

May 2024

CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN ARIZONA: 2021-MAY 2023

Presented by

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, Ph.D. ASU STIR

Sarah Way, MNLM





**FUNDING FROM AMBER ALERT TRAINING
AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
AND THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**



THIS PROJECT

The data in this report was collected by a statewide medical and behavioral health insurance provider for youth in care of the State of Arizona for the purpose of better understanding the experiences of child sex trafficking survivors. The report describes the Arizona Statewide Collaborative Process to identify victims of child sex trafficking and the how victims were identified as well as characteristics of the victims identified. From January 2021 to May 2023, **309** suspected or confirmed victims of sex trafficking were identified.

Arizona

SIZE

Arizona is the sixth largest state in the U.S. We have 15 counties, 141 law enforcement agencies and 14,591 sworn police officers.

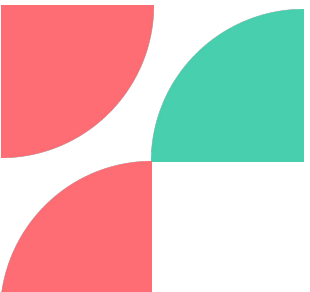
CHALLENGES

Arizona has some of the richest and poorest zip codes in the country. Arizona has a robust network of gangs and criminal activities including drug trafficking and human smuggling that are adjacent to sex trafficking.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Arizona has multiple environmental factors that drive sex trafficking activities-

- consistently sunny weather
- a large concentration of people- including those vulnerable to trafficking and those with the resources to purchase sex
- events that bring men and money to the major cities in Arizona regularly.



Previous Research

2020 REPORT

- 3-year time frame
- all but 4 were from Arizona
- Average age a detection was 15.3 (decreased over time).
- African American youth made up over a third of the sex trafficking cases.
- Change over time from 90% of the CST victims in AZDCS guardianship in 2017 to 59% in 2020.
- A history of running away was a key element of many of the cases.

291 child sex trafficking cases





MERCY CARE

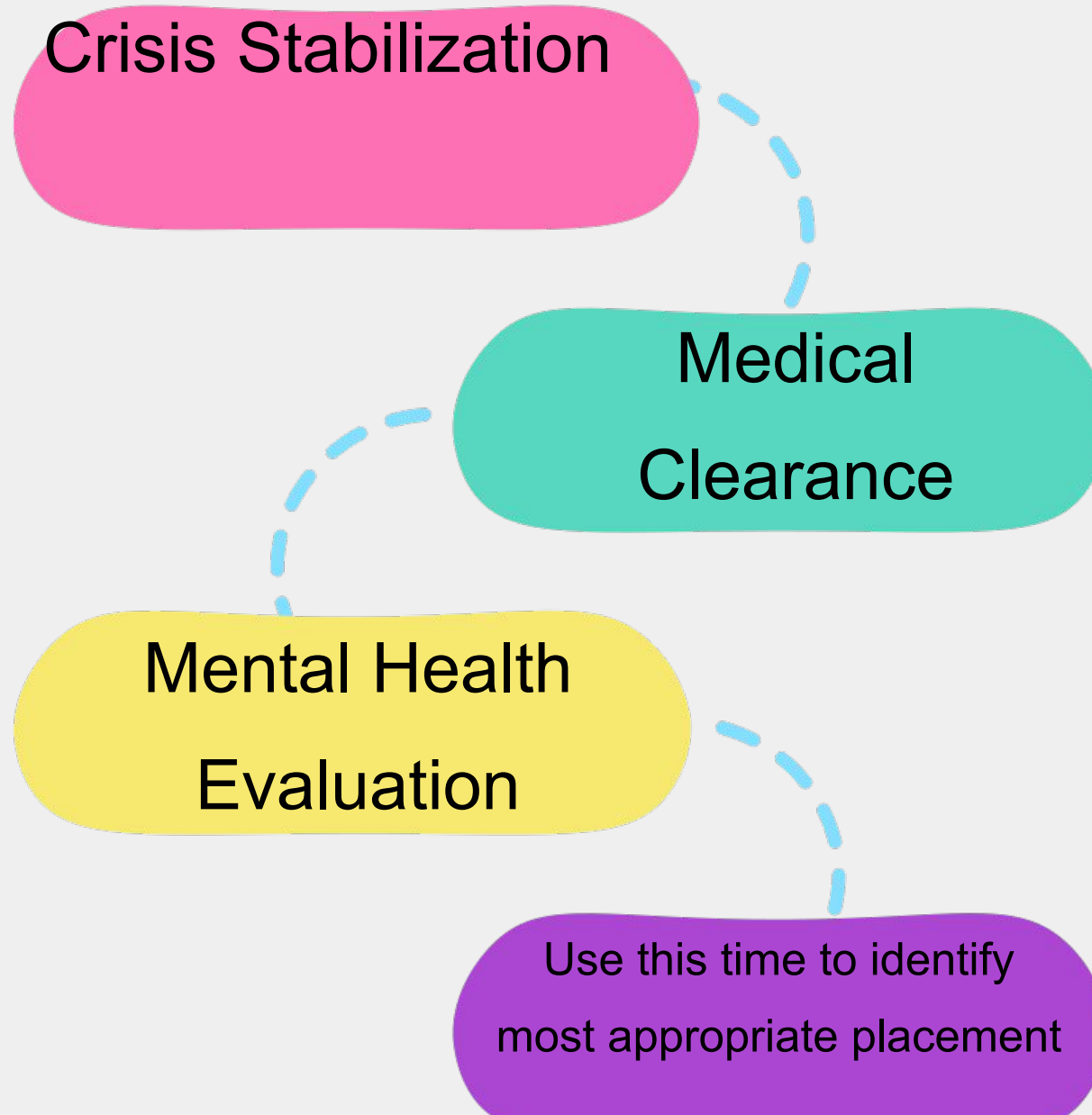
2017– Began coordinating the
Trafficked Youth Collaborative in
Maricopa County.

