

2023

YOUTH EXPERIENCES SURVEY

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Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research

Acknowledgements

The 2023 YES Study was made possible by the following eight participating agencies:



Lincoln YMCA PHX350

Flagstaff Homeless Youth Connection



The 2023 YES Study was funded by:

The Kaimas Foundation



Method

Instrument

Participants completed the YES survey via paper-and-pencil surveys (n = 162, 91.5%) and online surveys utilizing SurveyMonkey (n = 15, 8.5%).



91.5%

Paper and
Pencil
Surveys



8.5%

Online
Surveys

Participants

177

homeless young adults from Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff, Arizona, completed the Youth Experiences Survey. Participants completed surveys from eight agencies across the state. Participants of the YES study were receiving services from:


ourfamily services
(n = 62, 35%)


NATIVE AMERICAN CONNECTIONS
(n = 50, 28.2%)

Phoenix 360 YMCA
(n = 32, 18.1%)


SAAF
Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation
(n = 4, 2.3%)


one.n.ten
Today's Youth. Tomorrow's Future.
(n = 10, 5.6%)


HOMELESS YOUTH
connection
(n = 17, 9.6%)

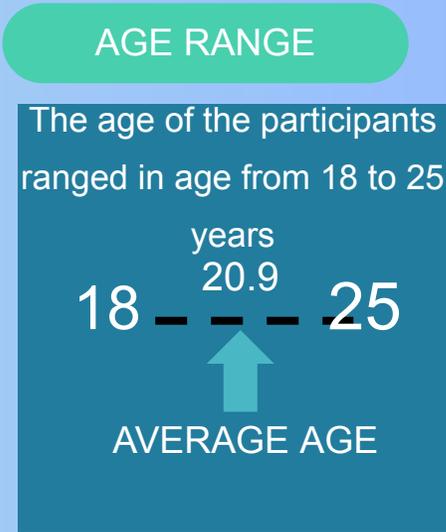
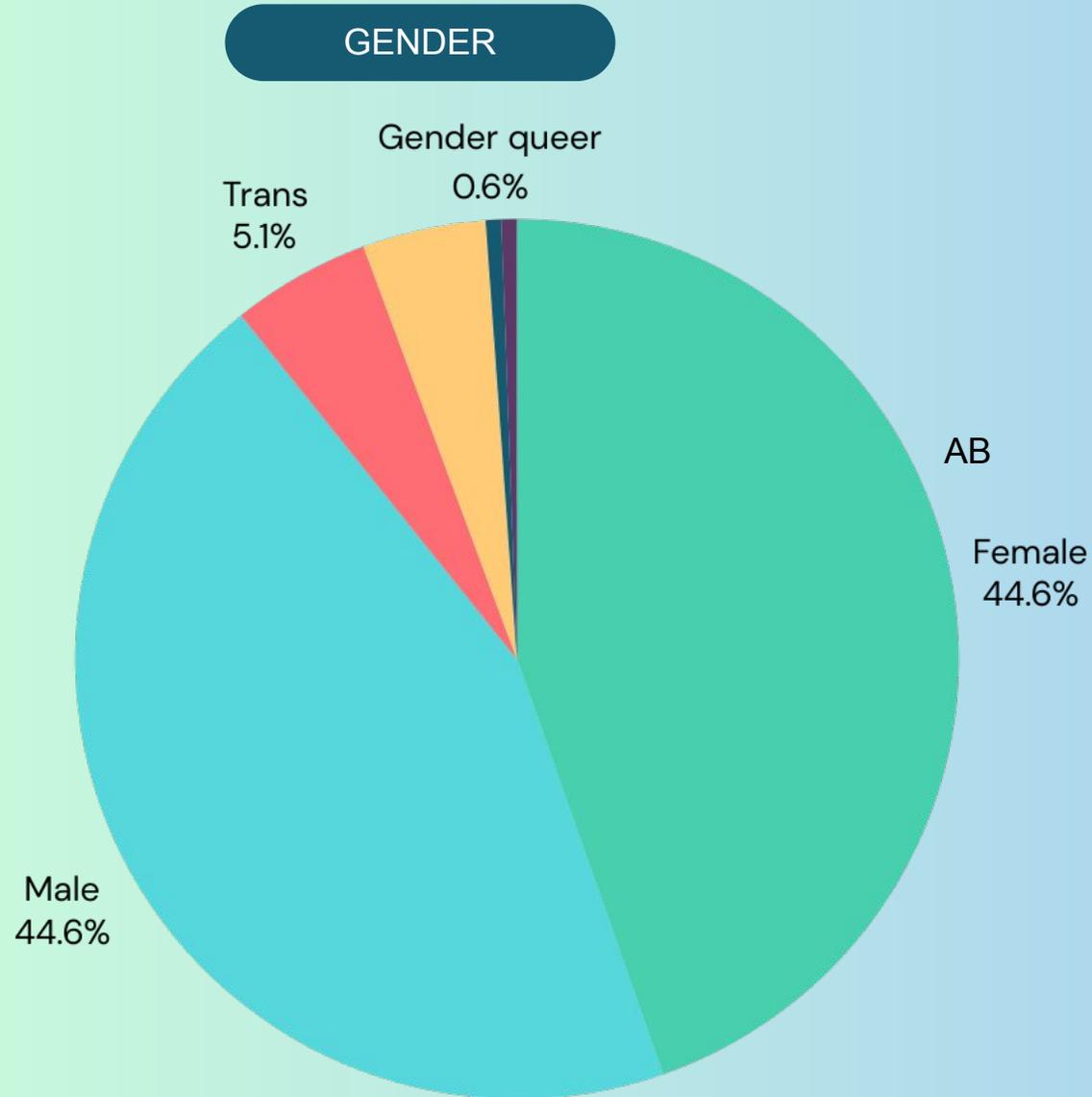

umom
NEW DAY CENTERS
(n = 1, 0.9%)


PHOENIX
DREAM
CENTER
(n = 2, 1.1%)

Setting

Participants responded to the survey from housing programs (n = 160, 90.4%), resource or drop-in centers (n = 15, 8.5%), and street outreach (n = 2, 1.1%).

PARTICIPANTS N = 177



RACE

The 177 participants identified as 26.6% Caucasian and 75.7% non-white (with 4 missing).

CAUCASIAN 26.6%

BIRACIAL 19.8%

ARAB 0.6%

AFRICAN AMER. 22.6%

AFRICAN/CARIBBEAN 2.8%

ASIAN/P.I. 0.6%%

HISPANIC 22%

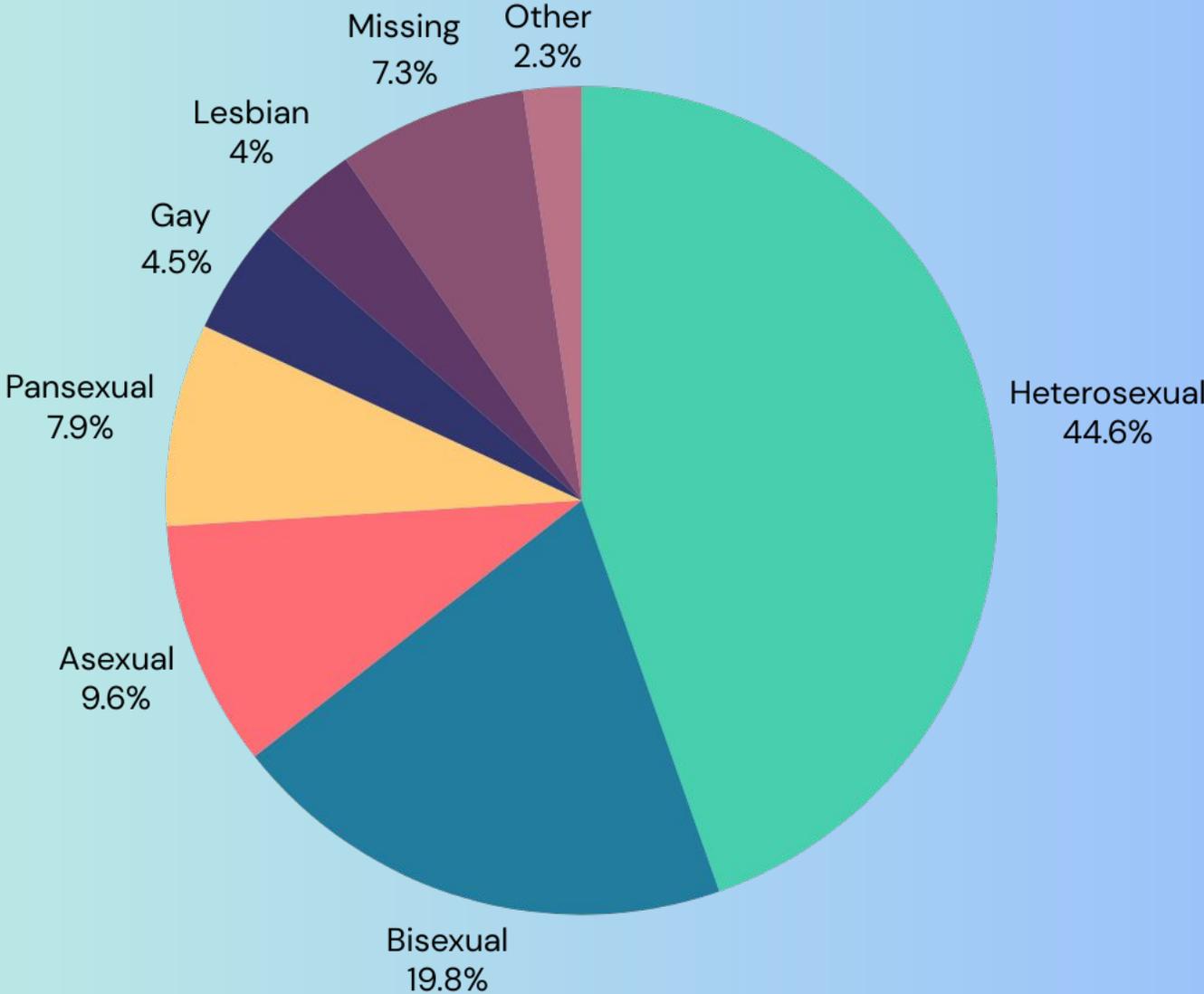
NATIVE AMER 2.8%

MISSING 2.3%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION (N = 177)

LGBTQI+

48.1% of the 177 participants identified as LGBTQI+.



WHERE THEY WERE FROM

ARIZONA

59.3 of the participants reported they were raised in the state of Arizona.

OTHER STATES

The other participants were from 24 other states and one country (Philippines).

RECENT ARRIVALS

Twenty (12.1%) of the participants had been in Arizona for less than a year.

