



# YOUTH • EXPERIENCES • SURVEY

Exploring the Sex Trafficking  
Experiences of Homeless Young  
Adults in Arizona.

ASU School of Social Work  
**Office of Sex Trafficking  
Intervention Research**

**ASU** School of  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

  
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## Youth Experiences Survey Year Three

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Youth Experiences Survey: Exploring the Sex Trafficking Experiences of Homeless Young Adults in Arizona, Year 3.**

The Youth Experiences Survey (YES) has been given every year for the past three years to a complex and difficult population to assess. Homeless runaway young adults (ages 18 to 25) are difficult to find and can be difficult to engage. This survey is given to homeless young adults in both Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona through homeless youth-targeted service providers. The findings from the YES survey continue to provide insight into the challenges and needs of homeless young adults. Information from the YES survey provides data about the scope and complexity of their challenges including the sex trafficking experiences of these young people.

Identifying sex trafficking among homeless young adults is challenged by access issues which make this population difficult to study- issues such as they are transient, they are difficult to find, and they are involved in fewer social service and medical service agencies than homeless youth due to their status as adults. This study targeted homeless young adults in transitional housing, drop-in centers, and on the streets. A six-page survey was distributed to homeless young adults over two weeks in July 2014, July 2015 and August 2016 by agency staff from four agencies. This report will begin with a description of the 2016 survey results of the respondents, proceed to compare the respondents that reported that they were sex trafficking victims with the non-sex trafficking victim respondents in the 2016 sample, and then conclude with comparisons of 2014, 2015 and 2016 surveys regarding the experiences of the sex trafficking victims.

### **Status of Homeless Young Adults in Arizona**

#### **In the 2016 Youth Experiences Survey**

- 207 participants responded to the Youth Experiences Survey in 2016. Eight surveys were excluded because they did not meet the age criteria. 199 surveys were included in the 2016 sample of the Youth Experiences Survey.
- The average age of the 199 homeless young adult respondents was 21.1 years old.
- At 51.3%, males represented just over half of the respondents, followed by females at 41.7% and transgender at 4.5% and other (genderqueer, two-spirit, non-conforming) at 2%.
- The sexual orientation of the participants was reported as 44.7% heterosexual, 44.2% LGBTQ, and 11.1% no response.
- Homeless young adults reported their living situations as living in a transitional housing program (39.1%), living on the streets (23.2%), living in a shelter (21.6%), couch surfing (12.4%), or living in a hotel (.5%).
- 68.3% of the respondents were born and raised in Arizona, while the rest were from 18 other states and three other countries.

- More than half of the respondents reported that they had used drugs or alcohol, while 20.6% believed they had an addiction to drugs and 11.6% had an addiction to alcohol.
- The drug used most often by the respondents was marijuana (45.6%) followed by methamphetamines (14.6%).
- A suicide attempt was reported by 80 (40.2%) of the respondents.
- 57.8% (n =115) of the respondents reported experiencing a current mental health problem, 43.7% (n =87) had more than one mental health problem, with the most common mental health problems identified as depression (37.2%) and anxiety (38.2%).
- Only 40.2% of the respondents reported having received treatment services for their current mental health problem.
- Nearly half (47.7%) of the respondents identified a current medical problem with 22.6% reporting they had received treatment for the identified problem(s).
- The most common medical problems reported included vision problems (17.6%) and asthma (19.6%).
- Family connectedness and level of contact varied among the respondents with 34.7% reporting they have some limited, but positive contact with their families and 43.7% reported that they would like to be more connected to their families.
  
- Negative life experiences reported by the homeless young adult respondents included:
  - Emotional abuse by a parent or guardian 40.7%
  - Having run away 40.2%
  - Been bullied by school peers 36.2%
  - Experienced dating violence 35.7%
  - Negative experiences with law enforcement 30.2%
  - Being sex trafficked 33.2%
  - Having been in group or foster homes 32.2%
  - Sexual abuse 23.6%
  
- Positive life experiences
  - Said no to drugs or alcohol when it was offered to them 51.8%
  - 47.7% reported practiced safe sex and 31.2% reported they said no when they felt they were being forced into having sex.
  - Having been in a club or youth organization 47.2%
  - Reported that they had a supportive, loving family or group of friends 44.2%
  - Felt secure or safe standing up for themselves or protecting themselves 43.2%
  - Enrolled in school or a technical program 42.2%
  - Having steady employment 33.2%

### *Status of Homeless Young Adult Victims of Sex Trafficking in Arizona*

- Overall, 66 (33.2%) of the homeless young adults identified as being a sex trafficking victim.
- One out of every three (38.6%) female respondents self-reported that they had been sex trafficked.
- One out of four (25.5%) male participants self-reported a sex trafficking experience.
- The average age of first sex trafficking experience was 17.9 years old with 36.1% reporting that they were sex trafficked before the age of 18.
- 74.2% of the respondents who reported being sex trafficked reported they had a sex trafficker with 12.1% of the respondents reporting sex trafficking victimization and that they were currently being sex trafficked.
- The most common reasons identified by the 66 participants that reported sex trafficking victimization were for money (53%), for a place to stay (48.5%), and for drugs (34.8%).
- When comparing the sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents with the non-sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents, the sex trafficked group was found more likely to:
  - Be LGBTQ
  - Be addicted to drugs
  - Be a methamphetamine user
  - Be addicted to alcohol
  - Participated in self-harm activities including cutting
  - Have a suicide attempt
  - Have a mental health problem/diagnosis
    - Have a diagnosis of Depression
    - Have a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
    - Have a diagnosis of Anxiety
    - Have a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder
    - Have a history of suicide attempts
  - Have more than one mental health problem/diagnosis
  - Had not received treatment for their mental health problem(s)
  - Have been in residential treatment programming
  - Have been bullied by school peers
  - Have a history of dating violence
  - Have a history of physical abuse by a parent or guardian
  - Have a history of sexual abuse
  - Have a history of emotional abuse by a parent or guardian

### **Three Year Analysis**

Sex trafficking was reported by the participants with an average of 31.5% (ranging from 25.6% to 35.8%). LGBTQ participants were increasingly likely over the three years to report being a sex trafficking victim and went from being 38.4% of the sex trafficked group to 54.4%. Other increases among the sex trafficked group of participants included reported suicide attempts and diagnosed with depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and bipolar disorder. Increases were also found among the sex trafficked group of reports of being kicked out of their homes and having received previous residential treatment. Regarding the sex trafficking experiences, over the three years, participants reported increased use of technology in their exploitation including the use of a smart phone and being posted on Facebook and backpage.com.

### **Key Findings**

Homeless young adults who have experienced sex trafficking are at increased risk among their peers to have serious drug and alcohol problems, have experienced abusive childhoods and abusive dating relationships, and were more likely to have serious mental health challenges including a history of suicide attempts, depression, anxiety, and Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder. These risks are intricately wound into the behaviors and actions of the sex trafficked homeless young adults, creating challenges to developing targeted treatments for them.

### **Brief Conclusion**

The experiences of homeless young adults in Arizona continue to be complex and multi-faceted with the necessity to address the resulting problems or challenges with innovation, creativity, and partnerships within each community.

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

### **Introduction**

Over the past decade the experiences of homeless young adults are more clearly understood in the United States through substantial research by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012), the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (2015) and the Family and Youth Services Bureau (2016). Homeless young adults can be defined to including persons from age 18 to 25 years “who have dropped out of school, are without regular employment, live in precarious conditions and often have little social support from their families or communities” (Haley et al. p. 526). Risk factors have been identified in the literature to explain young adult homelessness including transitioning from foster care to adulthood (Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013) and others which are similar to youth homeless including substance abuse, family conflict, history of childhood maltreatment, and identifying as LGBTQ.

Being homeless has been found to be risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation (Hudson & Nandy, 2012) but there continues to be limited knowledge about how the homeless young adults who have been sexually exploited differ from the homeless young adults that have not been sexually exploited regarding risk and protective factors.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences reported by homeless young adults in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona and to explore the prevalence of sex trafficking among the participants. This study will also compare the life experiences and treatment needs of sex trafficked and non-sex trafficked young adults from around Arizona. The findings from this study will be compared to the 2014 and 2015 studies to examine trends over time.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to understand the scope and complexity of sex trafficking among homeless young adults in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Homeless young adults were surveyed by staff at four agencies about their life experiences including sex trafficking victimization.

The specific research questions are:

1. What are the 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 connectedness, reasons for homelessness, and risk (childhood maltreatment, school problems, being bullied, history of foster care placement) and protective factors (said not to drugs when offered, able to stand up for themselves, practicing safe sex, being part of a club or organization, having supportive friends/family, knowing area resources)?.
2. Are sex trafficked homeless young adults different from non-sex trafficked homeless young adults on demographics, family connectedness, sexual orientation, medical and mental health issues, high risk behaviors, school and social issues, child abuse experiences, drug and alcohol use/abuse and risk and protective factors?

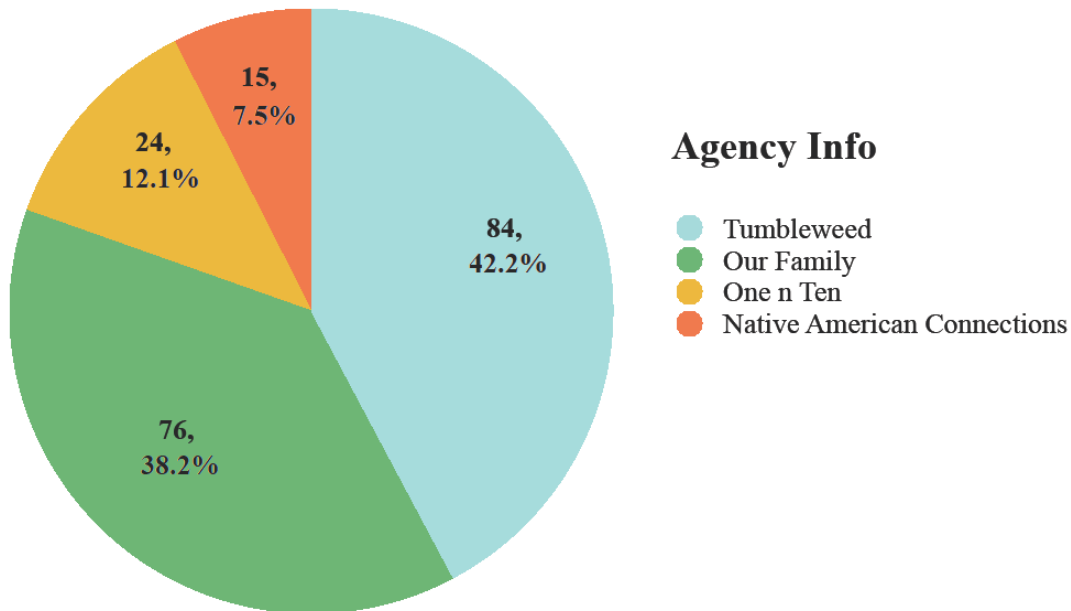
Within the sex trafficked homeless young adults:

3. What were the most common reasons the sex trafficking victims identified as how they were sex trafficked (money, food, clothes, drugs, protection, a place to stay)?
4. How prevalent was the use of technology in their sex trafficking experience?
5. What is a profile of a sex trafficked homeless young adult from Phoenix/Tucson, Arizona?

