underage said:

"It's been plenty of times that I told them I would never go back to that lifestyle and then I always found myself in a position where I kind of

"It's been plenty of times that I told them I would never go back to that lifestyle and then I always found myself in a position where I kind of didn't have a choice but to, because when you don't have a high school diploma and you're putting in for 1,000 job applications a day and you don't hear a callback from anyone, you don't have much left to do."

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A male respondent used to accept money from women for sex when he was a minor. He regrets utilizing his power and taking advantage of others. "It was bad. I'm not gonna lie. You just can't play with people like that. You're not supposed to play with people's lives like that cause their heart is something that you could break easily."

USING THE INTERNET FOR COMMERCIAL SEX

For youth who were victims of sex trafficking, 44% (20) were subjects of an online ad. Although most of the youth who reported being the subject of an Internet ad stated that they were either in control of or consented to the posting, their capacity to consent comes into question as they were often being trafficked by a third party through force, fraud, or coercion at the time, and the placement of the Internet ad was likely under duress. Many of these victims were under the psychological control of their trafficker and/or needed to feel that they were in control of the situation even if they were not.

An example of this implied consent can be found in a female participant who reported being pressured into placing an ad on Backpage for sex when she was 19 years old by a man she believed to be her boyfriend.

"He was encouraging me and pressuring me, but he wasn't physically abusing me until later on. He convinced me because he said that there's a lot of money in it and how I wouldn't have to worry about anything, how he has me and everything's going to be fine... But, long story short, he ended up just taking all the money every time. I didn't mind because I was willing

to. In my head, I thought we were together still. I did that because I wanted him to be there for me, for him to realize that I was a good woman; I just wanted to be with him so badly that I did that."

Many of the youth may not have been truly capable to consent to sell sex online, as the recruitment of clients for commercial sex was tied to threats of harm for non-compliance, or the need to earn money at the demands of a trafficker.

She eventually ended the relationship but continued posting her own ads on Backpage to obtain money to survive. She described getting raped at knifepoint by a man who answered one of her Backpage ads, but felt unable to call the police because it would curtail her business and she needed money to pay for her hotel room that very day.

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Many of the youth may not have been truly capable to consent to sell sex online, as the recruitment of clients for commercial sex was tied to threats of harm for non-compliance, or the need to earn money at the demands of a trafficker. For youth who expressed they had no choice but to sell sex

Male respondents reported more comfort with using the Internet in seeking sex trades.

to survive, they felt that they could take control over what few choices they had left. The psychological control of these youth is evidenced by only three respondents reporting that an ad was placed online to sell them for sex without their *explicit* consent, knowledge, or approval.

Another female respondent was exploited by her boyfriend starting at the age of 14. She reported that he quickly became her pimp, at times using physical violence to force her to sleep with men for money. She was forced to give him most of the money she earned. She knew that he was advertising her for sex on Backpage and Craigslist, but she asserted that the ad was placed "with her consent." She felt very unsafe when meeting up with new clients, and experienced a lot of trauma at the hands of customers. When she told her boyfriend she was unhappy, he replied, "you just do what you have to do to get the money."

The Internet was featured prominently in the sale of commercial sex for those interviewed, with Backpage.com as the leading site utilized. Approximately one-third of the 98 participants who engaged in commercial sex had either utilized the Internet to sell sex commercially or had an ad for commercial sex placed on their behalf. A total of 30 youth and young adults reported

using a variety of websites and platforms to advertise sex or seek commercial sex partners. The site with the largest market share in this study was Backpage.com, with approximately half (14) of the respondents reporting having been the subject of a Backpage ad. In addition, three respondents reported using Craigslist exclusively. The other websites and internet platforms used ranged from traditional dating sites to escort sites to sites aimed at forming illicit relationships as "mistresses" or obtaining "sugar daddies."

Participants who placed an ad on the Internet were more likely to be female (52%) and transgender (17%) than others who engaged in commercial sex. However, male respondents reported more comfort with using the Internet in seeking sex trades. In fact, one respondent stated that he felt safe meeting people on Backpage because he was male. Whether they used dating sites to secure "sugar mamas" or "sugar daddies," or posted specific ads for commercial sex, the males interviewed reported feeling in control of the situation.

Backpage.com had a strong presence among homeless youth interviewed for this study. Youth

Close to half (47%) of the respondents who had used the Internet to sell sex were underage at the time their ads appeared.

often were introduced to the online sale of sex through friends, and even if they had not personally placed an ad on the Internet to sell sex, they know someone who has. This behavior became normalized and even supported by youth's social networks. One transgender female was pressured into using Backpage by her friends. She reported, "My friends that were prostitutes were doing it and they just showed me how to do it and I just went from there."

Close to half (47%) of the respondents who had used the Internet to sell sex were underage at the time their ads appeared. Although their reasons for ending up in an online ad varied, these young people managed not to be flagged as underage by lying about their age or other demographics. They were also careful to use payment methods that could not be tracked. One female reported that she started paying for her own ads on Backpage when she was 16, stating that it was easy to go to the pharmacy and put money on a prepaid card. Another participant said that, when she was 17, her friend posted an ad for her on Backpage seeking money for sex. The posting said she was 21.

One young woman reported putting her first ad on Backpage when she was 16 years old. She was living in a hotel room and used Backpage to assure that she had enough clients to pay for the room. She reported that she used a prepaid Visa card to promote her Backpage ad so it remained at the top of the list.

Another female respondent reported being coerced into prostitution while on vacation with a friend's family, later finding out that her friend's mother had posted an ad on Backpage advertising her for sex.

Many underage youth utilized the Internet to seek commercial sex partners. A female participant first used Backpage at the age of 16 because her older sister was selling sex and introduced the idea to her. She obtained a pre-paid drugstore card and posted an ad online for sex. She reported that her customers ranged in age from 18 years to mid-50's. Later, after this participant turned 18 and was struggling financially, another woman offered to pay for her Backpage ads and a hotel room; in exchange, this young woman had to give the woman 40% of what she made throughout the night.

One young woman described having a friend who put up a sex ad for her on Craigslist. She described her friend always putting her in dangerous situations. She acknowledged that this friendship was not good for her, but felt that she had no choice.

Another participant spoke of her ambivalence about being the subject of an internet-based ad.

"My friend was on Backpage, she was like 'you about to have a baby. I don't know how you're going to do this,' and it was like what she was saying was true but at the time it was like, damn, I don't know what to do. She's right. So she made a page and then somebody called and they came but when they touched me I felt so disgusted. I

did it, but I didn't like that feeling. It was like I was ashamed. And then he left the money right there and I didn't even want to take it. I didn't even want to touch it."

Some of those interviewed described being the subject of internet ads placed under circumstances of fraud or coercion. One young woman reported that she was recruited into a prostitution ring through trickery and false promises by a madam via a private message on Facebook.

"[The woman] said 'it's me and two other girls. We travel a lot. We make up to \$1,000 a day. You could keep \$1,000 in your pocket. You'll have your own room. It's a nice setup. There's a nice, big house.' And it was never the way she said it was but I couldn't leave because I had nowhere to go, so I had to stay until I came to Covenant House."

All of the girls living in the apartment were posted on Backpage by the madam to arrange dates. This young woman never earned the money she was promised. This participant, although now a citizen, was particularly vulnerable as she was foreign-born and posted as a university foreign exchange student.

