



SEX TRAFFICKING IN HAWAI'I PART III

*SEX TRAFFICKING
EXPERIENCES
ACROSS HAWAI'I*

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HAWAI'I ISLAND

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Sex Trafficking on Hawai‘i Island

This is the third study in a series of research studies exploring sex trafficking in Hawai‘i. The first study conducted in 2018 explored the scope of the online sex buyer market. The online buyer market was found to be robust with many thousands of sex buyers looking for sex online every day in Hawai‘i. The second study was completed in 2019 and explored the stories of 22 female sex trafficking survivors who were sex trafficked in Hawai‘i. The victims were from Oahu and Hawai‘i Island and were 77.3 percent Native Hawaiian. The survivors’ stories included their recruitment experiences, their violent victimizations by their families, traffickers, and customers, and the involvement of systems including law enforcement, medical services, and schools that did not identify or respond to their victimization.

This study aims to build on the first two studies with a large scale survey (the Youth Experiences Survey (YES) Hawai‘i) of sex trafficking experiences among clients at a large social service agency in Hawai‘i. During three months in 2019, 363 individuals on five Hawaiian Islands completed an eight page paper and pencil survey about their childhood and adult experiences including their sex trafficking victimization.

Hawai‘i Island

Of the full sample from five Hawaiian Islands (N =363), 89 (24.5%) participants from Hawai‘i Island completed the eight page YES Hawai‘i Survey. Of the 89 participants, 20 (22.5%) reported that they were a victim of sex trafficking.



Demographics:

- The sex trafficking victims were 15% (n =3) male and 85% (n =17) female.
- Thirty-five percent of the 20 sex trafficking victims identified as some Native Hawaiian. Forty-five percent identified as Caucasian, 45 percent identified as multiracial, five percent identified as Native Hawaiian and five percent identified as Pacific Islander.
- Fifty percent (n =10) of the sex trafficking victims identified as heterosexual and 50 percent (n =10) as LGBTQ.

Sex Trafficking Specific Information

- *Age of Victimization*
The age of first sex trafficking ranged from age 4 to 28 years old with an average of 19.2 years old.
Six (30%) of the sex trafficking victims were children (under age 18) when they were first sex trafficked. Of those sex trafficked as children, the average age was 8.8 years old

(ranging from age 4 to 16 years old). All of the child sex trafficking victims were female.

▪ **Reasons for Sex Trafficking**

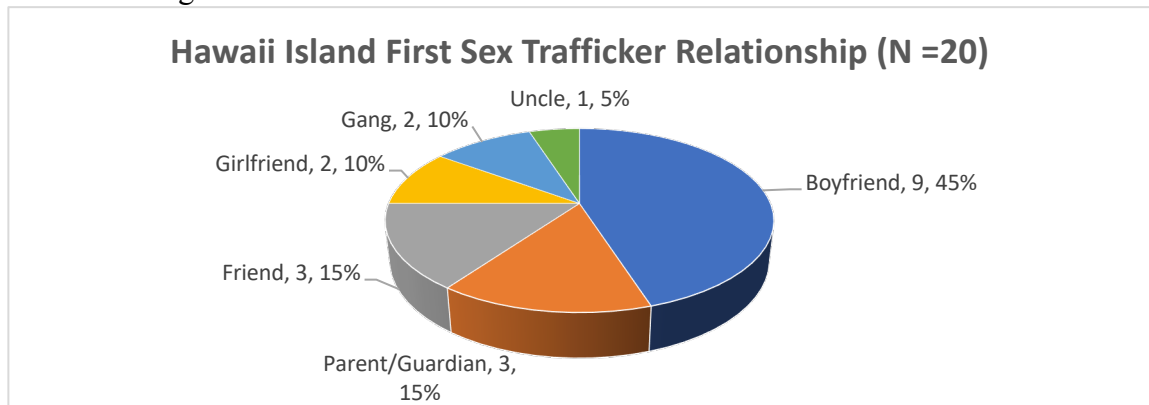
The sex trafficking victims identified as being forced to exchange sex for a reason (or reasons) including:



Fifty percent (n =10) of the sex trafficking victims in Hawai‘i Island reported that they had been sex trafficked for a place to stay.

▪ **Sex Traffickers**

In 100% of the sex trafficking cases in Hawai‘i Island, a sex trafficker was reported. The sex trafficking victims identified their first sex trafficker as:



Twenty percent (n =4) of the sex trafficking victims identified a family member as a sex trafficker. These included a mother, father, and an uncle. All of the four that were trafficked by a family member were children when they were first sex trafficked. The other two child sex trafficking victims were trafficked by a boyfriend and a friend.

▪ **Sex Trafficking Experiences**

- Four (20%) of the sex trafficking victims in Hawai‘i Island reported that they were forced to use drugs by their sex trafficker.
- Three (15%) of the sex trafficking victims in Hawai‘i Island were afraid to leave the sex trafficking situation because of a fear of violence or other threats of harm to them or their family.

