Loyola Law School
Loyola Marymount University
Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative



HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVALENCE STUDY

OVERVIEW

California is one of the largest hubs for human trafficking in the United States, with Los Angeles identified as a major center for exploitation and abuse.[1] Despite this, the City and County have yet to invest in a comprehensive prevalence study, leaving the true scope of the problem poorly understood and limiting their ability to prevent trafficking or develop support services tailored to survivors' lived experiences. A comprehensive prevalence study would provide essential data to assess the scale and characteristics of human trafficking in Los Angeles, providing the foundation for data-driven policies and evidence-based solutions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PREVALENCE STUDY

California has never conducted a comprehensive prevalence study on human trafficking, leaving a significant gap in data that could inform effective policies and services. Los Angeles has the opportunity to lead this effort, serving as a model for the rest of the state to take action. Completing a comprehensive prevalence study will help Los Angeles-area officials combat trafficking and serve survivors by:

- Gathering data on the prevalence of human trafficking.
- Collecting demographic information on those affected, including data on gender, race, age, and the form of trafficking experienced, whether sex, labor, or both.
- Identifying specific industries that are the most impacted by trafficking, including trafficking by forced criminality.

EXISTING DATA & LIMITATIONS

One of the few existing data sources in Los Angeles County on the prevalence of human trafficking is the annual Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, conducted by the Los Angeles Housing Services Authority (LAHSA).[2]

The most recent findings highlight the importance of this data. In 2026, LAHSA estimates found that 26.4% of unsheltered adults in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care reported human trafficking experiences, representing approximately 11,727 individuals. This increased from 19.3% in 2024 and 21.7% in 2025 **(Table 1).** Similarly, estimates for the City of Los Angeles increased from 20% in 2024 to 26.4% in 2026 **(Table 2).** These findings show an increase in the estimated percentage of unsheltered adults reporting experiences of human trafficking from 2024 to 2026, raising important questions about the extent of trafficking across Los Angeles.

[1] California Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General, What Is Human Trafficking? https://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/what-is

[2] Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, 2024–2026, Demographic Briefs: Experiences of Human Trafficking and Sexual Abuse Among Persons Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.

Table 1: Estimated Human Trafficking Experiences Among Unsheltered Adults (2024–2026)
Source: LAHSA, Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count (See Appendix A)

LA Continuum of Care	2024	2025	2026
Estimated unsheltered adults	47,866	42,449	44,488
Estimated trafficking experiences	9,231	9,214	11,727
Estimated percentage	19.3%	21.7%	26.4%

Table 2: Human Trafficking in City of Los Angeles (2024–2026)
Source: LAHSA (See Appendix B)

	2024	2025	2026
% Reporting Human Trafficking	20.0%	21.2%	26.4%

LAHSA data also identify the types of work where individuals reported being exploited (Table 3). Construction and restaurant or catering work were among the most commonly reported, although the largest share fell under "other," suggesting that additional types of work may not be clearly captured in the data.

Table 3: Type of Forced Work (2019–2024)
Source: LAHSA, Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count

	2019	2020	2022	2023	2024
Sex Work Only	0	22	20	8	14
Sex Work in Combination with Other Types	30	2	0	4	6
Multiple Types (non sex work)	33	25	0	14	47
Agricultural work	46	55	49	19	42
Door-to-door sales	14	5	12	6	8
Household/childcare work	37	21	44	27	42
Panhandling	25	6	7	1	*NA*
Restaurant/catering work	38	48	60	39	53
Illegal goods sales	0	0	13	0	0
Construction	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	186
Other	384	228	425	264	268
Declined/Don't Know	19	30	63	56	43
No Response	1	0	0	0	0
Total	**627**	**442**	**693**	**438**	**709**

Forced Work Summary (2025)

Type of Forced Work	Yes
Sex	23
Agri	57
Sales	21
Restaurant	78
Household Work	88
Illegal	14
Construction	224
Other	406

IMPACT

Despite offering some insight into who may be at risk of trafficking, existing data remain limited and fail to capture the full scope of survivor experiences across Los Angeles. These LAHSA findings capture only those vulnerable to trafficking due to lack of housing and therefore do not represent the broader population affected. However, research demonstrates that vulnerability extends far beyond homelessness, including immigration status, LGBTQ+ identity, minority status, disability, and experiences of fleeing violence. These limitations highlight the urgent need for the City and County to conduct a comprehensive prevalence study to better identify, prevent, and address trafficking across all communities. Such a study would provide the detailed data needed to design and tailor prevention and support efforts by industry, age, gender, and location of exploitation, helping policymakers and service providers develop more targeted, survivor-informed strategies to address the full scope of trafficking in Los Angeles.

