Youth Experiences Survey

2021
Exploring the Human Trafficking Experiences of Homeless Young Adults in Arizona, Year Eight.

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Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research
Acknowledgements

The 2021 YES Study was made possible by the following four participating agencies:
**GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

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

**WITHIN THE SEX TRAFFICKED HOMELESS YOUNG ADULTS**

1. What were the most common reasons the sex trafficking victims identified as 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?

**WITHIN THE LABOR EXPLOITED HOMELESS YOUNG ADULTS**

1. What were the most common reasons the labor exploited victims identified as 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?
**Method**

**INSTRUMENT**

Due to the unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 YES instrument was made available in both a paper-and-pencil format as well as an online survey format.

Participants of the YES study were receiving services from:

- **Our Family Services**
  
  \( n = 64, 71.9\% \),

- **Native American Connections**
  
  \( n = 22, 24.7\% \),

- **UMOM**
  
  \( n = 2, 2.2\% \),

- **one.n.ten**
  
  \( n = 1, 1.1\% \)

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**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

**N = 89**

homeless young adults participated in the 2021 YES Study.

- **77.5%**
  
  Paper and Pencil Surveys

- **22.5%**
  
  Online Surveys

All participants received a $5 gift card incentive.
Participants (N = 89)

**SETTING**

- Participants responded to the survey from:
  - Housing Programs (n = 43, 48.3%)
  - Street Outreach (n = 22, 24.7%)
  - Drop-in Centers (n = 18, 20.2%)

**AGE**

The age of participants ranged from 18 to 25 (M = 21.2, SD = 2.19)

**GENDER**

- Female: 56.2%
- Male: 4.5%
- Transgender: 2.2%
- Non-conforming: 2.2%
- Genderqueer: 1.1%
- Two-spirit: 2.2%
Participants (N = 89)

**ETHNICITY**

- Hispanic: 37.1%
- Caucasian: 28.1%
- Bi/Multiracial: 10.1%
- African American: 14.6%
- American Indian: 4.5%
- Asian/Pac. Islander: 1.1%
- African/Caribbean: 1.1%
- Other: 2.2%
- Missing: 1.1%

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

- Heterosexual: 36%
- Bisexual: 20.2%
- Missing data: 14.6%
- Asexual: 12.4%
- Pansexual: 10.1%
- Lesbian: 4.5%
- Gay: 2.2%

49.4% identified as LGBTQIA+
Findings ($N = 89$)

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

- **Graduated High School**: 50.6%
  - Half ($n = 45, 50.6\%$) of participants reported successfully graduating from High School.

- **Dropped Out of School**: 51.7%
  - Half ($n = 46, 51.7\%$) of participants reported dropping out of school at some point during their education career.
Findings ($N = 89$)

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

- **I moved around a lot**
  - ($n = 17, 19.1\%)$

- **I was homeless**
  - ($n = 15, 16.9\%)$

- **I had to work to support myself**
  - ($n = 7, 7.9\%)$

- **I was using substances**
  - ($n = 4, 4.5\%)$

- **Academic difficulty**
  - ($n = 12, 13.5\%)$

- **I was pregnant/had a baby**
  - ($n = 12, 13.5\%)$

- **I was expelled**
  - ($n = 3, 3.4\%)$

- **Bullying**
  - ($n = 3, 3.4\%)$

**Dropping Out**

Participants’ reasons for dropping out of school included:
**Findings (N = 89)**

**HOMELESSNESS + HOUSING**

Age of 1st homeless ranged from:

4 --- 17 --- 23

Average age

\( M = 17, \ SD = 3.66 \)

41 participants first experienced homelessness **under the age of 18.**

**Current Housing Arrangements**

Participants reported currently living:

- **(n = 26, 29.2%)** In my own place (transitional)
- **(n = 23, 25.8%)** In a shelter
- **(n = 14, 15.7%)** On the street
- **(n = 12, 13.5%)** Couch-surfing
- **(n = 5, 5.6%)** In my own place (paid by self)
- **(n = 5, 5.6%)** Other
- **(n = 3, 3.4%)** In a hotel
**Place of Origin**

Participants originated from around the United States, as well as from:

- Mexico (n = 3, 3.4%)
- Iraq (n = 1, 1.1%)
- Russia (n = 1, 1.1%)

Only six (6.7%) participants lived in AZ less than 1 year.

Over half (n = 48, 53.9%) reported being raised in AZ.
**Findings (N = 89)**

**SUBSTANCE USE**

- **Fifty-three (59.6%)** participants reported drug use.

**Age of 1st drug use ranged from:**

- **8** to **23**
  - Average age: **15.4**
  - (Mean: 15.4, SD: 2.82)

Participants reported using the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance used, by type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana/Weed</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methamphetamines</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percocet/Percodan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opiates/Oxy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Drugs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine/Crack</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About 1 in 3**

- (n = 27, 30.3%) participants vape.
Findings (N = 89)

**ADDICTION**

**Drugs**
- Thirteen participants
- Of the 13 that identified as having an addiction, 46.2% identified as having an addiction to drugs. (n = 6) began experiencing addiction after becoming homeless.