Has since expanded to statewide.



PROCESS OF THE COLLABORATIVE

Collaborative Process



THIS STUDY

309 CHILDREN
IDENTIFIED

196 (63.4%)
SUSPECTED

113 (36.6%)
CONFIRMED

2021 = 97

2022 = 173
(78.3%)



-MAY 2023 = 39

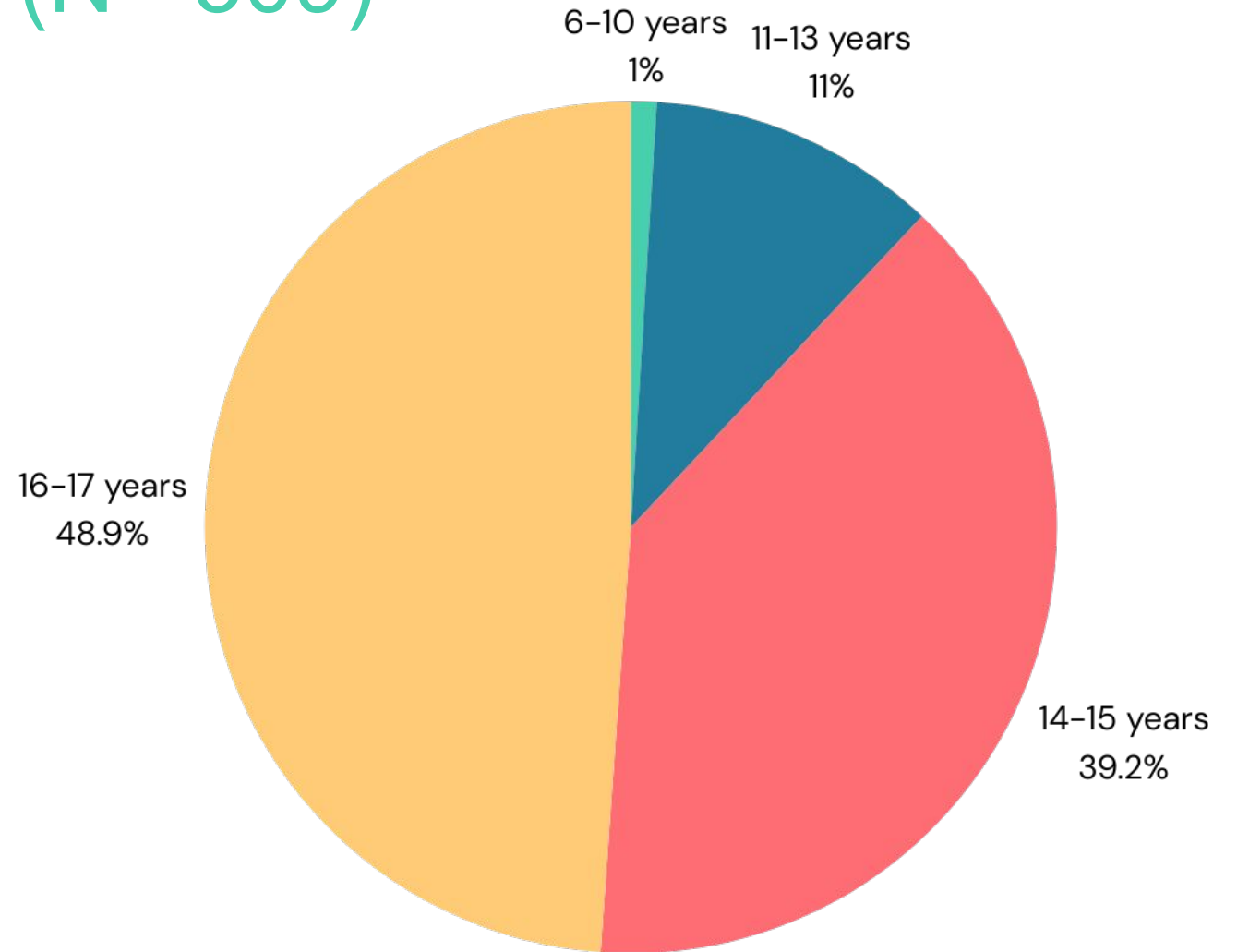
AGE OF CST VICTIMS (N = 309)