- Four (20%) of the sex trafficking victims in Hawai‘i Island reported that they had a family member who had also experienced sex trafficking.
- Twenty percent (n =4) reported that technology was used in their sex trafficking situation, with 80 percent (n =16) reporting that they were sex trafficked without the use of technology.
- **Current Situation**
 - For 45 percent of the sex trafficking victims their current housing situation was precarious (shelter, couch surfing, transitional housing, and streets).
 - Ninety percent (n =18) have children.
 - Eight (40%) of the sex trafficking victims are currently involved with the Hawai‘i Child Welfare System.
 - Five (25%) of the sex trafficking victims reported that their children did not live with them- their children are in foster care. Seven (35%) reported their children live with their family.
 - As adults, 85 percent (n =17) of the sex trafficking victims reported being victims of domestic violence.
 - Eight (40%) of the sex trafficking victims in Hawai‘i Island reported that they had experienced negative contact with law enforcement.

Lifetime Experiences of the Sex Trafficking Victims

- *Housing and Homelessness*
 - Sixty-five percent (n =13) of the sex trafficking victims reported that they had also experienced homelessness.
 - ⇒ Their average age of first homelessness was between ages 7 and 28 (average of 19.4 years old).
 - ⇒ They reported an average of 5.8 homelessness experiences.
- *Childhood Experiences*
 - Twenty-five percent (n =5) of the sex trafficking victims reported having a parent in prison.
 - The sex trafficking victims reported an average of 5.9 adverse childhood experiences on the ACE survey.
 - Sixty-five percent (n =13) reported having observed domestic violence in their homes as children. Fifty-five percent (n =11) saw their father hit their mother, thirty percent (n = 6) saw their mother hit their father.
 - Seventy percent (n =14) of the sex trafficking victims reported experiencing childhood emotional abuse.
 - Fifty-five percent (n =11) of the sex trafficking victims reported experiencing physical abuse as a child.
 - Four (20%) of the sex trafficking victims reported that they had been placed in residential treatment as a youth.
 - Sexual Abuse
 - ⇒ Sexual abuse before the age of 12 was reported by 45 percent (n =9) of the sex trafficking victims.

- ⇒ Sexual abuse between the age of 12 to 17 years was reported by 50 percent (n = 10) of the sex trafficking victims.
- ⇒ Combining the two reported experiences of sexual abuse, 12 (60%) of the sex trafficking victims reported experiencing some sort of sexual abuse.
- Teen dating violence experiences was reported by 60% (n =12) of the sex trafficking victims.
- Child Welfare Involvement
 - ⇒ Thirty percent (n =6) of the sex trafficking victims reported having been in foster care.
- Juvenile Delinquency
 - ⇒ Twenty-five percent (n =5) of the sex trafficking victims reported that they had been involved in the juvenile justice system (detention/probation).
 - ⇒ Gang affiliation was identified by 15 percent (n =3) of the sex trafficking victims.
- *School issues*
 - The sex trafficking victims identified important issues and experiences when they were in school.

School Issue	N = 20 Sex Trafficking Victims	%
Academic difficulties	9	45%
Bullied in school	8	40%
Special education classes	7	35%
Expelled from school	3	15%

- *Family Issues*
 - Family issues reported by the sex trafficking victims included being kicked out of the house, living in an unsafe environment, having conflict with their parents, and their family was too poor to provide for their needs.

Family Issue	N = 20 Sex Trafficking Victims	%
Kicked out of the home	5	25%
Home was unsafe environment	3	15%
Family conflict/fighting with parents	3	15%
Kicked out due to using drugs	2	10%
Family too poor to provide for their needs	1	1%

- Eleven (55 percent) of the sex trafficking victims reported having run away as a child. Four (80%) of the six child sex trafficking victims had runaway as a child.
- *Drug Use*
 - Eighty percent (n =16) of the sex trafficking victims reported have used drugs.
 - First drug use was on average, 17.1 years old for the sex trafficking victims.

- Drug addiction was reported by eight (40%) of the sex trafficking victims and one (5%) sex trafficking victim reported addiction to alcohol.
- Drug use types by the sex trafficking victims included:
 - Marijuana (n =14, 70%)
 - Methamphetamines (n =10, 50%)
 - Vaping (n =9, 45%)
 - Heroin (n =1, 5%)
- Seven (75%) of the sex trafficking victims reported attending drug treatment.
- *Mental Health Issues*
 - Twelve (60%) of the sex trafficking victims reported having a mental health diagnosis, half (n =10) reported having more than one mental health diagnosis.
 - Mental health diagnoses included:
 - Anxiety (n =8, 40%)
 - Depression (n =7, 35%)
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (n =6, 30%)
 - Bipolar Disorder (n =4, 20%)
 - ADD/ADHD (n =3, 15%)
 - Schizophrenia (n =1, 5%)

Mental Health Challenge	N = 20 Sex Trafficking Victims	%
Self-harm	16	80%
Excessive alcohol use	8	40%
Risk taking behaviors	5	25%
Attempted suicide	5	25%
Burning self	1	5%

- Thirteen (65%) of the sex trafficking victims on Hawai‘i Island reported receiving treatment for their mental health diagnoses.

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