



2020 Youth Experiences Survey

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Special Thanks

The 2020 YES Study was made possible by the following four participating agencies:



THANK YOU FOR YOUR LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIP AND DEDICATION TO THIS PROJECT, EVEN AMIDST THE CHALLENGES AND PRESSURES OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC.

2020 YOUTH EXPERIENCES SURVEY

Introduction

- Administered through 4 partnering social service agencies for the past seven consecutive years in the state of Arizona (2014-2020).
- The purpose of the YES study was to determine the gaps in service needs for this particularly vulnerable population and explore how prevalent sex and labor exploitation was as a result of these vulnerabilities.
- The year 2020 has presented its own unique challenges, with the COVID-19 pandemic creating critical barriers to providing services to the most vulnerable clients. It is still too soon to know the ultimate impact that COVID-19 has had on the homeless youth population. However, it is known that homeless populations are uniquely vulnerable to contracting the novel COVID-19 virus and to experience the more extreme symptoms and conditions of the virus, due to the fact that many homeless persons have pre-existing health complications (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020).

2020 YOUTH EXPERIENCES SURVEY

Introduction

- The true impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the prevalence of human trafficking is yet to be known.
- It is clear, however, that global shutdowns of country borders and businesses, large and small, have resulted in increased financial insecurity, through increased unemployment, poverty, and subsequent reduced access to food, housing, and healthcare (Armitage & Nellums, 2020).
- These factors exacerbate the dire circumstances for already vulnerable populations, and increase the risk of sexual and labor exploitation, as traffickers are adept at exploiting vulnerabilities for their own gain.
- Due to the limited capacity of social service agencies during COVID-19, the number of homeless young adults who participated in the 2020 YES study represents the lowest sample size in the history of the YES study. However, the findings reflect the dire circumstances that homeless young adults continue to find themselves in, including housing instability, job insecurity, mental health and medical challenges, substance use, and the presence of sexual and labor exploitation.

Research Questions

1. What are the life experiences of homeless young adults in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona related to place of origin, use of drugs and alcohol, mental and physical diagnoses, family dysfunction, and reasons for homelessness?
2. What Adverse Childhood Experiences have homeless young adults in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona faced?
3. What are the risk factor and protective factors present for homeless young adults in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona?

Research Questions

Within the sex trafficked homeless young adults:

1. What were the most common reasons the sex trafficking victims identified for how they were sex trafficked?
2. What is a profile of a sex trafficked homeless young adult from Phoenix/Tucson, Arizona?
3. How prevalent was the use of technology in their sex trafficking experience?
4. What are the differences between sex trafficked homeless young adults and non-sex trafficked homeless young adults?

Research Questions

Within the labor exploited homeless young adults:

1. What were the most common reasons the labor exploited victims identified for how they were exploited for labor?
2. What is a profile of a labor exploited homeless young adult from Phoenix/Tucson, Arizona?
3. What sectors did the labor exploited homeless young adults experience labor exploitation?
4. What are the differences between labor exploited homeless young adults and non-labor exploited homeless young adults?

Instrument

Due to the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 YES instrument was made available in both a paper-and-pencil format as well as an online survey format.

The Youth Experiences Survey is a 83-item survey with questions regarding demographics and personal history, family history, and life experiences, including questions about sex trafficking and labor exploitation and questions from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study.

Participant Demographics N = 81

81 homeless young adults participated in the 2020 YES Study, representing a 48.5% decrease in number of participants from the 2019 YES survey, due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.



76.5%

Paper and Pencil
Surveys



23.5%

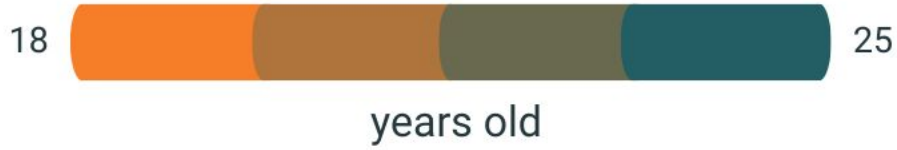
Online Surveys

Participants of the YES study were receiving services from Our Family Services in Tucson, AZ (n = 36, 44.4%), and three agencies from Phoenix, AZ, including: UMOM (n = 23, 28.4%), Native American Connections (n = 19, 23.5%), and one.n.ten (n = 3, 3.7%).