SMALL CHILDREN

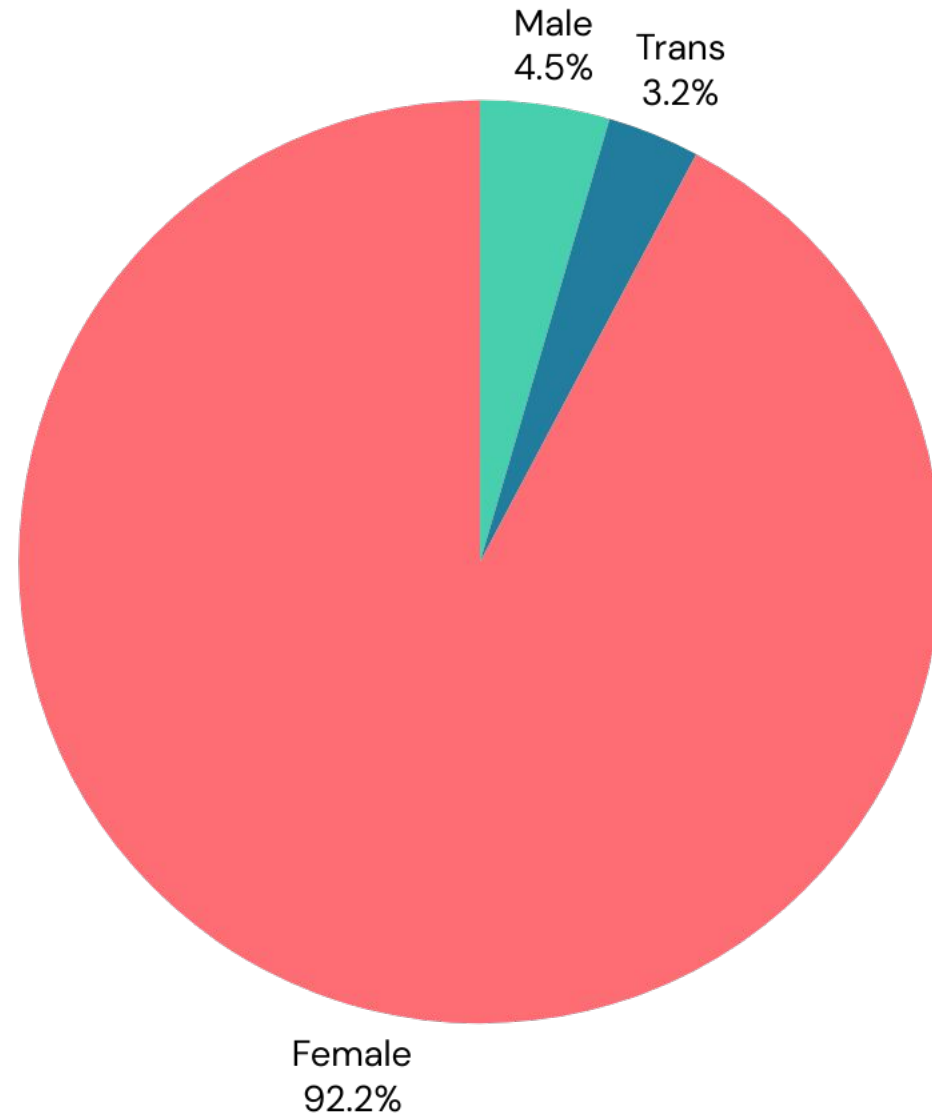
Three children were under age 10.