## METHOD

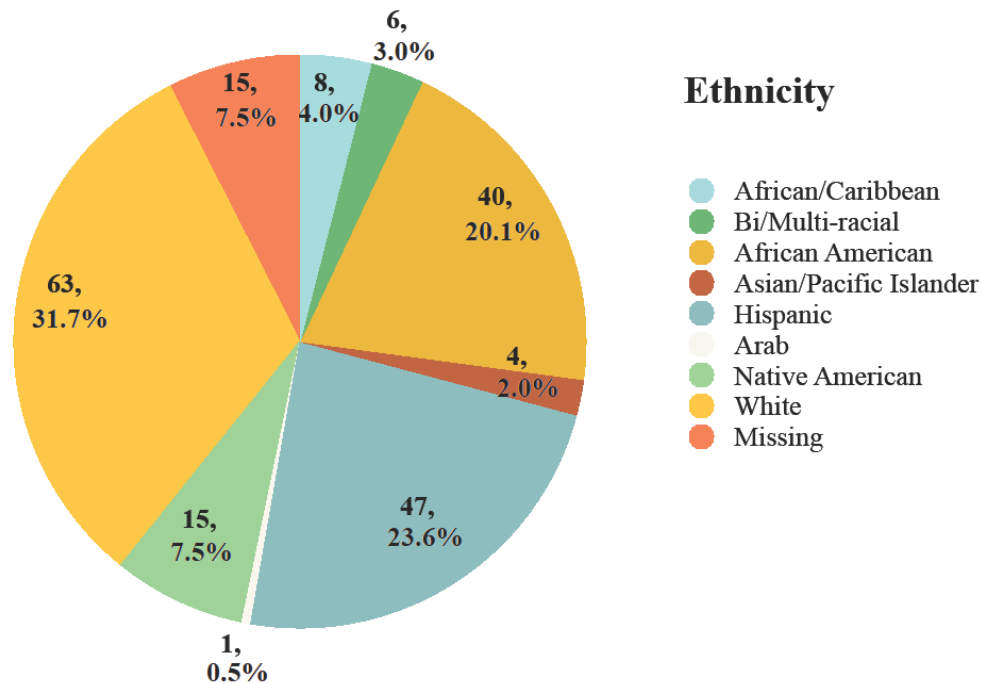
### Participants

In 2016, 199 homeless young adults from the greater Phoenix, Arizona area and Tucson, Arizona completed the Youth Experiences Survey. Respondents were drawn from four agencies including Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development (Phoenix, Arizona), Our Family Services (Tucson, Arizona), One•n•ten (Phoenix, Arizona), and Native American Connections. Tumbleweed had 84 (42.2%) respondents; Our Family Services had 76 (38.2%) respondents; One•n•ten had 24 (12.1%) respondents; and Native American Connections had 15 (7.5%) respondents.



Respondents identified as female (n = 83, 41.7%), male (n = 102, 51.3%), and other gender (n = 13, 6.5%). Other gender included respondents who identified as the following: transgender (n = 9, 4.5%) non-conforming (n = 1, 0.5%), two-spirit (n = 1, 0.5%), and genderqueer (n = 2, 1%). The respondents age ranged from 18 to 25 (M = 21.1, SD = 2.17). The most prevalent races/ethnicities reported were White (n = 63, 31.7%), Hispanic (n = 47, 23.6%) and African American (n = 40, 20.1%).





### Instrument

The Youth Experiences Survey is a 50-item survey with questions that ask about demographics, personal history, including where they are from, their living situation, drug and alcohol use, a health history section with questions about self-harm, history of suicide attempts, mental health issues and mental health treatment, medical issues and medical treatment access, and pregnancy. The family history section includes questions about how they define their family, how they feel about their connectedness and support from their families, reasons for being kicked out, and if family religion differs from their own. The life experiences section includes questions about how they make money and if they have experienced sex trafficking. If the respondent reported a sex trafficking experience, the survey directed them to questions about the presence of a sex trafficker and what technology was used in the sex trafficking situation.

Sex trafficking was identified if the respondents answered yes to any of the following questions:

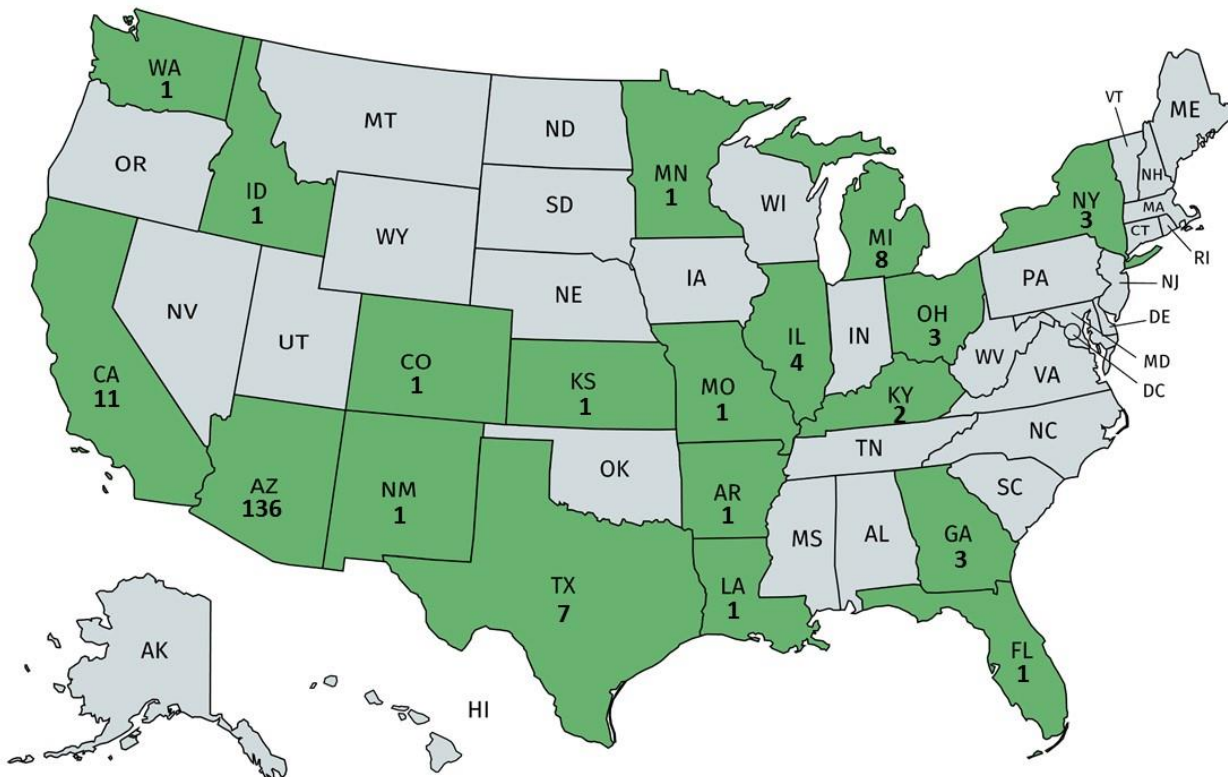
1. Have you ever been compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sexual act, including sexual intercourse, oral or anal contact for: money, food, clothing, drugs, protection, or a place to stay?
2. Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, food, a place to stay, clothing or protection?
3. In the past, has anyone encouraged/pressured/forced you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, food, place to stay, clothing or protection?

Negative life experience questions included a range of possible experiences, such as: residential treatment, negative contact with law enforcement, dating violence, foster care/group home, involvement with the juvenile justice system, academic difficulties, running away from home, expelled from school, special education classes, bullied by school peers, harassed by peers,

working in the adult industry (pornography, stripping, escort, etc.), physical abuse by a parent/guardian, gang affiliation, emotional abuse by parent/guardian, sexual abuse (molested or raped) as a youth (ages 13-17), and sexual abuse (molested or raped) as a child (age 12-under). Protective factors were also surveyed, these included: said no to drugs, said no when they felt they were being forced into sex, steady employment, being a part of a club or organization, enrolled in school or technical program, volunteered in community, supportive, loving family or group of friends, healthy, safe and permanent place to live, safe sex, trust/good relationship with law enforcement, feel secure or safe standing up for yourself/protecting yourself, and awareness of community resources.

### FINDINGS

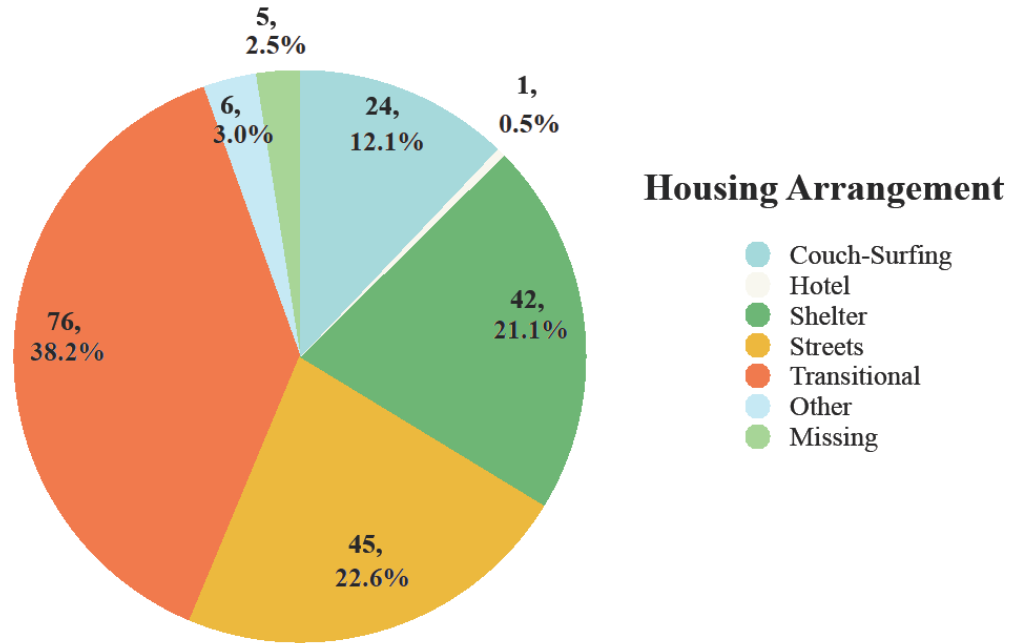
The respondents reported they were from Arizona and 18 other states in the United States and three other countries: Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Mexico. Sixty-eight percent (n = 136) of the respondents were born and raised in Arizona. The majority of the respondents (93.1%) had lived in Arizona for more than a year with 6.9% (n = 13) living in Arizona for less than a year. Respondents reported that their first homeless experience was between the ages of 1 and 24 years (M = 17.3, SD = 3.43).



### Housing

Homeless young adult respondents reported their living situations as: living in a transitional housing program (n = 76, 37.2%), living on the streets (n = 45, 22.6%), living in a shelter (n =

42, 21.5%), couch surfing (n = 24, 12.1%), or living in a hotel (n = 1, 0.5%). Six respondents indicated their housing as 'other' and five did not answer the question.



### Drug Use

Drug and alcohol use was reported by 56.8% (n = 113) of the homeless young adult respondents, while 20.6% (n = 41) believed they had an addiction to drugs, and 11.6% (n = 23) an addiction to alcohol. The age of first drug use ranged from 5 to 22 years (M = 14.4, SD = 3.36). Levels of reported motivation to change regarding drug use by the homeless young adult respondents were spread from: not at all motivated (n = 25, 12.6%), somewhat motivated (n = 28, 14.1%), very motivated (n = 68, 34.3%) and no response (n = 78, 39.8%).