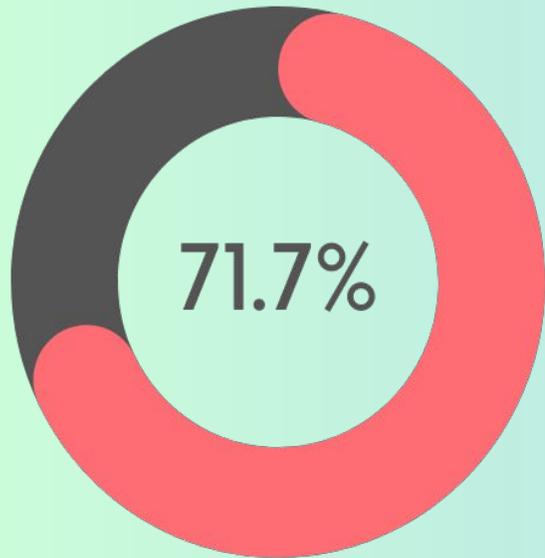
HOMELESSNESS

- The participants reported being homeless between 1 and 30 times during their lifetimes.
- The average age of first homeless experience was age 17.
- Nearly half (46.9%) experienced homelessness for the first time as a child.
- The participants were currently living in:
 - Youth shelter 40.7%
 - Transitional housing 31.1%
 - Couch surfing 12.4%
 - Other arrangements 7.9%
 - On the streets 2.8%
 - living in their own place 2.3%
 - in a hotel 1.1%
 - missing data 1.7%

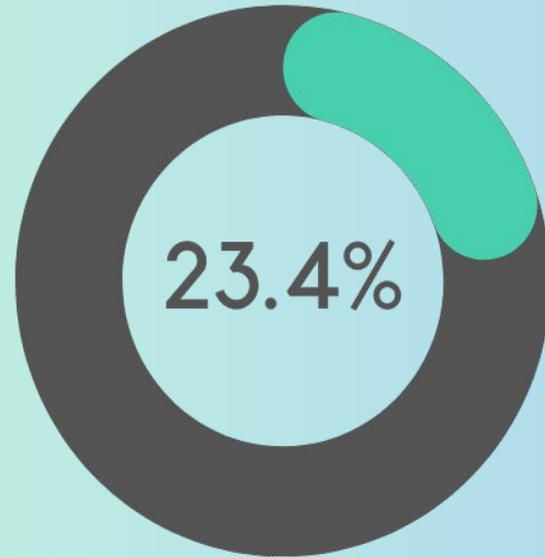
CHALLENGES (N =177)

- 35.6% dropped out of school
- 44.2% reported drug use
- Average age at first drug use was 14.8% (range from 9 to 21 years old)
- Addiction to drugs - 12.4%
- Addiction after homelessness- 9%
- Most common drugs used:
 - Marijuana 22%
 - Fentanyl 11.4%
 - Meth 12%
 - Heroin 7.9%
- Self harm-
 - Cutting 28.2%
- Suicide attempt 37.9%
- Mental Health
 - 46.3% diagnosis
 - 37.9% had more than one dx
- Most common diagnosis:
 - Bipolar disorder 46.9%
 - Depression 18.1%
 - ADD/ADHD 41.2%
 - Schizophrenia 31.1%
 - Borderline PD 20.3%
 - Autism 7.9%
 - PTSD 5.1%
- Received mental health treatment: 37.9%
- Medical issues
 - 42.4% had a current medical problem
 - 27.7% were not currently getting treatment for their medical issues
- Most common medical issues
 - Poor vision 25.4%
 - Asthma 20.3%
 - Dental issues 18.5%
 - Chronic pain 13.6%
 - Skin problems 7.3%

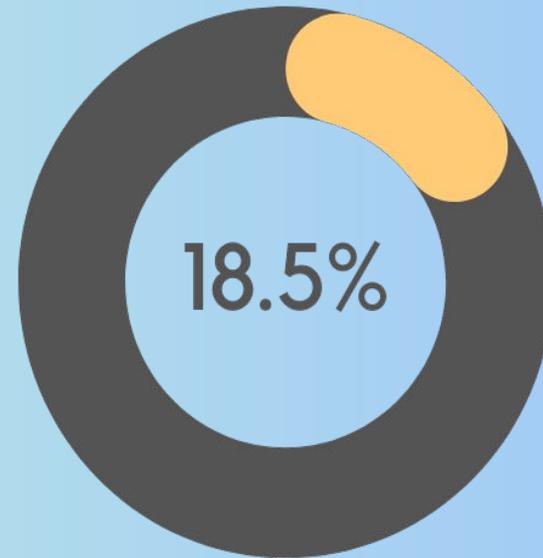
Being Kicked Out (N =177)



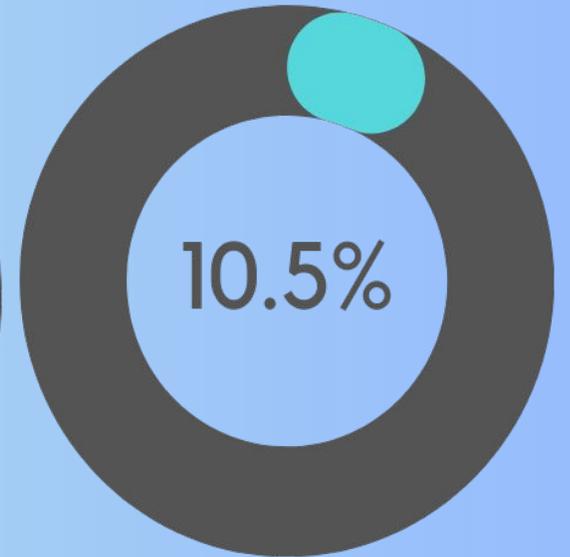
FAMILY CONFLICT



FAMILY POVERTY- COULD NOT MEET NEEDS



YOUTH WAS USING DRUGS



FAMILY DID NOT APPROVE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

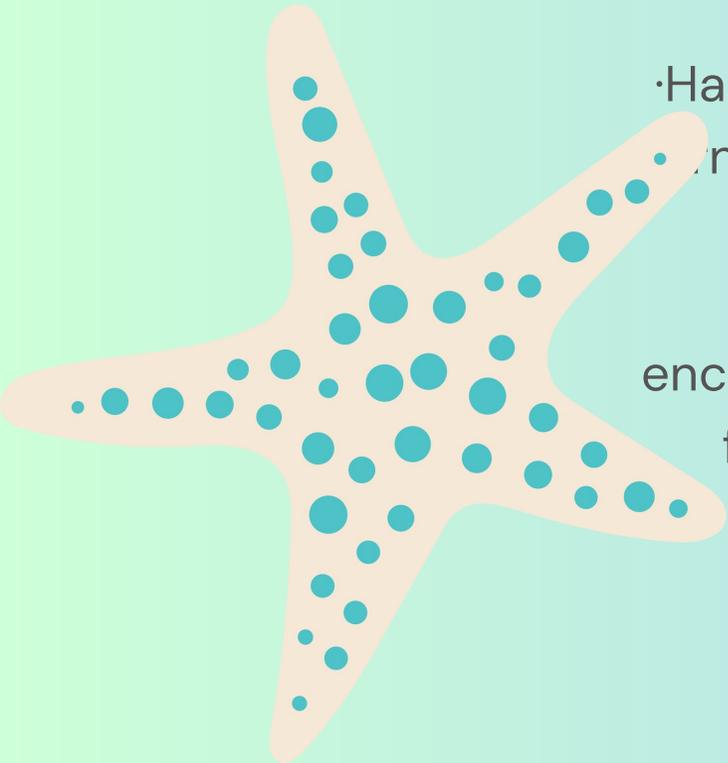
Sex trafficking:

- Have you ever been compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sex act?
- Have you ever been compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sex act for money, protection, drugs, clothes, protection, or a place to stay?
 - Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, place to stay, clothing, or protection?
- In the past, has anyone encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange a form of labor for money, drugs, place to stay, clothing, or protection

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Labor exploitation:

- Have you been tricked or forced into doing any kind of work that you did not want to do?
- Have you ever been promised work when the work or payment ended up being different than what you expected?
- Has someone you worked for ever controlled the money you earned, or kept the money you earned in exchange for drugs, a place to stay, clothing, or protection?
 - Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange a form of labor for money, drugs, place to stay, clothing, or protection?



SEX TRAFFICKED (N =49, 27.7%)

GENDER

Male = 23 (46.9%)
Female = 20 (40.8%)
Trans = 4, (8.2%)
Genderqueer = 2, 4.1%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

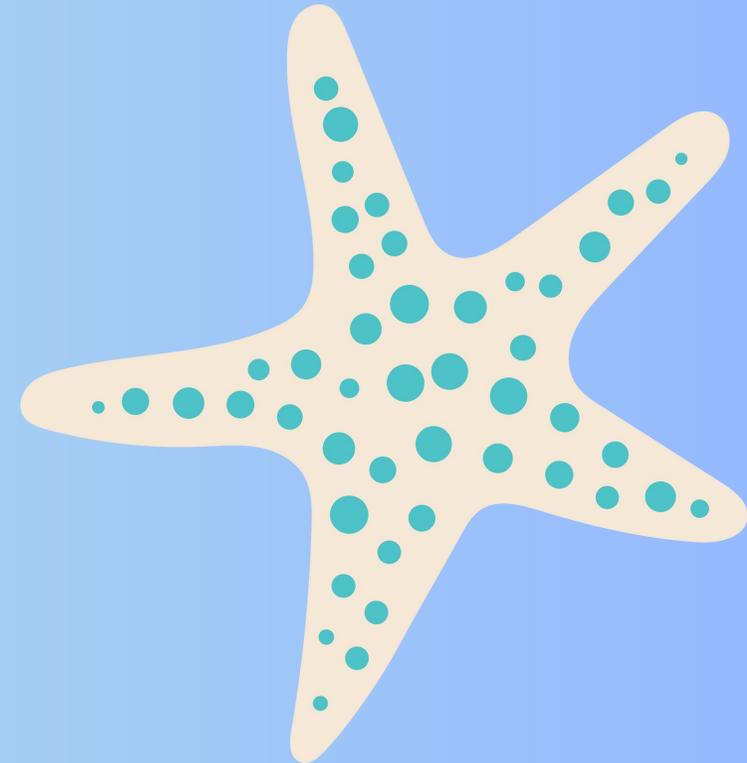
LGBTQI+ = 59.2%
Hetero = 40.8%

Not Sex Trafficked
72.3%

Sex Trafficked
27.7%

RACE

Caucasian: 34.7%
Non-White: 65.3%



AGE OF FIRST SEX TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCE

The participants reported their first sex trafficking experience ranged from age seven to 21- Average **15.7** years old.

10.7% reported they were sex trafficked before age 18.

SEX TRAFFICKED YOUNG ADULTS (N = 49)

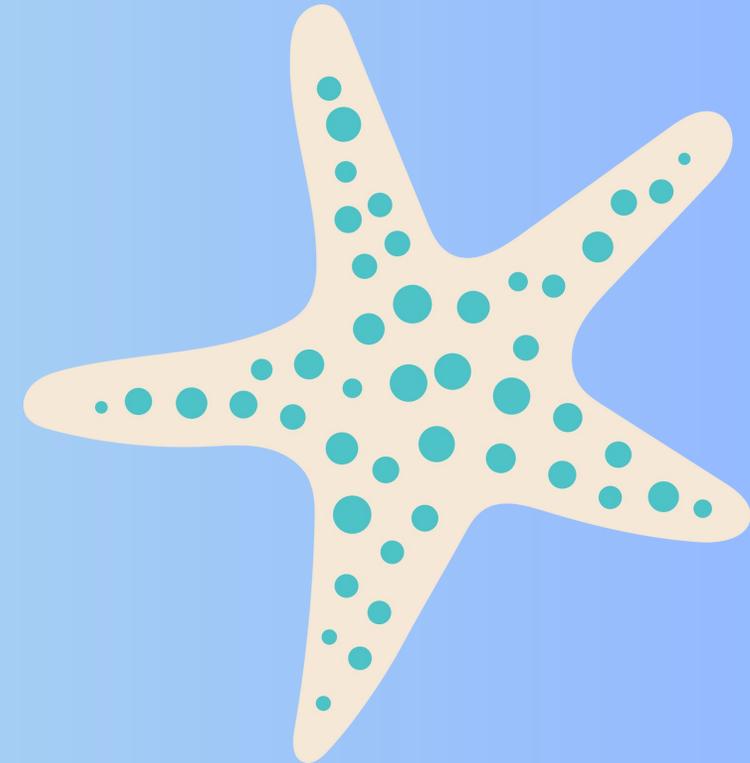


- 42.9% dropped out of school
- 71.4% reported using drugs
- 77.1% reported first drug use before age 18
- 24.5% reported addiction to drugs
- Most common drugs used:
 - meth 26.5%
 - marijuana 24.5%
 - fentanyl 19.4%
 - heroin 18.4%
- History of being kicked out: 71.4% (on average at age 16.6)
- 65.3% Reported a suicide attempt
- 79.6% had a mental health diagnosis
- 63.3% had more than one diagnosis
- Most common diagnosis:
 - ADD/ADHD 67.3%
 - Bipolar 63.3%
 - Schizophrenia 42.9%
 - Depression 28.6%
- Nearly 20% (n = 9) had an autism diagnosis.