LABOR TRAFFICKING

Contrary to the findings on sex trafficking and other types of exploitation discussed thus far, straight males with higher rates of education were at greater risk for labor trafficking than others. Seventy-three percent of labor trafficking victims identified as male, as opposed to 31% of sex trafficking victims. The rate of college entry among labor trafficking victims (27%) was three times that of sex trafficking victims (9%) and 36% had achieved up to a high school diploma, 14 percentage points more than the 22% of sex trafficking victims. Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) were straight, greater than the 60% who were victims of sex trafficking.

Family or caregivers utilized force or coercion with most of the participants who experienced labor trafficking. That was particularly true with drug sales, where male respondents discussed the appeal of doing work suggested by family, despite having reservations. One young man said when he was 13, his uncle brought him into the drug trade stating, "He just like bribed me I guess. He was saying that I could get a lot of money; he'd give me whatever I want. So I was like 'why not do this little favor.' Well, I thought it was little at the time but it wasn't." Despite the lack of overtly expressed force or coercion, many of these young people were unable to refuse to comply due to the power differential and/or relationship with adults in their lives.

Another male says he grew up near the United States-Mexico border in what was considered a "distribution house." His family was known for transporting drugs and people over the border, and as a young child he was required to support the family

A female obtained employment at a grocery store under the condition that she move in with the store owner ... Outside of the store, she was required to clean, provide childcare, and have sexual relations in the home.

operation. Thinking back to when he was 12 years old, he said, "My mom was doing her own part, as in like distributing stuff, and me and my brother were doing our own part—pretty much watch the house and make sure everything's good to go."

Although female labor trafficking victims were also involved in forced drug sales—one Native American participant was required by her father to distribute drugs on an Indian reservation as a child—there were also some incidences of forced domestic labor. One female respondent moved in with her boyfriend's family after a psychiatric hospitalization and homelessness, and his family forced her to work in their cleaning and landscaping business. She felt like his family took advantage of her by having her do unpaid work. She added they never accepted her and constantly threatened to break up her relationship, putting her back out on the streets, so she continued working for them without pay.

Another female obtained employment at a grocery store under the condition that she move in with the store owner, who was polygamous and resided with multiple “wives” and children. She was homeless, and despite her reservations, she agreed. Although she generally enjoyed the work at the grocery, she felt she was not compensated fairly for her hours. Outside of the store, she was required to clean, provide childcare, and have sexual relations in the home. Of her “boss,” she said: “He made me feel like I have no other option. He put me in positions that hindered me from finding other options. At that time it was my job and I didn’t have anywhere to go.”

Traffickers often isolated their victims from other relationships and resources. One male participant who was not a United States citizen escaped his home country to arrive in South America, where he met someone who offered to help him find work and go to school. He lived with this man for nine months, working on a farm and doing household chores, but never had access to money, personal

Seventy-three percent of labor trafficking victims identified as male, as opposed to 31% of sex trafficking victims.

One gay youth reported feeling uncomfortable at work since his boss was “anti-gay.” Another said his hours were mysteriously reduced after he came out as gay.

resources, a phone or school. When he asked about money and school, his exploiter threatened to call the police or have him sent back to his country of origin. He finally ran away, survived on the streets, and then connected with a refugee organization that helped him resettle in the United States.

Despite elevated risk of labor trafficking for some groups, rates of entry into labor trafficking were low across the board. Only 6% (15) of the 270 study participants were victims of labor trafficking. Even though males were at higher risk of labor trafficking than others, their risk of labor trafficking (7%) was still lower than their risk of sex trafficking (9%). The same holds true when the sexual orientation and education of respondents is taken into account.

EXPLOITATION EXPERIENCE THAT DID NOT RISE TO THE LEVEL OF TRAFFICKING

Table 4 shows the rates at which homeless youth perceived experiencing various types of coercion or exploitation. Three-quarters (75%) of the sample were victims of either (1) psychological or financial coercion by an employer, (2) subject to undue financial control from an employer, or (3) exchanged sex for either money or some other good or service.

The degree to which this group reflects the full sample overall belies the diversity of exploitative stresses and traumas they have experienced. Two-thirds of all participants (182 youth) were either psychologically or financially coerced to remain in employment situations in which they did not feel comfortable. Forty-one percent of all participants, as seen in Table 4, worked in situations that made them feel scared or unsafe. Selling drugs was the most common reason expressed, although participants varied in whether or not they considered drug sales risky or dangerous work. For many, although they acknowledged the work as objectively dangerous, when prompted with the question “Have you ever worked in a place that made you feel scared or unsafe,” they reported that they have not. Participants described a great deal of knowledge and “street smarts” in surviving in their neighborhoods, and were able to find ways to engage in the drug trade that did not cause them anxiety or fear for their own safety.

In all three cities, youth spoke openly about drug sales from a “trap house”—residences known

Two-thirds of all participants were either psychologically or financially coerced to remain in the complement situations in which they did not feel comfortable.

within communities where drug sales and distribution occurs. The trap houses referenced by the survey participants had anywhere from two to twenty people living inside, all participating in the drug trade in some way. Related to drug sales, some participants worked as “lookout” or “muscle” for drug organizations, providing security to those selling, through firearms or physical aggression. Nationwide, the youngest age at which a participant reported entering the drug trade was eight years old.

Other participants reported legal or under-the-table jobs that still put them at risk of physical harm, ranging from working retail jobs in “bad neighborhoods” where they were robbed at gunpoint to doing unregulated construction or electrical work where they were at risk of falling or being exposed to live wires.

A few respondents took jobs as package couriers, earning up to \$100 per trip for each package delivered. The respondents told similar stories of not being able to open the packages, not knowing what was inside, and operating

TABLE 4: RATES OF EXPLOITATION AND COERCION AMONG HOMELESS YOUTH

	#	%
Psychological/Financial Coercion	182	67%
Actual work different than promised	143	54%
Feel scared or unsafe at work*	111	41%
Witnessed another employee being hurt or Threatened	45	38%
Threatened by employer	47	36%
Tricked or forced into doing work	74	28%
Pressured to continue	22	15%
Afraid to leave or quit work due to fears of violence	32	12%
Employer threatened to report to police	12	4%
Types of Control Used by Employer	103	38%
Told to lie about work	66	24%
Employer controlled money without consent	52	19%
Employer restricted contact to friends/family/outside World	30	11%
Sexual Exploitation (Commercial or Survival Sex)	98	36%

*Work was defined on the HTIAM as “Anything you have done where you or someone else received something of value, such as money, food, clothing, a place to stay, protection, drugs or gifts in exchange for your work or efforts. Using this definition, “work” could mean stripping, prostitution, shoplifting, running drugs, or anything where efforts were exchanged for something of value. Employers could include a family member, a friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, or anyone you lived with or were in a relationship with.”

under fear of physical retaliation or death if they did not follow instructions.

In addition to not feeling safe, many (143) found that their work was different from what they were promised, and 74 reported that they were tricked or forced into the work. Again, selling drugs was the most frequent occurrence, with many participants saying that their friends or family members forced them into the work. Often, pressure by friends and acquaintances was a major factor in the youth's decision to get involved in the drug trade. Other respondents felt forced to assault or rob people as part of their own involvement in the drug trade or "game," as the drug trade is often called in their neighborhoods.