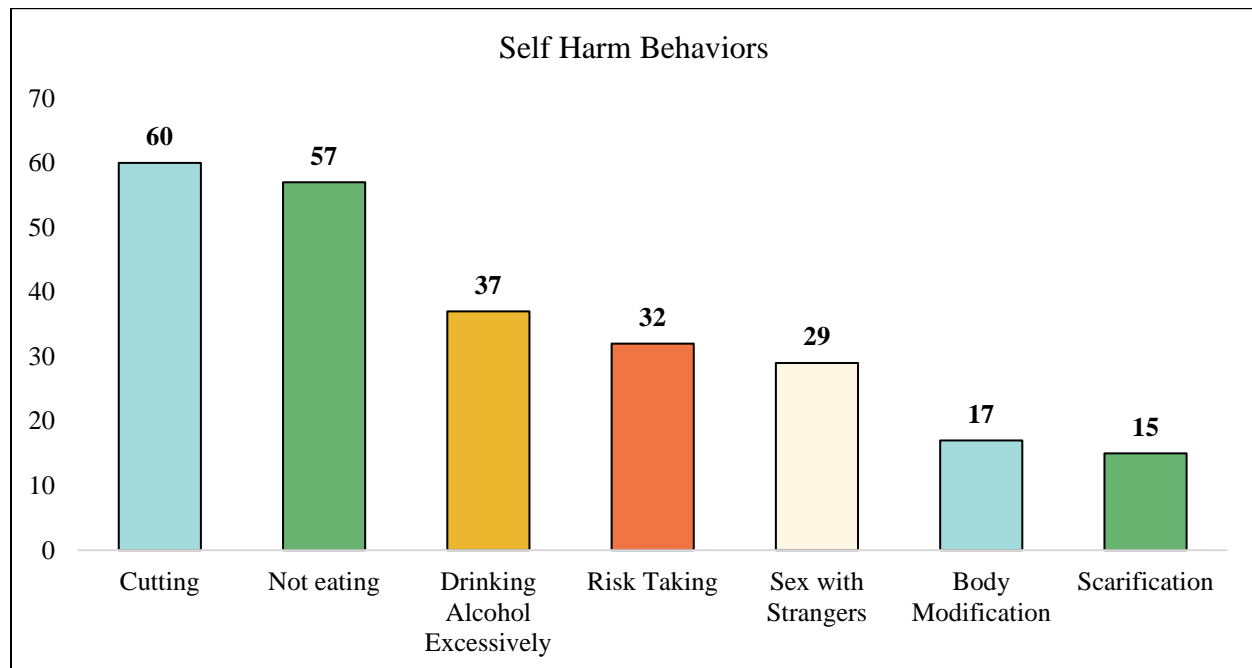
The types of drugs used by the respondents varied and some respondents identified using multiple drug types.

| Drug Type       | n  | %     |
|-----------------|----|-------|
| Marijuana       | 67 | 33.7% |
| Methamphetamine | 29 | 14.6% |
| Crack/Cocaine   | 10 | 5%    |
| Pills           | 10 | 5%    |
| Heroin          | 8  | 4%    |
| Spice           | 8  | 4%    |
| Acid            | 5  | 2.5%  |
| Ecstasy         | 4  | 2%    |

|                                |   |      |
|--------------------------------|---|------|
| Opiates/OxyContin              | 3 | 1.5% |
| Gamma Hydroxybutyrate Rohypnol | 2 | 1.6% |
| Special K/Ketamine             | 2 | 1%   |
| All drugs                      | 2 | 1%   |
| Percocet/Percodan              | 2 | 1%   |

### Self-Harm Behaviors

Nearly half (n= 98, 48.2%) of the homeless young adult respondents reported that they participated in some form of self harming behavior including: cutting (n = 60, 30.2%), drinking alcohol excessively (n = 37, 18.6%), having sex with strangers (n = 29, 14.6%), risk taking behaviors (n = 32, 16.1%), not eating for long periods (n = 57, 28.6%), body modification (defined as altering or modifying the human anatomy or physical appearance for self expression, shock value or aesthetics (Featherstone, 1999) (n = 17, 8.5%), and scarification (n = 15, 7.5%).



A suicide attempt was reported by more than a third (n = 80, 40.2%) of the homeless young adult respondents.

### Mental Health Issues

Fifty-seven percent (n = 115) of the homeless young adult respondents reported having a current mental health issue/diagnosis, with more than a third (n=87, 43.7%) reporting more than one mental health issues/diagnoses.

| <b>Types of Mental Disorders Reported (N =215)</b> | <b>#</b> | <b>%</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Depression                                         | 74       | 37.2%    |
| Anxiety                                            | 59       | 27.4%    |
| Bipolar disorder                                   | 56       | 28.1%    |
| ADD/ADHD                                           | 50       | 25.1%    |
| Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder                     | 32       | 16.1%    |
| Borderline Personality Disorder                    | 10       | 5%       |
| Schizophrenia                                      | 11       | 5.5%     |
| Oppositional Defiant Disorder                      | 12       | 6%       |
| Antisocial Personality Disorder                    | 9        | 4.5%     |
| Dissociative Identity Disorder                     | 5        | 2.5%     |

Four respondents (2%) reported having a diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome and another five (2.5%) reported to have Autism Spectrum Disorder. Having received treatment for the reported mental health disorders was reported by 80 (40.2%) respondents.

**Medical Issues**

Nearly two-thirds (n =127, 63.8%) of the respondents reported they had health insurance through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. A current medical problem was reported by 95 (47.7%) of the respondents with 34 (17.1%) reporting a current dental issue. Medical problems included the following: asthma, vision issues, chronic pain, sexually transmitted infections, open wounds, skin problems and broken bones.

| <b>Medical Issues Reported</b>  | <b>#</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Asthma                          | 39       | 19.6%    |
| Poor vision                     | 35       | 17.6%    |
| Chronic Pain                    | 28       | 14.1%    |
| Skin problems                   | 16       | 8%       |
| Open wounds                     | 9        | 4.5%     |
| Broken bones                    | 8        | 4%       |
| Sexually transmitted infections | 3        | 1.5%     |

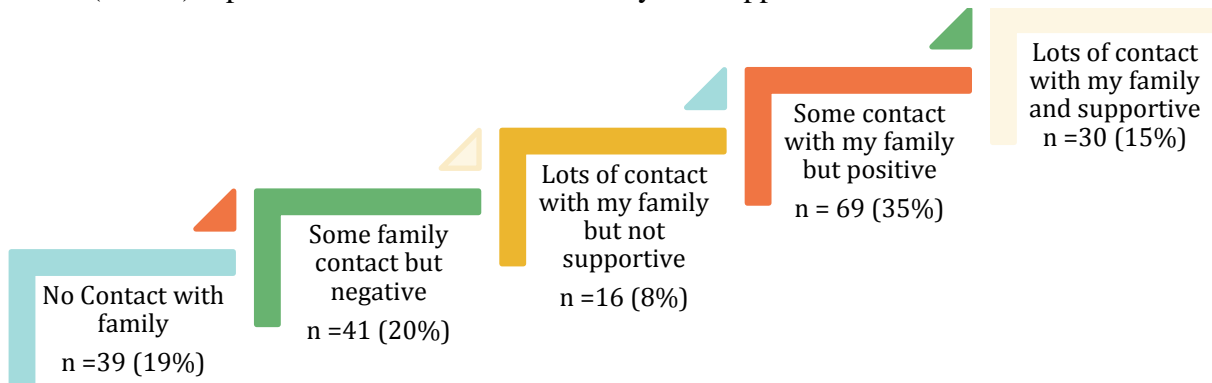
The homeless young adult respondents reported less than a quarter (n = 45, 22.6%) were receiving medical treatment for their identified current medical problem. The sources of medical

care was varied from using permanent sources (emergency rooms in hospitals, urgent care clinics) to mobile clinics to self or a friend treating the medical problem.

Currently being pregnant was reported by 16 (8%) respondents. More than a third (n = 70, 35.2%) of the respondents reported they had children: 31 (15.6%) reporting that the children were in their care; 10 (5%) reported their children were in foster care; 23 (11.6%) were in the care of their family, and 6 (3%) reported others situations. The number of children reported by the respondents ranged from one to five children (M =1.6, SD= 0.96).

### Family Connection

The homeless young adult respondents reported that relationships with their families and their level of connectedness with their families varied. Nineteen percent (n = 39) reported no contact with their family, 20% (n = 41) reported some contact but negative, 8% (n = 16) reported lots of contact with family, but not supportive, 35% (n = 69) reported some contact but positive. Fifteen percent (n = 30) reported lots of contact with family and supportive.



In response to a question about possible reasons for the respondents' contact with their families and 66 (33.2%) reported their family lives too far away, 38 (19.1%) reported that their home with their family was not a safe environment for them, and 103 (51.8%) reported that they were kicked out by their families.

Reasons that they were kicked out of their homes included that their family did not approve of their sexual orientation (n = 11, 5.5%), their family did not approve of their gender identity (n = 4, 2%), their family could not provide for my needs (poverty) (n = 32, 16.1%), and family conflict/fighting with parents (n = 63, 31.7%).

Specific religious practice was reported by 81 (40.7%) of the homeless young adult respondents. Forty-eight (24.1%) of the respondents reported they practiced the same religion as their families, whereas 81 (40.7%) reported they did not practice the same religion as their family. Nineteen (9.5%) of the homeless young adult respondents identified this as a contribution to a

disconnection with their families. The desire to be more connected with families was reported by 87 (43.7%) respondents.

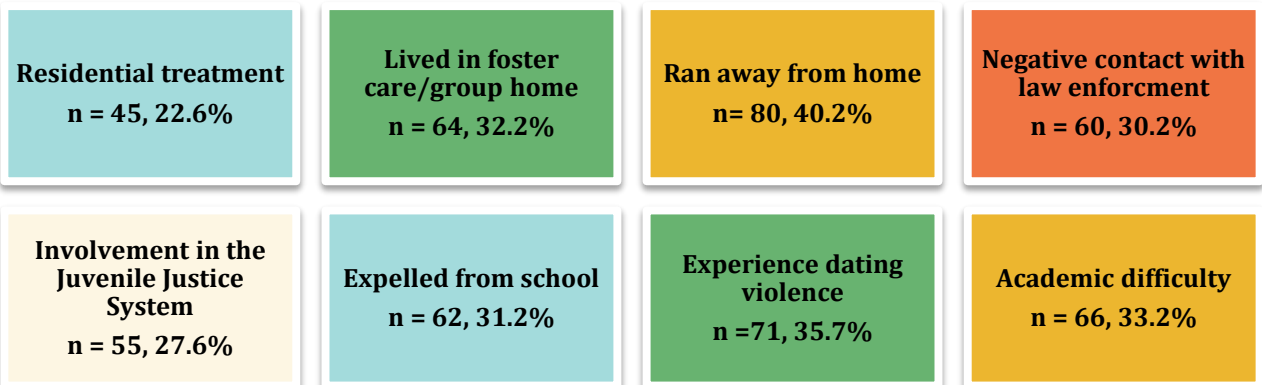
### Economics of Homeless Young Adults

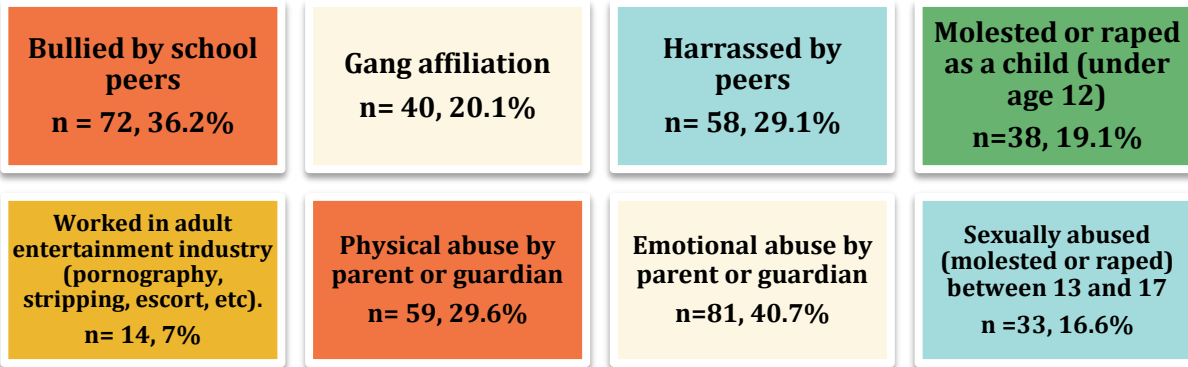
The respondents identified a variety of ways they earned money which included: having a steady job, working day labor, selling drugs, selling stolen things, selling their own belongings, working side jobs for cash, door to door sales, panhandling, pick pocketing, and sex trading.