Sex trafficked participants were:

- 6.8 times more likely to report having Autism
- 5.5 times more likely to report having been sexually abused or raped between the ages of 13–17
- 5.4 times more likely to report that they saw a parent hit or beat another parent
- 5.4 times more likely to have received medical treatment for their medical issues
- 4.6 times more likely to have experienced harassment by peers
- 4.5 times more likely to have experienced dating violence
- 3.8 times more likely to report dental issues
- 3.7 times more likely to have used drugs
- 3.6 times more likely to have been sexually abused age 12 or younger
- 3.6 times more likely to have attempted suicide
- 3.6 times more likely to have ever used methamphetamines
- 3.3 times more likely to report having an addiction to drugs
- 3.3 times more likely to participate in self-harm behaviors
- 3.3 times more likely to report having been bullied by peers
- 2.6 times more likely to have a mental health diagnosis



LABOR EXPLOITED (N = 55, 31.1%)

GENDER

Male = 29 (52.7%)

Female = 18 (32.7%)

Trans = 4, (7.3%)

Non-conforming = 3, (5.5%)

Genderqueer = 1, 1.8%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

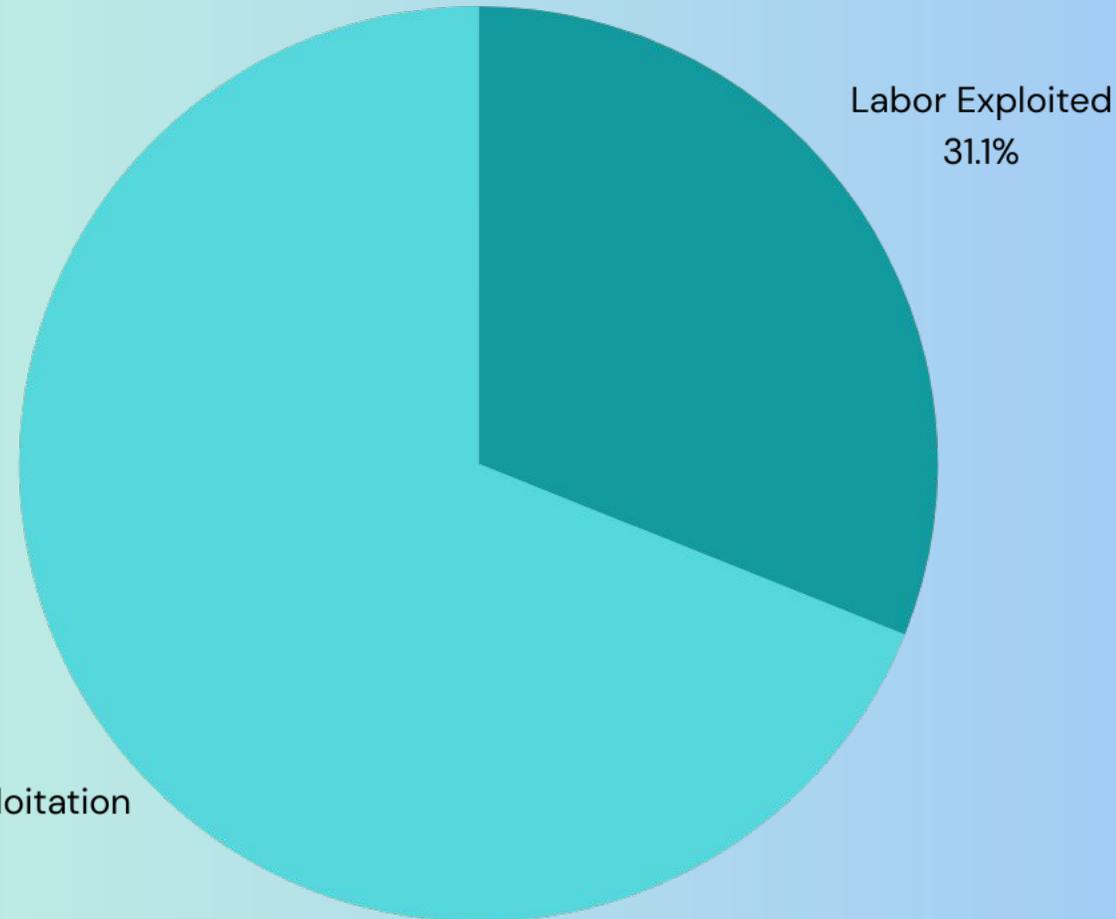
LGBTQI+ = 50.9%

Hetero = 43.6%

RACE

Caucasian: 40%

Non-White: 58.2%



AGE OF FIRST LABOR EXPLOITATION EXPERIENCE

The participants reported their first labor exploitation experience ranged from age ten to 24- Average **17.1** years old.

25.5% reported they were under age 18 the first time they were labor exploited.

LABOR EXPLOITED YOUNG ADULTS (N = 55)



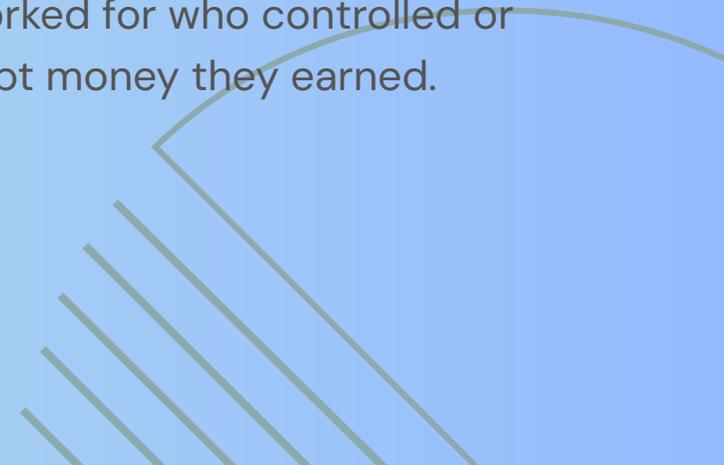
- 41.8% dropped out of school
- 54.5% reported using drugs
- 16.4% reported addiction to drugs
- Most common drugs used:
 - meth 21.7%
 - marijuana 32.7%
 - fentanyl 10.9%
 - heroin 10.9%
 - crack/cocaine 7.3%
- History of being kicked out: 74.5% (on average at age 16.5)

- 49.1% Reported a suicide attempt
- 61.8% had a mental health diagnosis
- 49.1% had more than one diagnosis
- Most common diagnosis:
 - ADD/ADHD 43.6%
 - Bipolar 49.1%
 - Schizophrenia 32.7%
 - Depression 23.6%
- 10% (n = 6) had an autism diagnosis.



LABOR EXPLOITATION EXPERIENCES

- Twenty-eight (50.9%) labor exploited participants reported that they had been promised work where the work or payment ended up being different than what they expected.
- Twenty-three (41.8%) labor exploited participants reported that someone they worked for had ever controlled the money they earned, or kept money they earned in exchange for money, drugs, food, place to stay, clothing, or protection.
- 50 percent (n = 28) of the labor exploited participants reported experiencing an element of fraud in which they were promised work where the work or payment ended up being different than what they expected.
- Twenty-three (41.8%) labor exploited participants reported that there was someone they worked for who controlled or kept money they earned.



LABOR EXPLOITATION EXPERIENCES

- Sectors where the 55 labor exploited adults were exploited:
- drug dealing 7.4%
- domestic work 5.5%
- traveling sales crew 5.5%
- hotel work 3.6%
- assisted living/healthcare 1.8%
- childcare 1.8%
- restaurant work 1.8%
- sexualized labor 1.8%
- non-profit 1.8%

- Thirty-four percent (n = 19) of the participants who reported experiencing labor exploitation reported that they had at some point had a labor trafficker.
- Three (5.5%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they currently had a person who was exploiting them.



Labor exploited participants were:

- 6.5 times more likely to have had negative experiences with law enforcement.
- 4.5 times more likely to have experienced Depression
- 4.1 times more likely to have experienced emotional neglect by a parent
- 4.1 times more likely to report having lived with a person who was depressed, mentally ill or had attempted suicide.
- 3.9 times more likely to have separated or divorced parents.
- 3.8 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse between the ages of 13 to 17 years old.
- 3.4 times more likely to report having witnessed domestic violence as a child.
- 3.3 times more likely to have experienced emotional abuse by a parent.
- 3.3 times more likely to have been in special education classes.

Labor exploited participants were:

- 3.2 times more likely to have experienced dating violence
- 3.2 times more likely to have experienced academic difficulties.
- 3.1 times more likely to have experienced physical abuse by a parent.
- 2.9 times more likely to live with a person with a drug or alcohol problem when they were a child.
- 2.5 times more likely to have experienced bullying by school peers.
- 2.5 times more likely to have been placed in foster care.
- 2.3 times more likely to have experienced physical neglect by a parent
- 5.9 times more likely to have used drugs
- 3.6 times more likely to have attempted suicide
- 2.8 times more likely to have ever used methamphetamines
- 2.7 times more likely to have more than one mental health diagnosis

From 2021 to May 2023

Changes over time

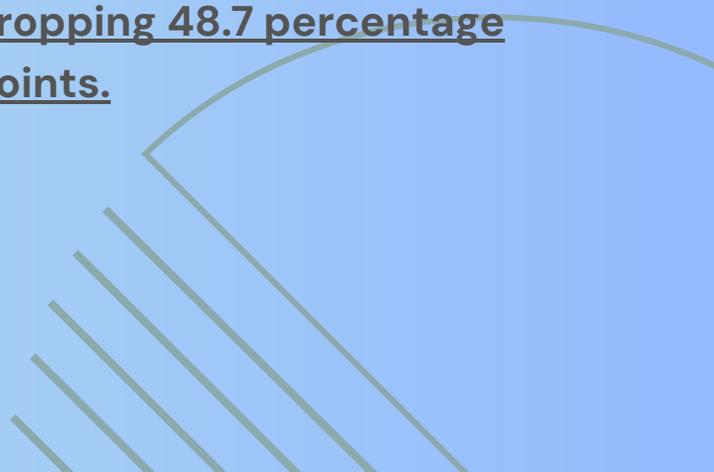
The incidence of human trafficking among Arizona's unsheltered young adults in this study steadily increased over the last three years of the study. Reports by the participants of sex trafficking victimization increased from 2021 to 2023 by 17.4 percentage points and for reports of labor trafficking, increased 31.8 percentage points.

	2021 (N = 89)	2022 (N = 107)	2023 (N= 177)
Sex trafficked	21 (23.6%)	39 (23.6%)	49 (27.7%)
Labor exploitation	21 (23.6%)	31 (29%)	55 (31.1%)

CHANGES FROM 2021 TO MAY 2023 SEX TRAFFICKED YOUNG ADULTS



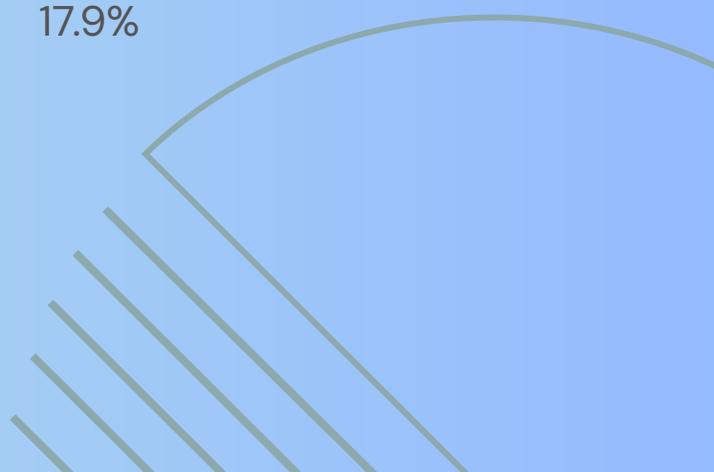
- The participants who reported sex trafficking over the past three years has changed with an increase in the victims of sex trafficking identifying as male by 146.8 percentage points.
- LGBTQI+ orientation remained high among the sex trafficked unsheltered young adults.
- The reason for exchanging sex during their sex trafficking experiences were varied with drops in exchanging sex for a place to stay, for money, protection, clothes, and for drugs. Those reporting exchanging sex for food remained steady.

