

**OCTOBER 2017**

---

**INCIDENCE OF  
IDENTIFIED  
SEX  
TRAFFICKING  
VICTIMS IN  
ARIZONA:  
2015-2016**

---

**ASU Office of Sex Trafficking  
Intervention Research**

**Incidence of Identified Sex Trafficking Victims in Arizona: 2015 and 2016**

**October 2017**

**Authors**

**Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, Ph.D.**

**Kristen Bracy, MA, MSW**

**Kimberly Hogan, MA, MSW**

**Bandak Lul, MA**

**Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research**



Arizona Human  
Trafficking Council

The following organizations contributed to the development of this report and provided the data necessary to develop the 2015 and 2016 Incidence of Identified Sex Trafficking Victims in Arizona.

Arizona Department of Child Safety  
Arizona Department of Public Safety  
Arizona Juvenile Probation  
Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS)  
Arizona office: Department of Homeland Security  
ASU Ruth McGregor Project  
Bureau of Indian Affairs/Arizona  
Catholic Charities DIGNITY Program, Prostitution Diversion Program  
CODAC  
Community Bridges  
EMPACT/La Frontera  
Interdiction for the Protection of Children Team  
International Rescue Committee  
Maricopa County Adult Probation  
Mesa Police Department  
Mingus Mountain Academy  
Native American Connections  
OneNTen  
Our Family Services  
Phoenix 1st Step Drop-In Center  
Phoenix Dream Center: Hope Wing and Homeless Women's Program  
Phoenix Police Department  
Pinal County Family Resource Center  
Scottsdale Police Department  
Sojourner Center  
Southwest Network  
StreetlightUSA  
Tucson Gospel Rescue Mission  
Tucson Police Department  
Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development  
Yavapai County Prosecutor's Office

For inquiries or questions regarding this research, please contact Dominique Roe-Sepowitz:  
[Dominique.roe@asu.edu](mailto:Dominique.roe@asu.edu), 602-496-0093.

## **Introduction**

Human trafficking is a crime in the United States and as such, is hidden from plain sight making the estimation of the size of the problem complex and rife with error. Tremendous pressure has been placed on the human trafficking research community to provide an estimate of the sex trafficking victims in the United States. The desire to have an estimate is driven by the desire to align resources with the number of victims needing services, because of the illicit nature of the crime and a lack of a systematic reporting mechanism, establishing a reliable and valid estimate has been unobtainable.

## **Incidence**

A prevalence estimate is the proportion of sex trafficking cases in a population at a specific time whereas an incidence is the number of confirmed sex trafficking cases in a population during a given time period. This report is about the development of a static (fixed) incidence number not an incidence rate which would require knowing the size of the population that isn't impacted by sex trafficking. The purpose of this study is to create a community driven incidence number of sex trafficking victims upon which the Arizona anti-sex trafficking community can build response services. This incidence number was developed by active participation from 36 Arizona-based organization to be used as a benchmark to track changes over time in Arizona.

## **Sex Trafficking in Arizona**

Sex trafficking in Arizona appears to have significantly increased over the past 15 years but whether the increase is due to a true growth in the number of victims or is a result of increased awareness and law enforcement focus is not clear.

## **Challenges of Capturing the Scope of the Problem**

Determining the number of sex trafficking victims has been challenging in a number of ways, including detection and reporting issues:

- Some professionals serving clients who may be sex trafficked are not aware or may not have the skills to look for the indicators of sex trafficking when assessing their clients.
- Service providers or law enforcement may identify sex trafficking victims but that information is not collated into a larger database or reporting system.
- A limited number of screening tools for sex trafficking exist, and only a few are in use in Arizona that can lead to the detection of victims.
- Sex trafficking victims may not self-identify as victims due to their lack of understanding of the definition of sex trafficking and do not self-engage into services.
- Sex trafficking victims may hide their victimization, and because prostitution, which is inherent to sex trafficking, is illegal in nearly the entire United States
- Sex trafficking victims may fear arrest.
- Some sex trafficking victims are arrested for prostitution without inquiry about their victimization or in some instances they deny being sex trafficked.
- Victims of sex trafficking may be undocumented and fearful about coming forward.
- Multiple systems may have identified a person as a sex trafficking victim but due to confidentiality and significant data systems differences, list matching from the systems has been unsuccessful.

- There are limited mechanisms to share data among and between public systems (criminal justice, child welfare, juvenile justice, adult corrections) and private systems (medical and social service providers).

**Previous Research Findings**

Arizona State University Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research (ASU STIR) has conducted a series of studies in Arizona within specific agencies that serve persons who have been identified as being at high risk for sex trafficking. The purpose of these studies was to explore the size and service needs of the sex trafficking victim population served within the participating agencies. The following studies form the foundation of this incidence report. These studies demonstrate that sex trafficking victims do exist within a number of service systems (juvenile justice, adult probation, and young adult homeless/runaway services) and a victim count can be established.