One youth expressed feeling that employers and others offering work, including exploiters and pimps, are always looking for ways to trick people. She answered a flyer ad for a hotel cleaning job and learned at the interview that the job instead was for an escort. She immediately fled and expressed hesitancy about seeking new work with strangers.

Finally, some youth reported being forced by family members to work in legitimate jobs as part of the family business, such as construction or clothing design, but not feeling as though they had a choice in the matter since their families were still providing for them. Although such responses may not be characterized as trafficking, respondents frequently described a narrative where they felt exploited and under-valued.

Examples of manipulative payment structures mostly centered on advertising, door-to-door sales, or canvassing, in which youth were offered an hourly wage or salary at the interview but, upon completing some work, they learned that they would be compensated only on commission. Other youth agreed to work in what they later described as pyramid or "get rich quick" schemes, such as selling cell-phones, that turned out to be fraudulent, and there was no money to be earned.

Under-the-table jobs were a big source of frustration for the youth who participated in the survey. Across a variety of industries, including construction, landscaping/snow removal, odd jobs or babysitting, youth often reported not receiving the full payment that was agreed upon. Whether they worked for family members, neighbors or formal bosses, many youth experienced what they perceived to be manipulation in the final payment of money owed. Although situations such as these, in and of themselves, don't always rise to the level of labor trafficking as defined by law, young people are often exploited by the offer of illegitimate work.

For youth who successfully obtained legal employment, there were still examples of exploitation. Many youth reported working for minimum wage, despite being offered a higher salary during the interview. This was most prevalent in fast food restaurants. In retail store jobs the most common complaint was not being paid for staying late or being told they were not eligible for overtime pay even when they believed they

were. Further, some respondents who held legitimate jobs were discouraged when employers did not pay them on time, or even when paychecks bounced. One participant summed it up by saying, "even legal work is sometimes not presented fairly."

Thirty-eight percent (103) reported that their employer exerted explicit control over their finances or contact with loved ones, with half of these respondents (52) stating that their employer controlled their money without their consent, and 66 were told to lie about their work. Less frequently, 12% of the respondents reported being afraid to leave or quit a work situation due to fear of violence or threat of harm. A few young men who participated in the study indicated that if they knew too much about any gang or

Nationwide, the youngest age at which a participant reported entering the drug trade was eight years old.

drug activity, the only way out was "in a body bag." Thus, some dealt with this by remaining affiliated as gang members, still maintaining ties and personal connections, but being less involved in street gang activities. Others were in hiding from gangs, sometimes even seeking homeless shelter services in a different city. For the young men

who worked as package couriers, they too were aware that if they did not leave on good terms with their employers, their physical safety might be at risk.

When asked if an employer had ever kept earnings in exchange for transportation, food, or rent, or otherwise controlled the money, 19% of respondents, nearly one in five, said yes. This was most common in the commercial sex arena, where the line between exploiter, provider, and partner often becomes blurred.

Thirty respondents, 11% of the total sample and 15% of those who experienced coercion, indicated that they had worked for someone who tried to limit their contact with friends, family, or the outside world, thereby creating dependence on the employer. This was most common for young women who were exploited and trafficked by a third party or pimp, as discussed earlier in this report.

Finally, 24% of youth reported being asked to lie when speaking about the work they have done. For youth who sold drugs there was an awareness that one had to hide the illegal activities, and they knew this without being told. Similarly for youth in gangs, participants were not explicitly told to lie but knew that their safety depended on their secrecy.

Many youth in formal and legal work situations were asked to lie about things that made them

uncomfortable, although these experiences did not necessarily define them as victims of human trafficking. Some youth who were hired and paid fairly to do a job were asked to lie about their age if they were minors. Other participants reported being asked to lie about commercial products being sold, such as cooking old meat in fast food restaurants, selling old produce in grocery stores, or being told to lie about a product or benefits during telemarketing and door-to-door work.

Whether or not the youth responded in the affirmative to any of the HTIAM-10 questions, many participants discussed what they perceived as discrimination or exploitation in legal or formal work. This was particularly true for youth who identified as LGBTQ. One gay youth reported feeling uncomfortable at work since his boss was "anti-gay." Another said his hours were mysteriously reduced after he came out as gay. A transgender female reported anti-trans policies in her workplace, including being forced into using a bathroom not matching her gender.

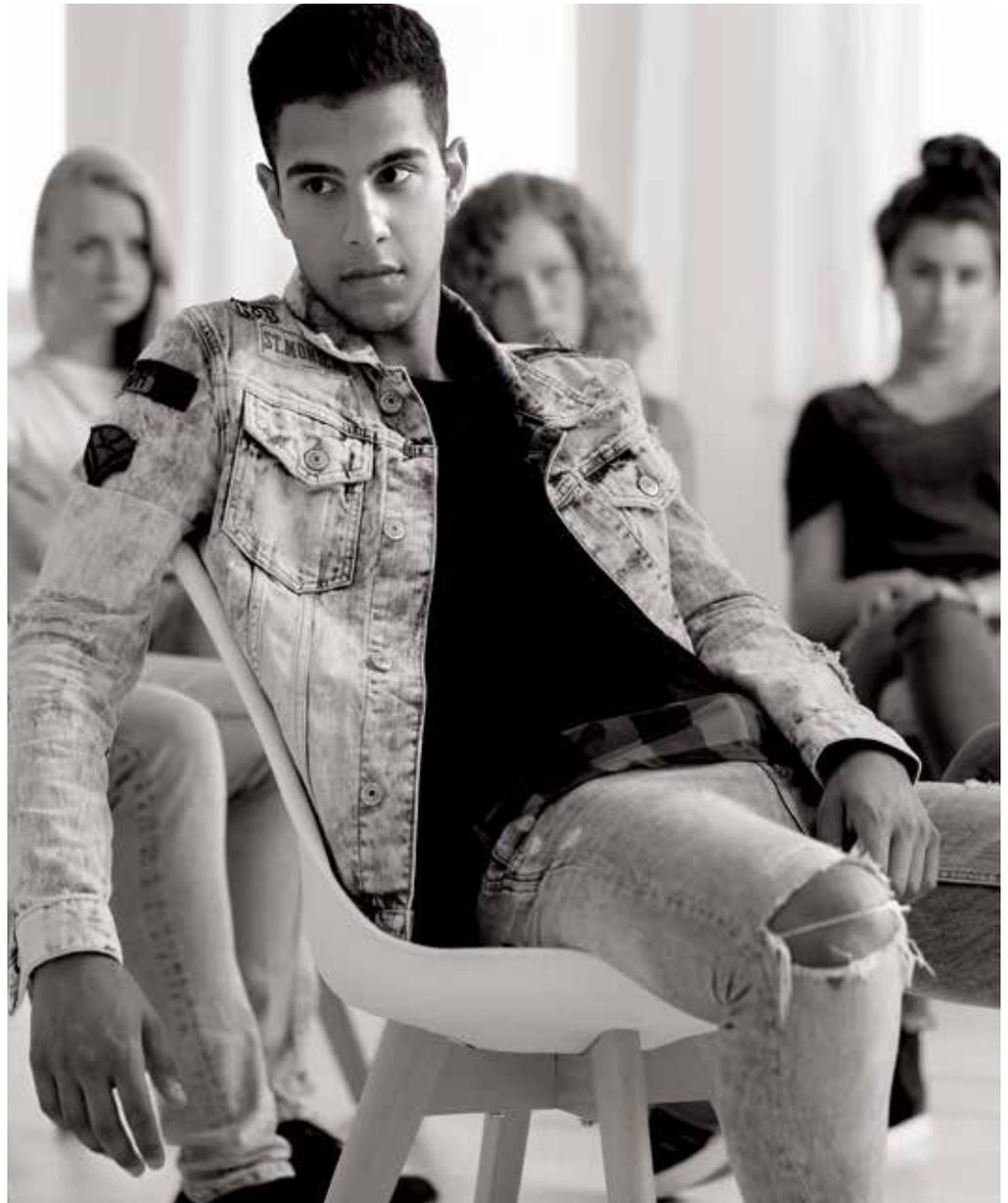
Many straight youth also described distressing or unfair situations at work. One female reported being fired after refusing sex with her boss, and other females described unwanted sexual advances. Others of all genders felt a general sense of unfairness in the workplace, being assigned more responsibilities than others or blamed for other's mistakes. They often pointed to their young age or vulnerabilities as making them easy targets.