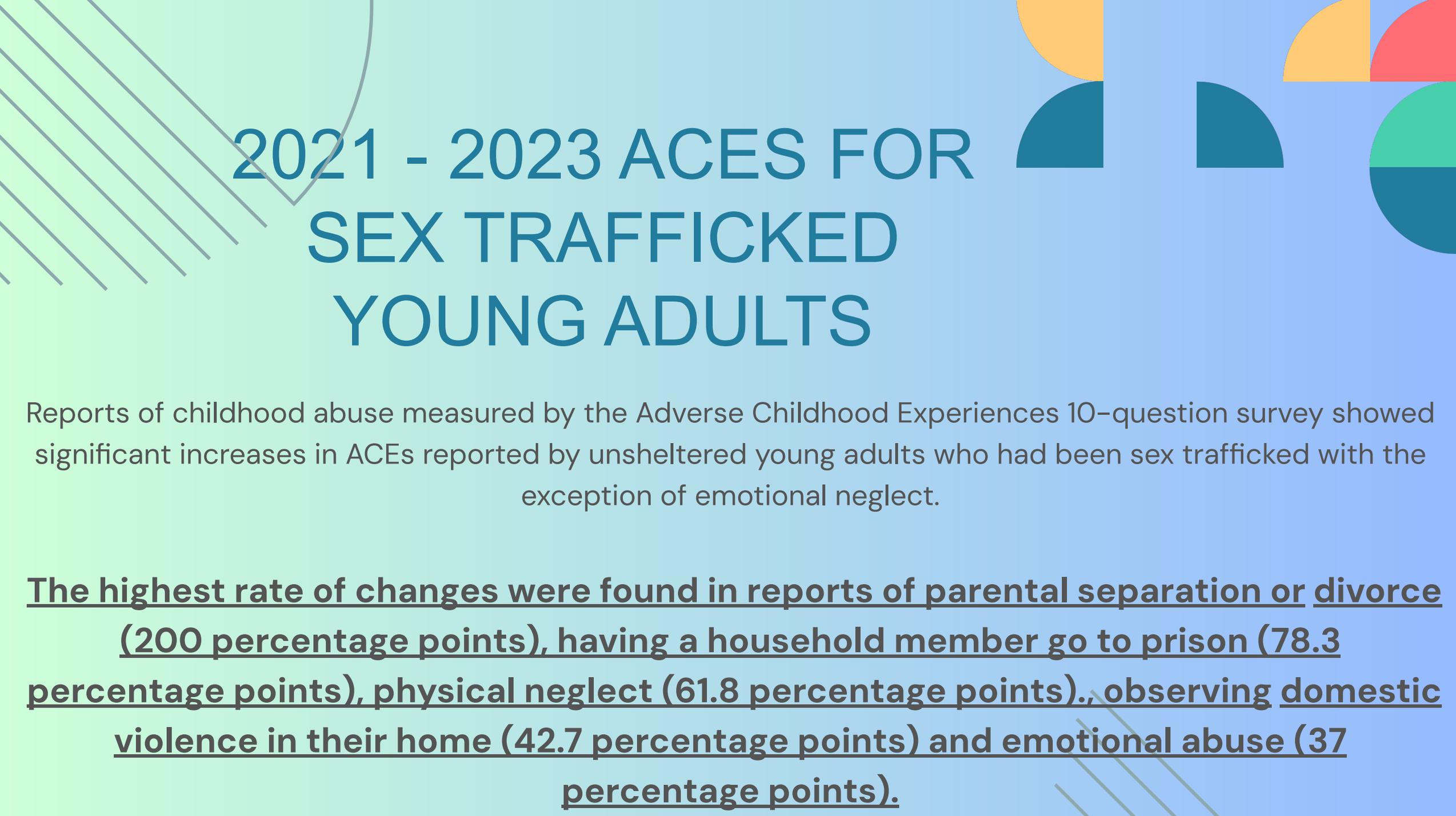
- The relationship between the victims of sex trafficking and their traffickers changed significantly over the past three years of the YES. **Significant increases were noted in the sex trafficker being a family member increasing 652.6 percentage points and stranger increasing 265.3 percentage points with boyfriend as trafficker dropping 48.7 percentage points.**
- 

CHANGES FROM 2021 TO MAY 2023 SEX TRAFFICKED YOUNG ADULTS



- While over the past three years there have been a drop in percentage points of drugs used and addiction reported by the unsheltered young adults reporting sex trafficking, drug use was reported on average of 74.6 percent. An average of 69.2 percent of the sex trafficked participants reported using drugs before age 18.
- Percentage point increases:
 - dropped out of school 22.5%
 - Saw DV at home 41.4%
 - Cutting behavior 28.7%
 - Mental health diagnosis 11.5%
 - Attempted suicide 14.4%

- Percentage point decrease:
 - Residential treatment 57.1%
 - neg contact with LE 46.4%
 - Involvement in Juv Justice 62.5%
 - Academic difficulties 40.7%
 - Expelled from school 44.8%
 - Bullied in school 39.9%
 - Special education 43%
 - Emotional abuse parent 30.9%
 - Physical abuse by a parent 17.9%
- 



2021 - 2023 ACES FOR SEX TRAFFICKED YOUNG ADULTS

Reports of childhood abuse measured by the Adverse Childhood Experiences 10-question survey showed significant increases in ACEs reported by unsheltered young adults who had been sex trafficked with the exception of emotional neglect.

The highest rate of changes were found in reports of parental separation or divorce (200 percentage points), having a household member go to prison (78.3 percentage points), physical neglect (61.8 percentage points), observing domestic violence in their home (42.7 percentage points) and emotional abuse (37 percentage points).

Conclusions

OVER REPRESENTATION

Persons of color
LGBTQI+

EARLY EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

In 2023, nearly half of the non-sex trafficked respondents (47%) and over half (55%) of the respondents who had a history of trafficking reported their first experience of homelessness occurred when they were minors

Childhood abuse rates for the sex trafficked young adults included emotional abuse (74.5%), physical abuse (58.2%), sexual abuse age 13–17 (43.6%), sexual abuse age 12 and under (36.4%), and dating violence (34.5%).

HIGH RATES OF ABUSE

Recomendations

INCREASE ATTENTION

Homelessness prevention

Early substance abuse deterrence

More family mediation

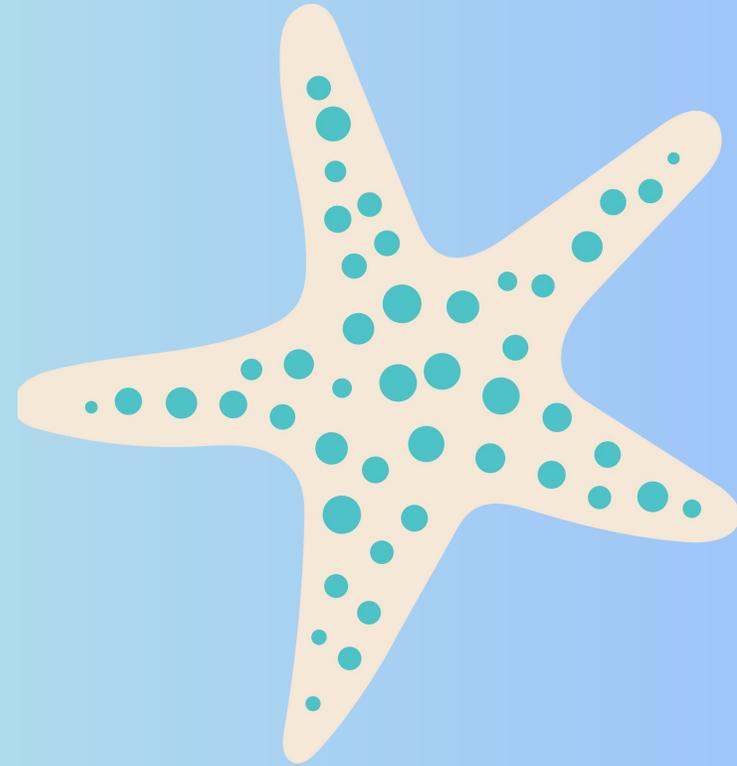
Dating violence prevention

Runaway youth

Mental health services access

Healthcare access- vision/asthma

**THANK
YOU**



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2023
Youth Experiences Survey
Study:
Exploring the Human
Trafficking Experiences of
Unsheltered Young Adults in
Arizona



June 2024

**2023 Youth Experiences Survey (YES)
Study:
Exploring the Human Trafficking
Experiences of Unsheltered Young
Adults in Arizona
Year Ten**

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Thank you to Our Family Services and Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation in Tucson, Arizona, Native American Connections, Homeless Youth Connections, one•n•ten, Lincoln YMCA PHX350, and the Dream Center in Phoenix, and Northland Family Help Center in Flagstaff, Arizona for their assistance in collecting this research.

For any questions contact the first author at Dominique.Roe@asu.edu

2023 Youth Experiences Survey (YES) Study: Exploring the Human Trafficking Experiences of Unsheltered Young Adults in Arizona, Year Ten.

The Youth Experiences Survey (YES) is a study of the experiences of unsheltered young adults in Arizona that has been conducted for the past ten years beginning in 2014. The YES Study, a survey administered to unsheltered young adults, focuses on building knowledge to understand the life experiences of unsheltered young adults (ages 18-25) and how those experiences contribute to their experiences of human trafficking. The information from this study will be used to identify the best approaches to addressing the issues facing unsheltered young adults in Arizona. These approaches will include tailoring current services to best meet the needs of the unsheltered youth as well as creating new programming based on the findings of this study.

The greatest challenge facing the researchers and practitioners attempting to contact unsheltered youth and assess their needs is access. Many of these youth are using non-traditional helping systems of friends and families and may not have contact with the agencies that receive local or federal funds to serve them. The non-traditional helping systems exist in both rural and urban communities. Other challenges include that unsheltered youth are often avoiding the systems that didn't prevent them from becoming unsheltered such as schools, child welfare organizations, and service providers. We recognize that this study shows a somewhat limited picture of the experiences of unsheltered young adults in Arizona but hope that the findings can be used to develop needed services and programming.

In post-pandemic Arizona, the challenges and needs of unsheltered youth appear to have grown with fewer youth-specific shelter beds available and the closing of many drop in and outreach services in the largest county (Maricopa County) in the state. During 2022 and 2023 a number of new programs funded by the Arizona Department of Housing and the Arizona Department of Economic Security emerged to serve unsheltered youth with a significant increase in capacity in Maricopa County and Coconino County. With these new partners, the 2023 YES survey was distributed to participants by eight unsheltered youth serving agencies (increasing from five agencies in years past) and a significant increase of 39.5 percent in participant responses (2022- 107 respondents, 2023- 177 respondents). The 2023 YES study was conducted in partnership with eight agencies from Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff that provide direct services to homeless persons: Our Family Services and Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation in Tucson; Native American Connections, Homeless Youth Connection, one•n•ten, Lincoln YMCA PHX350, and the Dream Center in Phoenix; and in Flagstaff. This report includes the findings from the 2023 YES study and comparisons with the findings from the 2021 and 2022 YES studies

While complicated to study, homeless youth ages 18 to 25 have immense potential and flexibility to shift into employment, further education, and housing. These changes would remove them from their unsheltered situations with supports in place with a high likelihood that they would not become unsheltered again in their lifetimes. This study highlights the critical needs of homeless young adults in transitional housing, drop-in centers, and on the streets of Tucson, Phoenix, and Flagstaff. It aims to identify unsheltered youth ages 18 to 25 and assess their experiences with sex and labor trafficking, as well as other challenging life circumstances such as abuse, drug use and addiction, adverse childhood experiences, and relationship violence. This information will be

shared across systems that serve these youth with the goal of increasing resources and focus on the most critical needs identified in the study.