Participant Demographics

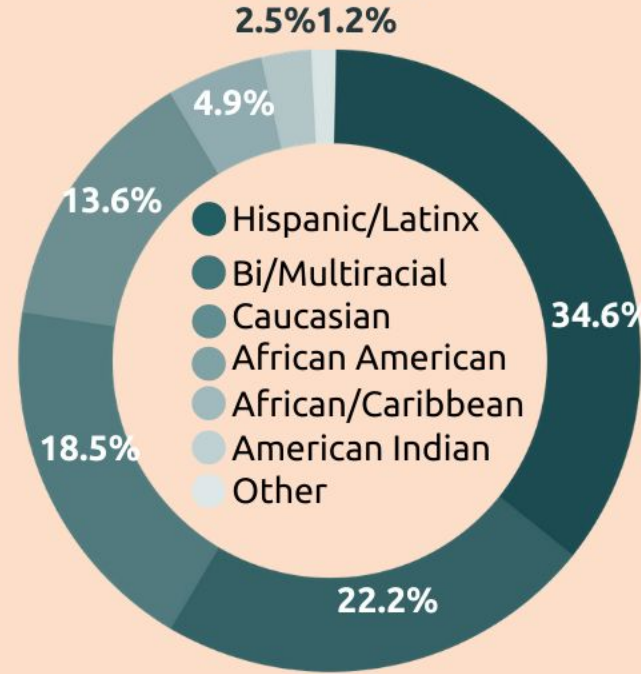
Age

Age ranged from

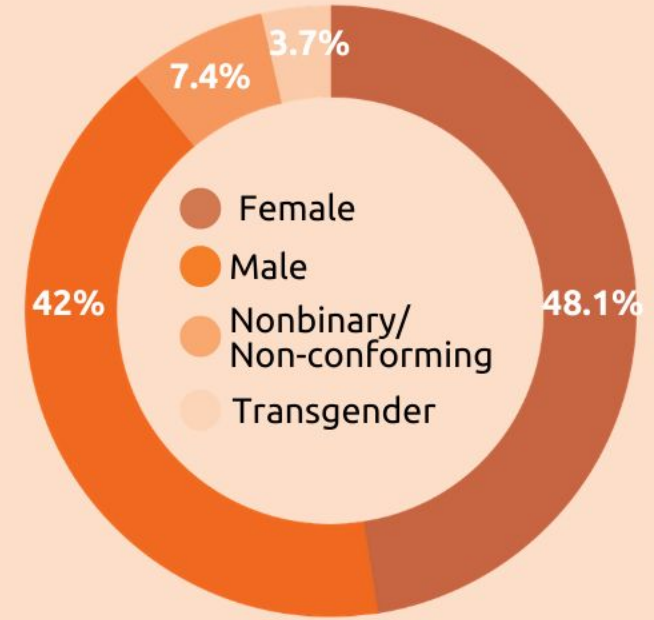


20.6
Average Age
of participants

Ethnicity



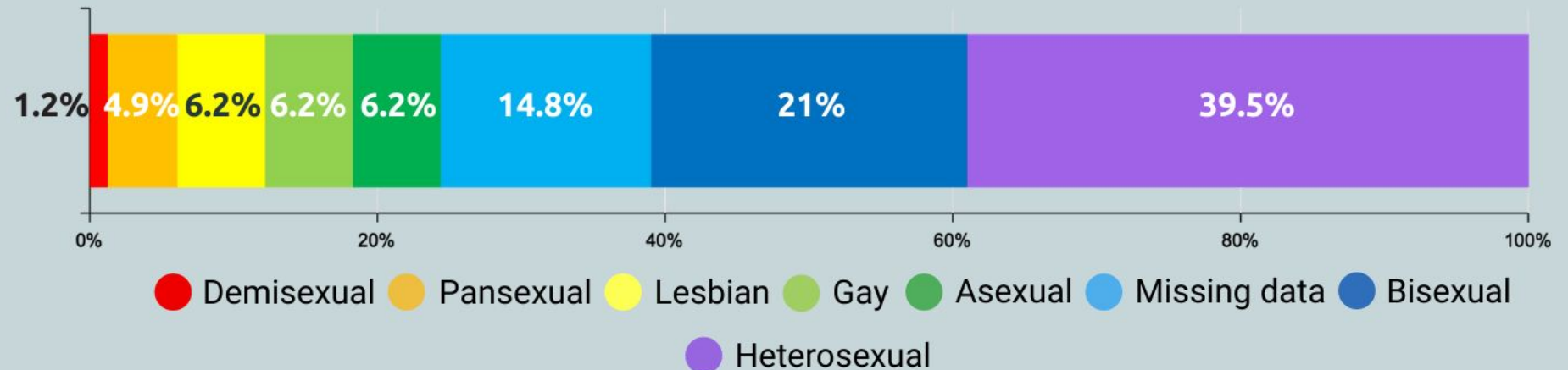
Gender Identity



Sexual Orientation

Participants identified as:

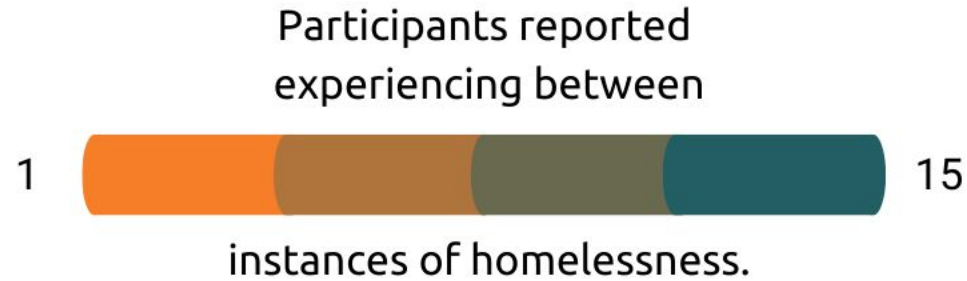
48.1%
identified as
LGBTQIA+



Housing



The average age of 1st homelessness was 16.6 years old.



The average number of times homeless being 3.5 times.



Participants reported their current housing situation to be:



Shelter
(n = 29, 35.8%)



Transitional housing
(n = 19, 23.5%)



Streets
(n = 15, 18.5%)



Couch-surfing
(n = 7, 8.6%)