| How the Respondents make money to live | #  | %     |
|----------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Steady job                             | 55 | 26.7% |
| Side jobs for cash                     | 53 | 26.6% |
| Selling their own belongings           | 29 | 14.6% |
| Panhandling                            | 27 | 13.6% |
| Day labor                              | 25 | 12.6% |
| Selling drugs                          | 14 | 7%    |
| Sex trading                            | 9  | 4.5%  |
| Selling stolen things                  | 7  | 3.5%  |
| Door to door sales                     | 5  | 2.5%  |
| Pick pocketing                         | 2  | 1%    |

### Negative Life Experiences

The homeless young adult respondents identified their negative life experiences as:

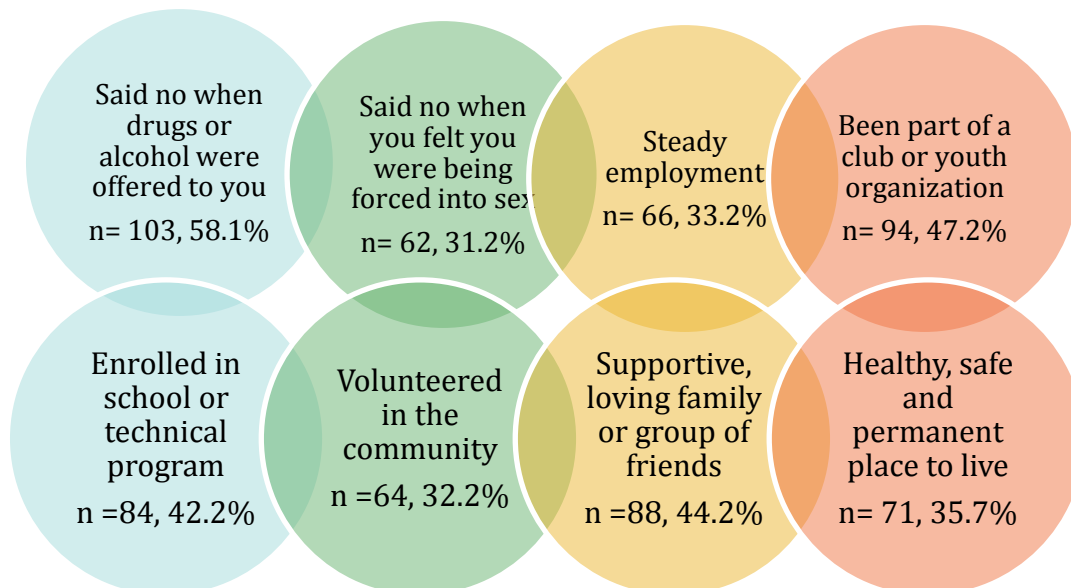




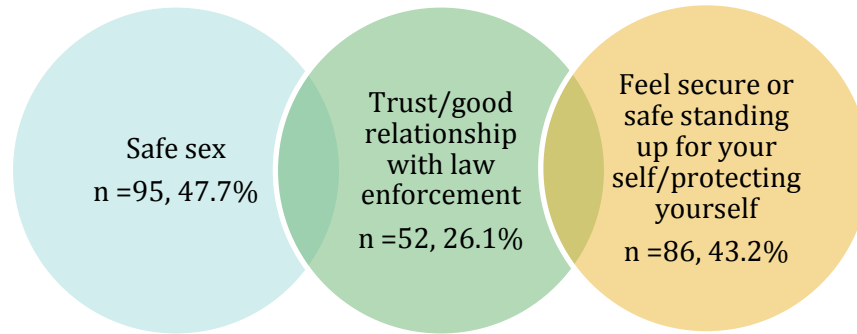
Twenty-five percent (n =51) identified as having been in special education classes when in school. A total of 53 (26.6%) of the homeless young adult respondents reported that they had been sexually abused before the age of 18.

### Positive Life Experiences

Positive life experiences of the homeless young adult respondents varied with almost two-thirds reporting that they had said no to drugs or alcohol when it was offered to them. Forty-seven percent of the respondents reported that they practiced safe sex and 31.2% reported that they had said no when they felt they were being forced in to having sex. Having been in a club or youth organization was identified by 47.2% of the respondents. More than 40% reported that they felt secure or safe standing up for themselves or protecting themselves. Forty-four percent reported that they had a supportive, loving family or group of friends. Being enrolled in school or a technical program was identified by 42.2% of the respondents. Having steady employment was identified by 33.2% of the respondents and having some experience volunteering in the community was reported by 32.2% of the respondents.







## Sex Trafficking Experiences of Homeless Young Adults

### Sex Trafficking Experiences

Sixty-six (33.2%) of the homeless young adult respondents reported they had been sex trafficked by answering affirmatively to any of the following questions:

1. Have you ever been compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sexual act, including sexual intercourse, oral or anal contact for: money, food, clothing, drugs, protection, or a place to stay?
2. Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/forces you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, food, a place to stay, clothing or protection?
3. In the past, has anyone encouraged/pressured/forced you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, food, place to stay, clothing or protection?

Thirty-two female homeless young adults reported that they were a sex trafficking victim, which is 38.6% of the total number of female homeless young adult respondents. Of the 110 male respondents, 26 (25.4%) reported they were a sex trafficking victim. Finally, of the 13 individuals who identified as other gender (transgender, genderqueer two-spirit, non-conforming), 8 (61.5%) reported that they were a sex trafficking victim. Regarding sexual orientation, the sex trafficked group (n = 66) identified as 24 (36.4%) as heterosexual and 36 (54.5%) as LGBTQ. The age of first being sex trafficked was only reported by 36 (54.5%) of the 66 respondents who reported being sex trafficked. The age of first sex trafficking victimization reported ranged from 11 to 24 years (M = 17.9, SD = 2.95). Of the 36 sex trafficked respondents that identified the age of their first sex trafficking victimization, 13 (19.7%) reported that they were sex trafficked before they were age 18. The two most commonly reported reasons the respondents identified as how they were sex trafficked were: they were compelled, forced, or coerced to perform a sexual act that was for money (n = 35, 53%) followed by for a place to stay (n = 32, 48.5%), for food (n = 24, 36.4%), for clothes (n = 14, 21.2%), and protection (n = 12, 18.2%).



Having a sex trafficker was reported by 52 (78.7%) of the respondents that identified as being a victim of sex trafficking. The 78.7% who reported having a sex trafficker answered affirmatively to the one of the following questions:

1. Do you currently have a person who encourages/pressures/ forces you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, a place to stay, clothing or protection?
2. In the past, has anyone encouraged/pressured/ forced you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, a place to stay, clothing or protection?

Eight (12.1%) of the 66 respondents who reported a sex trafficking experience identified they were currently being sex trafficked by a person who encourages/pressures/forces them to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, protection, a place to stay, clothing or protection.

The use of technology for the purpose of the sex trafficking was identified by 38 (57.6%) of the 66 homeless young adult respondents who reported having been sex trafficked. The respondents responded affirmatively to the following survey question:

1. Were any of the following technological devices or means used to recruit you to trade sex, to keep you in the sex trading situation, or used as a tool in the sex trading situation?

| <b>Types of technology used in the sex trafficking situations (n=66)</b> |          |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                                                                          | <b>#</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Smart phone                                                              | 27       | 41%      |
| Facebook                                                                 | 17       | 25.8%    |

|                       |    |       |
|-----------------------|----|-------|
| Dating websites       | 11 | 16.6% |
| Backpage.com          | 10 | 15.1% |
| Craigslist.com        | 8  | 12.1% |
| Pornographic pictures | 7  | 10.6% |
| Tinder                | 4  | 6%    |
| Instagram             | 2  | 3%    |
| Tumblr                | 2  | 3%    |
| Twitter               | 2  | 3%    |
| Paypal                | 1  | 1.5%  |
| Bitcoin               | 1  | 1.5%  |

The names of the dating websites used to recruit, keep them in, or as a tool in the sex trafficking situation were written in by the participants and included Adam4Adam, Badoo, fetlife.com, Grindr, Jacked, Scruff, and Plenty of Fish.

### Comparing the Sex Trafficked Victims with the Non-Sex Trafficking Group

To compare the sex trafficked and the non-sex trafficked group, chi square and t-test analysis were used. There were no significant differences between the two groups regarding age at the time of the survey, age of first homelessness or age at first drug use.

Respondents who indicated their sexual orientation was in the category of gay, lesbian, pansexual, asexual, bisexual or other, were significantly more likely to have reported they were a sex trafficking victim when compared to those who reported heterosexual as their sexual orientation ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 177) = 3.84, p < .05$ ).

Participants identifying as a drug addict ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 178) = 5.83, p < .016$ ) and ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 186) = 5.83, p < .017$ ) was significantly more likely within the sex trafficked group than the non-sex trafficked group. The sex trafficked group was significantly more likely to report the use of methamphetamines compared to the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 136) = 14.7, p < .001$ ).

|                     | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sexual orientation* |                              |                                   |
| Heterosexual        | 32 (47.1%)                   | 82 (65.1%)                        |
| LGBTQ               | 36 (52.9%)                   | 44 (34.9%)                        |
| Drug addiction*     | 18 (24.3%)                   | 14 (11.3%)                        |

|                       |            |           |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------|
| Alcohol addiction*    | 13 (19.7%) | 10 (7.5%) |
| Methamphetamine use** | 11 (14.9%) | 7 (5.4%)  |

\*Significance at a p< .05 level. \*\*Significance at a p< .01 level.

### Self-Harm and Risk Taking Behaviors

Self-harming behaviors were significantly more likely to have been reported by the sex trafficked group when compared to the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 188) = 22.25, p < .001$ ). The sex trafficked homeless young adults were more likely to report they were participating in cutting behaviors when compared to the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 166) = 12.49, p < .001$ ). Drinking alcohol excessively was significantly more likely to be reported by the sex trafficked group of homeless young adult respondents than the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 164) = 12.13, p < .001$ ).

Drug use as a high risk behavior was significantly more likely to have been reported by the sex trafficked respondents when compared to the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 163) = 20.79, p < .001$ ). Having sex with strangers as a risky behavior was significantly more likely to have been reported by the sex trafficked respondents than the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 165) = 31.66, p < .001$ ). Risk taking behaviors ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 164) = 18.54, p < .001$ ) and not eating for long periods of time ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 171) = 24.17, p < .001$ ). were significantly more likely to have been reported by the sex trafficked respondents than the non-sex trafficked respondents.

Engaging in body modification behaviors was more likely to be reported by the non-sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents when compared to the sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 164) = 4.3, p < .038$ ).

| Self-Harming and Risk Taking Behaviors | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non-sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Self-harming behaviors**               | 48 (72.7%)                   | 48 (36%)                          |
| Not eating for long periods**          | 36 (54.5%)                   | 28 (21%)                          |
| Cutting**                              | 33 (50%)                     | 28 (21%)                          |
| Drug use**                             | 31 (47%)                     | 28 (21%)                          |
| Sex with strangers**                   | 24 (36.4%)                   | 37 (27.8%)                        |
| Drinking alcohol excessively**         | 22 (33.3%)                   | 36 (27.1%)                        |
| Risk taking behaviors**                | 22 (33.3%)                   | 37 (27.8%)                        |
| Body modification*                     | 10 (15.2%)                   | 7 (5.3%)                          |

\*Significance at a p< .05 level. \*\*Significance at a p< .01 level.