This report, the tenth Youth Experiences Survey, is based on data collected from a seven-page survey distributed to homeless young adults over two weeks in August 2023 by staff from the above mentioned homeless young adult serving partner agencies. The young adults were surveyed at resource centers, shelter/transitional housing programs, and on the street during outreach activities. The surveys were collected in paper and pencil format (n = 162, 91.5%) and online (n = 15, 8.5%) with a total of 177 completed surveys. The Youth Experiences Survey asks for details about their homelessness experiences, substance use, mental and medical health history, family challenges, as well as risk and protective factors. The sex trafficking and labor exploitation experiences of the participants are also assessed, and a comparison of the trafficked versus non-trafficked participants is provided. Finally, notable findings from the 2023 data collection period are highlighted and future research and targeted service provision recommendations are discussed.

Brief Summary of Findings

Status of Homeless Young Adults in Arizona in the 2023 Youth Experiences Survey

(N = 177)

The survey was distributed by the staff at the following agencies to adult (ages 18 to 25 years old) participants. The participants were recruited to participate during regular activities of each agency including at their transitional housing programs, drop in center, outreach activities, and case management services.

Agency Partner	#	%
Our Family Services- Tucson	62	35%
YMCA- Phoenix 360 Downtown Phoenix	32	18.1%
Native American Connections- Phoenix	27	15.3%
Native American Connections- Surprise	23	13%
Phoenix Homeless Youth Connections	16	9%
OneNTen	10	5.6%
Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation	4	2.3%
Dream Center- Phoenix	2	1.1%
Flagstaff Homeless Youth Connections	1	0.6%
Total	177	100%

Participant Profile

- One hundred and seventy-seven participants responded to the Youth Experiences Survey in 2023.
- The age of the 177 homeless young adult participants ranged from 18 to 25 and the average age was 20.9 years old.
- The participants identified their gender as female (n = 79, 44.6%), male (n = 79, 44.6%), transgender (n = 9, 5.1%), non-conforming (n = 8, 4.5%), gender queer (n = 1, 0.6%), and other (n = 1, 0.6%).
- The race identified by the participants was 26.6% Caucasian and 75.7% non-white, with 4 (2.3%) missing.

Race of YES Participants:

Race	#	%
Caucasian/White	47	26.6%
Black/African American	40	22.6%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	39	22%
Biracial/multiracial	35	19.8%
African/Caribbean	5	2.8%
Native American	5	2.8%
Arab	1	0.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.6%
Missing	4	2.3%

Participants identified their sexual orientation as:

Sexual Orientation	#	%
Heterosexual	79	44.6%
Bisexual	35	19.8%
Asexual	17	9.6%
Pansexual	14	7.9%
Gay	8	4.5%
Lesbian	7	4%
Other	4	2.3%
Missing	13	7.3%

Regarding sexual orientation, 48.1% of the participants identified as LGBTQI (not heterosexual).

- 59.3% of the participants were raised in the State of Arizona, and the others were from 24 other states and one other country (the Philippines). Twenty (12.1%) reported that they had been in Arizona for less than a year.

Housing and Homelessness

- The participants reported that they had been homeless from 1 time to 30 times during their lifetime starting at age 2 years old to 25 years old.
- The average age of the participants' first homelessness experience was 17 years of age.
- Nearly half (n = 82, 46.9%) of participants first experienced homelessness as a child, under the age of 18.
- Current living situations for the participants included:
 - living in a shelter (n = 72, 40.7%)
 - a transitional housing program (n = 55, 31.1%)
 - couch-surfing (n = 22, 12.4%)

- other living arrangement (n = 14, 7.9%)
- on the streets (n = 5, 2.8%)
- or living in their own place (n = 4, 2.3%)
- living in a hotel (n = 2, 1.1%)
- Missing (n = 3, 1.7%)

Challenges and Risk Factors

- **Educational attainment:** 63 (35.6%) of participants dropped out of school as one point in time, and 28.2% (n = 50) of the sample did not graduate high school.
- **Drug Use:** Drug use was reported by nearly half of the participants (n = 78, 44.2%), with average age of first drug use was 14.8 years old. Drug use starting age ranged from 9 years old to 21 years old. Of the 78 participants that reported drug use, 74.4% (n = 58) reported first drug use before the age of 18. An addiction to drugs was reported by 22 (12.4%) participants. Sixteen (9%) reported that they became addicted to drugs after they became homeless. Ten (5.6%) participants reported that they were addicted to alcohol.
- The most common drugs reportedly used by the participants were:
 - Marijuana: 39 (22%) participants
 - Fentanyl: 20 (11.4%) participants
 - Methamphetamines: 23 (13%) participants
 - Heroin: 14 (7.9%) participants
- **Self-Harm:** Seventy-nine (44.6%) of the homeless young adult participants reported that they participated in some form of self-harming behavior including cutting (n = 50, 28.2%). A suicide attempt was reported by 67 (37.9%) of the homeless young adult participants.
- **Mental Health Challenges:** Eighty-two (46.3%) participants reported a current mental health diagnosis, and 67 (37.9%) reported having more than one mental health diagnosis. The participants identified as having the following mental health diagnoses:

Diagnoses	#	%
Bipolar Disorder	83	46.9%
Depression	32	18.1%
ADD/ADHD	73	41.2%
Schizophrenia	55	31.1%
Borderline Personality Disorder	35	20.3%
Anxiety	12	6.8%
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	9	5.1%

Antisocial Personality Disorder	7	4%
Dissociative Identity Disorder	7	4%

Having received mental health treatment for their diagnosis was reported by 67 (37.9%) of the participants.

An Autism diagnosis was identified by 14 (7.9%) of the participants.

- **Medical Challenges:** Seventy-five (42.4%) of the participants reported experiencing a current medical problem. More than a quarter (n = 49, 27.7%) of the participants reported that they were not currently receiving medical treatment for their medical issue. The medical issues reported by the participants included:

Medical Issue	#	%
Poor Vision	45	25.4%
Asthma	36	20.3%
Dental	33	18.5%
Chronic Pain	24	13.6%
Skin Problems	13	7.3%
Wounds	3	1.7%
Sexually Transmitted Infections	1	0.6%

- **Rejection by Family:** Being kicked out of the house was reported by 124 (70.1%) of participants, with the average age of first being kicked out being 16.4. Fifty-eight percent of the participants (n = 73) who had been kicked out reported being kicked out before the age of 18. The reasons for being kicked out included the following (some participants chose more than one option):

Reason	#	%
Family conflict (fighting with parents)	89	71.7%
Family could not provide for my needs due to poverty	29	23.4%
I was using substances	23	18.5%
Family did not approve of my sexual orientation	13	10.5%
Family didn't not approve of my gender identity	12	9.7%

- **Work:** The participants reported that they participated in the following activities to earn money to live (some participants chose more than one option):

Activity	#	%
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Steady job	82	46.3%
Day laborer	45	25.4%
Selling my own things	29	16.4%
Side jobs for cash	22	12.4%
Selling drugs	9	5.1%
Selling stolen things	8	4.5%
Panhandling	8	4.5%
Door to door sales	5	2.8%
Pickpocket	2	1.1%

- Adverse Childhood Experiences:** Participants experienced an average of five ACEs. The majority of participants (n = 109, 61.6%) reported experiencing more than one ACE and 54.2% (n = 96) reported experiencing four or more ACEs. The specific ACE experiences of the participants included (some participants chose more than one option):

Adverse Childhood Experience	#	%
Parent with a drug or alcohol problem	102	57.6%
Parents separated or divorced	102	57.6%
Emotional abuse	100	56.5%
Feeling unloved or un-special	97	54.8%
Family member depressed or mentally ill or a family member attempted suicide	96	54.2%
Physical abuse	79	44.6%
Family member went to prison	75	42.4%
Mother/stepmother physically abused	72	40.7%
Neglect (not enough to eat, dirty clothes, no one to protect you or take you to the doctor)	65	36.7%
Sexual abuse by a person at least 5 years older	47	26.6%

- Abuse and Violence:** 42% (n = 74) of participants reported that they had seen one of their parents hit or beat their other parent. Being a victim of dating/interpersonal violence was reported by 70 (39.5%) of the participants. Other abuse experiences included (some participants chose more than one option):

Abuse Experience	#	%
Childhood emotional abuse	93	52.5%
Childhood physical abuse	62	35.6%
Sexual abuse age 12 and under	54	30.5%
Sexual abuse age 13-17	42	23.7%
Dating violence	38	21.5%

Challenging experiences: The participants reported the following challenging experiences (some participants chose more than one option):

Experiences	#	%
Academic difficulties	65	36.7%
Ran away from home	64	36.2%
Bullied by peers	60	33.9%
Negative contact with law enforcement	47	26.6%
Harassment by peers	42	23.7%
Foster care	41	23.2%
Expelled from school	31	17.5%
Attended special education programs	31	17.5%
Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System	23	13%
Member of a gang	12	6.8%
Residential treatment	13	7.3%

Status of Homeless Young Adult Victims of Human Trafficking in Arizona

The measure of human trafficking in this study was a positive response to any of the following questions:

Sex trafficking:

- Have you ever been compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sex act?
- Have you ever been compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sex act for money, protection, drugs, clothes, protection, or a place to stay?
- Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, place to stay, clothing, or protection?
- In the past, has anyone encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange a form of labor for money, drugs, place to stay, clothing, or protection

Labor exploitation:

- Have you been tricked or forced into doing any kind of work that you did not want to do?
- Have you ever been promised work when the work or payment ended up being different than what you expected?
- Has someone you worked for ever controlled the money you earned, or kept the money you earned in exchange for drugs, a place to stay, clothing, or protection?
- Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange a form of labor for money, drugs, place to stay, clothing, or protection?

Findings

Of the 177 homeless young adult participants, 49 (27.7%) reported experiencing sex trafficking exploitation, and 55 (31.1%) reported experiencing labor exploitation. At least one form of exploitation (sex or labor) was reported by 75 (42.4%) participants, and 29 (16.4%) participants reported experiencing both sex trafficking and labor exploitation.

Sex Trafficking (n = 49)

- Forty-nine (27.7%) of the total participants (N = 177) reported experiencing sex trafficking exploitation.
- The sex trafficked participants identified their gender as male (n = 23, 46.9%), female (n = 20, 40.8%), transgender (n = 4, 8.2%), and non-conforming (n = 2, 4.1%).
- The sex trafficked participants identified their sexual orientation as:

Sexual Orientation	#	%
Heterosexual	19	38.8%
Bisexual	13	26.5%
Asexual	2	4.1%
Pansexual	4	8.2%
Gay	5	10.2%
Lesbian	4	8.2%
Other	1	2%
Missing	1	2%

- Regarding sexual orientation, 29 (59.2%) of the sex trafficked young adults identified as LGBTQI (not heterosexual).
- The sex trafficked participants identified as the following races:

Race	#	%
Caucasian/White	17	34.7%
Black/African American	12	24.5%
Biracial/multiracial	9	18.4%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	7	14.3%
Native American	2	4.1%
African/Caribbean	1	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	2%
Total	49	100%

- Regarding race, 65.3% of the participants that identified as having been sex trafficked did not identify as White.

- The average age of first sex trafficking experience was 15.7 years old, ranging from age seven to 21. Nineteen participants (10.7%) reporting that they were sex trafficked before the age of 18.
- Eighty-four percent (n = 41) of the participants who reported being sex trafficked reported that they had at some point had a sex trafficker. Four (8.2%) of the sex trafficked participants reported that they currently had a person who was sex trafficking them.
- The most common items of value the sex trafficked participants were forced/tricked/coerced for sex for were (some participants chose more than one option):

Items of Value	#	%
Place to stay	20	40.8%
Money	19	38.8%
Food	13	26.5%
Protection	8	16.3%
Drugs	7	14.3%
Clothing	4	8.2%

- 55.1% of the sex trafficked participants were raised in the state of Arizona, and the others were from 10 other states. Four (8.2%) reported that they had been in Arizona for less than a year.