**My own place,
paid by self**
(n = 4, 4.9%)

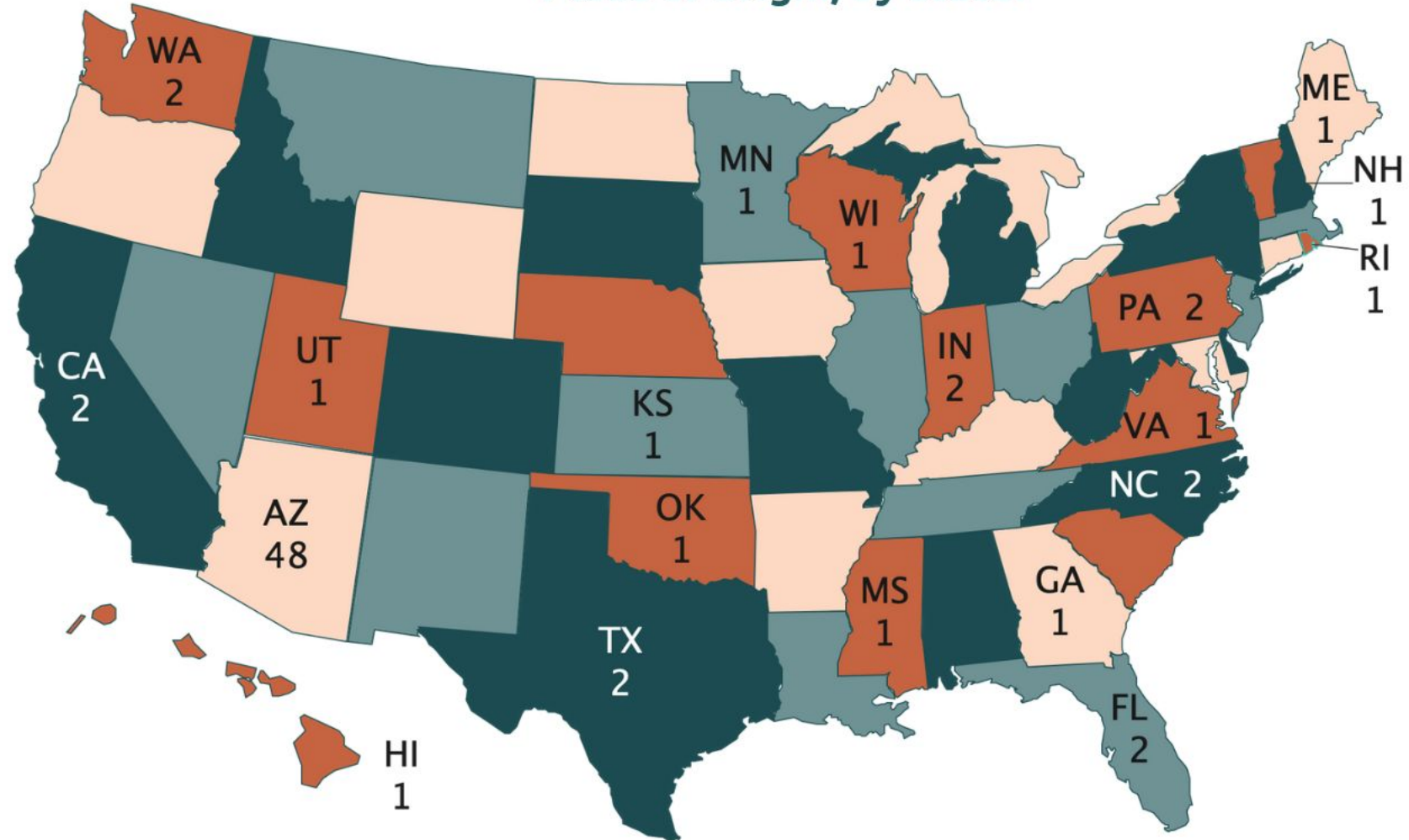
RESULTS (N = 81)

Time living in Arizona ranged from



The average time living in Arizona was 13.7 years.

Place of origin, by state.



- The majority of participants (n = 50, 61.7%) were raised in Arizona.
- Participants originated from 20 different states within the United States of America.
- Participants also originated from three additional countries: Mexico (n = 2, 2.5%), Jamaica (n = 1, 1.2%), and Russia (n = 1, 1.2%)

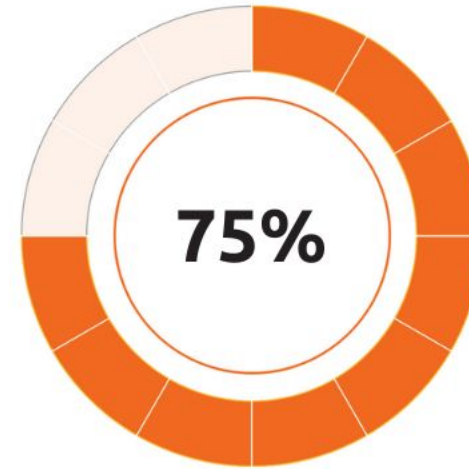
Sex Trafficking (N = 24)

Almost half (n = 37, 45.7%) of participants reported experiencing some form of human exploitation, either sex or labor. Nine (11.1%) participants reported experiencing both sex trafficking and labor exploitation. Twenty participants (24.7%) reported experiencing labor exploitation. Twenty-four (29.6%) participants reported experiencing sex trafficking.



The average age of 1st sex trafficking experience was 13 years old.

75% Female
70.8% LGBTQIA+



reported first being trafficked before the age of 18.