In turn, the Baseline data from such a study would enable Los Angeles to:

(1) Understand the scale and scope of trafficking.
(2) Create a data-driven plan for allocating resources to prevention, intervention, and survivor services.
(3) Strengthen collaboration between county agencies, community organizations, and survivor-led programs.

COST

By looking at the cost of comparable studies, such as *Looking for a Hidden Population: Trafficking of Migrant Laborers in San Diego County (2012* [3] *and The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County(2016),*[4] it is estimated that a county-wide prevalence study focusing on both sex and labor trafficking would cost approximately $1.5 million and take about 3 years to complete. These earlier studies were

[3] Sheldon X. Zhang, San Diego State University, Looking for a Hidden Population: Trafficking of Migrant Laborers in San Diego County, Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, November 2012. https://respect.international/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Looking-for-a-Hidden-Population-Trafficking-of-Migrant-Laborers-in-San-Diego-County.pdf

[4] Ami Carpenter and Jamie Gates, The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County, Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, January 2016. https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Sex-SD.pdf

$400,000 and 500,000 respectively, with San Diego's population in 2010 approximately 3 million. For the City of Los Angeles, the estimated cost would be approximately $1 million, with a similar 3-year timeline. The higher estimated cost for Los Angeles is based on its larger population and the fact that the study would capture data on both sex and labor trafficking rather than one form alone.

Geographic Location	Year 1 Cost	Year 2 Cost	Year 3 Cost	Total
District 1	$21,426	$21,426	$21,426	$64,277
District 2	$22,250	$22,250	$22,250	$66,749
District 3	$22,662	$22,662	$22,662	$67,985
District 4	$21,838	$21,838	$21,838	$65,513
District 5	$23,074	$23,074	$23,074	$69,221
District 6	$22,662	$22,662	$22,662	$67,985
District 7	$22,250	$22,250	$22,250	$66,749
District 8	$21,426	$21,426	$21,426	$64,277
District 9	$21,014	$21,014	$21,014	$63,041
District 10	$21,838	$21,838	$21,838	$65,513
District 11	$23,486	$23,486	$23,486	$70,457
District 12	$22,662	$22,662	$22,662	$67,985
District 13	$21,426	$21,426	$21,426	$64,277
District 14	$22,250	$22,250	$22,250	$66,749
District 15	$23,074	$23,074	$23,074	$69,221
Citywide Total	**$333,338**	**$333,338**	**$333,338**	**$999,999**

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive prevalence study represents more than just a research effort. It is an investment in prevention, systems change, and survivor-centered support. With accurate, localized data, Los Angeles can move from responding to individual cases toward addressing systemic patterns of exploitation. The findings would guide smarter funding decisions, strengthen cross-agency coordination, and ensure that both the City and County are equipped to protect those most at risk.

By committing to this effort, Los Angeles has the opportunity to lead the state in building an evidence-based and survivor-informed model for understanding and preventing human trafficking. This model could ultimately serve as a blueprint for California and beyond.

ABOUT SJI

The Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative ("SJI") is an evidence-based, community-informed think tank that intentionally fills gaps in human trafficking through an intersectional framework that fosters systemic change and progressive policy innovations.

SUNITA JAIN ANTI-TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE

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LOS ANGELES HOMELESS SERVICES AUTHORITY
LAHSA

Demographic Brief

Experiences of Human Trafficking and Sexual Abuse Among Persons Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care from the 2026 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count

Data Source (if applicable): 2026 Unsheltered Demographic Survey and PIT Count
Date completed: October 16, 2026
**If you have any questions or concerns please submit a ticket at https://lahsa.freshservice.com/support/home.*

Results

Table 1a. Experiences of Human Trafficking Among Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care,[a] 2026

Estimated Total Population				
Category of PEH [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
All Unsheltered Adults, 18+ years of age	44,488	43,206 – 45,770	5.8%	100.0%
Estimated Category Subpopulation of Adults, 18+ years of age				
Whether Reported Human Trafficking Experiences [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
No	32,761	30,200 – 35,321	15.6%	73.6%
Yes	11,727	9,245 – 14,209	42.3%	26.4%

Table 1b. Experiences of Human Trafficking Among Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, 2026

Estimated Total Population				
Category of PEH [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
All Unsheltered Adults, 18+ years of age	28,204	27,378 – 29,030	5.9%	100.0%
Estimated Category Subpopulation of Adults, 18+ years of age				
Whether Reported Human Trafficking Experiences [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
No	20,768	17,408 – 24,128	32.4%	73.6%
Yes	7,436	5,598 – 9,273	49.4%	26.4%

APPENDIX B

HUMAN TRAFFICKING SUMMARY

Table 1: Experience of Violence/Abuse Summary					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total Surveys	3,931	3,873	3,887	3,473	4,081
Any Experience of Human Trafficking	0	43	69	66	131
Other Experience of Violence (Excluding HT)	1,650	1,112	1,138	1,116	1,487
None/Decline/Don't Know	2,212	1,448	1,369	1,350	1,482
No Response/NA	69	1,270	1,311	941	981