Housing and Homelessness (n = 49)

- The sex trafficked participants reported that they had been homeless from 1 time to 20 times during their lifetime starting at age 8 years old to 24 years old.
- The average age of the sex trafficked participants' first homelessness experience was 16.75 years of age.
- More than half (n = 27, 55.1%) of sex trafficked participants first experienced homelessness as a child, under the age of 18.
- Current living situations for the sex trafficked participants included:
 - living in a shelter (n = 15, 30.6%)
 - a transitional housing program (n = 23, 46.9%)
 - couch-surfing (n = 7, 14.3%)
 - other living arrangement (n = 2, 4.1%)
 - on the streets (n = 2, 4.1%)

Challenges and Risk Factors (n = 49)

Educational attainment: 21 (42.9%) of the sex trafficked participants dropped out of school before high school completion.

- **Drug Use:** Drug use was reported by nearly three quarters of the sex trafficked participants (n = 35, 71.4%), with average age of first drug use being as a child, 14 years old. Drug use

starting age ranged from 9 years old to 18 years old. Of the 35 sex trafficked participants that reported drug use, 77.1% (n = 27) reported first drug use before the age of 18.

- An addiction to drugs was reported by 12 (24.5%) of the sex trafficked participants.
- Nine (18.4%) of the sex trafficked participants reported that they became addicted to drugs after they became homeless.
- Five (10.2%) of the sex trafficked participants reported that they were addicted to alcohol.
- The most common drugs reportedly used by the sex trafficked participants were:
 - Methamphetamines: 13 (26.5%) participants
 - Marijuana: 12 (24.5%) participants
 - Fentanyl: 9 (18.4%) participants
 - Heroin: 9 (18.4%) participants
- Self-Harm: Thirty-six (73.5%) of the sex trafficked homeless young adult participants reported that they participated in some form of self-harming behavior including cutting (n = 22, 44.9%).
- A suicide attempt was reported by 32 (65.3%) of the homeless young adult participants.
- **Mental Health Challenges:** Thirty-nine (79.6%) of the sex trafficked participants reported a current mental health diagnosis, and 31 (63.3%) reported having more than one mental health diagnosis. The sex trafficked participants identified as having the following mental health diagnoses:

Diagnoses	#	%
ADD/ADHD	33	67.3%
Bipolar Disorder	31	63.3%
Schizophrenia	21	42.9%
Depression	14	28.6%
Borderline Personality Disorder	13	26.5%
Antisocial Personality Disorder	6	12.2%
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	4	8.2%
Anxiety	7	14.3%
Dissociative Identity Disorder	3	6.1%

- Having received mental health treatment for their diagnosis was reported by 22 (44.9%) of the sex trafficked participants.
- Nearly 20 percent (n = 9) of the sex trafficked participants identified as having an Autism diagnosis.

- **Medical Challenges:** Thirty-one (63.3%) of the sex trafficked participants reported experiencing a current medical problem. Nearly a third (n = 16, 32.7%) of the sex trafficked participants reported that they were not currently receiving medical treatment for their medical issue. The medical issues reported by the participants included:

Medical Issue	#	%
Dental	17	34.7%
Poor Vision	15	30.6%
Asthma	13	26.5%
Chronic Pain	11	22.4%
Skin Problems	8	16.3%
Wounds	2	4.1%
Sexually Transmitted Infections	1	2%

- **Reject by Family:** Being kicked out of the house was reported by 35 (71.4%) of the sex trafficked participants, with the average age of first being kicked out being 16.6. Forty-nine percent of the participants (n = 17) who had been kicked out reported being kicked out before the age of 18.

The reasons for being kicked out included the following (some participants chose more than one option):

Reason	#	%
Family conflict (fighting with parents)	27	55.1%
Family could not provide for my needs due to poverty	14	28.6%
I was using substances	6	12.2%
Family did not approve of my sexual orientation	9	18.4%
Family didn't not approve of my gender identity	4	8.2%

- **Work:** The participants reported that they participated in the following activities to earn money to live (some participants chose more than one option):

Activity	#	%
Steady job	24	49%
Day laborer	19	38.8%
Selling my own things	14	28.6%
Selling drugs	6	12.2%
Side jobs for cash	5	10.2%
Selling stolen things	5	10.2%
Panhandling	5	10.2%

Door to door sales	3	6.1%
Pickpocket	1	2%

- Adverse Childhood Experiences:** Participants experienced an average of seven ACEs. The majority of participants (n = 41, 83.7%) reported experiencing more than one ACE and 77.6% (n = 38) reported experiencing four or more ACEs. The specific ACE experiences of the participants included (some participants chose more than one option):

Adverse Childhood Experience	#	%
Physical abuse	37	75.5%
Parents separated or divorced	37	75.5%
Emotional abuse	37	75.5%
Feeling unloved or un-special	37	75.5%
Family member depressed or mentally ill or a family member attempted suicide	36	73.5%
Neglect (not enough to eat, dirty clothes, no one to protect you or take you to the doctor)	34	69.4%
Parent with a drug or alcohol problem	32	65.3%
Mother/stepmother physically abused	30	61.2%
Family member went to prison	25	51%
Sexual abuse by a person at least 5 years older	25	51%

- Abuse and Violence:** Thirty-three (n = 67.3) of the sex trafficked participants reported that they had seen one of their parents hit or beat their other parent. Being a victim of dating/interpersonal violence was reported by 25 (51%) of the sex trafficked participants. Other abuse experiences included (some participants chose more than one option):

Abuse Experience	#	%
Childhood emotional abuse	29	59.2%
Childhood physical abuse	23	46.9%
Sexual abuse age 12 and under	20	40.8%
Sexual abuse age 13-17	18	36.7%
Dating violence	17	34.7%

- Challenging experiences:** The participants reported the following challenging experiences (some participants chose more than one option):

Experiences	#	%
Ran away from home	23	46.9%
Bullied by peers	21	42.9%
Academic difficulties	18	36.7%

Harassment by peers	17	34.7%
Negative contact with law enforcement	15	30.6%
Foster care	14	28.6%
Expelled from school	9	18.4%
Attended special education programs	8	16.3%
Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System	7	14.3%
Member of a gang	7	14.3%
Residential treatment	5	10.2%

- **Sex Trafficking Experience (n = 49)**

The sex trafficked participants identified the relationship with their sex traffickers as (some participants identified more than one):

Relationship with Trafficker	#	%
Stranger	17	34.7%
Friend	16	32.7%
Family member (parent, guardian, sibling, cousin, grandfather)	14	28.6%
Boyfriend	6	12.2%
Girlfriend	2	4.1%
Gang/cartel	2	4.1%

Comparing Sex Trafficked and Non-Sex Trafficked Unsheltered Young Adults

Experience	Sex Trafficked Participants (n = 49)	Non-sex trafficked participants (n = 128)	Significance (p value)
History of Suicide Attempt	32 (65.3%)	35 (27.3%)	.001
Sexual abuse age 13-17	18 (36.7%)	13 (10.2%)	.001
Witnessed Domestic Violence	33 (67.3%)	31 (24.2%)	.001
History of Drug Use	35 (71.4%)	39 (30.5%)	.001
Medical Issues Treatment	25 (51%)	18 (14%)	.001
Self-Harm Behaviors	36 (73.5%)	43 (33.6%)	.002
Dating Violence	17 (34.7%)	12 (9.4%)	.004
Harassment by Peers	17(34.7%)	14 (10.9%)	.004
Autism	9 (18.4%)	5 (3.9%)	.007
Ever Used Meth	13 (26.5%)	8 (6.3%)	.008
Addiction to Drugs	12 (24.4%)	9 (7%)	.011
Sexual abuse 12 years and under	20 (40.8%)	23 (18%)	.016

Dental Issues	17 (34.7%)	10 (7.8%)	.02
Bullied by Peers	21 (42.8%)	24 (18.8%)	.023
Mental Health Diagnosis	39 (79.6%)	66 (51.6%)	.034
ADD/ADHD	33 (67.3%)	40 (31.3%)	.034
Medical Issues	31(63.3%)	27 (21.1%)	.048

Sex trafficked participants were:

- 6.8 times more likely to report having Autism
- 5.5 times more likely to report having been sexually abused or raped between the ages of 13-17
- 5.4 times more likely to report that they saw a parent hit or beat another parent
- 5.4 times more likely to have received medical treatment for their medical issues
- 4.6 times more likely to have experienced harassment by peers
- 4.5 times more likely to have experienced dating violence
- 3.8 times more likely to report dental issues
- 3.7 times more likely to have used drugs
- 3.6 times more likely to have been sexually abused age 12 or younger
- 3.6 times more likely to have attempted suicide
- 3.6 times more likely to have ever used methamphetamines
- 3.3 times more likely to report having an addiction to drugs
- 3.3 times more likely to participate in self-harm behaviors
- 3.3 times more likely to report having been bullied by peers
- 2.6 times more likely to have a mental health diagnosis

Labor Exploitation Findings (n = 55)

- Fifty-five (31.1%) of the participants (N = 177) reported experiencing labor exploitation.
- Labor exploited participants identified their gender as male (n = 29, 52.7%), female (n = 18, 32.7%), transgender (n = 4, 7.3%), non-conforming (n = 3, 5.5%), and genderqueer (n = 1, 1.8%).
- Regarding sexual orientation, 50.9 (n = 28) percent of the sex trafficked young adults identified as LGBTQI (not heterosexual).
- Regarding race, 58.2 % (n = 32) of the participants that identified as having been sex trafficked did not identify as White.
- The average age of the first labor exploitation experience for the 55 participants was 17.1 years old ranging from age 10 to 24 years old.
- Fourteen (25.5%) of the participants reported that they were minors (under age 18) the first time they experienced labor exploitation.
- Twenty-eight (50.9%) labor exploited participants reported that they had been promised work where the work or payment ended up being different that what they expected.
- Twenty-three (41.8%) labor exploited participants reported that someone they worked for had ever controlled the money they earned, or kept money they earned in exchange for money, drugs, food, place to stay, clothing, or protection.

- 50 percent (n = 28) of the labor exploited participants reported experiencing an element of fraud in which they were promised work where the work or payment ended up being different than what they expected.
- Twenty-three (41.8%) labor exploited participants reported that there was someone they worked for who controlled or kept money they earned.
- The most common sectors that participants reported experiencing labor exploitation included: drug dealing/transportation (n = 4, 7.3%) and domestic work (n = 3, 5.5%).
Sector reported by labor exploited participants (some participants identified they were labor trafficked in more than one sector):

Sector	#	%
Drug dealing/transportation	4	7.3%
Domestic work	3	5.5%
Traveling sales crew	3	5.5%
Hotel work	2	3.6%
Assisted Living/Healthcare	1	1.8%
Childcare	1	1.8%
Restaurant work	1	1.8%
Sexualized labor (stripping, exotic dancing)	1	1.8%
Entertainment (games and recreation)	1	1.8%
Non-profit	1	1.8%

- The labor exploited participants identified as the following races:

Race	#	%
Caucasian/White	22	40%
Black/African American	14	25.5%
Biracial/multiracial	8	14.5%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	7	12.7%
Native American	2	3.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1.8%
Missing	1	1.8%
Total	55	100%

- The average age of first labor exploitation experience was 17.1 years old, ranging from age ten to 24. Fourteen participants (25.5%) reported that they first experienced labor exploitation before the age of 18.
- Thirty-four percent (n = 19) of the participants who reported experiencing labor exploitation reported that they had at some point had a labor trafficker. Three (5.5%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they currently had a person who was exploiting them.

- The relationship to the labor trafficker was identified by some of the labor exploited participants as:

Relationship to Labor Trafficker	#	%
Family Member	8	14.5%
Employer	7	12.7%
Boyfriend	5	9.1%
Stranger	5	9.1%
Gang	3	5.5%
Girlfriend	2	3.6%
Other	2	3.6%
Friend	1	1.8%

- Ten (18.2%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they had ever been afraid to leave or quit this labor trafficking situation due to fear of violence or other threats to harm them or their families.
- The most common items of value the labor exploited participants were forced/tricked/coerced for labor for were (some participants chose more than one option):

Items of Value	#	%
Money	24	43.6%
Place to stay	16	29.1%
Food	13	23.6%
Drugs	11	20%
Clothing	9	16.4%
Protection	8	14.5%
Repay a debt	3	5.5%

49.1% of the labor exploited participants were raised in the state of Arizona, and the others were from 14 other states. Those not raised in Arizona reported that they had been living in Arizona ranging from three weeks to four years.