### Mental Health Issues

Suicide attempts were significantly more likely to have been reported by the sex trafficked homeless young adults when compared to the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 127) = 16.67, p < .001$ ). The sex trafficked respondents were more likely to have a current mental health issue/diagnosis than the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 176) = 6.11, p < .013$ ). The sex trafficked group was also significantly more likely to report having more than one mental health diagnosis compared to the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 159) = 5.34, p < .021$ ).

The sex trafficked group were more likely to report being diagnosed with bipolar disorder ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 157) = 3.69, p < .05$ ), depression ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 159) = 7.05, p < .008$ ), Posttraumatic stress disorder ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 152) = 6.08, p < .014$ ), and anxiety ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 157) = 10.65, p < .001$ ). The sex trafficked group were more likely to report that they had received treatment for their mental health problem than the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 161) = 4.78, p < .029$ ).

| Mental Health Issues                   | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non-sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mental health issue/diagnosis*         | 50 (75.8%)                   | 65 (48.9%)                        |
| Suicide attempts**                     | 45 (68.2%)                   | 35 (26.3%)                        |
| More than one diagnosis reported*      | 41 (62.1%)                   | 46 (34.6%)                        |
| Anxiety**                              | 40 (68.2%)                   | 36 (27.1%)                        |
| Depression**                           | 37 (56.1%)                   | 37 (27.8%)                        |
| Ever received mental health treatment* | 36 (54.5%)                   | 44 (33.1%)                        |
| Bipolar disorder*                      | 27 (40.1%)                   | 29 (21.8%)                        |
| ADD/ADHD                               | 19 (28.8%)                   | 31 (23.3%)                        |
| Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*        | 18 (27.3%)                   | 14 (10.5%)                        |
| Borderline Personality Disorder        | 6 (9%)                       | 4 (3%)                            |
| Oppositional Defiant Disorder          | 6 (9%)                       | 6 (4.5%)                          |
| Schizophrenia                          | 3 (4.5%)                     | 8 (6.2%)                          |
| Antisocial Personality Disorder        | 3 (4.5%)                     | 6 (4.5%)                          |

\*Significance at a  $p < .05$  level. \*\*Significance at a  $p < .01$  level.

### Medical Problems and Services

The two groups were not significantly different regarding reporting a medical problem. Asthma was more likely to be reported by the sex trafficked respondents than the non-sex trafficked respondents ( $\chi^2 (1, N = 156) = 3.71, p < .05$ ).

| <b>Medical Problems</b>         | <b>Sex trafficked group (n =66)</b> | <b>Non-sex trafficked group (n =133)</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Current medical problem         | 37 (56.1%)                          | 58 (43.6%)                               |
| Asthma*                         | 19 (28.8%)                          | 20 (15%)                                 |
| Poor vision                     | 12 (18.2%)                          | 23 (17.3%)                               |
| Chronic pain                    | 12 (18.2%)                          | 16 (12%)                                 |
| Dental problems                 | 11 (16.6%)                          | 23 (17.3%)                               |
| Skin problems                   | 6 (9.9%)                            | 10 (7.5%)                                |
| Open wounds                     | 5 (7.6%)                            | 4 (3%)                                   |
| Sexually Transmitted Infections | 3 (4.5%)                            | 0                                        |
| Broken bones                    | 2 (3%)                              | 6 (4.5%)                                 |

\*Significance at a p< .05 level. \*\*Significance at a p< .01 level.

| <b>Medical Services Accessed</b>      | <b>Sex trafficked group (n =66)</b> | <b>Non-sex trafficked group (n =133)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Emergency room                        | 32 (48.5%)                          | 47 (35.3%)                               |
| Urgent care/walk-in clinic            | 26 (39.4%)                          | 39 (29.3%)                               |
| Currently receiving medical care      | 20 (30.3%)                          | 25 (18.8%)                               |
| Primary doctor                        | 16 (24.2%)                          | 25 (18.8%)                               |
| Treat it myself                       | 12 (18.2%)                          | 20 (15%)                                 |
| Crews'n Mobile                        | 8 (12.1%)                           | 8 (6%)                                   |
| Use internet to learn how to treat it | 10 (15.1%)                          | 9 (6.8%)                                 |
| Alternative medicine                  | 3 (4.5%)                            | 8 (6%)                                   |
| Friend/relative treats it             | 2 (3%)                              | 5 (3.8%)                                 |
| City public health clinic             | 0                                   | 8 (6%)                                   |

\*Significance at a p< .05 level. \*\*Significance at a p< .01 level.

The two groups did not differ regarding the number of children they have and were similar in the locations of their children.

| <b>Pregnancy and Children</b> | <b>Sex trafficked group (n =66)</b> | <b>Non-sex trafficked group (n =133)</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Have children                 | 19 (28.8%)                          | 58 (43.6%)                               |
| Children with family          | 9 (47.3%)                           | 14 (24.1%)                               |
| Currently pregnant            | 6 (9.1%)                            | 10 (7.5%)                                |

|                                   |           |            |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Children in the respondent's care | 5 (26.3%) | 26 (44.8%) |
| Children in foster care           | 3 (4.5%)  | 7 (12.1%)  |

\*Significance at a  $p < .05$  level. \*\*Significance at a  $p < .01$  level.

### Family Connection and Support

Although not significant, 62% of the sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents identified reported that they had been kicked out by their family compared to 46% of the non-sex trafficked group.

| Family Connection and Support                  | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non-sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Some family contact, but positive              | 17 (25.8%)                   | 52 (39.1%)                        |
| No contact                                     | 16 (24.2%)                   | 23 (17.3%)                        |
| Some family contact, but negative              | 14 (21.2%)                   | 27 (20.3%)                        |
| Lots of family contact, supportive             | 12 (18.2%)                   | 18 (13.5%)                        |
| Lots of family contact, not supportive         | 6 (9.1%)                     | 10 (7.5%)                         |
| Reasons for disconnection and lack of support: |                              |                                   |
| They kicked me out                             | 41 (62.1%)                   | 62 (46.6%)                        |
| They live too far away                         | 20 (30.3%)                   | 46 (34.6%)                        |
| The family was not a safe environment          | 11 (16.6%)                   | 27 (20.3%)                        |

\*Significance at a  $p < .05$  level. \*\*Significance at a  $p < .01$  level.

### How Respondents Earn Money

The sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents and the non-sex trafficked homeless young adult respondents did not differ significantly on any of the methods of earning money.

| How Respondents Earn Money | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non-sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Side jobs for cash         | 18 (27.3%)                   | 35 (26.3%)                        |
| Steady job                 | 16 (24.2%)                   | 39 (29.3%)                        |
| Selling my own things      | 12 (18.2%)                   | 17 (12.8%)                        |
| Panhandling                | 7 (10.6%)                    | 20 (15%)                          |
| Day labor                  | 5 (7.6%)                     | 20 (15%)                          |
| Sell drugs                 | 3 (4.5%)                     | 11 (8.3%)                         |
| Selling stolen things      | 2 (3%)                       | 5 (3.8%)                          |

## Negative Life Experiences

Childhood abuses were reported by both the sex trafficked and non-sex trafficked homeless young adults, but the sex trafficked respondents were more likely to report emotional abuse by a parent or caregiver ( $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 9.65, p < .002$ ), childhood (age 12 and under) sexual abuse ( $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 15.86, p < .001$ ), and sexually abused between the ages of 13 -17 years old ( $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 32.37, p < .001$ ). The sex trafficked homeless young adults were more likely to report having experienced dating violence than the non-sex trafficked group ( $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 12.1, p < .001$ ). Two issues related to being bullied or harassed by peers was significantly more likely to be reported by the sex trafficked group. They were more likely to report that they had been bullied by school peers ( $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 6.47, p < .011$ ) and harassed by peers ( $\chi^2(1, N = 207) = 10.46, p < .001$ ). Finally, the sex trafficked homeless young adults were more likely to report experiences of working in the adult entertainment industry, thirteen of the sex trafficked group had a history of working in the adult entertainment industry, only one of the non-sex trafficked group reported having worked in the adult entertainment industry.

| Negative Life Experiences               | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non-sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Emotional abuse by parent or guardian** | 37 (56.1%)                   | 44 (33.1%)                        |
| Experienced dating violence**           | 35 (53%)                     | 37 (27.8%)                        |
| Bullied by school peers**               | 32 (48.5%)                   | 40 (30.1%)                        |
| Running away                            | 30 (45.5%)                   | 50 (37.6%)                        |
| Physical abuse by parent or guardian    | 30 (45.5%)                   | 29 (21.8%)                        |
| Harassed by peers **                    | 29 (43.9%)                   | 29 (21.8%)                        |
| Sexually abused (ages 13-17)**          | 25 (37.9%)                   | 8 (6%)                            |
| Residential treatment                   | 24 (36.4%)                   | 21 (15.8%)                        |
| Sexually abused (age 12 and under)**    | 23 (34.8%)                   | 15 (11.3%)                        |
| Negative contact with law enforcement   | 22 (33.3%)                   | 38 (28.6%)                        |
| Foster care/group home                  | 22 (33.3%)                   | 42 (31.6%)                        |
| Academic difficulties                   | 22 (33.3%)                   | 44 (33.1%)                        |
| Expelled from school                    | 20 (30.3%)                   | 42 (31.6%)                        |
| Juvenile justice involvement            | 19 (28.8%)                   | 36 (27.1%)                        |
| Been in special education classes       | 18 (27.3%)                   | 33 (24.8%)                        |
| Gang affiliation                        | 14 (21.2%)                   | 26 (19.5%)                        |



|                                            |            |          |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Worked in the adult entertainment industry | 13 (19.7%) | 1 (7.5%) |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|----------|

\*Significance at a p< .05 level. \*\*Significance at a p< .01 level.

**Protective Factors**

The non-sex trafficked homeless young adults were more likely to report that they had a trusted and good relationship with law enforcement (x2 (1, N = 199) = 5.36, p <.021).

| Protective Factors                                               | Sex trafficked group (n =66) | Non-sex trafficked group (n =133) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Has safe sex                                                     | 36 (54.5%)                   | 59 (44.4%)                        |
| Been part of a club or youth organization                        | 34 (51.5%)                   | 60 (45.1%)                        |
| Said no when drugs and alcohol were offered                      | 33 (50%)                     | 70 (52.6%)                        |
| Enrolled in a technical program                                  | 29 (43.9%)                   | 55 (41.4%)                        |
| Have a supportive, loving family or group of friends             | 27 (40.9%)                   | 61 (45.9%)                        |
| Feel secure or safe standing up for yourself/protecting yourself | 27 (40.1%)                   | 59 (44.4%)                        |
| Aware of community resources                                     | 26 (39.4%)                   | 62 (46.6%)                        |
| Said no when you felt you were forced into sex                   | 25 (37.9%)                   | 37 (27.8%)                        |
| Trusting/good relationship with law enforcement*                 | 24 (36.4%)                   | 28 (21.1%)                        |
| Volunteered in the community                                     | 21 (31.8%)                   | 43 (32.3%)                        |
| Having a health, safe and permanent place to live                | 21 (31.8%)                   | 50 (37.6%)                        |
| Steady employment                                                | 17 (25.8%)                   | 49 (38.9%)                        |

\*Significance at a p< .05 level. \*\*Significance at a p< .01 level.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study will help the Arizona community better serve homeless young adults through an increased awareness of their specific experiences and needs. The main findings of this study include: a) most of Arizona’s homeless young adults, 68%, grew up in Arizona and their experiences which resulted in their current homeless status occurred in Arizona; b) drug and alcohol use and addiction, as well as mental health problems (diagnosis and self-harm behaviors), appear to be critical issues that are not currently being addressed which create