AVERAGE AGE

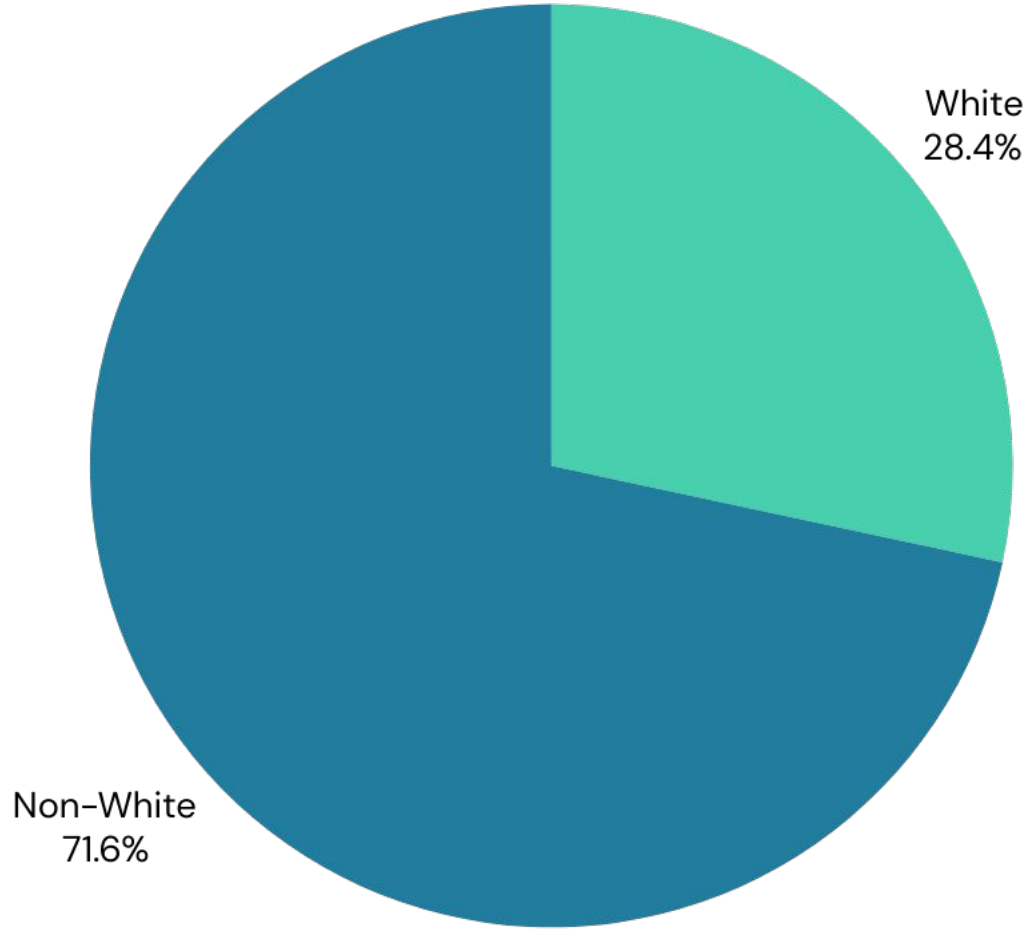
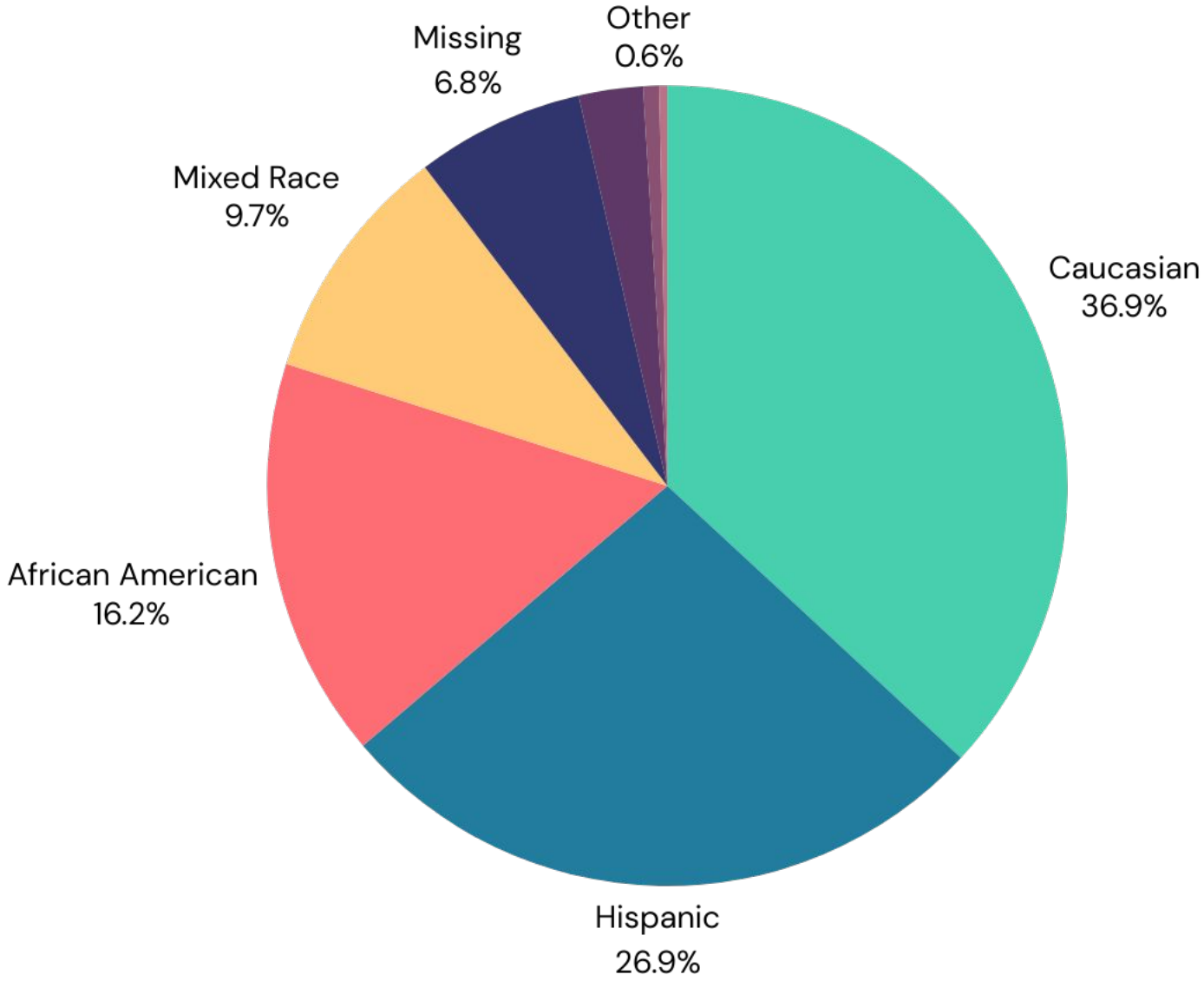
The average age of the children when identified was 15.1 years old.