Housing and Homelessness (n = 55)

- The labor exploited participants reported that they had been homeless from 1 time to 20 times during their lifetime starting at age 2 years old to 24 years old.
- The average age of the labor exploited participants' first homelessness experience was 16.6 years of age.
- More than half (n = 29, 52.7%) of the labor exploited participants first experienced homelessness as a child, under the age of 18.
- Current living situations for the labor exploitation participants included:

- living in a shelter (n = 23, 41.8%)
- a transitional housing program (n = 19, 34.5%)
- couch-surfing (n = 6, 10.9%)
- on the streets (n = 3, 3.6%)
- other living arrangement (n = 2, 4.1%)

Challenges and Risk Factors (n = 55)

- **Educational attainment:** 23 (41.8%) of the labor exploited participants dropped out of school before high school completion.
- **Drug Use:** Drug use was reported by nearly three quarters of the labor exploited participants (n = 30, 54.5%), with average age of first drug use being as a child, 14.5 years old. Drug use starting age ranged from 9 years old to 19 years old.
- An addiction to drugs was reported by 9 (16.4%) of the labor exploited participants.
- Nine (16.4%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they became addicted to drugs after they became homeless.
- Four (7.3%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they were addicted to alcohol.
- The most common drugs reportedly used by the labor exploited participants were:
 - Methamphetamines: 12 (21.7%) participants
 - Marijuana: 18 (32.7%) participants
 - Fentanyl: 6 (10.9%) participants
 - Heroin: 6 (10.9%) participants
 - Crack/cocaine: 4 (7.3%) participants
- **Self-Harm:** Twenty-nine (52.7%) of the labor exploited homeless young adult participants reported that they participated in some form of self-harming behavior including cutting (n = 17, 30.9%).
- A suicide attempt was reported by 27 (49.1%) of the labor exploited participants.
- **Mental Health Challenges:** Thirty-four (61.8%) of the labor exploited participants reported a current mental health diagnosis, and 27 (49.1%) reported having more than one mental health diagnosis. The labor trafficked participants identified as having the following mental health diagnoses:

Diagnoses	#	%
Bipolar Disorder	27	49.1%
ADD/ADHD	24	43.6%
Schizophrenia	18	32.7%
Depression	13	23.6%
Borderline Personality Disorder	12	21.8%
Anxiety	6	10.9%

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	4	7.3%
Antisocial Personality Disorder	2	3.6%
Dissociative Identity Disorder	2	3.6%

- Having received mental health treatment for their diagnosis was reported by 19 (34.5%) of the labor exploited participants.
- Ten percent (n = 6) of the labor exploited participants identified as having an Autism diagnosis.
- **Medical Challenges:** Thirty (54.5%) of the labor exploited participants reported experiencing a current medical problem. Nearly a third (n = 11, 20%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they were not currently receiving medical treatment for their medical issue. The medical issues reported by the participants included:

Medical Issue	#	%
Dental	14	25.5%
Asthma	13	23.6%
Poor Vision	12	21.8%
Chronic Pain	11	22.4%
Skin Problems	4	7.3%
Broken Bones	4	7.3%
Wounds	1	1.8%
Sexually Transmitted Infections	1	1.8%

- **Reject by Family:** Being kicked out of the house was reported by 41 (74.5%) of the labor exploited participants, with the average age of first being kicked out being 16.5 years (range from age 13 to 21). Forty-five percent (n = 25) of the labor exploited participants who had been kicked out reported being kicked out before the age of 18.
- The reasons for being kicked out included the following (some participants chose more than one option):

Reason	#	%
Family conflict (fighting with parents)	35	63.6%
Family could not provide for my needs due to poverty	15	27.3%
I was using substances	6	12.2%
Family did not approve of my sexual orientation	5	9.1%
Family didn't not approve of my gender identity	4	7.3%

- **Work:** The labor exploited participants reported that they participated in the following activities to earn money to live (some participants chose more than one option):

Activity	#	%
Steady job	26	47.3%
Day laborer	24	43.6%
Side jobs for cash	12	21.8%
Selling my own things	9	16.4%
Trading sex	5	9.1%
Selling stolen things	5	9.1%
Door to door sales	5	9.1%
Selling drugs	4	7.3%
Panhandling	4	7.3%
Pickpocket	1	1.8%

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences:** The labor exploited participants experienced an average of seven ACEs. The majority of participants (n = 40, 72.7%) reported experiencing more than one ACE and 67.3% (n = 37) reported experiencing four or more ACEs. The specific ACE experiences of the labor exploited participants included (some participants chose more than one option):

Adverse Childhood Experience	#	%
Family member depressed or mentally ill or a family member attempted suicide	43	78.2%
Parent with a drug or alcohol problem	42	76.4%
Parents separated or divorced	39	70.9%
Emotional abuse	38	69.1%
Feeling unloved or un-special	38	69.1%
Mother/stepmother physically abused	34	61.8%
Physical abuse	32	23.6%
Family member went to prison	29	52.7%
Neglect (not enough to eat, dirty clothes, no one to protect you or take you to the doctor)	26	47.3%
Sexual abuse by a person at least 5 years older	17	30.9%

- **Abuse and Violence:** Twenty-eight (n = 50.9%) of the labor exploited participants reported that they had seen one of their parents hit or beat their other parent. Being a assaulted, hit or kicked in a romantic relationship was reported by 25 (45.5%) of the labor exploitation participants. Other abuse experiences included (some participants chose more than one option):

Abuse Experience	#	%
Childhood emotional abuse	41	74.5%
Childhood physical abuse	32	58.2%
Sexual abuse age 13-17	24	43.6%
Sexual abuse age 12 and under	20	36.4%
Dating violence	19	34.5%

- **Challenging experiences:** The participants reported the following challenging experiences (some participants chose more than one option):

Experiences	#	%
Academic difficulties	31	56.4%
Ran away from home	29	52.7%
Bullied by peers	29	52.7%
Negative contact with law enforcement	26	47.3%
Harassment by peers	22	40%
Foster care	19	34.5%
Attended special education programs	15	27.3%
Member of a gang	13	23.6%
Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System	11	20%
Expelled from school	9	16.4%
Residential treatment	8	14.5%
Work in the Adult Entertainment Industry	8	14.5%

Comparing Labor Exploited and Non-Labor Exploited Unsheltered Young Adults

Experience	Labor Exploited Participants (n = 55)	Non-labor exploited participants (n =105)	Significance (p value)
Lived with a depressed, mentally ill household member or who had attempted suicide.	43 (78.1%)	47 (44.7%)	.001
History of Suicide Attempt	27 (49.1%)	32 (30.5%)	.001
Childhood Emotional Neglect	38 (69.1%)	53 (50.5%)	.001

Negative Contact with Law Enforcement	26 (47.3%)	17 (16.2%)	.001
Witnessed Domestic Violence as a Child	34 (61.8%)	33 (31.4%)	.001
History of Drug Use	34 (61.8%)	34 (32.4%)	.001
Sex Trafficked	23 (41.8%)	17 (16.2%)	.001
Someone in their childhood home used drugs/alcohol	42 (76.4%)	53 (50.5%)	.003
Childhood Physical Abuse	32 (58.2%)	40 (38.1%)	.003
Separated or Divorced Parents	39 (70.9%)	57 (54.3%)	.003
Sexual abuse age 13-17	24 (43.6%)	17 (16.2%)	.004
Childhood Emotional Abuse	38 (69.1%)	57 (54.3%)	.007
Dating Violence	19 (34.5%)	15 (14.3%)	.012
Experienced Academic Difficulties	31 (56.4%)	31 (29.5%)	.012
Attended Special Education Classes	15 (27.3%)	12 (11.4%)	.017
Childhood Physical Neglect	26 (47.3%)	34 (32.4%)	.021
Depression	13 (23.6%)	13 (12.5%)	.022
More than one Mental Health Diagnosis	27 (49.1%)	37 (35.2%)	.030
Ever Used Meth	12 (21.8%)	9 (8.6%)	.034
Bullied by Peers	29 (52.7%)	29 (27.6%)	.044
In Foster Care	19 (34.5%)	17 (16.2%)	.049

Labor exploited participants were:

6.5 times more likely to have had negative experiences with law enforcement.

4.5 times more likely to have experienced Depression

4.1 times more likely to have experienced emotional neglect by a parent

4.1 times more likely to report having lived with a person who was depressed, mentally ill or had attempted suicide.

3.9 times more likely to have separated or divorced parents.

3.8 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse between the ages of 13 to 17 years old.

3.4 times more likely to report having witnessed domestic violence as a child.

3.3 times more likely to have experienced emotional abuse by a parent.

3.3 times more likely to have been in special education classes.

3.2 times more likely to have experienced dating violence

- 3.2 times more likely to have experienced academic difficulties.
- 3.1 times more likely to have experienced physical abuse by a parent.
- 2.9 times more likely to live with a person with a drug or alcohol problem when they were a child.
- 2.5 times more likely to have experienced bullying by school peers.
- 2.5 times more likely to have been placed in foster care.
- 2.3 times more likely to have experienced physical neglect by a parent
- 5.9 times more likely to have used drugs
- 3.6 times more likely to have attempted suicide
- 2.8 times more likely to have ever used methamphetamines
- 2.7 times more likely to have more than one mental health diagnosis

From 2021 to 2023

In a look at if the experiences of unsheltered youth who identified as being trafficked in Arizona have changed since 2021, we explored the YES data from 2021 to 2023. Each year the data is collected from young adults receiving services from homeless youth services in Arizona. It is not evident that these youth are duplicated and it is somewhat unlikely that there would be much overlap due to the short-term nature of most of the services provided to unsheltered young adults in Arizona but it is always possible. Please take that caution into consideration as you interpret the following results.

Experiences of Human Trafficking Among Unsheltered Young Adults YES 2021-2023

The incidence of human trafficking among Arizona’s unsheltered young adults in this study steadily increased over the last three years of the study. Reports by the participants of sex trafficking victimization increased from 2021 to 2023 by 17.4 percentage points and for reports of labor trafficking, increased 31.8 percentage points.

	2021 (N = 89)	2022 (N = 107)	2023 (N= 177)
Sex trafficked	21 (23.6%)	39 (23.6%)	49 (27.7%)
Labor exploited	21 (23.6%)	31 (29%)	55 (31.1%)

The participants who reported sex trafficking over the past three years has changed with an increase in the victims of sex trafficking identifying as male by 146.8 percentage points.

Sex Trafficked Young Adults by Gender from 2021-2023 YES

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)
Female	14 (66.7%)	24 (61.5%)	20 (40.8%)
Male	4 (19%)	10 (25.6%)	23 (46.9%)
Trans/other (genderqueer, two- spirit, non conforming)	3 (14.4%)	5 (12.8%)	6 (12.3%)

The sexual orientation of the young adult participants reporting sex trafficking victimization did not vary significantly over the past three years. It is important to note that those identifying as

LGBTQI+ represented more than half, an average of 56.5 percent, of the sex trafficking participants over the three years.

Sex Trafficked Young Adults Sexual Orientation from 2021-2023 YES

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)
LGBTQI+	14 (66.7%)	17 (43.6%)	29 (59.2%)
Heterosexual	5 (33.3%)	20 (51.3%)	20 (40.8%)

Racial identity of the sex trafficked young adults was stable over the three years. persons of color (non-white) represented those victims of sex trafficking on average 67.2 percent which reflects the high proportion (75.7 percent) of non-white homeless young adults in this overall study.