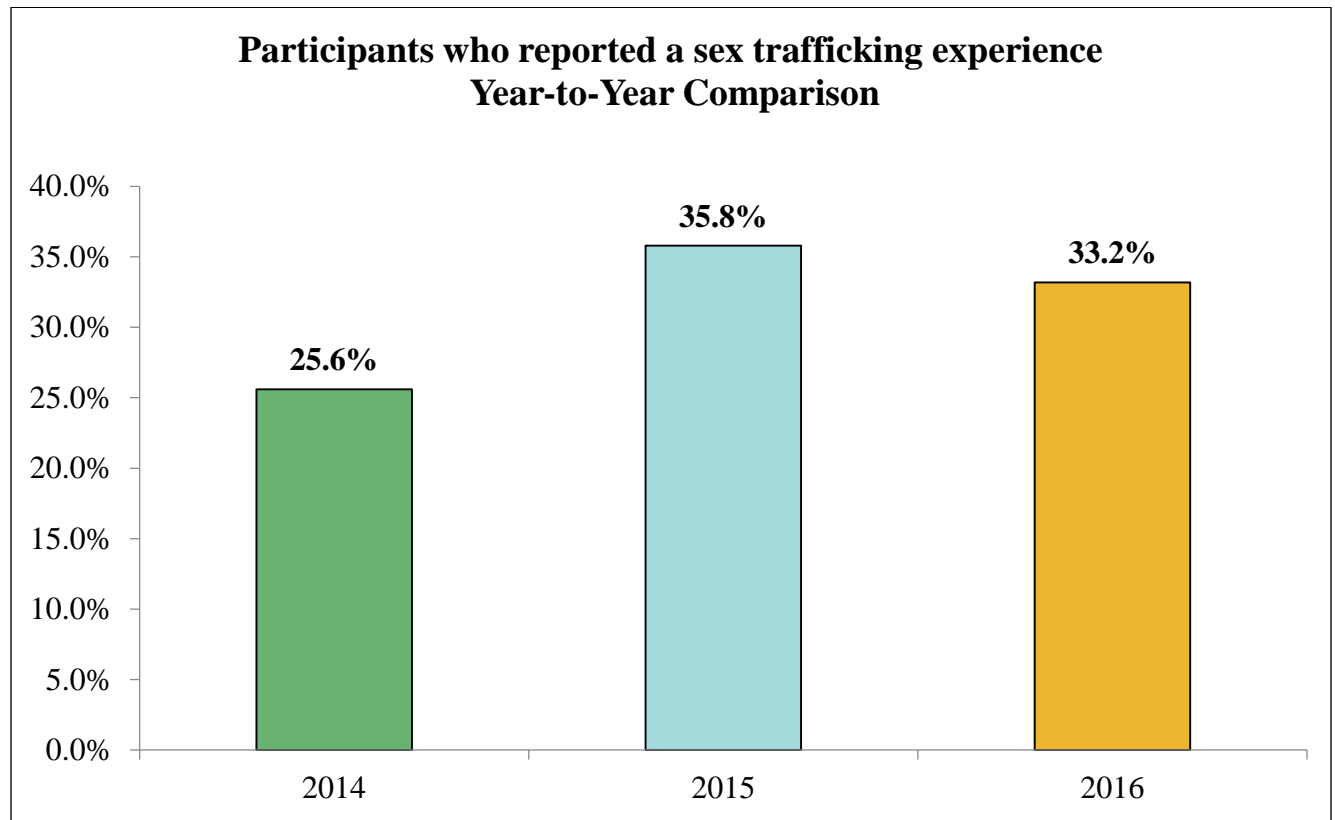
barriers to resolving their homelessness; c) the majority of the participants reported some positive contact with their families which indicates that agencies should continue to initiate and support the engagement of the young adult's family system to help address their needs (homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction and mental health problems); d) many of the participants received social system-based services during their childhoods in Arizona including residential treatment programs, foster care involvement, school issues, and juvenile justice involvement. These services did not prevent their current homelessness as young adults.

Several differences were found between the sex trafficked participants and the non-sex trafficked participants. The main findings regarding the 33.2% of the homeless young adult participants that reported having experienced sex trafficking victimization included: a) gender and sexual orientation are important factors regarding sex trafficking, with transgender persons and LGBTQ demonstrating increased vulnerability for sex trafficking victimization; b) the sex trafficked participants reported nearly equally being sex trafficked for money (53%) and place to stay (48.5%); c) technology was an important part of the sex trafficking experience for 57.6% of the sex trafficking victims; d) the sex trafficked group reported more addiction to drugs, more use of methamphetamines, and more self-harm behavior than the non-sex trafficked group; e) mental health problems and childhood experiences of abuse (dating violence, sexual and physical abuse), bullying, and harassment by peers were reported more often by the sex trafficked group.

The profile of a sex trafficked homeless young adult in Arizona would be a person who identifies as LGBTQ, reports being addicted to drugs, has a history of cutting, uses alcohol excessively and participates in risk-taking behaviors. They are more likely to report having sex with strangers, have a history of suicide attempts, and have more than one mental health diagnosis including depression or anxiety. They are most likely to report having been kicked out by their family, experienced emotional abuse as a child, as well as dating violence.

### **2014, 2015, and 2016 Finding Comparisons**

In 2014, 246 homeless young adults participated in the Youth Experiences Survey (YES). The 2015 YES was completed by 215 homeless young adults and the 2016 YES was completed by 199 homeless young adults. Due to the transient nature of this population and the anonymity of the respondents, duplication from year to year was not considered or included in the interpretation of the findings. Additions to the 2015 Youth Experiences Survey included questions about respondent origins, such as hometown and how long the respondent has resided in Arizona, what types of medical services the respondent utilizes, and if the respondent has children or is currently pregnant. New questions addressing family history and connectedness, spirituality, how the respondent makes money, and how technology was used in a sex trafficking situation were also included in the 2015 Youth Experiences Survey. New questions added to the 2016 YES included requesting their hometown zip code, and reasons for being kicked out of their homes (if they were kicked out).



In 2014, one in four (n = 63, 25.6%) homeless young adult participants self-reported that they had experienced a sex trafficking situation. The 2015 respondents demonstrate an increase in the number of reported sex trafficking experiences by homeless young adults, with over one in three (77, 35.8%) respondents self-reporting a sex trafficking experience. The 2016 YES respondents reported that one in every three (n = 66, 33.2%) participants had experienced sex trafficking.

#### **Changes over time Youth Experiences Survey 2014-2016**

Over the three years of the YES study, a number of trends were identified. The diversity of the places where participants originated decreased over the years of the study. During year 2, participants were from 26 other states, and in year 3, participants were from 18 other U.S. states. Positive changes found among the homeless young adult participants over the three years included overall reported drug use decreased and specifically, the use of marijuana went down by nearly 12% from year 2 to year 3. The reported use of crack cocaine also fell from 7.3% to 5%.

Reports of self-harm behaviors including cutting, risk taking, body modification, excessive use of alcohol and having sex with strangers all decreased over the three years.

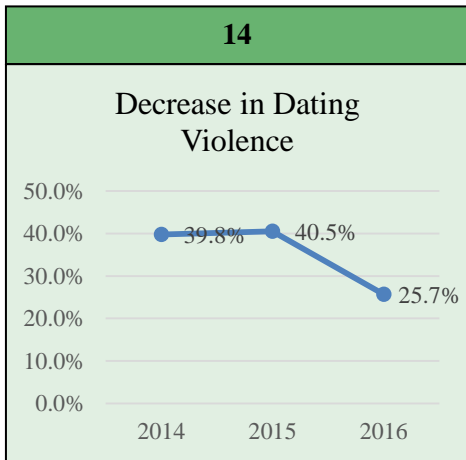
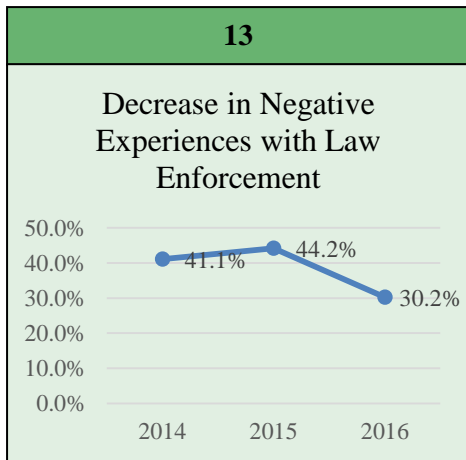
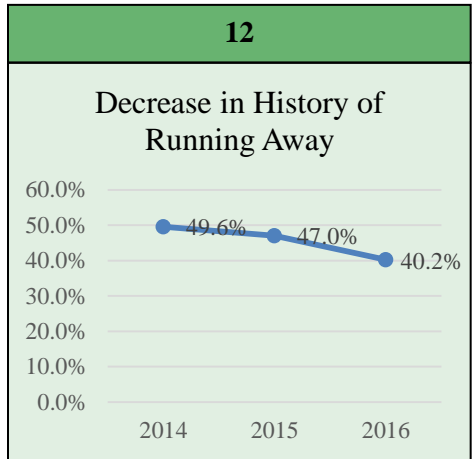
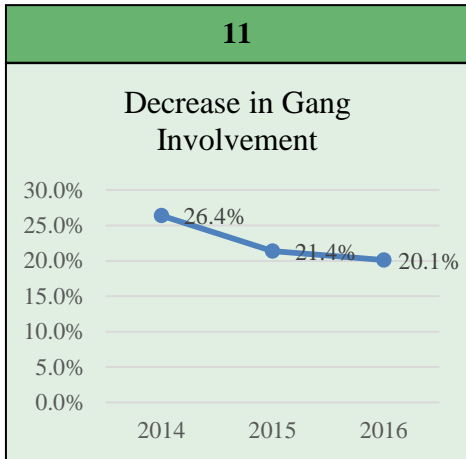
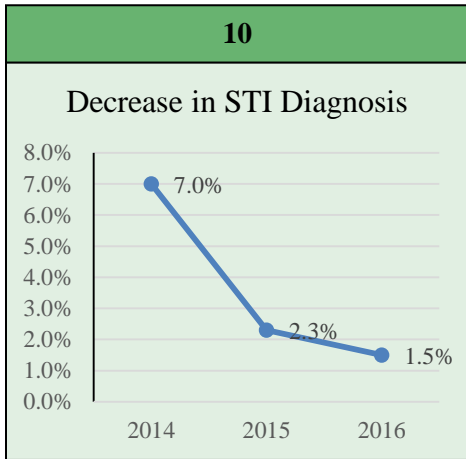
Participants reported increased enrollment into the Arizona healthcare insurance system.

Reported medical issues changed with Sexually Transmitted Infections decreasing from 7% to

1.5%. A steady decrease in gang involvement was noticed from year 1 to year 3 and fewer reports of dating violence was found among the homeless young adult respondents from year 1 to year 3. A decrease in the rate of running away reported by the participants was found over the three years. Reports of negative experiences with law enforcement also decreased over the three-year time period. Overall reports of childhood sexual abuse (age 12 and under) decreased as well.

