

The Virginia Anti-Violence Project (VAVP)

What is Slavery and Human Trafficking?

Sex Trafficking is “A crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological.”

Traffickers prey on people who are poor, vulnerable, living in unstable conditions, or are isolated from friends and family.

The most common targets in the U.S. are Alaskan/American Natives, LGBTQ+ people, undocumented migrants, runaway and unhoused youth, and low income individuals.

How does this affect LGBTQ+ people?

LGBTQ+ people fit several of the most affected demographics, often at once and intersecting.

Additionally, 40% of unhoused youth are LGBTQ+ (1.6 million). Unhoused LGBTQ+ people are much more likely to be forced to engage in survival sex (sex in exchange for food and shelter) than other groups. Engaging in survival sex can often be directly linked to an increased likelihood that the individual will become trapped within a sexual slavery or human trafficking operation.

Unhoused LGBTQ+ Youth are also less likely to have supportive familial or social circles, greatly decreasing the likelihood of someone raising an alarm over disappearances.

LGBTQ+ people are also less likely to seek law enforcement or legal aid, out of fear of outing, state-sanctioned or interpersonal violence and discrimination, and more. This fear is historically justified and often becomes even more relevant with QTPOC identified people.

LGBTQ+ Friendly Resources:

Safe Harbor Laws: these vary state by state, but in general ensure that victims will not be criminalized.

- National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline: 1-888-373-7888
- Polaris BeFree Textline: Text HELP to Befree (233733)

- Hub for following legislation and civic action against Sex Trafficking:
<https://polarisproject.org/take-action/>
- Working With HT Survivors: LGBTQ+ Communities:
<https://www.supporthtsurvivors.org/lgbtq>
- Services Empowering Rights of Victims (SERV)
 - Hotline: 1-866-295-SERV (7378)
 - <https://www.centerffs.org/serv/lgbtq-services>

Citations

<https://polarisproject.org/take-action/>

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/news/prevention-month-2020>

<https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking>

<https://www.out.com/news/2019/11/02/lgbtq-youth-increased-risk-human-trafficking-new-survey-says>

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LGBTQ-Sex-Trafficking.pdf>

<https://sdlgbtn.com/news/2010/02/09/sex-trafficking-hits-san-diegos-lgbt-youths>