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)
White	8 (38.1%)	10 (25.6%)	17 (34.7%)
Non-white	13 (61.9%)	29 (74.4%)	32 (65.3%)

The reason for exchanging sex during their sex trafficking experiences were varied with drops in exchanging sex for a place to stay, for money, protection, clothes, and for drugs. Those reporting exchanging sex for food remained steady.

Sex Trafficking: Reason for Sex Exchange from 2021 to 2023 YES, participants were able to choose more than one option.

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)
Place to Stay	12 (57.1%)	17 (43.6%)	20 (40.8%)
Money	11 (52.4%)	14 (35.9%)	19 (38.8%)
Drugs	7 (33.3%)	11 (28.2%)	7 (14.3%)
Food	6 (28.6%)	14 (35.9%)	13 (26.5%)
Protection	5 (23.8%)	7 (17.9%)	8 (16.3%)
Clothes	4 (19%)	8 (20.5%)	4 (8.2%)
Other	1 (4.8%)	1 (2.6%)	0

The relationship between the victims of sex trafficking and their traffickers changed significantly over the past three years of the YES. Significant increases were noted in the sex trafficker being a family member increasing 652.6 percentage points and stranger increasing 265.3 percentage points with boyfriend as trafficker dropping 48.7 percentage points.

Sex Trafficking: Relationship Between the Victim and Trafficker YES 2021-2023

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)	Change from 2021 to 2023 in % points
Friend	7 (33.3%)	12 (30.8%)	16 (32.7%)	-2%
Boyfriend	5 (23.8%)	10 (25.6%)	6 (12.2%)	-48.7%
Stranger	2 (9.5%)	8 (20.5%)	17 (34.7%)	265.3%

Parent/Guardian	3 (7.7%)	3 (7.7%)	6 (12.2%)	58.4%
Other	2 (9.5%)	3 (7.7%)	4 (8.2%)	-13.7%
Gang	0	3 (7.7%)	2 (4.1%)	200%
Girlfriend	1 (4.8%)	3 (7.7%)	2 (4.1%)	-14.6%
Other family member (cousin, mother's boyfriend)	4 (19%)	2 (5.1%)	5 (10.2%)	-46.3%
Sibling	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	3 (6.1%)	134.6%
Family member combined	8 (3.8%)	6 (15.4%)	14 (28.6%)	652.6%

While over the past three years there have been a drop in percentage points of drugs used and addiction reported by the unsheltered young adults reporting sex trafficking, drug use was reported on average of 74.6 percent. An average of 69.2 percent of the sex trafficked participants reported using drugs before age 18.

Sex Trafficking: Substance Use and Drug Type YES 2021-2023

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)	Change from 2021 to 2023 in % points
Drug use	18 (85.7%)	26 (66.7%)	35 (71.4%)	-16.7%
Drug use before age 18	15 (71.4%)	22 (56.4%)	27 (55.1%)	-22.8%
Addiction to drugs	6 (28.6%)	5 (12.8%)	12 (24.5%)	-7.3%
Methamphetamines	7 (28.6%)	11 (28.2%)	13 (26.5%)	-7.3%
Marijuana	9 (42.8%)	12 (30.8%)	12 (24.5%)	-42.8
Fentanyl	Did not ask	6 (15.4%)	9 (18.4%)	
Heroin	4 (19%)	8 (20.5%)	9 (18.4%)	-3.1%

Changes in experiences reported by the unsheltered young adults who were sex trafficked included decreases in reporting being kicked out of their home as a child, decreased attendance to residential treatment, fewer reports of negative interactions with law enforcement, decreased reports of dating violence, fewer reports of being involved in the juvenile justice system, and decreases in most types of childhood abuse. Increases were seen with the victim of sex trafficking dropping out of school, reporting seeing domestic violence in their homes, cutting behaviors, mental health diagnoses, history of attempted suicide and gang affiliation. The rates of all of the vulnerabilities listed were significant and of serious concern with long term ramifications for mental health challenges.

Sex Trafficking: Vulnerabilities YES 2021- 2023

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)	Change from 2021 to 2023 in % points
Kicked out of home before age 18	11 (52.4%)	26 (66.6%)	21 (42.9%)	-18.1%
Dropped out of school	7 (33.3%)	21 (53.8%)	20 (40.8%)	22.5%
Saw DV at home	10 (47.6%)	20 (51.3%)	33 (67.3%)	41.4%
Cutting behaviors	12 (57.1%)	20 (51.3%)	36 (73.5%)	28.7%
Mental health diagnosis	15 (71.4%)	27 (69.2%)	39 (79.6%)	11.5%
History of attempted suicide	12 (57.1%)	23 (59%)	32 (65.3%)	14.4%
Residential treatment	5 (23.8%)	5 (12.8%)	5 (10.2%)	-57.1%
Negative contact with law enforcement	12 (57.1%)	16 (41%)	15 (30.6%)	-46.4%
Dating violence	10 (47.6%)	27 (69.2%)	17 (34.7%)	-27.1%
Foster care/group home	6 (28.6%)	9 (23.1%)	14 (28.6%)	0
Involvement in the juvenile justice system	8 (38.1%)	9 (23.1%)	7 (14.3%)	-62.5%
Academic difficulties	13 (61.9%)	18 (46.1%)	18 (36.7%)	-40.7%
Run away from home	12 (57.1%)	21 (53.8%)	23 (46.9%)	-17.9%
Expelled from school	7 (33.3%)	12 (30.8%)	9 (18.4%)	-44.8%
Special education classes	6 (28.6%)	9 (23.1%)	8 (16.3%)	-43%
Bullied in school	15 (71.4%)	19 (48.7%)	21 (42.9%)	-39.9%
Gang affiliation	0	8 (20.5%)	7 (14.3%)	1330%
Physical abuse by a guardian	12 (57.1%)	19 (48.7%)	23 (46.9%)	-17.9%
Emotional abuse by a guardian	18 (85.7%)	27 (69.2%)	29 (59.2%)	-30.9%
Sexual abuse (age 12 and under)	9 (42.9%)	18 (46.1%)	20 (40.8%)	-4.9%
Sexual abuse (age 13- 17)	8 (38.1%)	19 (48.7%)	18 (36.7%)	-3.7%
Harassment by peers	10 (47.6%)	14 (35.9%)	17 (34.7%)	-27.1%

Reports of childhood abuse measured by the Adverse Childhood Experiences 10-question survey showed significant increases in ACEs reported by unsheltered young adults who had been sex trafficked with the exception of emotional neglect. The highest rate of changes were found in reports of parental separation or divorce (200 percentage points), having a household member go to prison (78.3 percentage points), physical neglect (61.8 percentage points), observing domestic violence in their home (42.7 percentage points) and emotional abuse (37 percentage points).

Sex Trafficking and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) YES 2021-2023

	2021 (n = 21)	2022 (n =39)	2023 (n = 49)	Change from 2021 to 2023 in % points
ACE Emotional abuse	16 (55.1%)	32 (82.1%)	37 (75.5%)	37%
ACE Physical abuse	12 (57.1%)	29 (74.4%)	37 (75.5%)	32.2%
ACE Sexual abuse	9 (42.9%)	24 (61.5%)	25 (51%)	18.9%
ACE Emotional neglect	18 (85.7%)	30 (76.9%)	37 (75.5%)	-11.9%
ACE Physical neglect	9 (42.9%)	29 (74.4%)	34 (69.4%)	61.8%
Parents separated or divorced	11 (52.4%)	35 (89.7%)	34 (69.4%)	200%
ACE Observed domestic violence in home	9 (42.9%)	23 (59%)	30 (61.2%)	42.7%
ACE Drug or alcohol abuse in home	13 (61.5%)	35 (89.7%)	32 (65.3%)	6.2%
ACE Family member with mental illness or attempted suicide	13 (61.5%)	29 (74.4%)	36 (73.5%)	19.5%
ACE Household member go to prison	6 (28.6%)	22 (56.4%)	25 (51%)	78.3%
4 or more ACES	15 (71.4%)	35 (89.7%)	38 (77.6%)	8.7%

Key Findings and Recommendations

Incidence

The incidence of human trafficking among Arizona’s unsheltered young adults in this study steadily increased over the last three years. It is unclear why the reports of sex and labor trafficking by the study’s participants increased. There have been some community activities

that may have influenced these changes. There has been ongoing sex and labor trafficking awareness campaigns around the state of Arizona beginning in 2022 with billboards, radio advertisements, and awareness information on social media. Training by a number of organizations on sex trafficking during the years between 2021 and 2023 reached more than 20,000 community members. This steady increase is of great concern by those in the anti-trafficking and youth/young adult homeless provider community, as experiences of exploitation seem to exacerbate trauma symptoms, mistrust of others, and challenges with emotional and relationship stability.

Disproportionate Representations of People of Color and LGBTQI+ Identities

The 2023 YES report found that of the convenience, cross-sectional sample of the study, more than three quarters of the unsheltered young adults surveyed identified as a person of color. This disproportionate representation is likely a result of limited access to comprehensive supports including poorly funded schools in minority-rich communities in Arizona, higher likelihood of families of color being involved in the child welfare and criminal justice systems in Arizona, and very limited prevention programs for youth in Arizona for issues including mental health, violence prevention, and relationship guidance and support. Therefore, one proposed recommendation includes an expansion of culturally sensitive programs. Service providers should receive training on cultural competence to better understand and address the unique challenges faced by these youth. This training should include modules on the historical and systemic factors contributing to homelessness among people of color, as well as practical strategies for building trust and rapport with these communities. Additionally, engaging with community leaders and organizations within communities of color may assist with developing outreach programs that are culturally relevant and effective in identifying and supporting at-risk youth.

Nearly half, 48.1 percent of the 2023 participants reporting sex trafficking victimization identified as LGBTQI+. This year, LGBTQI+ participants reported that just over 50 percent had come out as LGBTQI+ before they became homeless the first time. Twenty five percent responded that they thought being LGBTQI+ made them more vulnerable to being forced or coerced to exchange sex for something of value. Statements from those who reported they felt more vulnerable to coercion included:

I am trans and I can't get work.

I think it diminished my worth so I was expendable, unimportant and seen as stupid.

Of those that identified as LGBTQI+ and sex trafficked, 18.6 percent reported that they were forced to engage in sex with persons of a different gender from their sexual preference. Overall, this highlights the urgent need for targeted support for LGBTQI+ youth. One recommendation is the creation of more safe spaces specifically for this population, where they can access supportive services without fear of discrimination. These safe spaces should offer specialized counseling and mental health services that address the unique experiences and traumas of LGBTQI+ individuals, including those related to coming out, family rejection, and social stigma.

Additionally, service providers should also receive comprehensive training on LGBTQI+ issues to ensure they are equipped to provide inclusive and affirming care.

Early Experiences of Homelessness

In 2023, nearly half of the non-sex trafficked respondents (47%) and over half (55%) of the respondents who had a history of trafficking reported their first experience of homelessness occurred when they were minors. One recommendation is the implementation and or support of existing school-based programs to identify and support students at risk of homelessness. Furthermore, family mediation services should be developed and funded to address conflicts within families, as that was the most common reason for being kicked out of the home among both trafficked (70%) and non-trafficked respondents (71%).

Substance Use

In 2023, substance use was prevalent among both non-trafficked respondents (44%) and those who had a history of trafficking (71%). Although there is some nuance since substance use may have been used as a coping mechanism, due to the similarly high prevalence of first substance use occurring while under the age of 18 among both groups, there is a need for increased access to youth-friendly substance use treatment services. One recommendation is to allocate resources towards the development and implementation of such services. These programs should focus on education, early intervention, and harm reduction strategies, and could be done by either expanding youth-specific treatment facilities and integrating substance use treatment into other supportive services for this population.

Conclusion

The findings from the 2023 YES study echo the findings from the previous ten years of research on homeless young adults in Arizona. This group of young adults continue to be at high risk for harm including sex trafficking and labor exploitation. This study demonstrates the need for broad intervention with unsheltered young adults to protect them from harm as well as provide supports so they can find stable, non-exploitative housing and meaningful connections in the Arizona community.