GENDER OF CST VICTIMS N = 309



RACE OF CST VICTIMS N = 309



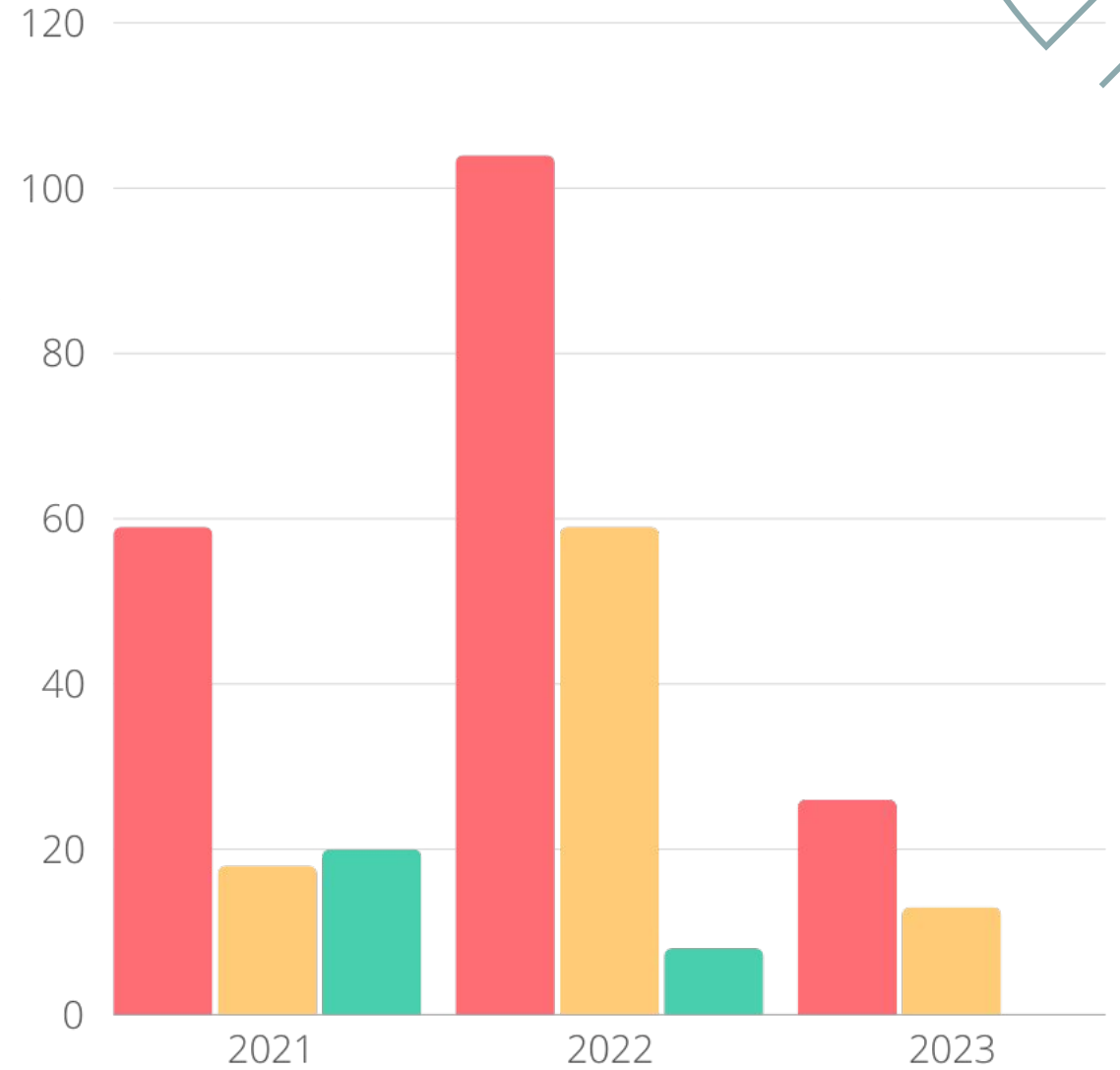
GUARDIANSHIP

The most common guardianship found among the 309 CST victims was AZDCS (between 60 and 66%). There were only 2 cases of Indian Child Welfare Act Guardianship