Participants reported being sex trafficked for:

37.5%

Money



37.5%

Food



25%

Clothing



20.8%

Shelter



16.7%

Protection



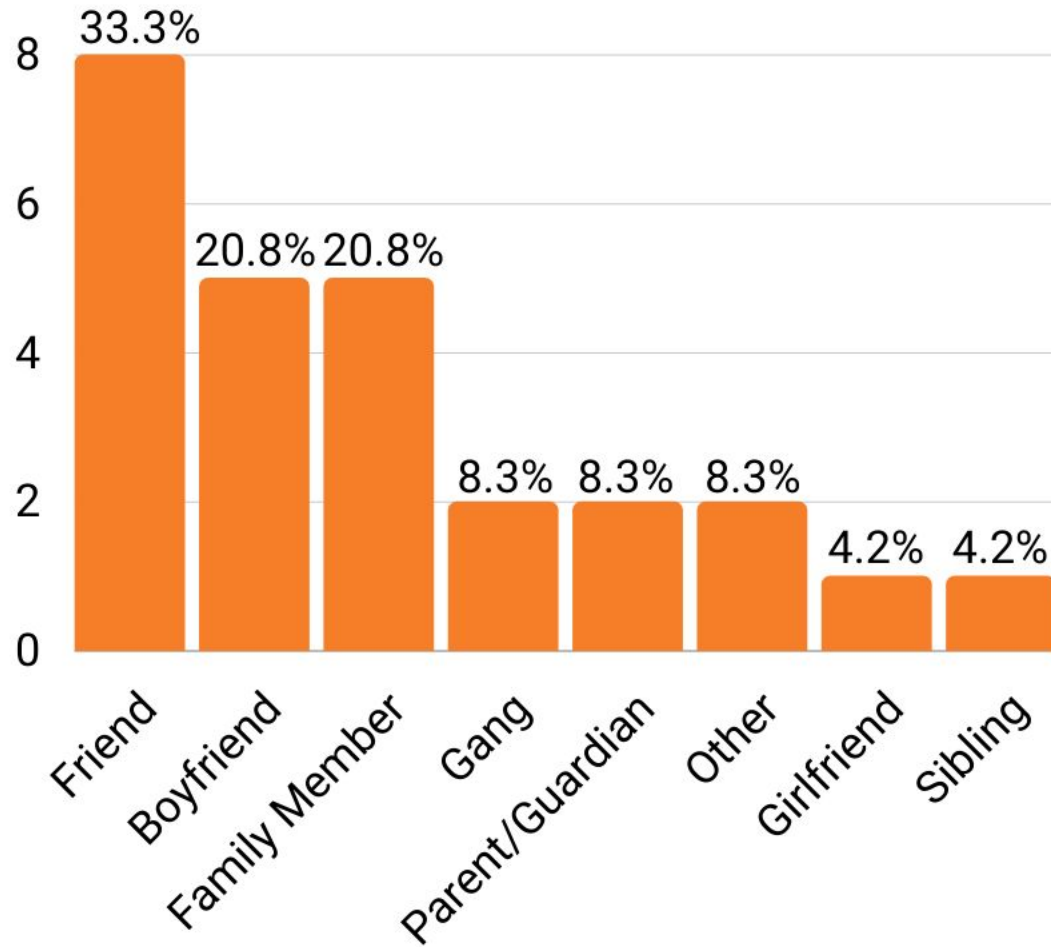
12.5%

Drugs



Sex Trafficking (N = 24)

Participants identified their relationship to their sex trafficker as:



1 (4.2%) participant reported currently having a sex trafficker.

22 (91.7%) identified as ever having a sex trafficker.

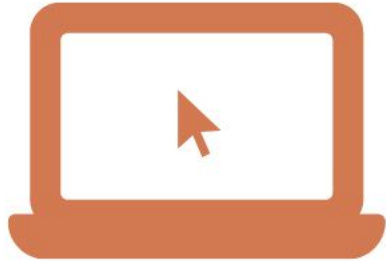
Those who selected other wrote in: “mom’s ex-boyfriend” and “family friends”.



12.5%

of participants reported that they were afraid to leave the situation due to fear of violence against self or family.

Sex Trafficking (N = 24)



29.2%

(n = 7) reported that technology was used to facilitate their exploitation.