<b>Research Project Partners</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of sex trafficking victims identified</b>
Arizona Office of the Court Juvenile Probation Therapeutic Providers	2014	161 minor victims
Arizona Youth Experiences Survey	2014	63 young adult victims (ages 18 to 25)
Maricopa County Adult Probation Officer	2015	165 adult victims
Arizona Office of the Court Juvenile Probation Officers	2015	271 minor victims
Arizona Youth Experiences Survey	2015	77 young adult victims (ages 18 to 25)
Arizona Youth Experiences Survey	2016	66 young adult victims (ages 18 to 25)
Maricopa County Adult Probation	2017 (forthcoming)	398 adult victims

**Participating Agencies and Data Collection**

In Arizona, currently there are two active federally funded human trafficking task forces (SAATURN and CAUSE) along with the City of Phoenix Human Trafficking Task Force, and the Governor’s Human Trafficking Council, working to increase awareness and services provided to victims of human trafficking. These task forces and councils are made up of dozens of members including service providers (medical, mental health, housing, drug and alcohol treatment, legal services, mentoring programs, homeless/runaway youth service providers, domestic violence programs), criminal justice partners (law enforcement, victim advocates, prosecutors, diversion program providers, public defenders, juvenile corrections/court, adult and juvenile probation), community groups (faith community, advocacy groups, prevention projects), and community members (researchers/academics, philanthropists, tourism, hotels, airport), and municipal partners (city staff, governor’s staff and statewide department heads, and county

representatives). These groups have actively participated in the awareness about sex trafficking in the Arizona community and many directly serve victims.

All direct service providers ( $N = 50$ ) that attend any of the above four groups who might serve sex trafficking victims in Arizona were surveyed to ask about the number of confirmed sex trafficking victims served by their agency during 2015 and 2016, with a delineation between victims under age 18 and victims over age 18. Seventy-two percent ( $n = 36$ ) responded via email. Six agencies reported that they had not identified any sex trafficked clients in 2015 and 2016. Also, because two systems do not currently collect this data, we used other research studies conducted in the time period (2015 and 2016) for those agencies' reported victim number. Questions about client overlap in each region was discussed with each agency and a number of cases were removed from the count when an overlap was identified. For example, some Dream Center clients also attended the Phoenix 1<sup>st</sup> Step pop up drop in center. Thus, they were only counted in the Dream Center victim number. Follow up emails were sent to encourage a response, and 36 service providers responded with data from 2015 and 2016. Service providers from some regions of the state including northern Arizona reported that they had not yet served a confirmed sex trafficking victim during 2015 and 2016. Other data included in the table includes results of research studies conducted by ASU STIR of systems that do not have a tracking protocol for sex trafficking victims (Maricopa County Adult Probation) or did not have a protocol during 2015 and 2016 (Arizona Office of the Court/ Arizona Juvenile Probation). Please note, a number of agencies only had data for 2016 only, such as the Arizona Department of Child Safety, due to the initiation of their sex trafficking victim data tracking system during 2016.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to consider when interpreting this incidence number. First, although we included every agency known to the task forces and working groups that serve victims, we acknowledge that all persons and agencies providing services to victims of sex trafficking may not have been included. We acknowledge that there are no medical service providers or school-based providers included in this report.

Duplication of cases is possible using this survey method and even our best attempts to un-duplicate and remove clients that may be counted twice (or more) from this incidence number, some duplication may exist.

The way that the data collected on sex trafficked victims within a system of services differed for two groups, Arizona Juvenile Probation and Maricopa County Adult Probation. For those two groups who during 2015 and 2016 did not systematically collect data on sex trafficking victimization of their clients, we used studies conducted by STIR where we asked a large group of probation officers how many sex trafficked clients they had at the time of the survey. Other agencies chose to use the number derived from the ASU STIR Youth Experiences Survey. This was a survey given directly to young adults who were identified as homeless or runaway in Arizona. These data collection methods may differ from the ways the other agencies derived their number of sex trafficked victims served.

This incidence number represents only areas including Pinal County, Pima County, Maricopa County, and Yavapai County. Some areas of Arizona do not currently have any services for victims of sex trafficking and no documented victims identified. Other areas in Arizona have become increasingly aware of how to identify and intervene with sex trafficking victims through receiving extensive trainings throughout the state and they may be able to provide victim data for the next iteration of this study.

**Table 1.** 2015 and 2016 Total Number of Human Trafficking Victims Served by 30 Arizona Agencies and Systems

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Minors (under age 18)</b>	<b>Adults</b>
Arizona Department of Child Safety (2016 data only)	11	0
Arizona Department of Public Safety Interdiction for the Protection of Children Team	13	0
Arizona Juvenile Probation (online survey)	271	0
Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS)	0	43
Arizona office: Department of Homeland Security	7	6
ASU Ruth McGregor Project	7	48
Bureau of Indian Affairs/Arizona	2	3
Catholic Charities DIGNITY Program (Diversion)	0	214
CODAC	16	31
Community Bridges	0	310
EMPACT/La Frontera	0	14
International Rescue Committee (all foreign-born)	0	28
Maricopa County Adult Probation (online survey)	0	398
Mesa Police Department	3	30
Mingus Mountain Academy	55	0
Native American Connections (YES 2016)	0	7
OneNTen (YES 2015 and 16)	0	15
Our Family Services (YES 2015 and 16)	0	50
Phoenix 1 <sup>st</sup> Step Drop-In Center	0	120
Phoenix Dream Center (Hope Wing and Homeless Women's Program)	0	135
Phoenix Police Department	28	104
Pinal County Family Resource Center	27	12
Scottsdale Police Department	4	8
Sojourner Center	1	47
Southwest Network	12	0
StreetlightUSA	86	0
Tucson Gospel Rescue Mission	0	7
Tucson Police Department	7	69
Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development (YES 2015/16)	9	71
Yavapai County Prosecutor's Office	1	7
<b>Total Served</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>1,777</b>

**Implications**

The purpose of this report is to establish a number of minor and adult sex trafficking victims served in Arizona during 2015 and 2016. The number of identified sex trafficked minors (under age 18) in Arizona for 2015 and 2016 was 560. The number of identified sex trafficked adults (over age 18) in Arizona for 2015 and 2016 was 1,777. To spread these numbers over time, a child sex trafficking victim is identified in Arizona nearly every single day, and two adult victims of sex trafficking are identified each day in Arizona.