Thirty-eight percent reported that their employer exerted explicit control over their finances or contact with loved ones, with half of those respondents stating that their employer controlled their money without their consent.

Child Welfare Factors: CWSS Findings

Beyond the HTIAM-10 instrument, the 98 study participants who engaged in commercial sex were asked a series of supplemental questions comprising the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey (CWSS) related to their welfare as children, including any history of child abuse and/or neglect, child welfare system involvement, experience in out-of-home placement, and perceptions of social supports. Responses shed light on how childhood experiences during youth might correlate to risk for sex trafficking and whether there were distinctions between those who experienced sex trafficking and those who experienced other forms of commercial sex but were not trafficked. The nuances between the experiences of youth who engaged in the sex trade as a legitimate means of income vs. those who were victims of sex trafficking or engaged in commercial sex for the sole purpose of survival can help illuminate both risk and protective factors.

Ninety-five percent of victims of sex trafficking experienced some type of maltreatment as minors.



CHILD MALTREATMENT

Eighty-two percent of the 98 respondents who answered the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey reported having been maltreated as children. The type of maltreatment, and the perpetrators of that maltreatment, varied widely. Sexual abuse was the most common form of maltreatment, with 54% (43) of those reporting some maltreatment reporting having experienced this type of abuse. Physical abuse (40%) and neglect (28%) were the next most common types of maltreatment. Only five percent reported explicit emotional abuse only, and 13% reported having experienced more than one type of abuse.

Ninety-five percent of victims of sex trafficking experienced some type of maltreatment as minors, compared to 73% of those who experienced other forms of commercial sex but were not trafficked. Figure 9 shows the different rates of maltreatment type based on whether or not a youth had been sex trafficked. There were no statistically significant differences in the types of maltreatment experienced by those who were involved in commercial sex based on whether or not he or she was sex trafficked. Sexual abuse rates were nearly equal (49% among those who were sex trafficked, vs. 47% who engaged in commercial sex but were not trafficked). These rates provide a stark contrast to rates of sexual abuse seen in the general population, with the rate of sexual abuse among sex-trafficking survivors found to be *over four times higher* than the lifetime prevalence rate of sexual abuse in the general population of 10.5% (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman,

1994). Additionally, the Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4) found a child sexual abuse prevalence rate of 1.8 per 1,000 (Sedlak et al., 2010).

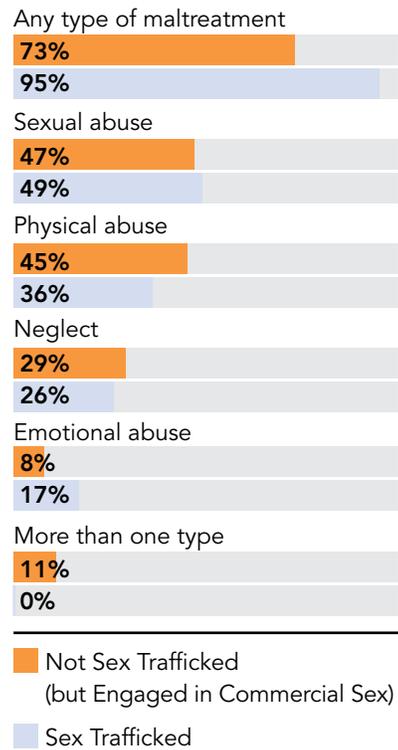
The rate of sexual abuse for those who were sex trafficked was significantly higher than that found in two earlier studies examining the rate of sexual abuse among homeless and runaway youth. Of a sample of 223 homeless and runaway youth in New York State, 21% were reported to have experienced sexual abuse (Powers, Eckenrode & Jaklitsch, 1990), and 29% of 372 homeless and runaway youth in Seattle indicated that they had been sexually abused (Tyler & Cauce, 2002).

For many respondents, the history of maltreatment was lengthy, spanning many years and life stages, and involving multiple perpetrators, and this did not appear related to sex trafficking vs. other forms of commercial sex. More than half of those who reported maltreatment indicated that their earliest incidence of abuse occurred when they were five years old or younger, and all but a handful reported that their maltreatment began at 10 or younger. The abuse lasted for an average of five years, and respondents typically experienced two to three distinct episodes of maltreatment.

One female trafficking victim identified significant dysfunction in her biological family. When she was seven years old, her father tried to sell her to men for sex to feed his drug addiction. She recalls that no one ever offered

Figure 9

TYPES OF MALTREATMENT BY SEX TRAFFICKED STATUS



him enough money. She was also sexually abused by her mother's boyfriends and physically abused by her extended family. When she was finally placed in foster care, she thought things would change, but she continued to be sexually victimized by peers, and even reports physical assaults from some of the staff in her subsequent group home placements.

Regardless of trafficking status, emotional abuse and neglect took a significant toll on psychosocial development and future life choices. One respondent, who

was currently battling a drug addiction and had been tricked into prostitution, reflected on her distant relationship with her adoptive parents, commenting:

“How about pay attention to your kid’s life and see that it’s going the wrong way and that she really isn’t acting right every day and that that’s just not her mental state, that’s something else. Maybe pay attention to why your liquor’s going missing every day when you go to try to take a drink and half of it’s gone and you just bought the bottle. Maybe you should wonder why she’s always wearing these really long shorts in the summer, trying to hide things. Maybe you should look at why she wears all these bracelets on her arms. Maybe when she shows you one day that she cut her arm that you don’t just give up on her and just be like, you know what, I don’t care. Maybe you should show a little more support from the beginning and be a little more there.”

Immediate family members were the most likely people to abuse respondents. Fifty-nine percent of those who experienced maltreatment were abused by a parent, and about 48% were abused by a sibling or other relative. Four percent (3) were abused by a guardian appointed to them through the child welfare system. Rates generally varied little between those who were sex trafficked and those who experienced commercial sex but were not sex trafficked, as seen in Figure 10, with one exception. Thirty-one percent of those who were sex trafficked reported being abused by someone other than a biological parent or other relative

or guardian, compared to 16% of youth who experienced commercial sex but were not sex trafficked.