Technology used, by type	#	%
Smartphone	4	16.7%
Dating Site	3	12.5%
Craigslist	2	8.3%
Facebook	2	8.3%
Grindr	1	4.2%
Tinder	1	4.2%
Tumblr	1	4.2%
Backpage	1	4.2%
Pornographic photos	1	4.2%

The two dating sites mentioned included MeetMe (n = 2, 8.3%) and Mocospace (n = 1, 4.2%).

Technology was used:

as a tool in a sex exchange (n = 4, 16.7%)

to keep victim in a sex trafficking situation (n = 2, 8.3%)

for recruitment to exchange sex (n = 1, 4.2%)

to help the victim get out of a sex trafficking situation (n = 1, 4.2%)

Sex Trafficking (N = 24)

Participants who reported being sex trafficked were significantly more likely to experience:



Identify as LGBTQ

$x^2(1, N = 70) = 6.83, p < .009$



Self-harming behavior

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 13.79, p < .000$



Dating violence

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 18.24, p < .000$



4 or more ACEs

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 8.34, p < .004$

Cutting

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 10.43, p < .001$

Emotional abuse before age 18

$x^2(1, N = 79) = 6.09, p < .014$

Drug use

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 8.54, p < .003$

Physical abuse before age 18

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 9.14, p < .002$

Residential treatment

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 6.79, p < .009$

Attempted suicide

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 6.69, p < .010$

Sexual abuse before age 18

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 12.38, p < .000$

**Substance abuse in the home
before age 18**

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 11.26, p < .001$

PTSD

$x^2(1, N = 80) = 7.35, p < .007$

Emotional neglect before age 18

$x^2(1, N = 78) = 12.87, p < .000$

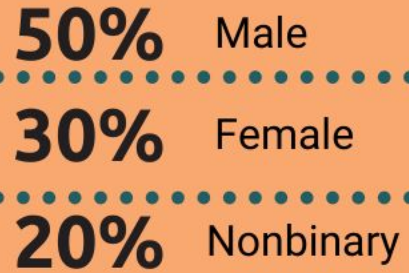
Labor Exploitation (N = 20)

Twenty participants (24.7%) reported experiencing labor exploitation.

Participant's age at first labor exploitation experience ranged from



The average age of 1st labor exploitation was 15.4 years old.



(n = 4, 20%) reported first being exploited for labor before the age of eighteen.

Eight (40%) participants reported having been tricked or forced into doing work that they did not want to do. Participants reported being tricked or forced into work in hopes of receiving:

