



2017 Youth Experiences Survey
Year Four

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth Experiences Survey: Exploring the Sex Trafficking Experiences of Homeless Young Adults in Arizona, Year 4.

The Youth Experiences Survey (YES) has been given each year for the past four years to a complex and difficult population to assess. Homeless runaway young adults (ages 18 to 25) are difficult to find and can be difficult to engage and there is limited knowledge about their needs and experiences. This survey was given to homeless young adults in both Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona through a small web of homeless youth-targeted service providers to explore their experiences and service needs. Over the past three years, the findings from the YES study have helped to provide insight to service providers and the community about the challenges and needs of Arizona's homeless young adults. Information from the YES study provides the Arizona community with rich data about the scope and complexity of their needs and challenges including the sex trafficking experiences of these young people.

Identifying sex trafficking among homeless young adults is confounded by access issues which make this population difficult to study- issues such as that they are transient, are difficult to find, and are involved in fewer social service and medical service agencies than other homeless youth due to their status as adults. This study targeted homeless young adults in transitional housing, drop-in centers, and on the streets of Tucson and Phoenix.

A six-page paper survey was distributed to homeless young adults over two weeks in July 2014, July 2015, August 2016, and August 2017 by agency staff from four agencies. This report will begin with a description of the 2017 survey results of the respondents, proceed to compare the respondents that reported that they were sex trafficking victims with the non-sex trafficking victim respondents in the 2017 sample, and then conclude with comparisons across the four years of data collection regarding the experiences of the sex trafficking victims.

Status of Homeless Young Adults in Arizona in the 2017 Youth Experiences Survey

- 187 participants responded to the Youth Experiences Survey in 2017.
- The average age of the 187 homeless young adult respondents was 21.1 years old.
- Males represented 49.2% of the respondents, followed by females at 40.6% and transgender at 7% and other (genderqueer, two-spirit, non-conforming) at 2.7%.
- Of the 160 participants that reported their sexual orientation, 48.8% were heterosexual and 51.2% LGBTQ.
- The homeless young adults reported their living situations as living in a transitional housing program (28.9%), living on the streets (22.5%), living in a shelter (20.9%), couch surfing (15.5%), living in their own place paid by self (5.9%) or living in a hotel (1.6%).

- 52.4% of the respondents were raised in the state of Arizona, while the rest were from 26 other states and four other countries: Canada, Mexico, China, and Japan.
- Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (64.7%) reported that they had used drugs or alcohol, while 16.6% believed they had an addiction to drugs and 10.7% had an addiction to alcohol.
- The drug used most often by the respondents was marijuana (40.1%) followed by methamphetamines (33.2%), and heroin (18.2%).
- A suicide attempt was reported by 102 (54.5%) of the respondents.
- 67.9% (n =127) of the respondents reported experiencing a current mental health problem, 54% (n =101) had more than one mental health problem, with the most common mental health problems identified as anxiety (n = 89, 47.6%) and depression (n = 84, 44.9%).
- Over half (53.5%) of the respondents identified a current medical problem with 24.6% reporting they had received treatment for the identified problem(s).
- The most common medical problems reported included asthma (n = 46, 24.6%) and poor vision (n = 38, 20.3%).

Status of Homeless Young Adult Victims of Human Trafficking in Arizona

Of the overall sample of 187 homeless young adult respondents, 58 (31%) reported experiencing sex trafficking exploitation, and 60 (32.1%) reported experiencing labor trafficking exploitation. At least one form of human trafficking (either sex or labor) was reported by 80 (42.8%) respondents and 38 (20.3%) respondents reported experiencing both sex and labor trafficking exploitation.

Sex Trafficking Findings

- 58 (31%) of the total sample (N = 187) reported experiencing sex trafficking exploitation.
- Over one out of every three (n = 29, 38.2%) female respondents self-reported that they had been sex trafficked.
- One out of four (n = 23, 25%) male participants self-reported a sex trafficking experience.
- The average age of first sex trafficking experience was 16.6 years old with 43.1% reporting that they were sex trafficked before the age of 18.
- 82.8% of the respondents who reported being sex trafficked reported that they had at some point had a sex trafficker, with 6.9% of the respondents reporting the current presence of a sex trafficker.
- The most common reasons identified by the 58 participants that reported sex trafficking victimization were for money (58.6%), for a place to stay (39.7%), and for food (36.2%).
- When comparing the sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents with the non-sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents using an odds ratio test, the sex trafficked group was found to be:

- Nine times more likely to report the self-harm activity of cutting.
- Six times more likely to have a history of sexual abuse.
- Six times more likely to have had a mental health problem/diagnosis.
 - Three times more likely to have diagnosis of Depression.
 - Three times more likely to have a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
 - Four times more likely to have a diagnosis of Anxiety.
 - Three and a half times more likely to have a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder.
 - Three times more likely to have a diagnosis of Schizophrenia.
 - Three times more likely to have a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder.
- Five times more likely to have faced harassment by peers.
- Five times more likely to have more than one mental health problem/diagnosis.
- Four times more likely to report being addicted to drugs.
- Four times more likely to have attempted suicide.
- Four times more likely to have been kicked out of the home because the family did not approve of the respondents' sexual orientation.
- Four times more likely to have run away from home.
- Four times more likely to have a history of emotional abuse by a parent or guardian.
- Three times more likely to have been bullied by school peers.
- Three times more likely to have a history of physical abuse by a parent or guardian.
- Three times more likely to be a methamphetamine user.
- Three times more likely to be addicted to alcohol.
- Three times more likely to have been abused in a domestic violence relationship.
- Three times more likely to have been kicked out of the home due to using substances.
- Two times more likely to be LGBTQ.
- Two times more likely to have witnessed domestic violence in the home as a child.
- Two times as likely to have been the abuser in a domestic violence relationship.