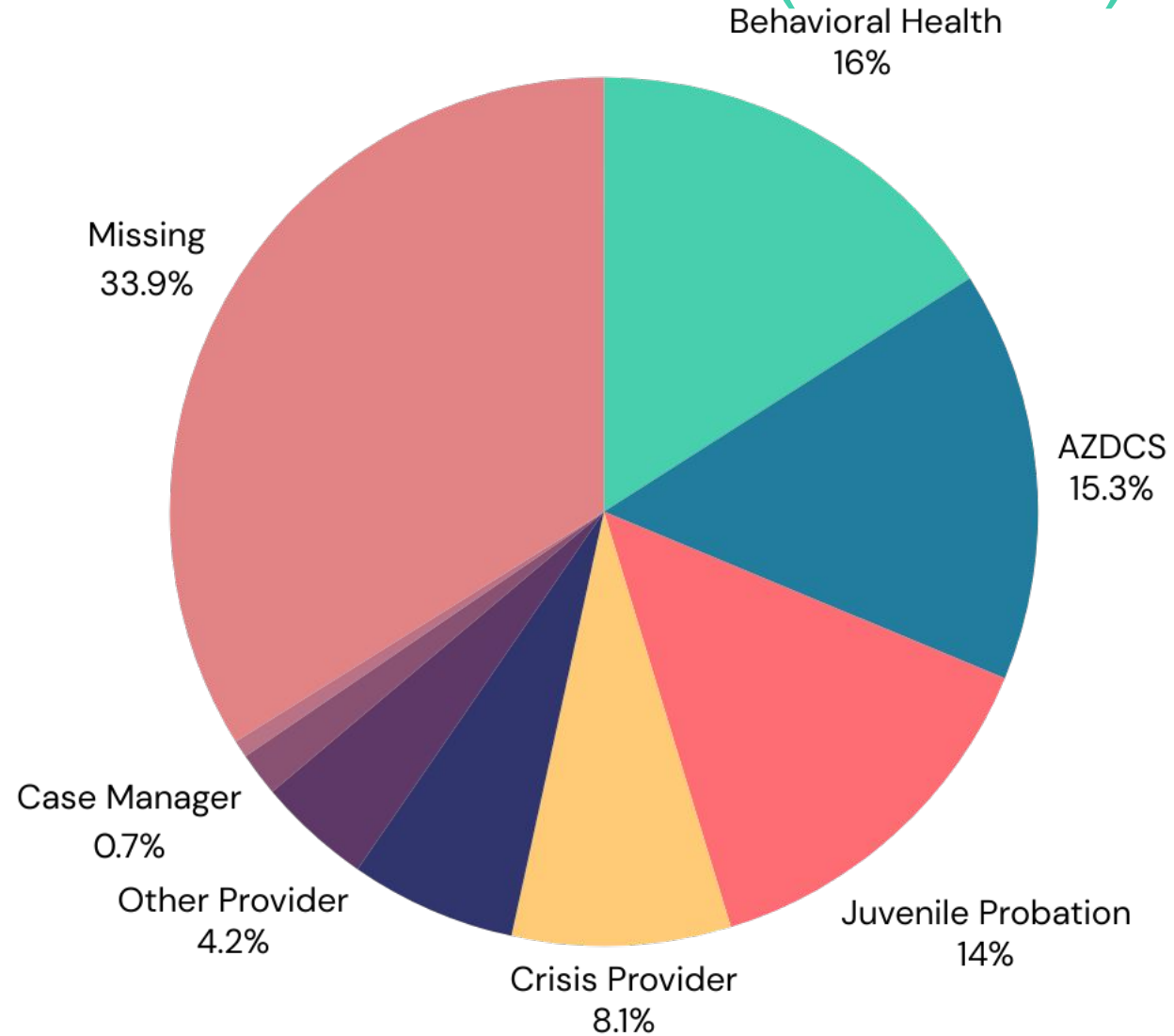
01 - AZDCS

02 - NON-DCS

03 - MISSING



REFERRAL SOURCES (N = 309)



WHERE ARE THE CST CASES

2021

5 COUNTIES

In 2021, five counties had reports of CST victims.