Sixty-two percent (45) of youth who were maltreated reported that they told someone about their maltreatment and, of those, only 47% (23) stated that some action was taken as a result of reporting the maltreatment. Taken together, of the 74 youth who were maltreated, less than one third were able to see any direct action to address the maltreatment. This was an important distinction between youth who were victims of sex trafficking, and those who experienced commercial sex but were not sex trafficked, as seen in Figure 11. Only 36% of sex trafficking victims who informed someone of maltreatment saw a resultant action, compared to 64% of those who experienced commercial sex but were not sex trafficked.

In addition, only 69% (53) of those who experienced abuse or neglect reported receiving any help or services, formal or informal, related to their maltreatment. Participants varied on their opinions of prior therapeutic services; some youth felt that talking about personal things was not comfortable for them or felt that their therapists were simply getting “paid to listen to them.” Others cited positive outcomes from the help they received, including learning coping skills and having someone to talk to. One female reported, “I finally started opening up at placement. We would do girl groups. I felt comfortable around other girls.”

Figure 10

PERPETRATOR BY SEX TRAFFICKED STATUS

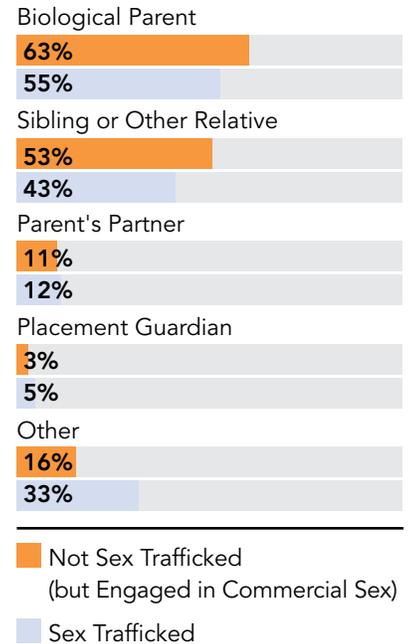
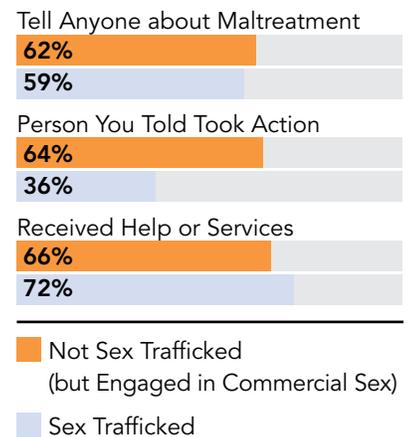


Figure 11

RECEIVING HELP FOR MALTREATMENT





LIVING SITUATION

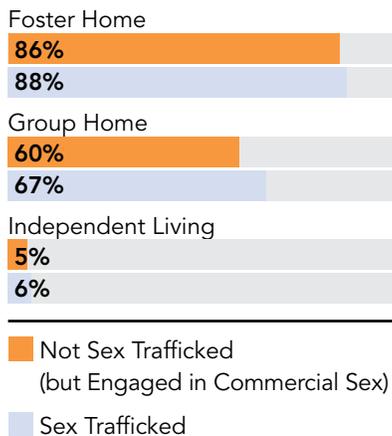
The youth who answered the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey indicated severe residential instability growing up. This was true regardless of sex trafficking status. Eighty-four youth (88%) lived in at least one place without a biological parent and more than half (50) said that, at some point before their 18th birthday, they did not have a place to live. All but seven had lived in at least two places, with someone other than a parent, friend, or significant other. The modal response (19) was having lived in two places, but 24 said that they had lived in at least 10 places, including seven that answered 20 or more residences; in addition, three indicated that they had lived in too many places to count.

Sixty-three percent (56) of youth who answered the CWSS indicated that they had been involved in the child welfare system, and 41% (39) were removed and placed outside of their homes by the child welfare system at some time during their youth, with experiences in the system varying widely. Eighty-seven percent of them were placed into a foster home, 63% were in a group home, and 5% (2) were placed into independent living environments. As Figure 12 demonstrates, there were no stark differences between sex trafficking victims and others who engaged in commercial sex.

Although one and two were the most commonly reported number of placements (10 and 5, respectively), 10 participants reported having 10 or more different placements. Examinations of child welfare involvement revealed the biggest differences between youth from different cities.

Figure 12

PLACEMENT SETTING FOR YOUTH PLACED IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE BY SEX TRAFFICKED STATUS



Youth interviewed in Philadelphia had twice as many placements in foster homes (average of 4.75) and nearly twice as many placements in group homes (4.06) than the homeless youth from either Phoenix or Washington, DC.

Youth in foster care frequently spoke of feeling like they didn't belong in the family or being treated differently than biological

Eighty-four youth (88%) lived in at least one place without a biological parent and more than half said that, at some point before their 18th birthday, they did not have a place to live.

children in the home. One participant stated "[my foster mother] treated her other kids like she loved them and treated me like I was nothing."

Another respondent reported living in approximately ten different foster homes. She said that she was devastated to be taken away from her mother when she was initially placed. She felt like she had been separated from her best friend. Of her placements, she reported, "None of [the homes] really fit me as a person. I was really rebellious because of all of the behavior problems with me moving and getting to know new people."

Despite the abuse experienced in their biological families, some youth expressed that their family of origin was still preferable to foster care, resulting in frequent placement moves and disruptions. One male participant reports that he was in nearly 20 foster homes because he and his brothers always ran away from placement. He said, "We always ran to what we know—family. We always found a way to find them cause they didn't move us far."

A female respondent who was in out-of-home care from the age of 10 to 18 described the impermanence in group home placement and shared how this made her feel like nobody cared about her. She frequently ran from her group homes, admitting that she sometimes had sex just to have somewhere to stay. She did not like feeling scrutinized in her placements and constantly being diagnosed with different disorders. "I felt they just wanted to get rid of me cause when I was in placement I didn't want to talk to anybody."

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Caring Adults. Despite their reported maltreatment, the majority of respondents indicated the presence of a caring adult (other than a caregiver) throughout their lives. Sixty-six percent of youth reported having a caring adult in their lives while under the age of 18, and 72% said they had one at the time of the interview. These figures varied based on whether or not youth were sex trafficked, as shown in Figure 13. Youth who were sex trafficked were 15 percentage points less likely to report having a caring adult in their lives while under the age of 18 than those who experienced commercial sex but weren't sex trafficked; that gap was narrower (7 percentage points) to describe the current presence of a caring adult, thus indicating that those who had a caring adult present in their lives were less likely to be sex trafficked.

Who they saw as a caring adult, however, varied widely. Respondents mentioned a variety of extended family members, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings, as providing support to them when they were children. One female respondent credited her grandfather for believing in her, stating, "My grandfather was the one that I could turn to for anything. I'll say he was my inspiration."

Another described a supportive relationship that he valued: "My 'adoptive grandma' - she's just an older lady that's always been a part of my life and never gave up on me, so she's earned my respect and the title is grandma."