**Alcohol**
- Eleven participants
- Of the 11 that identified as having an addiction, 63.6% identified as having an addiction to alcohol. (n = 7) began experiencing addiction after becoming homeless.
## Findings ($N = 89$)

### SELF-HARM

Almost half ($n = 43$) of participants reported engaging in some form of self-harming behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Harm Behavior, by type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cutting</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not eating for long periods of time</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking behavior</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking alcohol excessively</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binging/Vomiting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex with strangers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body modification</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarification</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overdosing on prescription meds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings (N = 89)

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Over 1 in every 3 (n = 34, 38.2%) participant reported attempting suicide.

Fewer than half (n = 40) reported receiving treatment for their mental health disorder.

61.8% (n = 55) reported having a current mental health diagnosis.

52.8% (n = 47) reported more than one mental health diagnosis.

The most reported mental health diagnoses included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Diagnosis, by type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADD/ADHD</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bipolar Disorder</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline Personality Disorder</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings (N = 89)

**PHYSICAL HEALTH CHALLENGES**

Only 51.7% (n = 46) participants reported having a current medical issue. (n = 16) reported receiving treatment.

The most common medical issues reported included:

- Asthma (n = 19, 21.3%)
- Poor vision (n = 13, 14.6%)
- Dental problems (n = 9, 10.1%)
- Skin problems (n = 6, 6.7%)
PREGNANCY + CHILDREN

(7.9%) participants were pregnant at the time of the 2021 YES Survey.

30.3%
(n = 27) participants reported having children.

Children reportedly lived:
- In the participant’s care (n = 19, 21.3%)
- With family (n = 10, 11.2%)
- In DCS custody (n = 4, 4.5%)
- Other (n = 4, 4.5%)
Findings ($N = 89$)

**FAMILY INSTABILITY**

71.9% ($n = 64$) were kicked out of the home.

Age of first time kicked out ranging between:

13

17.1 (average age)

23

Over one in every three participants ($n = 35$, 39.3%) reported being kicked out before the age of 18.
Findings (N = 89)

**VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS**

32.6% (n = 29) of participants witnessed domestic violence in the home.

**Witnessing Domestic Violence in Childhood**
- About 1 in every 3 participants reported witnessing their father hit their mother (n = 28, 31.5%).
- 1 in 5 participants reported witnessing their mother hit their father (n = 18, 20.2%).

**Experiencing Domestic Violence in Adulthood**
- 50.6% (n = 45) reported experiencing abuse by their intimate partner.
- 28.1% (n = 25) reported also being abusive to their intimate partner.
**Findings (N = 89)**

**ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES**

Participants reported experiencing between 0 to 10 ACEs.

- **0** participants reported an average number of ACEs
- **4** participants reported an average number of ACEs
- **10** participants reported an average number of ACEs

\[ M = 4, \ SD = 2.85 \]

- **68** participants reported experiencing **76.4%** more than one ACE
- **40** participants reported experiencing **44.9%** between 0-3 ACEs
- **47** participants reported experiencing **52.8%** 4 or more ACEs
Findings (N = 89)

**ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES**

- **60.7%** Emotional Abuse
- **59.6%** Parents Separated / Divorced
- **51.7%** Emotional Neglect
- **44.9%** Substance Abuse in the Household
- **38.2%** Physical Abuse
- **31.5%** Mental Illness in the Household
- **30.3%** Witness Domestic Violence
- **27%** Incarcerated Household Member
- **24.7%** Physical Neglect
- **21.3%** Sexual Abuse
## Findings ($N = 89$)

### Negative Life Experiences

Participants reported experiencing additional life challenges, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running away from home</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic difficulty</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied by school peers</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating violence</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative contact with law enforcement</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment by peers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education classes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster case/group home</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice System</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential treatment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in the adult entertainment industry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang affiliation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Findings ($N = 89$)**

**POSITIVE LIFE EXPERIENCES**

- Said no when drugs or alcohol were offered. ($n = 45, 50.6\%$)
- Said no when pressured for sex ($n = 33, 37.1\%$)
- Enrolled in school or technical program ($n = 32, 36\%$)
- Practiced safe sex ($n = 32, 36\%$)
- Supportive, loving family/group of friends ($n = 31, 34.8\%$)
- Been part of a youth club or organization ($n = 30, 33.7\%$)
- Healthy, safe and permanent place to live ($n = 29, 32.6\%$)
- Feel secure standing up for/protecting self ($n = 29, 32.6\%$)
- Volunteered in the community ($n = 23, 25.8\%$)
- Steady employment ($n = 21, 23.6\%$)
- Aware of community resources ($n = 20, 22.5\%$)
- Trust/good relationship with law enforcement ($n = 12, 13.5\%$)

Participants also reported positive life experiences that can serve as protective factors against homelessness or long-term negative effects of trauma.
Findings ($N = 89$)

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING DATA**

40.4%

Two out of every five ($n = 36$) participants reported experiencing at least one form of exploitation.

12.4%

(n = 11) reported experiencing both sex trafficking and labor exploitation.
About **one in every four** (n = 21, 23.6%) participants reported experiencing sex trafficking.

The age of 1st sex trafficking experience ranged from 12 to 21 (M = 16.9, SD = 2.31) average age.

38.1% (n = 8) of those that reported experiencing a sex trafficking situation were **first sex trafficked under the age of 18**.