

# LGBTQ YOUTH AND SEX TRAFFICKING



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## LGBTQ

Acronym referring to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning.

Acronym used to designate a community of people whose sexual or gender identities can create shared political and social concerns

Different identities within 'LGBTQ'

Specific needs and concerns related to each individual identity

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer or Questioning



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## Sex Trafficking

TVPA 2000

- According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, sex trafficking is defined as a situation "in which a commercial sex act is induced by **force, fraud, or coercion**, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age".
- Always sex trafficking when under age 18 if there is an exchange.
- Males, females, and transgender persons can be victims of sex trafficking.

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## Homeless Youth

- Chronically or intermittently homeless
- Living in transitional shelter or temporary situations such as ‘couch surfing’,
- Living in hotels
- On the streets
- Abandoned houses or other unsafe/ unstable housing situations.

Sources: (National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, 2014; Woods, Samples, Melchiono, Harris, & Boston Happens Program Collaborators, 2003)

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### What are the risk factors for homelessness?



Sources: (Cauce et al, 2000; Doyle Jr., 2007; Kruks,1991; Lankenau et al., 2004; Tyler, et al., 2001; Whitbeck et al., 2010)

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## Homelessness and Sex Trafficking

- Most often classified as **survival sex**:

*The exchange of sex to meet subsistence needs.*

As items of value, they meet the criteria established by the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act for a commercial exchange.

Sources: (Bailey, Camlin, & Ennett, 1998; Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999)




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## LGBTQ Research Questions

1. In a sample of homeless/runaway young adults (age 18-25 years), how many identified as **LGBTQ**?
2. Of the homeless/runaway young adults in the sample that identified as **LGBTQ**, how many reported being sex trafficked in their lifetimes?
3. Do the **LGBTQ** homeless/runaway young adults who reported a history of sex trafficking differ on related to their *life experiences* when compared with non-sex trafficked **LGBTQ** homeless/runaway young adults?

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## Methodology

- 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a longitudinal, descriptive study using a cross-sectional sampling design of all homeless young adults available.
- 2 week data collection period in August 2016.
- 199 surveys were completed from 4 agencies in Arizona serving homeless young adults ages 18-25 years old
- 22 removed from sample – did not report sexual identity
  - 177 total sample
  - Anonymous surveys were completed by youth in transitional housing, drop-in centers, and street outreach.
- Participants received a \$5 gift card.




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## The Survey

• Questions that cover:




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## Sample Questions

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?

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?

In the past, has anyone encouraged/pressured/forced you to exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, food, place to stay, clothing or protection?

Have you ever been afraid to leave or quit this situation due to fear of violence or other threats to harm you or your family?

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## Total Participants (N = 199)

### Participants by Agency:

- Tumbleweed: 84 (42.2%) respondents
- Our Family Services: 76 (38.2%) respondents
- One-n-ten: 24 (12.1%) respondents
- Native American Connections: 15 (7.5%) respondents

### Gender Identity:



male (n = 102, 51.3%)



female (n = 83, 41.7%)



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%).*

1 participant did not report gender identity.

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## Sexual Orientation Reported

**Heterosexual 44.7% (n = 89)**

Mean Age 21.06 (SD = 2.00)

**LGBTQ 44.2% (n = 88)**

Mean Age 21.02 (SD = 2.24)

- Bisexual 20.1% (n = 40)
- Asexual 12.1% (n = 24)
- Lesbian 4.5% (n = 9)
- Gay 3.5% (n = 7)
- Pansexual 3.0% (n = 6)
- Other 1.0% (n = 2)

**Missing 11% (n = 22)**

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## Findings | LGBTQ Ethnicity (N=88)

The most prevalent races/ethnicities reported were:

- White/Caucasian (30, 34%)
- Black/African American (17, 19.3%)
- Hispanic/Latina/Latino (16, 18.2%)
- Native American/American Indian (7, 7.9%)

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## Findings | Sex Trafficking

Of the 177 young adults who reported their sexual orientation:

66 (33.2%) reported having been sex trafficked.