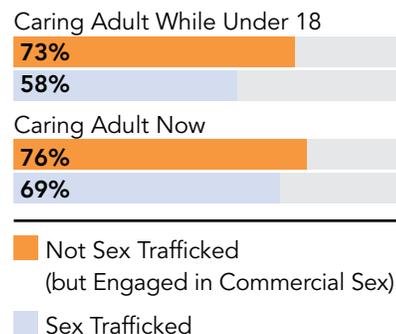
Participants also distinguished between different types of support and what a caring adult in their life can offer. Although one female participant identified an aunt as a caring adult in her life, when asked if she still had an adult she could rely on, she replied, "It's still kind of my aunt, but just on certain things."

Others took this as an opportunity to reflect on how adults in their life impacted them in positive ways. One respondent stated:

"My teacher was one of them. I don't remember if it was like third or fourth grade, but she was my teacher and she treated me a little different from the other students cause she knew that something was wrong. She'd wait till the class was over, and she'd ask me what was going on, and sometimes she'd let me sit there and cry. She just cared. She tried to intervene, and when she did they pulled me out of the school. She went to the school district board to file a complaint against my parents."

Figure 13

PRESENCE OF A CARING ADULT BY SEX TRAFFICKING STATUS

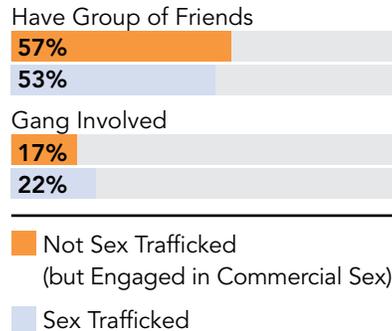


Youth who were sex trafficked were 15 percentage points less likely to report having a caring adult in their lives while under the age of 18 than those who experienced commercial sex but weren't sex trafficked.



Figure 14

SELF-IDENTIFIED PEER RELATIONS



Peer Relationships. In addition to caring adults, many youth also reported having peer supports on which they could rely. Fifty-two youth (55%) reported having a group of friends that they could rely on, and 18 (19%) reported being involved in a gang. As shown in Figure 14, sex trafficked youth were slightly less likely than others who engaged in commercial sex to say they had a group of friends, and were slightly more likely to have been involved in a gang.

Some youth proudly claimed membership in national gangs, including Bloods, Crips, and Gangster Disciples, while others vaguely indicated that they were “affiliated.” Particularly in Philadelphia, gang activity sometimes included affiliation with smaller local groups, named by neighborhoods. Although several shared stories about violence within the gang and difficult exits, some noted that these were people you could rely on if you needed something or who provided protection and safety in a community otherwise difficult to survive in, even if gang membership required participation in illegal activities. One young person noted, “They’re not as bad as you might think.”

PERSONAL RESILIENCE

Several open-ended questions were asked in order to understand their perspectives on potential resilience/protective factors related to both preventing victimization and coping strategies.

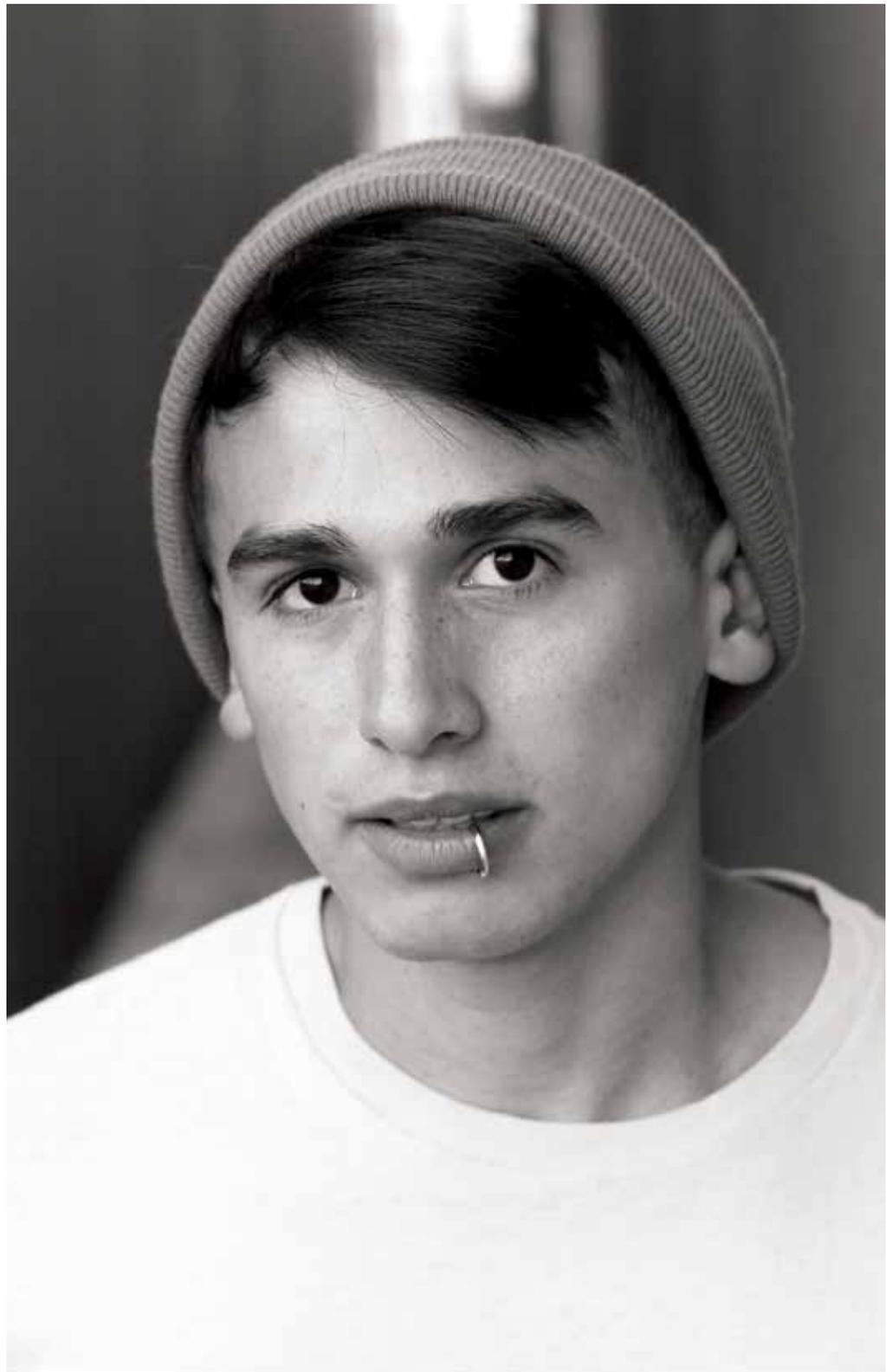
Participants were asked if there was anything that might have helped to prevent them from being trafficked or helped them leave their situation, and how others might have provided assistance. Three themes emerged as most salient: (1) having family/parents, (2) having someone other than parents who cared about them, and (3) having the support of one's community and programming. As one participant said,

"I wish that my mom had been more working with me than against me, being more there for me. I wouldn't have had to go out and do other things to make myself fit in or feel like I was not wanted at my home. If I had more love from my mom, basically, because I had went from being taken to being in foster care and then recently gone back home with my mom. Basically just having family, love and support."

Another participant commented on both parents.

"I wish I had a mother that was alive. I wish I had a father that was there. I wish I had a family that wasn't so screwed up. I wish I had a family that was on good mental terms. I wish I had a supportive family."

