



2022 Restructure Team Demographics Report

Background

In December of 2021, the Survivor Leadership Program Manager (SLPM) of the National Survivor Network (NSN) was hired, and inherited a strong values statement that had been drafted by prior staff after the NSN had suffered from lack of clarity about our values. One of the challenges that the NSN has experienced, and that is common in many anti-trafficking and nonprofit spaces, is a lack of representation of frequently marginalized voices in decision-making spaces. Majority rule can be used (and has often been used) to threaten and silence marginalized voices when we do not have clear values. One way to ensure our clarified values are created with that in mind is to have those values written by the very people who most frequently experience silencing and erasure or who are often left out of access to funds and power in our movement.

With this in mind, the SLPM convened a team of experts in public health, anti-violence, anti-racism organizing, immigrant justice initiatives, harm reduction, policy, direct services, and human trafficking to develop and finalize a values statement that will guide the NSN's policy and membership activities moving forward. ALL of these experts have lived experience that fits the federal definition of human trafficking, and are thus also survivors of trafficking. They come from a range of identities and experiences, and reflect the diversity and wisdom our movement could gain if it respected those voices that have traditionally been excluded.

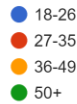
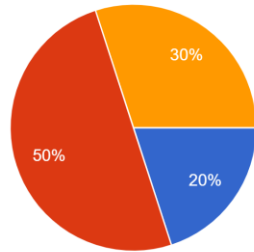
When these experts were invited to participate, some expressed concern that it would be challenging for them to express their authentic beliefs if they knew it would make them a target for harassment – a legitimate concern given the nature of online discussions and the anti-trafficking movement's history of racism and paternalism. In order to ensure authentic participation and free sharing of perspectives, and to create increased participation from those who typically do not feel safe in anti-trafficking spaces, we agreed to keep the identities of this team confidential. Members may self-identify if they choose, but neither NSN leadership nor other team members will disclose other members' identities.

We do, however, want to cultivate a spirit of transparency and accountability, especially given the ways this movement often marginalizes, talks over, or tokenizes survivors who come from oppressed communities. Two current staff members of Cast were on this team: the Survivor Leadership Program Manager and the Associate Director for Survivor Advocacy. All ten members of the team, including the two staff members, graciously shared information about our identities and experiences so that our membership, funders, and stakeholders can get a picture of whose perspectives and lived experience synthesized this strong and powerful statement.

Team Demographics

Age range (check one):

10 responses



Half of our restructure team is between the ages of 27-35. The remaining were split roughly equally between 18-26 and 36-49.

Three (30%) identified as female, two (20%) as male, one (10%) self-described as transmasculine, and four (40%) as nonbinary or agender.

80% identified as have an identity on the 2SLGBTQIA+ spectrum, and 40%

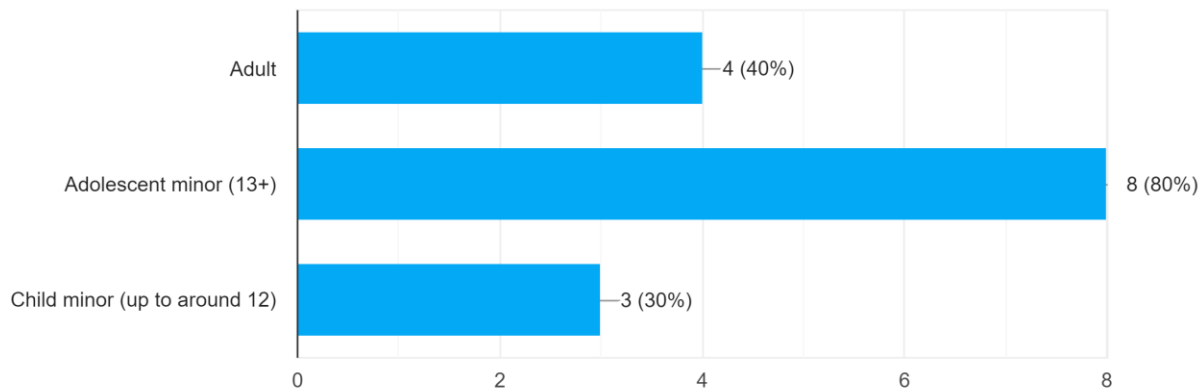
identified as transgender.