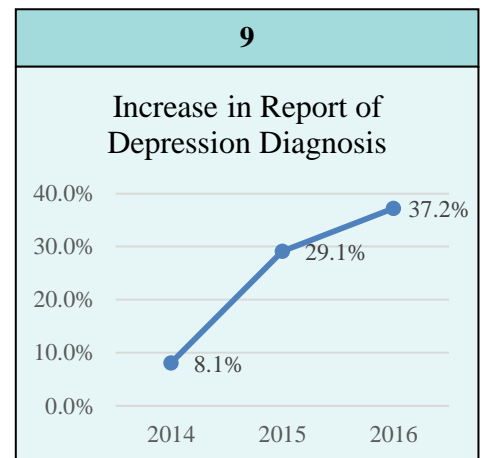
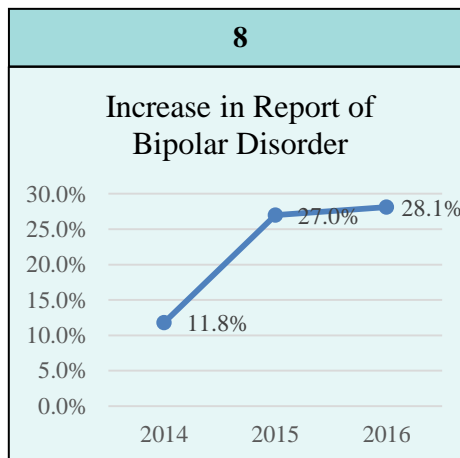
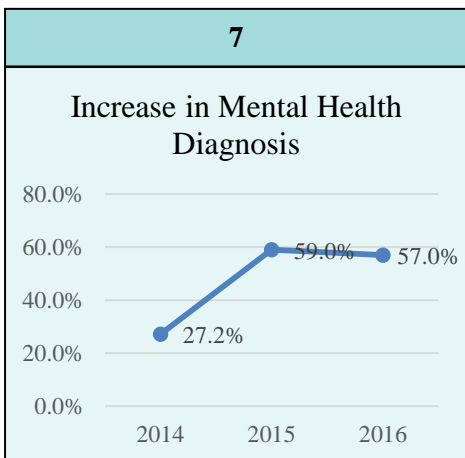
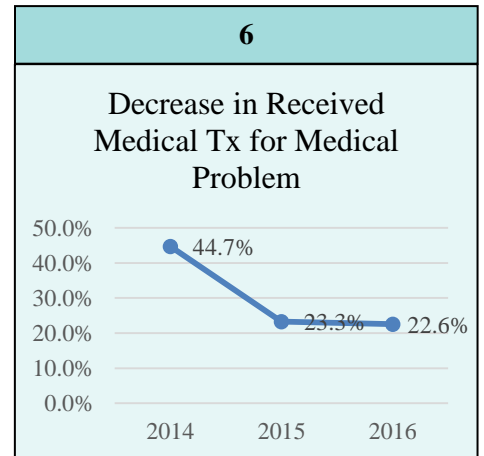
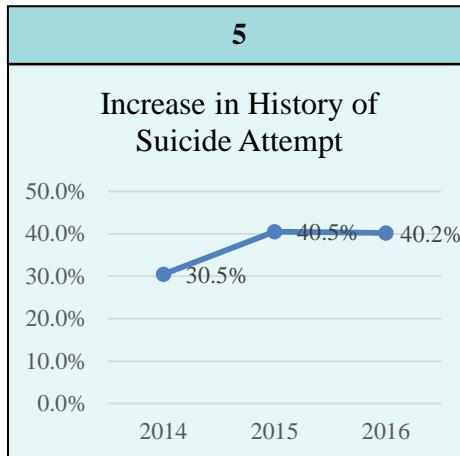
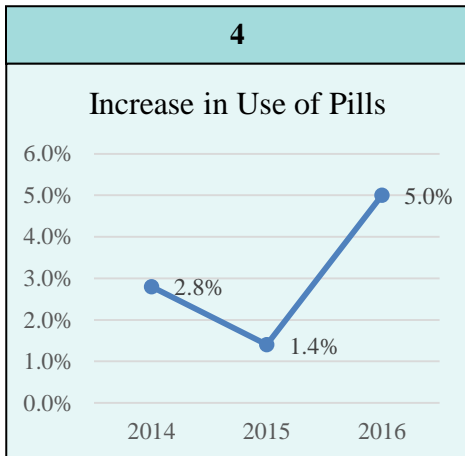
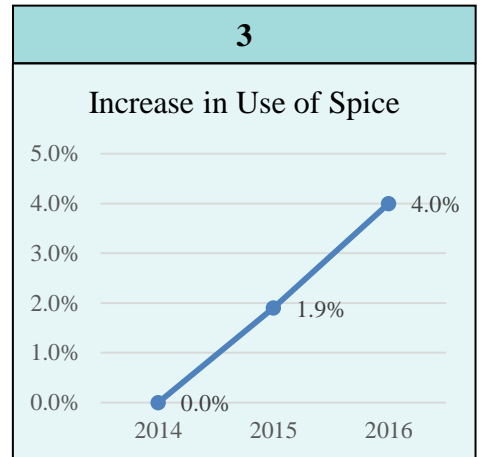
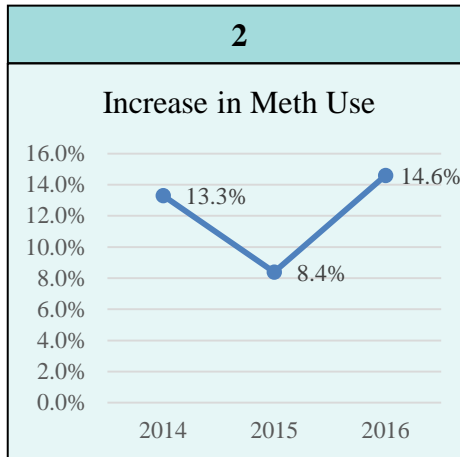
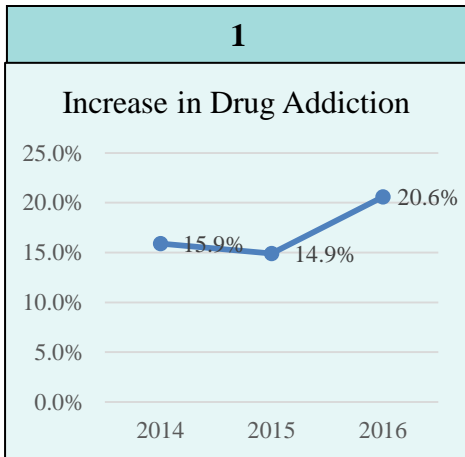
### Positive Changes Over Time From 2014 to 2016

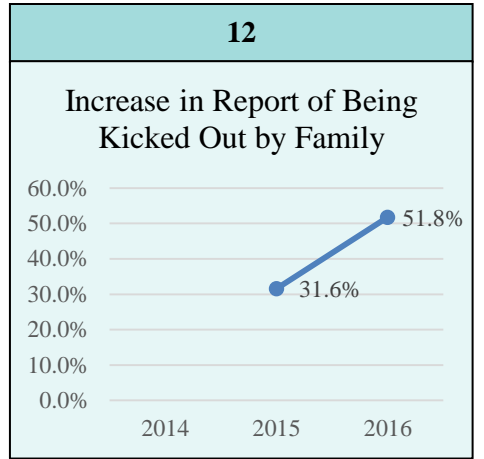
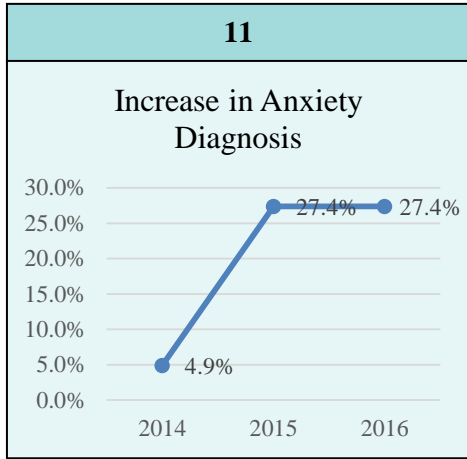
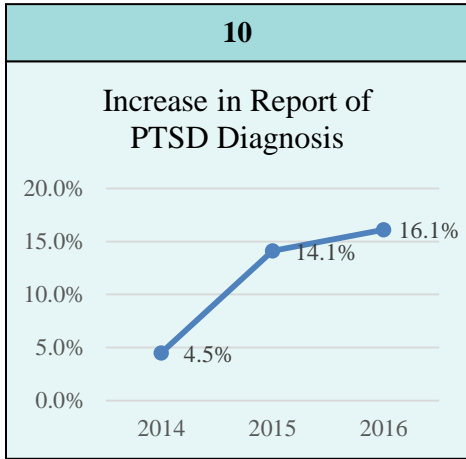




Although overall drug use appears to have decreased over the three years of the survey, the homeless young adult participants reported a steadily increasing rate of addiction to drugs. Use of methamphetamines increased as did the use of Spice and pills. Reported history of suicide attempts doubled from year 1 to year 3. Although an increase in medical insurance was found over the three years, reported receiving medical treatment for their medical programs significantly decreased from 44.7% in year 1 to 22.6% in year 3. Mental health diagnosis reported by the participants significantly increased from 27.2% on year 1 to 57% on year 3. Participants reported significant increases in the following diagnoses: bipolar disorder, Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Reports of being kicked out by their family increased from 31.6% in year 2 to 51.8% in year 3.

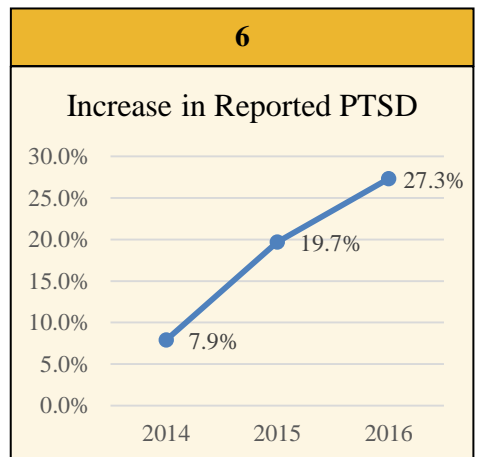
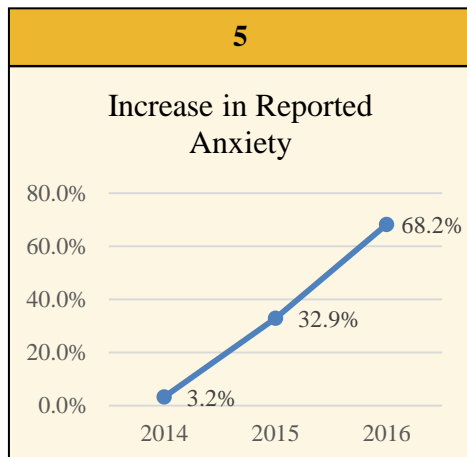
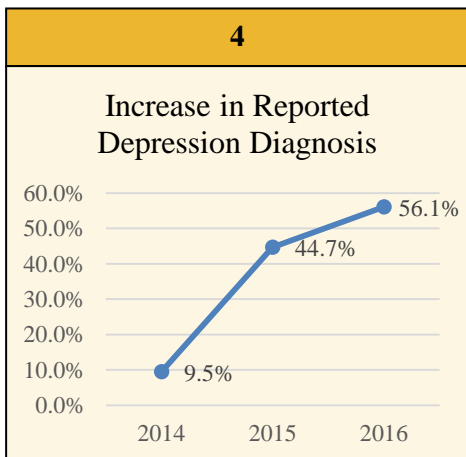
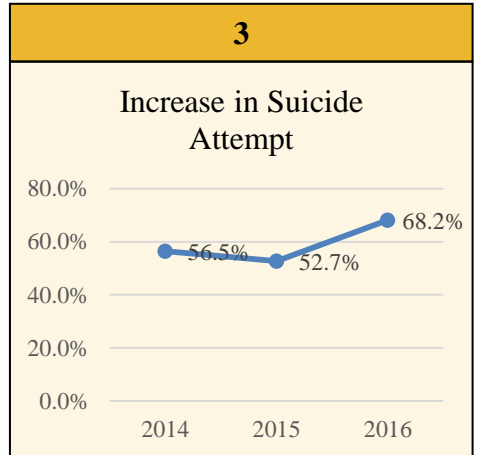
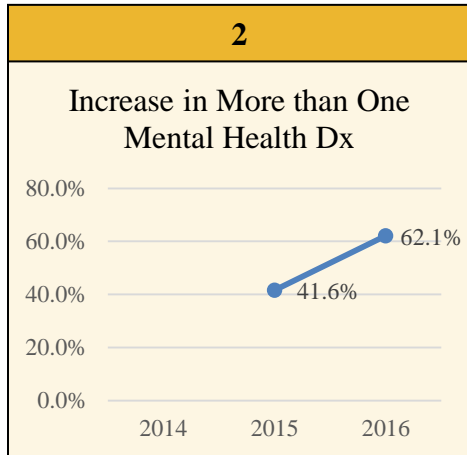
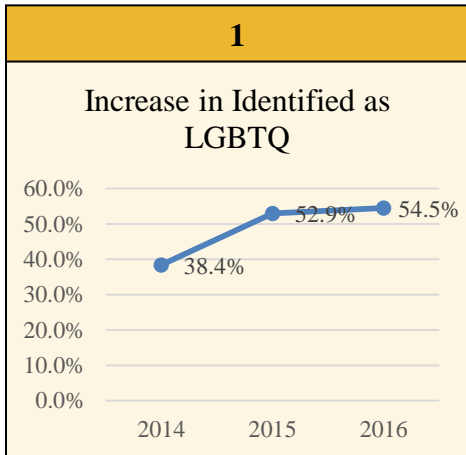
## Negative Changes Over Time from 2014 to 2016