2022

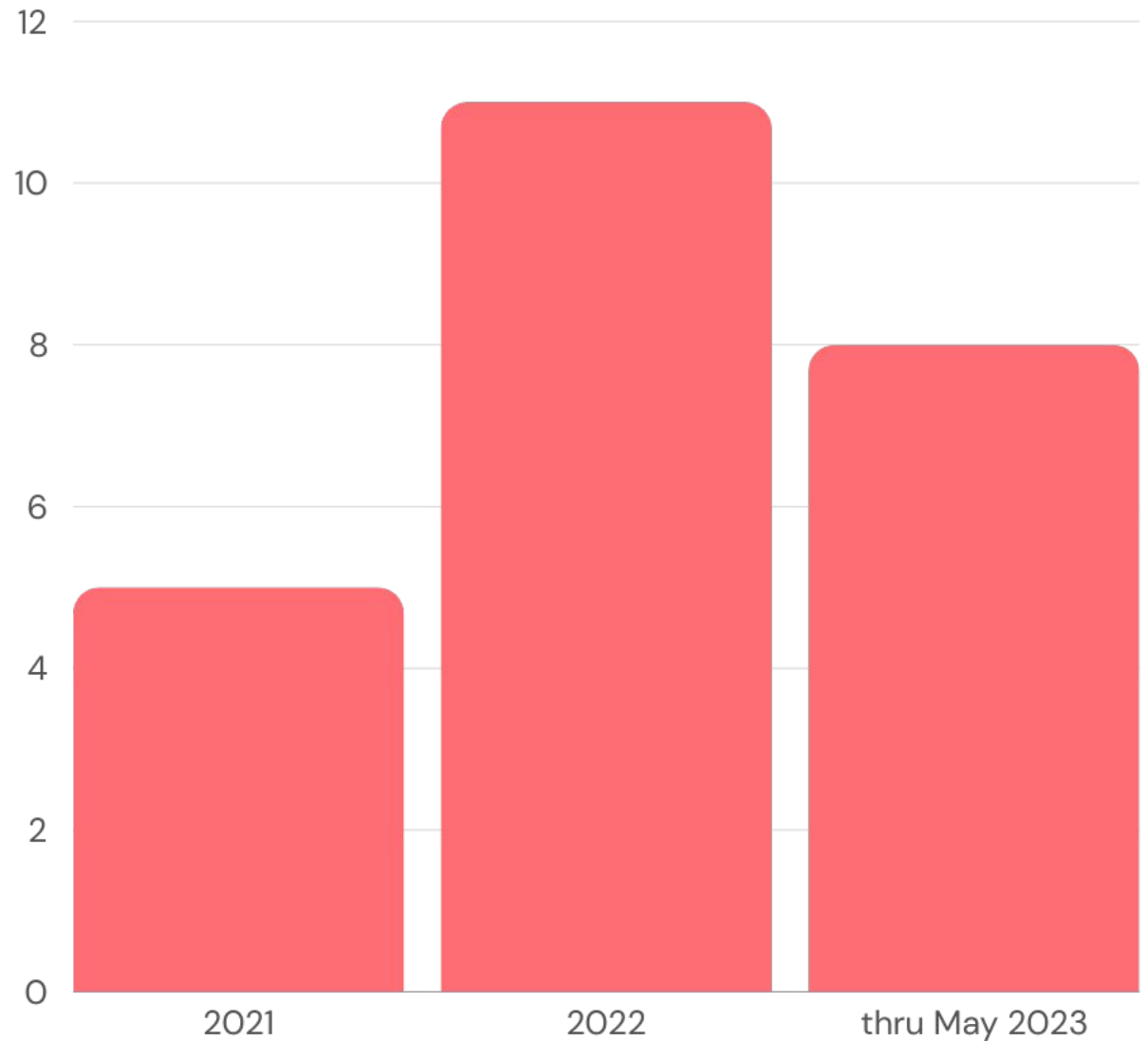
11 COUNTIES

In 2022, 11 counties had reports of CST victims.