In addition to parents and family, participants also reflected on the role of other caring adults and how such individuals could have served a protective role and prevented



them from being sex trafficked. For example, one young man stated, "If I'd just reached out or told others, but being the kind of guy I am, I'm not really going to talk about that stuff. It's embarrassing. It's shameful; it made me feel like an abomination."

Another participant reflected on feeling alone, stating, "I wish I had somebody that was there to tell me like don't—I don't know, just somebody there for me. I was out there by myself."

Participants also discussed the role of community support and programs as potentially having been able to prevent them from being trafficked or leaving earlier. One young person discussed what was missing.

"Resources. It's a lot of for-yourself. I wish I would have had more community resources from people that I know.... The whole time I was homeless, I only had one guy approach me and tell me that there's some places that could help me out of this situation. I'm pretty sure that out of all the people that probably seen me, somebody else probably knew something that could help me."

A second young person listed the array of supports that are needed to help prevent youth from becoming victims of trafficking.

"I would say to support these young men and woman out here that are at least under the age of 26 years old that you see on the streets, to prevent them from doing what they do, from what they have in the streets, provide them with shelter, provide them

with food, provide them with books that they can actually put their nose into cause a lot of these young men and women out here, they're trapped within this world."

Another open-ended question asked participants what assistance or information they wish they had been given to help them learn to live on their own. Two primary areas emerged: learning independent living skills and having a supportive adult/mentor available to teach them these skills. At least twenty-five young people endorsed independent living skills, especially financial literacy and money management skills.

"The cost of living, the savings account, the checking account, just all that stuff, what credit is, how to file taxes. I didn't have nobody. I still am working on all of them things now as far as like building my credit and stuff like that. I didn't know I needed credit to get an apartment. I didn't know I needed credit to get a car or how my credit would determine how much I would have to pay for the car or put down on it."

Similarly, a second young person shared, "My credit score. Checking account, I don't know, everything about money." A third young person related, "Budgeting is a huge one. Oh god, I'm terrible with money! I don't even like having it in my hands. As fast as it comes is as fast as it goes, and now I'm paying bills and I'm like, 'I really need to stop.'" Another young person also stated, "I wish someone had talked to me about how to set up a bank account before turning 18."

"The whole time I was homeless, I only had one guy approach me and tell me that there's some place that could help me out of this situation. I'm pretty sure that out of all the people that probably seen me, somebody else probably knew something that could help me."

Having someone to teach them independent living skills and/or mentor them also emerged as a salient theme for participants. For example, one young person stated, "I just wish I would have had somebody to keep me on the straight and narrow before I made these terrible choices. Somebody like a mentor or something, or somebody to just stay on my back." Similarly, another young person described, "Coaches, someone that can coach a kid or young adult on how to meet goals, how to set up goals, so a coach or a mentor."

A young woman described wishing she had had an adult to teach her about growing up, relationships, and sex. She said, "I never had the mom, the period talk or the birds and bees talk, so I basically got everything from the internet or just from experience. So having more so like a female role model or someone who has similar situations to you."

Participants were also asked what advice they would give other young people going through similar experiences. Three themes emerged: (1) attitude matters, (2) ask for help, and (3) access programs. "Attitude matters" emerged as the most potent theme with nearly 40 participants expressing sentiments pertaining to this theme, offering advice to others based on their own experiences.

"Besides staying strong, I would tell a young person to believe in himself or herself and to look to your future. Is there something that you want to do in the future, do you want to have kids, do you want to be the next president, you know, the first female president of the United

States? I feel like for a female at that time, she needs to have that hope to look to her future, because if you don't look to your future, you have nothing."

Another young person reflected on the importance of thinking about the long-term implications of choices, and trying to stay positive.

"Think about what really matters to you and whatever you can do to change your situation, then do it cause right now it might seem like it's not that much of a big deal, but then 5 years, 10 years, 20 years from now it's gonna be a whole different story. It could be really bad. I would also tell them to think on the bright side, think of how you can make it better. And whatever good advice people give you, take it and use whatever you have to your advantage."

Similarly, another participant shared a history of suicidal ideation, describing a positive attitude as a salvation.

"I'd tell them there's always a way, there's other options, stay strong, and just get there. I was in a black hole and I didn't think I'd make it to this age and I wanted to commit suicide, but it's like, just stay strong, everything happens for a reason; at the end you'll get stronger."

"I just wish I would have had somebody to keep me on the straight and narrow before I made these terrible choices. Somebody like a mentor or something, or somebody to just stay on my back."

Discussion

The Field Center studied homeless youth in three U.S. cities as part of an initiative by Covenant House International to conduct the largest study to date of the prevalence of trafficking among homeless youth, encompassing nearly 1,000 youth across 13 cities. The Field Center interviewed 270 homeless youth in Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington, DC to learn about the prevalence of domestic sex and labor trafficking, as well as the history of child maltreatment, out-of-home placement, and protective factors among those who were sex trafficked and/or engaged in the sex trade to survive.

Prior studies provided similar results. The Covenant House New York City study found that 14.9% of youth in their sample experienced some form of trafficking victimization, consistent with the definition under federal law (Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013). An additional 8%, all of whom were over the age of 18, had engaged in survival sex. In New Orleans, Covenant House found very similar rates, with 14% of the young people having been trafficked by federal legal definitions, and 25% engaging in commercial sex labor (Murphy, Taylor & Bolden, 2015).

The Field Center had very similar findings in its three-city study: 17% of the youth interviewed reported being victims of sex trafficking, 14% engaged in survival sex, and 36% engaged in commercial sexual activity. Six percent reported that they were victims of labor trafficking.

With 67% of homeless females in this study reporting being offered money for sex, it is apparent that homeless youth are particularly vulnerable to traffickers. Youth described being approached for sex in a variety of places, such as gas stations, explaining that they are recognized on the streets as being

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homeless and therefore targeted. As close to one-out-of-four who were offered money for sex had this happen on their very first night of being homeless, this population remains at high risk for victimization.

Among key findings were that several special populations appear particularly vulnerable, including transgender youth. Although the number of transgender youth interviewed was small, it remains noteworthy that this is a population that remains at risk for becoming victimized by sex traffickers.

This study investigated the role of child welfare risk factors for trafficking victimization, including history of maltreatment, involvement in the child welfare system, social support networks, living situation, and preparation for independence. Youth who have been maltreated were particularly vulnerable, with 95% of those who were sex trafficked reporting a history of child abuse or neglect. Similarly, in 2007, New York City identified 2,250 child victims of trafficking. Seventy-five percent of those experienced some contact with the child welfare system, mostly in the context of abuse and neglect proceedings (Saada Saar, 2013). Traffickers target vulnerable youth and lure them into sex trafficking using physical and psychological manipulation, and sometimes they may resort to violence (Children's Bureau, 2015). Children within the care of the child welfare system are particularly susceptible to traffickers who target and take advantage of their emotional and physical vulnerability. Often traffickers/pimps create a seemingly loving or caring relationship with their victim in order to establish trust

and allegiance. This manipulative relationship ensures the youth will remain loyal to the exploiter, even in the face of severe victimization. Traffickers are predators who seek out vulnerable victims. Although a trafficker can target any youth, children in state care or children experiencing trouble at home are especially vulnerable (Children's Bureau, 2015).