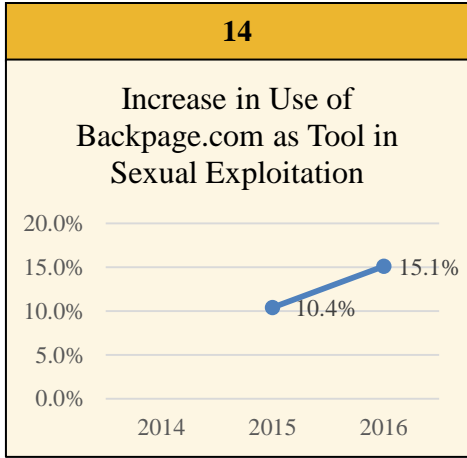
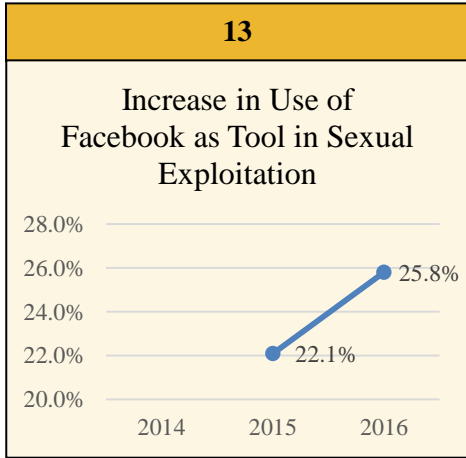
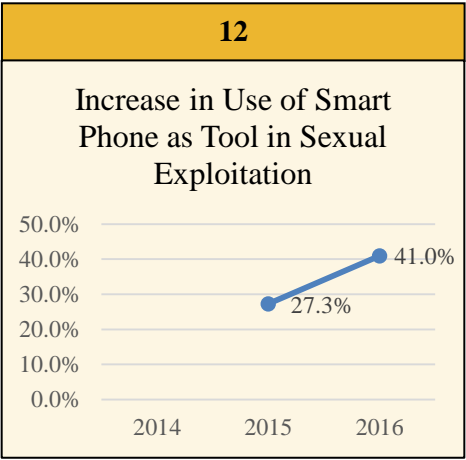
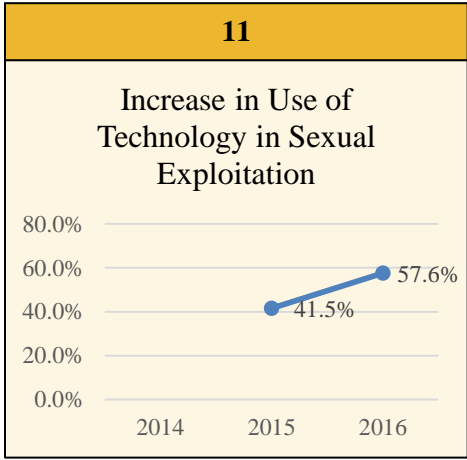
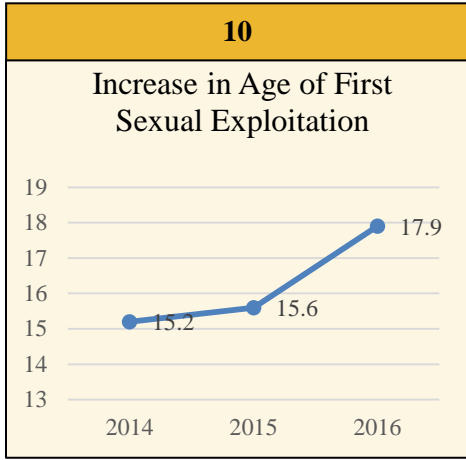
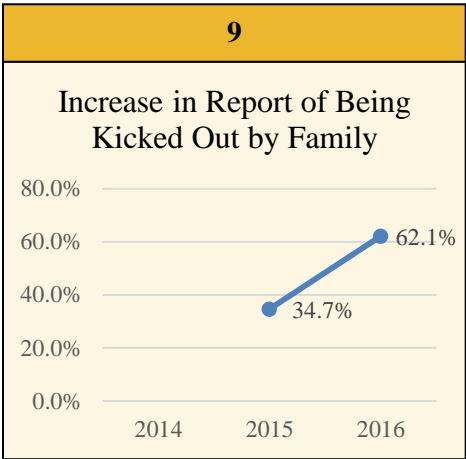
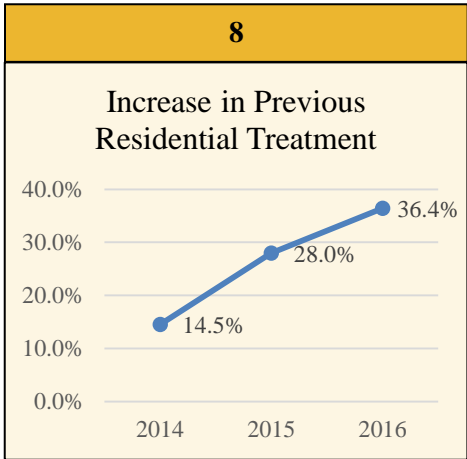
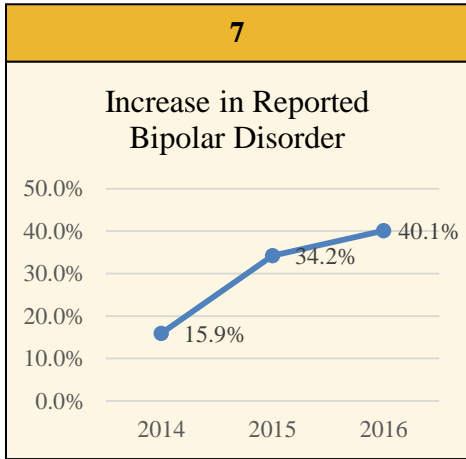




Specific to the sex trafficked group, the percentage of participants identifying as LGBTQ increased. The sex trafficked participants reported an increase in being diagnosed with more than one mental health diagnosis. The sex trafficked participants reported increasing rates of previous suicide attempts, from 56.5% in year 1 to 68.2% in year 3. The sex trafficked group also reported increasing numbers of diagnoses of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and bipolar disorder over the three years. The sex trafficked group reported an increased rate of being kicked out by parents (31.6% in year 2 to 51.8% in year 3).

**Changes Within the Sex Trafficked Group Over Time From 2014 to 2016**





Regarding the experiences of sex trafficking, sex trafficked participants reported having a sex trafficking at an increased rate from 63.5% in year 1 to 87.7% in year 3. The use of technology in the sex trafficking was more reported from year 2 at 41.5% to year 3 at 57.6%. A steady increase in the use of smartphones in the participants' sex trafficking experiences increased from 21% in year 2 to 27% in year 3. Backpage.com and Facebook were increasingly reported as elements of the participants' sex trafficking experiences.



## **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to consider when interpreting the findings from this study. The data was drawn from the two largest cities in Arizona, Phoenix and Tucson, utilizing four service providers but data was not collected from rural areas or smaller cities. In the rural and smaller cities, sex trafficking prevalence along with the other issues presented in this study among homeless young adults may vary from the urban sample used in this study. Another limitation of this study consists of the sample being limited to those in contact with a homeless young adult service provider whether through street outreach, at a resource/drop-in center, or in transitional housing. The \$5 gift card given to survey completers may have influenced their decision to complete the survey, but no surveys were turned in that were incomplete or appeared to be marked in a pattern. Finally, during the three years of the YES study (2014-2016) significant efforts were made to train the staff at all of the participating agencies, and new sex trafficking victim targeted services were developed and implemented at the two largest agencies, Tumbleweed and Our Family Services. This may have influenced who the surveys were given to within each agency.

## **Implications**

This study found that homeless young adults in Arizona have faced serious challenges in their lives and often report limited opportunities to resolve some of their most presenting problems including drug addiction, mental health issues, and limited family connectedness. The findings of this study also confirm the rate of reported sex trafficking victimization among homeless young adults in Arizona. The rate of sex trafficking victimization over the three years of the YES study is 31.5%. This has significant implications for the service providers who serve homeless young adults in Arizona.

The results of this study provide a snapshot of the complexities homeless young adults face throughout their childhood and early adult life. Service providers should identify areas within programs to embed education and clinical services surrounding childhood abuse, exploitation, and suicide. Service programs should ensure that interventions not only focus on victims of trafficking but runaway and homeless youth who are at-risk for exploitation. An emphasis is needed to expand beyond just female-focused interventions and to be inclusive of male, transgender, and LGBTQ youth. Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) providers should evaluate their existing programming and identify areas to improve prevention based activities using trafficking and at-risk language to inform high-risk youth how to ensure safety, identify healthy (and non-healthy) relationships, and increase resiliency factors to prevent victimization.

Homeless and runaway youth are often viewed as isolated from the community and as part of street families. This study found that many young adults would like improved relationships with their family or to have a stronger support network. Efforts such as Kevin Campbell's Family Finding seek to reunite young adults with a network of family and support. Arizona's

Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development developed the “Forever Network” for Homeless and Runaway Youth based on the Family Finding model. These efforts include building a peer support network to help move the youth forward to rebuild relationships and to assist youth in achieving self-sufficiency using those needed supportive relationships. These supportive networks can also serve as a protective factor for youth at risk of sexual exploitation.

This data highlights the increased risk for adolescents and young adults in child welfare, residential treatment and at-risk programming to educate and inform staff and clients regarding the potential for exploitation and sex trafficking. Regardless of trafficking-specific programs, service providers should include training on human trafficking, risks, and red flags to identify potential at-risk or victims and refer to appropriate victim serving agencies. Sex trafficking victims access many services during the course of adolescence and as a young adult. All agencies should have a response protocol to ensure that staff provides appropriate referrals. Homeless agencies should be prepared to provide alternative programming or explore service delivery that meets the comprehensive needs of victims. Services should include, but not be limited to case management, service and safety planning, substance abuse, therapeutic, education, and workforce programming and include medical and dental options. Victims of sex trafficking are actively engaged in the homeless, youth serving agencies and housing opportunities need to consider the time a victim may need post-victimization to heal, restore and rebuild life skills. Lastly, agencies should consider partnering with victim providers to offer groups, one-on-one and supportive services to build prevention, education and wraparound care for clients.

This study not only provides support for improved service delivery, but also provides essential statistics that should inform internal policy and procedures for youth and young adult serving agencies around the United States. This includes: adding sex trafficking questions to screening; training staff at all levels of service provision on sex trafficking identification; developing and providing targeted service delivery for victims of trafficking; developing protocols for mandated reporting requirements for minor and adult sex trafficking victims; and developing clear and useable safety measures to prevent sexual exploitation and protection from predators for staff and clientele. Training and education should continue with each agency to increase awareness about sex trafficking and should include a focus on the warning signs and risk factors surrounding victims of trafficking with a focus on trauma informed care.

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