30 (45.45%) reported their sexual orientation as Heterosexual

36 (54.5%) reported their sexual orientation as LGBTQ




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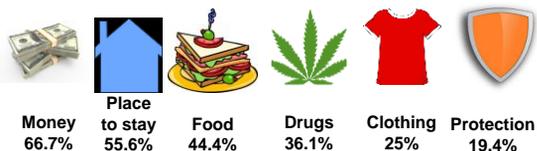
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## Sex Trafficked LGBTQ Life Experiences

LGBTQ Sex Trafficked youth compelled, forced or coerced to perform a sexual act for...




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## Sex Trafficked LGBTQ Life Experiences

LGBTQ Sex Trafficked youth were significantly more likely to report a history of:

- Meth use
- A Healthy History of
  - PTSD
  - Asthma
  - Chronic Pain

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## LGBTQ Life Experiences

LGBTQ youth who had been sex trafficked were significantly more likely to report a history of:



Self-harm



As characterized by:

- Cutting
- Drinking Alcohol excessively
- Using drugs
- Not eating for long periods of time
- Vomiting

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## LGBTQ Life Experiences

LGBTQ youth who had been sex trafficked were significantly more likely to report negative lifetime experiences of:

- Physical Abuse by a Parent / Guardian
- Emotional Abuse by a Parent / Guardian
- Sexual Abuse (both in childhood years and young adult)
- Harassment by Peers
- Dating Violence




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## Implications

- Agency awareness of increased risk of sexual exploitation for homeless **LGBTQ** young adults
- Train staff to create a welcoming space for **LGBTQ** young adults
- Targeted interventions for homeless **LGBTQ** young adults
- Clinical training and curriculum development for trauma-informed care and trauma-focused treatment

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## Creating an Inclusive Space

- Call on your community partners for training, education, and tools.
- Observe LGBTQ+ agency spaces.
- Ongoing trainings, in-service training.
- Evaluate policy and procedures regarding anti-discrimination, client files, and housing.




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## Safety Planning Strategies

- Complete safety planning, regardless of any "active safety concerns," acknowledging that for LGBTQ+ youth, *safety is an ongoing issue*.
- Consider using a person-centered, harm-reduction model for those identified as victims of trafficking who are still in the life.
- Treat a safety plan as a live document, encourage staff to modify, change, and update as rapport grows and situations may change.
- **Safety planning should focus on:**
  - How an individual defines safety.
  - Identifying potential areas of danger (people, places, situations).
  - Outline prevention and intervention techniques.

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## Safety Planning

- For both trafficking victims and LGBTQ+ individuals, safety planning should also address potential safety concerns in the community.
- LGBTQ+ youth are at a greater risk for discrimination, abuse, and victimization, so preventive conversations should be identified.
- Safety planning should identify these risks and seek to inform individuals of their rights, safe spaces for reporting, and how to report a crime.
- **Clients should be aware of local and state laws.**
  - Rights as victims.
  - Discrimination protection within the workplace.
  - Housing laws.

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## Partnerships with LGBTQ+ Stakeholders

- Partnerships create:
  - Opportunities for cross-training.
  - Ability to leverage both agencies' services.
- To provide a greater impact on training and service delivery, encourage LGBTQ+ agency participation in:
  - Task forces.
  - Victim service communities.
  - Large-scale trainings.




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## Implications - Child Welfare

- Understand child welfare policy and Article 74 regarding placements
- Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act
- Talk to the team (CFT's, Adoption/Licensing, DCS workers)
  - Strategize
  - Think prevention
  - Be honest!

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## Lessons Learned

- Ongoing process, especially with training new staff and team members on LGBTQ issues
- Often for minors or child welfare involved youth, each client's situation is addressed by level of safety, health and well-being
- Be honest about barriers with youth and young adults
- Make service providers aware of these risks of exploitation

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## Future Research

- Focus on pathways into sex trafficking for homeless young LGBTQ adults
- Explore the time order of LGBTQ homelessness and sex trafficking experiences
- Evaluate innovative treatments for LGBTQ youth who have been sex trafficked

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**THANK YOU. QUESTIONS?**

[www.sextraffickinghelp.com](http://www.sextraffickinghelp.com)

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