Only two (20%) members of the team identified as non-Hispanic white. Four (40%) identified as Black/African American, two (20%) as American/Alaska Native, two (20%) as Asian, and three (30%, which includes the two non-Hispanic white team members above) identified themselves as white. Three (30%) selected Hispanic. Members were able to choose more than one racial identification, although only one did. One team member responded that while they have Afro-Indigenous ancestry they are typically not perceived as Black, do not experience anti-Blackness in the same ways as others in the US, and thus did not check that box. Three (30%) indicated that they are immigrants and/or were trafficked as a non-citizen.

Team Trafficking Experiences

Ages of trafficking experience(s):

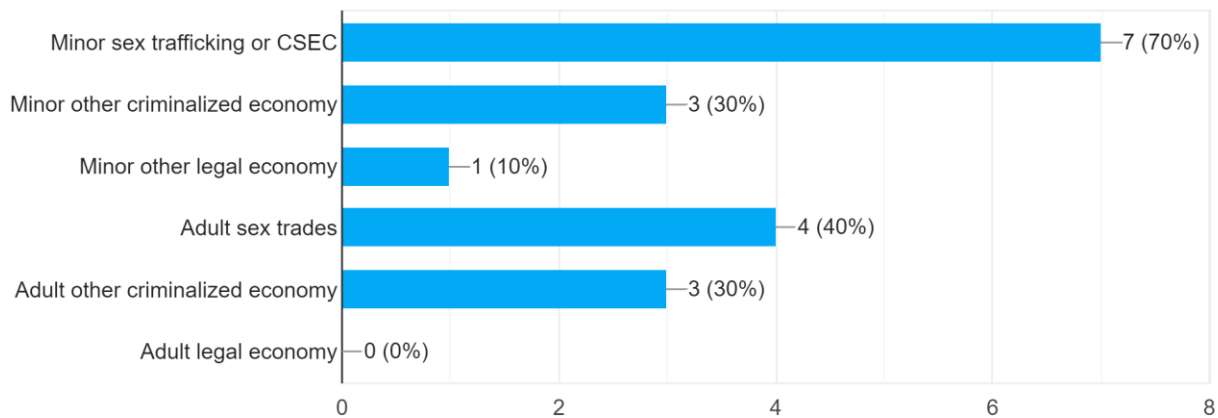
10 responses



Eight (80%) of our team members were trafficked as adolescents. Four (40%) were trafficked as adults and three (30%) were trafficked as children before the age of 13, which means many have experienced trafficking repeatedly at different points in their lives. For our definition of trafficking, we used the federal definition, which means force, fraud, or coercion was present, or that they were a minor in the sex trades.