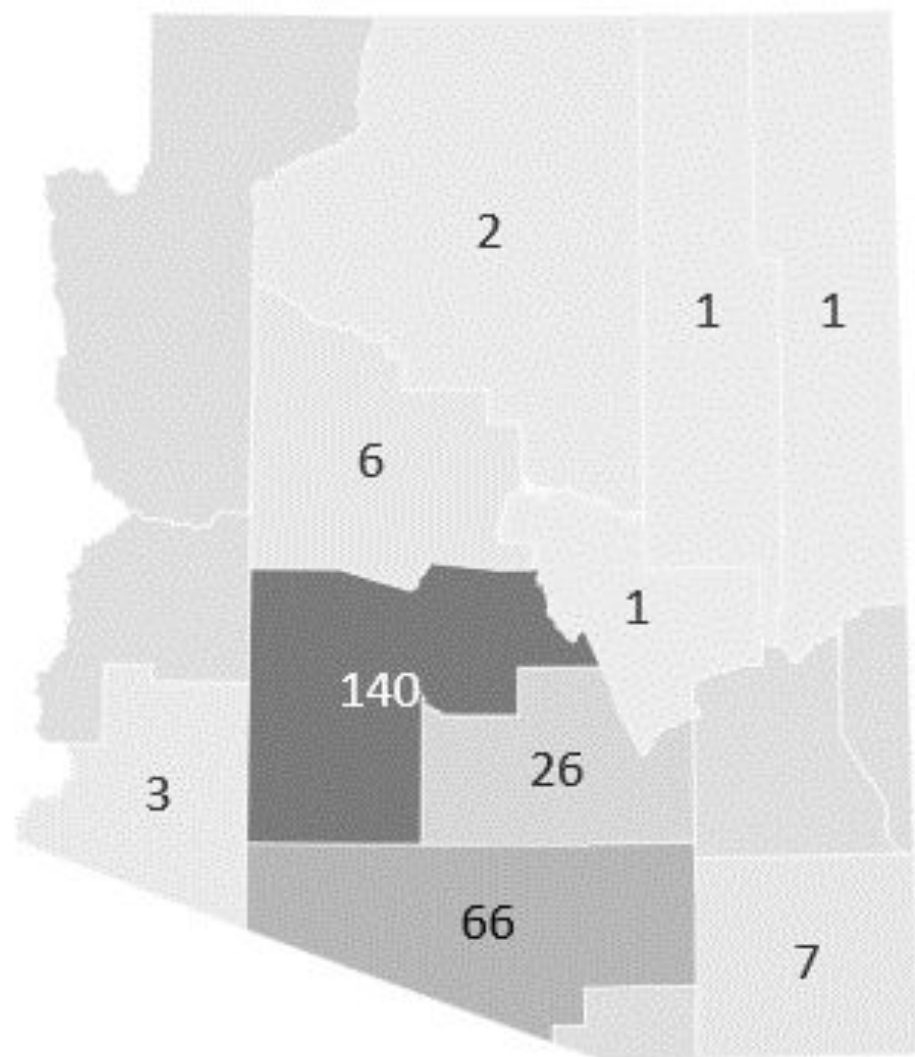
THRU MAY 2023

• TO MAY 2023

Through May 2023, eight counties had reports of CST victims.



Arizona Child Sex Trafficking Victims 2021-May 2023



CST VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS (N =309)

Type of Substance Use

59.2%

RUNNING AWAY

There was a 40.1% increase from 2021 to 2022 in reports of CST victims having a history of running away.

18.8%

SEXUAL ABUSE

Nearly one out of five of the CST victims reported a history of sexual abuse.

45%

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

45% of the victims CST were reported to have used drugs and alcohol. Substance use by the victims of CST increased by 30% from 2021 to 2022.

153.6%

ALCOHOL USE

During the study period, alcohol use increased by 153.6%.

125.6%

FENTANYL

During the study period, Fentanyl use increased by 125.5%.

41.4%

COCAINE

During the study period, Cocaine use increased by 41.4%.

DISCUSSION

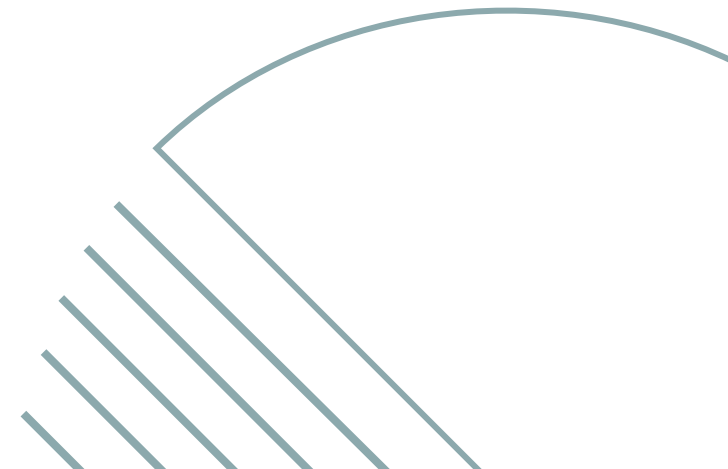


- Overrepresentation of youth of color – exceeding 50% of the CST victims.
- 309 child victims of sex trafficking in Arizona!
- Overrepresentation of youth of color – exceeding 50% of the CST victims.
- This disproportionality, not uncommon in sex trafficking victimization research, points to limited opportunities for awareness and prevention in especially communities of color.
- This study found that 29 percent (n =90) of the identified victims of sex trafficking were living in non-Department of Child Safety situations, i.e. with their family.
- Female child sex trafficking victims represented 92.2 percent of the victims in this study.
- Nearly one out of every five (18.8%) of the child sex trafficking victims identified as having a history of childhood sexual abuse.
- This study found a large increase over the 2.5-year study period of drug use, with significant increases in victims of sex trafficking's use of alcohol and Fentanyl by 153 percent and 125 percent increases from 2021 to 2022 respectively.



WHAT NOW:

- Cases from 11 of 15 Arizona Counties.
- Nine Human Trafficking Task Forces.
- Maricopa County STRENGTH Court.
- Pinal County Juvenile Court
- Statewide Collaborative approach.
- Continue to build awareness and prevention.
- Continue to build capacity for detection and intervention.
- Create services and supports for guardians of the 40% of the CST victims not in DCS care.
- Continue to build clinical capacity to treat CST victims.
- Screenings used in Juvenile Probation.
- New AZDCS training.
- No standardized screening in most settings.





THANK YOU

dominique.roe@asu.edu

WayS@mercycares.org