When youth exit the foster care system, or are discharged from congregate care, having reached the age of majority ("aging out"), they frequently do so without the benefit of the skills or resources needed to survive. Without access to jobs or adequate wages, skills for independence, a place to live, or connection to a caring adult, youth exiting the child welfare system are particularly vulnerable to traffickers. Numerous youth surveyed reflected on the lack of soft and hard resources, resulting in their victimization. The need for caring adults was evidenced at varying points throughout the study, from responses to questions on what could have made a difference to the low numbers who took action on behalf of trafficked youth when abuse or neglect occurred.

Children within the care of the child welfare system are particularly susceptible to traffickers who target and take advantage of their emotional and physical vulnerability.

The rate of child maltreatment among victims of sex trafficking was found to be an astounding 95%, with sexual abuse the most frequently cited form of abuse. The rate of sexual abuse among homeless youth who were sex trafficked was significantly higher than the rate found in studies on homeless and runaway youth in general, and four times the rate of sexual abuse among the general population.

This study also found differences between those who were victims of sex trafficking and the larger population of those who engaged in the commercial sex trade. Two findings in particular stand out. Those who reported that they had experienced child abuse or neglect told someone about it at similar rates, but those who were sex trafficked reported a significantly lower rate (36% to 64%) of intervention on their behalf. Additionally, those who were sex trafficked reported a lower rate of having a caring adult in their lives. These data offer several hypotheses, including (1) that those who were sex trafficked may have learned to not rely on or trust adults and (2) that those who were sex trafficked may have internalized their victimization experiences, informing both life choices and subjecting them to increased vulnerability. Those who engaged in non-trafficking and non-survival commercial sex may be better equipped to assume and assert control over their lives, vis a vis engaging in commercial sex activities in which they perceive they are in control, versus trafficked youth who may be more vulnerable to exploitation by others.

Data, however, pointed to a potential opportunity to reduce the risk of trafficking for homeless youth. The presence of a caring adult in the lives of youth, and graduation from high school emerged as two potential protective factors. These are worthy of further exploration.

Most human service providers, including child welfare systems, have not developed ways to identify youth at risk of being trafficked in out-of-home care (Mace, 2015; Macy & Graham, 2012). Although recent efforts are targeting services for victims of sex trafficking, little headway has been made to identify who is most at risk and develop interventions aimed at prevention. With an understanding that victims of child maltreatment and those involved in the child welfare system may be at higher risk for victimization, focus on stemming the child welfare to child trafficking pipeline is warranted. Therefore, in order to put in place practices and policies to better protect children with child welfare risk factors, this research has endeavored to better understand the nature of these risk factors and how they come together to create vulnerable trafficking victims. This study's findings lead to actionable recommendations that can identify and potentially predict which youth may be vulnerable to trafficking, inform new strategies at prevention and intervention, and ultimately improve the lives of homeless and runaway youth.

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STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

A significant strength of this study is the level of candid participation by youth participants. There were a variety of reasons why the youth openly shared their thoughts and experiences with the interviewer, including:

- 1. Anonymity:** Because no one will know who they are
- 2. Confidentiality:** Because information will not go in their file and staff will not have access to their responses
- 3. Professional distance:** Because they will never see the interviewer again
- 4. Desire to help:** Because they want to help other youth.

Limitations encountered also deserve comment. One limitation was using a non-probability, purposive sample of youth presenting for services at five programs in three cities rendering results not generalizable to the entire homeless youth population. There could be difference in victimization experiences between homeless youth who seek shelter and those who do not. Youth who are currently being trafficked and those who are being provided shelter through commercial sex activity might not be seeking services from a program providing shelter for homeless youth and therefore would not be represented in the research study.

As all data were self-reported, the researchers have relied on the honesty of the youth participants. Self-reported data also increases the risk of response bias, or an individual's tendency to respond a certain way, regardless of the actual evidence they are assessing. Some participants could over-report experiences, while others may have under-reported experiences. There was also some fear about "true" confidentiality; youth often asked the interviewer if she "promised not to tell anyone." The mandated reporting requirement of the interviewer may have also limited some youth from sharing about illegal activities.

Due to the highly sensitive nature of the topics discussed, there could have very likely been under-reporting of sexual exploitation experiences of some youth, including those not wanting to share personal history with a stranger, and those fearing legal or personal repercussions. Males may have been less likely to acknowledge sexual exploitation out of a sense of shame and fear of stigma (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan, 2008; Willis, Willis, Friedman & Roberts, 2013). Lastly, there was not an even gender distribution across the participants. The overall study results may look different if the participants were more evenly distributed between male and female respondents and if the rate of transgender youth was higher.

Those who reported that they had experienced child abuse or neglect told someone about it at similar rates, but those who were sex trafficked reported a significantly lower rate of intervention on their behalf.

Recommendations

Policy and Practice Recommendations

In light of the findings from this study, which provide the opportunity to make an impact on current policy and practice, we offer the following recommendations:

1. **Utilize data to identify populations at highest risk** for human trafficking and create targeted prevention services.
2. **Support continued and increased funding for programming for homeless youth** on both state and federal levels.
3. **Target street outreach services** to newly homeless youth, and support continued funding of this critical service.
4. **Promote psychoeducational intervention** and access to evidence-based treatment for victims of sexual abuse.
5. As **LGBTQ youth** were found to be frequent targets, develop and implement victimization minimization services for this demographic.
6. Promote **programs that support youth to remain in school** and graduate from high school. Preliminary data indicates that being in school, as opposed to earning a GED, may be a protective factor.
7. Support policies that promote **out-of-home-placement stability** for youth in the child welfare system, as multiple moves place them at greater risk.
8. Assure that youth who exit the child welfare system are financially literate and are provided with **transitional and after-care services** to foster a successful transition to independence.
9. **Identify and foster emotional attachments** for vulnerable children and youth with both family members and other caring adults, including natural mentorship initiatives to help connect at-risk youth with caring adults in their lives. Early identification of and facilitation of such relationships can serve to both prevent youth from becoming victimized and to provide a resource should they end up needing support and assistance.
10. Services and interventions need to acknowledge that being trafficked does not define *who* youth are, but rather it is something that happened to them. This is likely one in a series of traumas they have faced throughout their lives. Therefore, **all services must be trauma-informed**.

Research Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research that will move the field forward, and for which this work lays an important foundation:

1. **Conduct longitudinal work** to prospectively follow a sample of trafficked youth over time to learn how they fare later in life. Similar work has been done with youth who have aged out of foster care (i.e., Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth), and the learning from this seminal work has been critically important for advocacy efforts on behalf of this marginalized population, including extending foster care to age 21. Similar work needs to be done for youth who have been victimized by trafficking in order to provide evidence-based policy recommendations.
2. **Incorporate administrative data** to supplement self-reports of exploitation, victimization, and service system experiences. Administrative data can help address the validity issue with self-report data.
3. **Incorporate standardized measures of health and well-being** to better understand and define the impact of trafficking's impact on these vulnerable youth, building on earlier research.
4. **Further refine the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey (CWSS)** to gather more information about child welfare and protective factors.
5. **Administer the HTIAM and the Child Welfare Supplemental Survey to both trafficked and non-trafficked homeless youth** to further understand the particular risk and protective factors that distinguish the two groups.

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