

Prevalence Study of Human Trafficking in the City of Los Angeles



Human trafficking is the exploitation of human beings through force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of commercial sex or forced labor for the benefit of their traffickers. Within the United States, human trafficking has had a particularly dramatic impact on the state of California. California is particularly vulnerable to human trafficking because of factors such as large runaway and homeless youth populations, proximity to international borders, the number of ports and airports, a significant immigrant population, and a large economy including industries that attract forced labor and sex trafficking.¹ Although human trafficking victims are not traditionally homeless, the annual 2018 Homeless Count for Los Angeles County found that almost 1 in 10 homeless individuals reported to be sex or labor trafficked,² and a recent survey found that approximately one in five homeless youth in California has experienced some form trafficking, with 14% experiencing sex trafficking, 8% experiencing labor trafficking, and 3% experiencing forms of both.³ Unfortunately, studies aimed at understanding and reducing this form of exploitation are oftentimes underfunded or disregarded altogether.

The Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST), a statewide nonprofit that provides life-saving services to survivors of human trafficking, and the Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women (LACSW), an organization dedicated to advancing the general welfare of women and girls in the Los Angeles community, together, are requesting funds for a research study of the prevalence of human trafficking in the City of Los Angeles. A prevalence study focusing on all of the City of Los Angeles will cost approximately \$750,000 and last for approximately three years. Alternatively, a more limited prevalence study focusing on one of the fifteen Los Angeles City Council Districts, for example, would cost on average approximately \$50,000. Results of a smaller study could then be extrapolated and would aim to provide data beneficial to the remaining Council Districts and the City of Los Angeles as a whole.

Currently, there is limited research focusing on the prevalence of human trafficking in the City of Los Angeles. Furthermore, much of the data that is currently available is largely imprecise and not fully representative. Many local statistics are based on policing priorities, which can be misleading and reflect prioritization of investigating certain populations. Generally, prevalence studies in the past have suffered from inaccuracies and gross over estimations.

This study aims to offer comprehensive, robust research on the annual number of victims, the nature of the trafficking (sexual exploitation vs. labor exploitation), demographic breakdowns of victims, and concentrations of victims in particular geographic areas within Los Angeles. Specifically the study would collect the following data points: (1) age; (2) gender; (3) nationality; (4) type of trafficking; (5) length in trafficking; and (6) location of trafficking. This study will involve data mining of reported cases, accessing intake records from victim service providers, and selected locations for primary data collection. Collecting robust data on this information will assist both law enforcement and service providers in understanding the scope and severity of the human trafficking epidemic in the City of Los Angeles.

Cost estimates for a prevalence study for the City of Los Angeles can be modeled after two prevalence studies which occurred in San Diego County: 1) "Looking for a Hidden Population: Trafficking of Migrant Laborers in San Diego County," led by Dr. Sheldon Zhang, and 2) "The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County," led by Dr. Jamie Gates and Dr. Ami Carpenter. These studies, which focused on San Diego County, provide a helpful comparison when estimating the costs of this study. Dr. Zhang's study

¹ *What is Human Trafficking*, CALIFORNIANS AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, <http://www.caseact.org/learn/humantrafficking/>.

² These statistics from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority are not yet published.

³ *Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth*, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS, MODERN SLAVERY RESEARCH PROJECT, <https://nspn.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/NSPN/labor%20and%20sex%20trafficking%20among%20homeless%20youth.pdf>.

cost \$522,000 and lasted for three years. The study conducted by Dr. Carpenter and Dr. Gates lasted for two years and cost over \$400,000. Dr. Gates noted, “Estimating the number of victims in this clandestine activity has been profoundly difficult, time consuming and dependent on a wide range of partnerships and trusted relationships in our region that opened the door to the data we needed.” Dr. Zhang advised that covering both labor and sex trafficking in one study raises costs significantly, as these are different markets and require different sampling and field procedures.

As of the 2010 census, the population of San Diego County was approximately 3.1 million and the population of the City of Los Angeles was approximately 3.8 million. Based on the cost of prevalence studies conducted by Dr. Zhang, Dr. Gates, and Dr. Carpenter, and comparing the population between the two geographies, we conservatively estimate that an accurate, robust prevalence study focusing on both sex and labor trafficking within the City of Los Angeles would cost approximately \$750,000 and have a duration of three years. Alternatively, a study of one of the fifteen Los Angeles City Council Districts would conservatively cost on average approximately \$50,000 based on the most recent population statistics available on the website of the Los Angeles Controller. The table below breaks out how these estimates would approximately be allocated over a three-year duration.

Geographic Location	Year 1 Cost	Year 2 Cost	Year 3 Cost	Total
Council District 1	\$15,249	\$15,249	\$15,249	\$45,748
Council District 2	\$16,235	\$16,235	\$16,235	\$48,706
Council District 3	\$17,014	\$17,014	\$17,014	\$51,043
Council District 4	\$15,983	\$15,983	\$15,983	\$47,948
Council District 5	\$17,046	\$17,046	\$17,046	\$51,138
Council District 6	\$16,605	\$16,605	\$16,605	\$49,815
Council District 7	\$16,736	\$16,736	\$16,736	\$50,207
Council District 8	\$16,105	\$16,105	\$16,105	\$48,314
Council District 9	\$17,117	\$17,117	\$17,117	\$51,352
Council District 10	\$15,764	\$15,764	\$15,764	\$47,293
Council District 11	\$18,625	\$18,625	\$18,625	\$55,875
Council District 12	\$18,304	\$18,304	\$18,304	\$54,912
Council District 13	\$16,240	\$16,240	\$16,240	\$48,719
Council District 14	\$15,246	\$15,246	\$15,246	\$45,737
Council District 15	\$17,731	\$17,731	\$17,731	\$53,192
City of Los Angeles	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$750,000

As a result of a prevalence study, the City of Los Angeles will have a data informed, evidence-based estimate of the prevalence of human trafficking within its community. This study will provide valuable demographic information on trafficking victims, in order to help both law enforcement and service providers in strategically targeting their efforts. With funding allocation for this prevalence study, and the information that this research will provide, the community of Los Angeles can help make a dramatic difference and fight to end the pervasive evils of human trafficking.

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