Type of trafficking

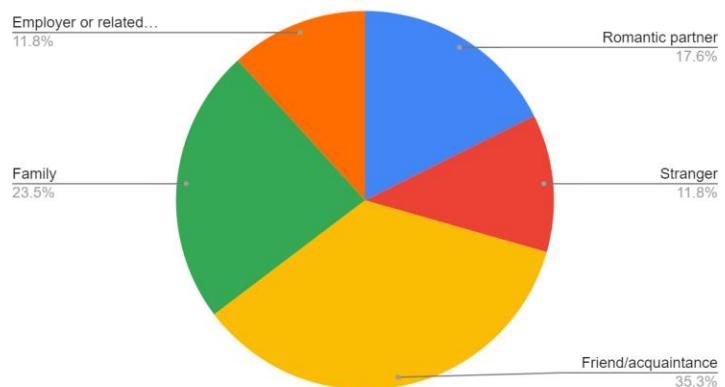
10 responses



The majority of our team members have experience of minor trafficking in the sex trades or commercial sexual exploitation of children (70%), and four (40%) were trafficked as adults in the sex trades. Four (40%) experienced trafficking in other forms of labor as minors, three of whom were in other criminalized economies. Three (30%) were trafficked as adults, all three in criminalized economies other than the sex trades. Out of the ten members, five (50%) indicated labor trafficking experiences, and nine (90%) had experienced sex trafficking. Four (40%) had experienced both sex and labor trafficking, but our survey did not inquire about whether these experiences were simultaneous or whether they'd been experienced at different points in their lives. Only one (10%) of our team members had experienced labor trafficking in a legal economy; this is the only area in which we would like to improve in future leadership working groups' representation.

Team members were able to check multiple options for their relationship with their traffickers. **Friend** was most common with six responses, followed by **Family** with four, and **Romantic partner** with three. **Employer** and **Stranger** came in least common, with two responses each. All of the respondents who had been trafficked in the sex trades indicated that they had also engaged in commercial sex consensually as adults at some point in their lives.

Relationship with trafficker(s):

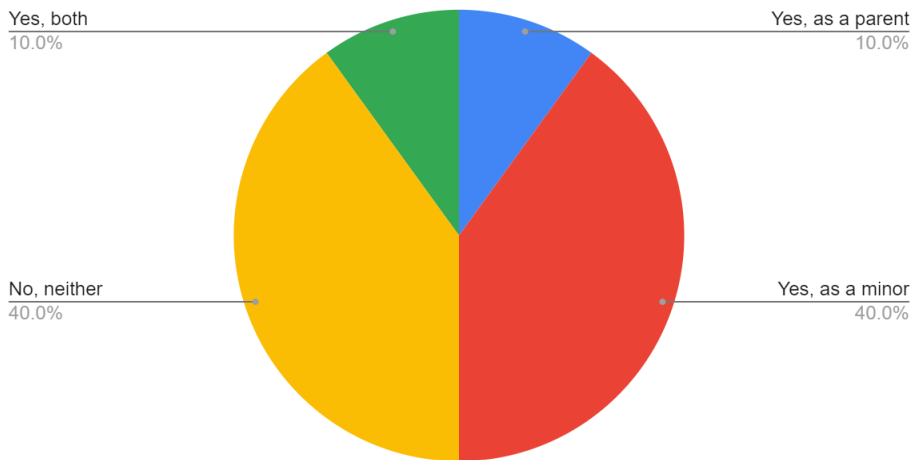


Three (30%) indicated that they were currently the primary caregiver for both children and adults, and two (20%) indicated being primary caregivers for children only. Half are not currently primary caregivers.