30%

Money



30%

Food



25%

Shelter



25%

Clothing



10%

Protection



5%

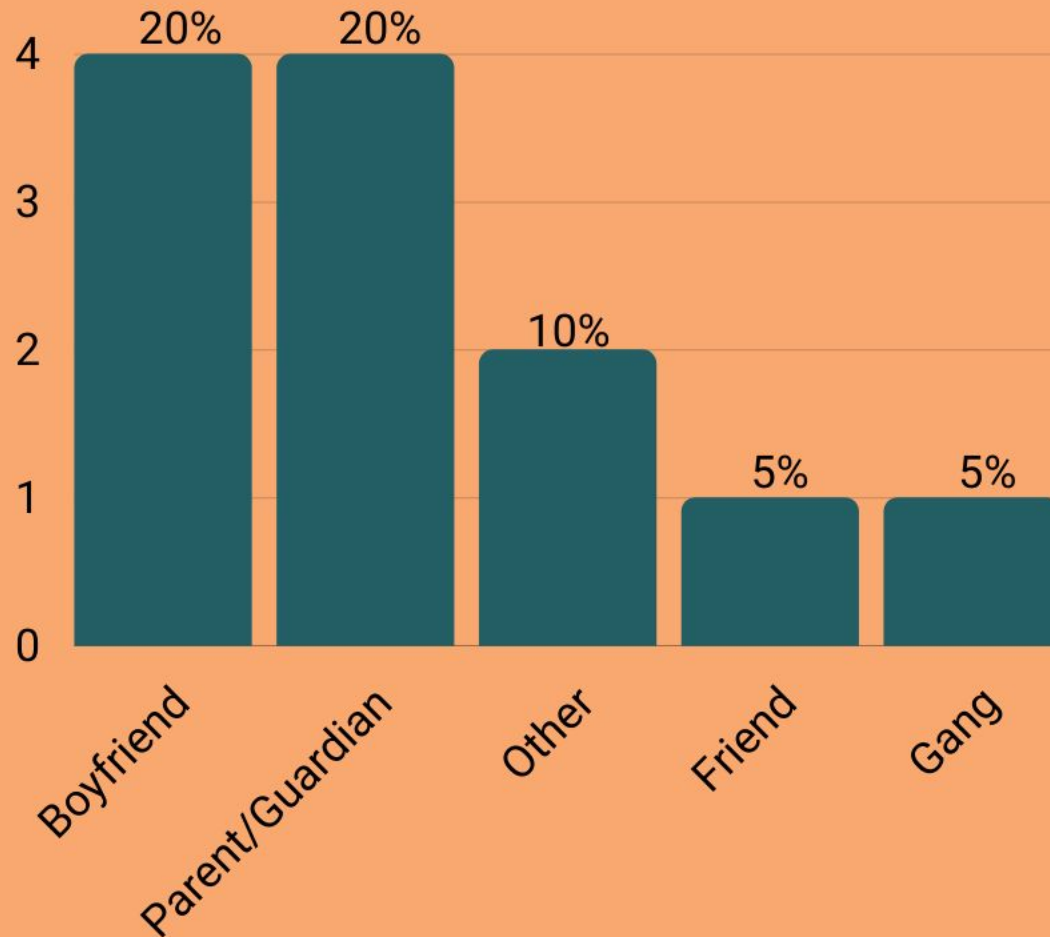
Drugs



Labor Exploitation (N = 20)

Five (25%) participants reported having a labor exploiter who controlled or kept all of the money earned by the participant. Sixteen (80%) participants reported having a person who exploited them for labor.

The participants identified their relationship to the labor exploiter as:



The participants who selected “other” identified their labor exploiter as “employer” and “friend’s uncle”.



10%

of participants reported that they were afraid to leave the situation due to fear of violence against self or family.

Labor Exploitation (N = 20)



Thirteen (65%) participants reported being promised work where the type of work or payment ended up being different than what was agreed upon.



Four (20%) participants reported being paid less than what was agreed upon.



Three (15%) participants reported never being paid for the work they had done.

Participants who reported being labor exploited were significantly more likely to experience:



4 or more ACEs
 $\chi^2(1, N = 81) = 6.33, p < .012$



Witnessing domestic violence in home before age 18
 $\chi^2(1, N = 80) = 4.62, p < .032$



Physical neglect before age 18
 $\chi^2(1, N = 80) = 11.39, p < .001$

Eight (40%) participants reported what sector they experience labor exploitation in:



Domestic Servitude
 (n = 4, 20%)



Agriculture
 (n = 2, 10%)



Assisted living/healthcare
 (n = 1, 5%)



Child care
 (n = 1, 5%)



Restaurant
 (n = 1, 5%)



Moving company
 (n = 1, 5%)



Selling magazines
 (n = 1, 5%)



Construction
 (n = 1, 5%)



Drugs related
 (n = 1, 5%)

CONCLUSION

- Despite a 48.5% decrease in sample size from the 2019 YES Study, the findings from the 2020 YES Study remain consistent across the 7 years with regard to the most critical vulnerabilities to the sex trafficked and labor exploited homeless young adults in the state of Arizona:



Self-Harm



Attempted Suicide



**History of Abuse
(sexual abuse notable)**



**Experiencing 4 or
More ACEs**



Drug Use



PTSD

The **LGBTQIA+** community remains overrepresented within the sample population of homeless young adults.

Almost half of all participants identified as LGBTQIA+, and were significantly more likely to report a sex trafficking experience.

COVID-19 has presented critical challenges to service provision for vulnerable populations around the state of Arizona. The impact of COVID-19 on both the homeless population and the trafficking victim population is yet to be known, but the findings demonstrate that homeless young adults continue to face significant challenges, including sexual and labor exploitation, due to their unique vulnerabilities. Further research should be conducted to understand the impact of COVID-19 on this population.



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