Labor Trafficking Findings

- 60 (32.1%) of the total sample (N = 187) reported experiencing labor trafficking exploitation.
- Over one out of every three (n = 27, 35.5%) female respondents reported that they had been labor trafficked.
- Over one out of every four (n = 25, 27.2%) male participants reported a labor trafficking experience.

- The average age of first labor trafficking experience was 16.5 years old with 35% reporting that they were labor trafficked before the age of 18.
- 66.7% of the respondents who reported being labor trafficked reported that they had at some point had a labor trafficker, with 18.3% of the respondents reporting the current presence of a labor trafficker.
- The most common reasons identified by the 60 participants that reported labor trafficking victimization were for money (66.7%), for food (58.3%), and for a place to stay (55%).
- When comparing the labor trafficked homeless young adult respondents with the non-labor trafficked homeless young adult respondents using an odds ratio test, the labor trafficked group was found more likely to:
 - Seven times more likely to have been abused in a domestic violence relationship.
 - Six times more likely to have a history of sexual abuse.
 - Five times more likely to have participated in self-harm activities including cutting.
 - Five times more likely to have faced harassment by peers.
 - Four times more likely to be addicted to drugs.
 - Four times more likely to have a mental health problem/diagnosis.
 - Four times more likely to have a diagnosis of Depression.
 - Five times more likely to have a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
 - Three times more likely to have a diagnosis of Anxiety.
 - Two times more likely to have a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder.
 - Four times more likely to have a diagnosis of Schizophrenia.
 - Four times more likely to have more than one mental health problem/diagnosis.
 - Three times more likely to have been the abuser in a domestic violence relationship.
 - Three times more likely to have a current medical issue.
 - Three times more likely to have attempted suicide.
 - Two times more likely to have been kicked out by his/her family home.
 - Two times more likely to have witnessed domestic violence in the home as a child.
 - Two times more likely to have a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD.
 - Two times more likely to be a methamphetamine user.
 - Two times as likely to have been enrolled in special education classes.
 - Two times more likely to have a gang affiliation.
 - Two times more likely to have been bullied by school peers.
 - Two times more likely Have a history of physical abuse by a parent or guardian.
 - Two times as likely to have a history of emotional abuse by a parent or guardian.

Four Year Analysis

Sex trafficking was reported by the participants over the four years with an average of 31.4% (ranging from 25.6% to 35.8%). LGBTQ participants were increasingly likely over the four years to report being a sex trafficking victim from 38.4% in 2014 to 60.7% in 2017 of the sex trafficked group. Other increases among the sex trafficked group of participants included reported suicide attempts, reports of more than one mental health diagnosis, and reported diagnoses of depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and bipolar disorder. Regarding the sex trafficking experiences, over the four years, participants reported increased use of technology in their exploitation including the use of backpage.com.

Key Findings

The average age of first homeless for the 187 participants was 16 years old creating a particular set of risks for victimization as they are minors with limited options for employment and many are avoiding contact with child welfare services or any systems (medical, mental health, law enforcement) thus creating even more risks. Homeless young adults who have experienced sex trafficking are at increased risk among their peers to have serious drug and alcohol problems, have experienced abusive childhoods, particularly sexual abuse histories, been in abusive dating relationships, and were more likely to have serious mental health challenges including a history of suicide attempts, depression, anxiety, and Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder. Forty-three percent of the sex trafficked youth were sex trafficked before they were adults and over a third of the participants reporting labor trafficking were minors when they were first labor trafficked. . Due to the broad spectrum of challenges faced by sex trafficked homeless young adults, targeted programming and interventions continue to be recommended.

Brief Conclusion

The experiences of homeless young adults in Arizona continue to be complex and multi-faceted with the necessity to address the resulting problems or challenges with innovation, creativity, and partnerships within each community. Sex trafficked and labor trafficked homeless young adults may appear to have some of the most complex needs among homeless young adults. Screening for sex trafficking and labor trafficking can assist programs in identifying victims and providing intensive and purposefully designed housing and therapeutic interventions addressing a wide array of issues that the victims face. The results of the 2017 YES survey call on Arizona's community to develop a comprehensive approach to screen for both labor and sex trafficking among homeless and runaway young people and to develop community protocols that outline services standards. Additional state and community based funding is necessary to assist providers in maintaining services that meet the complex needs of our homeless youth and young adults.