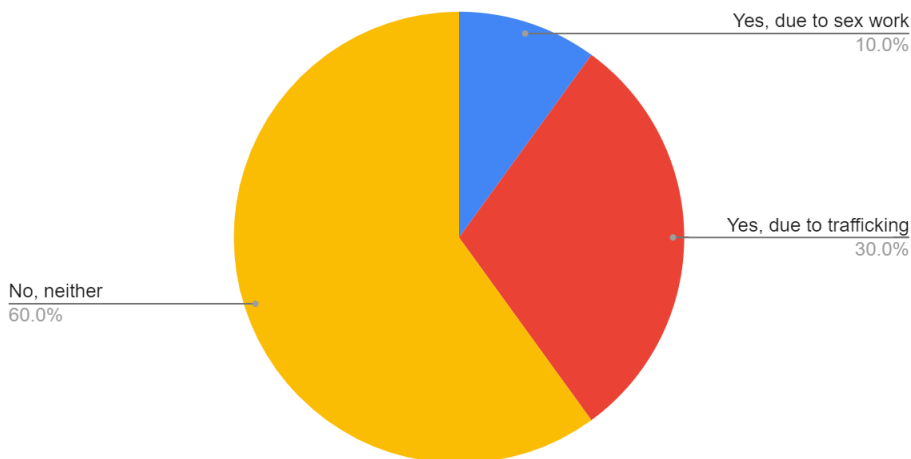
Team Experiences with Systems

Unsurprisingly, team members had diverse experiences with systems-involvement. Six (60%) indicated having been involved with Child Protective Services – one only as a parent, one both as a parent and as a minor, and four only as minors. One of our team members indicated that they have been involved in child custody court due to sex work, and three indicated that they'd been in child custody court due to their trafficking. While three (30%) had never been involved in either juvenile justice or criminal legal systems, seven (70%) had: three (30%) as minors, two (20%) as adults, and two (20%) both as minors and adults.

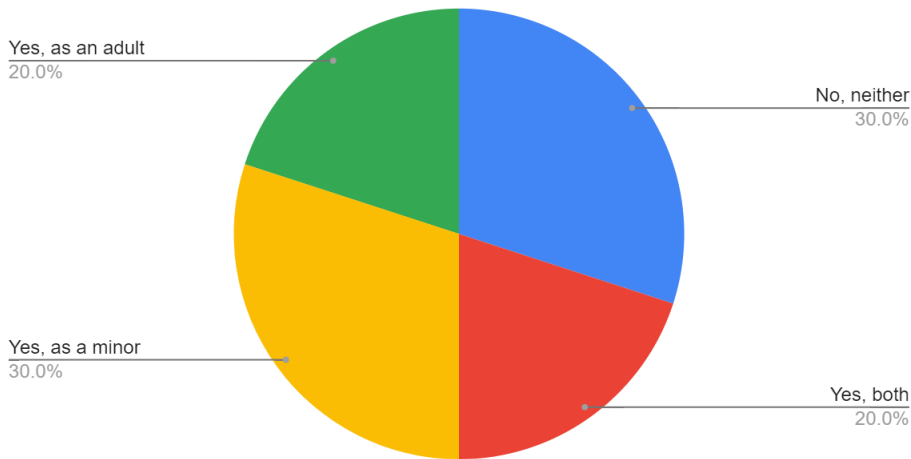
Have you or your children ever been involved in child protective services?



Have you or your children ever been involved in child custody court due to your trafficking or sex work?



Have you ever been impacted by the juvenile justice or criminal legal systems?

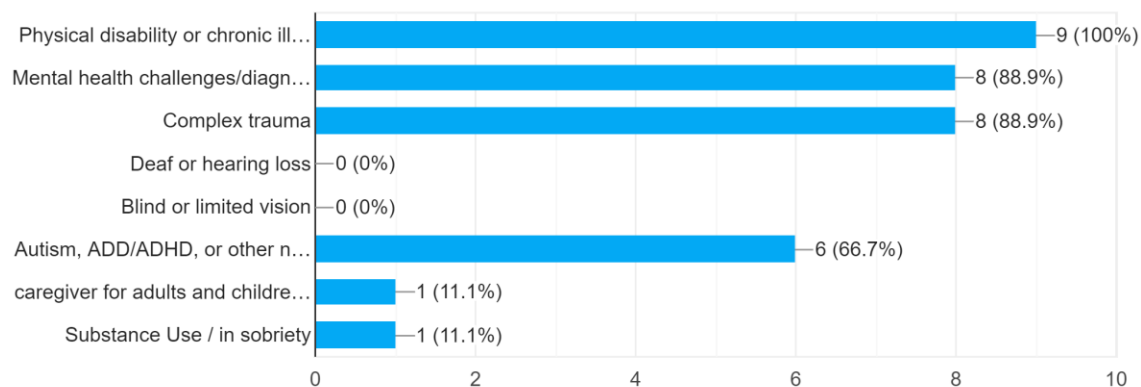


Other Team Demographics and Experiences

Nine (90%) of our team members experience chronic illness or have a physical disability, and eight (80%) reported mental health challenges/diagnosis or complex trauma (these were the same eight for both). Six (60%) identified as autistic, having ADD/ADHD, or otherwise being neurodivergent, and one (10%) indicated experiencing or being in recovery from a substance use disorder. Here we note that these demographic characteristics were developed collaboratively with the team, and we did have a thoughtful conversation about the way language used to describe someone's self-described struggle with substance use can be used in stigmatizing ways by others, and it could be that the demographic identification on this one data point is skewed due to lack of consensus on how to frame the spectrum of ways people use alcohol and/or other drugs.

Do you identify as having any of the below experiences?

9 responses



Four (40%) of our team do or have worked for government agencies, nine (90%) for nonprofit organizations, and eight (80%) in grassroots anti-oppression organizing spaces.

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to share about their identities or experiences, some of the comments included the following themes, which have been synthesized since multiple responses noted some of these experiences. These are not in an order representative of frequency/percentage experienced, but de-identified themes in random order that appear at least once.

- Being a child bride.
- Having engaged in survival sex.
- Being swept up in the foster-to-trafficking pipeline, or being trafficked through domestic servitude or CSEC while in foster care.
- Having extensive professional experience in other victim advocacy fields.
- Early childhood familial trafficking.
- Having sex trafficking and sex work experiences in a variety of settings, including in massage parlors, brothels, escort services, and street-based commercial sex.
- Experiencing forced recruiting and forced criminality.
- Living in the US while undocumented.
- Experiencing homelessness.
- Experiencing identity-based hate crimes.
- Experiencing domestic violence, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and other forms of violence.
- Multiple lifetime instances of being robbed or raped by law enforcement.
- Involuntary psychiatric holds while struggling with trauma.
- Having been held in solitary confinement for long periods (up to four months, in one instance).
- Having experienced anti-2SLGBTQIA+ “conversion therapy.”
- Having their exploiters’ children.
- Barriers to educational and employment opportunity due to language barriers.
- Experiencing multiple forms of literal torture.
- Experiencing CSEC while a toddler.

Reflections

This is not a “privileged” group of experts with lived experience. They are not “out of touch” with the needs of the most marginalized communities in our society. Each person on this team has fought for access to rooms where their lives (and the lives of people like them) are being decided, as well as for every success they've ever had. And each of them is beautiful, powerful, and brilliant. They reflect the wisdom the anti-trafficking movement *could choose* to tap into by committing to inclusivity, and yet they are not often invited to anti-trafficking tables. For at least two of our members, this was their first time being welcomed to any kind of movement leadership in the anti-trafficking movement (even though they are survivors and leaders in related movements), and our first meeting was met with tears from some due to powerful feelings of past invalidation and exclusion and repeated instances of violence they had previously experienced from the anti-trafficking movement. Members expressed

gratitude for an intentional space that honored their perspectives as survivors, without gatekeeping or shaming them. One survivor, a long-time anti-trafficking survivor leader, noted “this is the most diverse space I’ve ever been in as a survivor,” and added that while we talk about diversity a lot as a movement, we rarely see an entire team of decision-makers with lived experience of trafficking and marginalization working together, empowered to speak freely.

This is what we stand to gain as a movement, and as a network, when we let go of our need to adhere to the mainstream anti-trafficking narrative, and when we truly listen to all survivors, even the ones whose experiences don’t align with our historical framing of our work. This is revolutionary, and it shows in the visionary and aspirational values statement our team drafted. This is the future of the anti-human trafficking movement, and the National Survivor Network is both honored and challenged to be at the forefront of our movement’s evolution.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions about this report.

Warmly and in solidarity,

Chris

Chris Ash
Survivor Leadership Program Manager
National Survivor Network