Table 2: Type of Violence/Abuse Summary					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Any Experience of Human Trafficking (*Alone or with other violence*)	*NA*	43	69	66	131
Any Experience of Human Trafficking (*With other violence*)*	*NA*	41	62	64	125
Neglect by parent, guardian, or other relative	*NA*	31	34	37	65
Physical abuse by parent, guardian, or other relative	*NA*	34	31	36	60
Sexual abuse by parent, guardian, or other relative	*NA*	16	21	24	38
Physical abuse by intimate partner or spouse	*NA*	33	38	45	80
Sexual abuse by intimate partner or spouse	*NA*	24	26	24	56
Physical abuse by someone else while unsheltered	*NA*	31	43	47	86
Sexual abuse by someone else while unsheltered	*NA*	29	35	38	69
Dating violence	*NA*	30	37	50	73
Stalking	*NA*	34	44	54	96
Any Sexual Abuse	*NA*	36	46	46	88
*respondents are able to select multiple types of violence. Therefore responses are not mutually exclusive.					

Table 3: Gender of Respondents with Human Trafficking Experience*

	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Man (or boy, if child)	*NA*	11	23	28	60
Woman (or girl, if child)	*NA*	30	43	38	70
Transgender	*NA*	2	4	1	3
Non-Binary/Gender Non-Conforming/A gender that is not singularly 'Female' or 'Male'	*NA*	0	3	2	1
Different Identity	*NA*	0	0	0	0
Questioning	*NA*	0	0	0	0
Culturally Specific Identity (e.g. Two-Spirit)	*NA*	0	0	0	0
Declined/Don't Know	*NA*	1	0	0	0
*Respondents may identify with more than one gender and therefore may be recorded in multiple gender categories.					

Table 4: Race and Ethnicity of Respondents with Human Trafficking Experience*					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Indigenous	*NA*	3	7	4	11
Asian or Asian American	*NA*	4	4	0	5
Black, African American, or African	*NA*	14	21	18	34
Hispanic/Latina/e/o	*NA*	12	24	18	42
Middle Eastern or North African	*NA*	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*NA*	0	1	0	2
White	*NA*	15	24	26	42
Other	*NA*	2	5	7	10
Declined/Don't Know	*NA*	3	5	14	7
*Respondents may identify with more than one race/ethnicity and therefore may be recorded in multiple categories.					

Table 5: Sexual Orientation of Respondents with Human Trafficking Experience					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Straight	*NA*	26	48	49	106
Gay	*NA*	4	4	0	2
Lesbian	*NA*	1	0	0	3
Bisexual	*NA*	7	17	14	14
Unsure	*NA*	1	0	0	2
Other	*NA*	2	0	1	1
Declined/Don't Know	*NA*	2	0	2	3

Table 6: Age Group of Respondents with Human Trafficking Experience					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
25-34	*NA*	11	24	17	35
35-44	*NA*	17	20	15	45
45-54	*NA*	10	17	20	33
55-59	*NA*	4	3	3	10
60-61	*NA*	0	2	3	2
62-64	*NA*	1	0	5	1
65-69	*NA*	0	2	1	4
70-79	*NA*	0	0	2	1
80+	*NA*	0	1	0	0

FORCED WORK SUMMARY

Table 1: Experience of Forced Work Summary					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Total Surveys	3931	3873	3887	3473	4081
Forced to Work	627	442	693	438	709
No/Don't Know/Decline	3266	3299	3052	2881	3082
No Response/NA	38	132	142	154	290

Table 2: Type of Forced Work Summary					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Forced to Work	627	442	693	438	709
Sex Work Only	0	22	20	8	14
Sex Work in Combination with Other Types	30	2	0	4	6
Multiple Types (non sex work)	33	25	0	14	47
Agricultural work	46	55	49	19	42
Door-to-door sales	14	5	12	6	8
Household/childcare work	37	21	44	27	42
Panhandling	25	6	7	1	*NA*
Restaurant/catering work	38	48	60	39	53
Illegal goods sales	0	0	13	0	0
Construction	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	186
Other	384	228	425	264	268
Declined/Don't Know	19	30	63	56	43
No Response	1	0	0	0	0

Table 3: Gender of Respondents with Experience of Forced Work*					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Man (or boy, if child)	622	438	679	437	696
Woman (or girl, if child)	164	112	134	108	146
Transgender	13	18	21	8	12
Non-Binary/Gender Non-Conforming/A gender that is not singularly 'Female' or 'Male'	0	0	13	4	7
Different Identity	0	0	0	0	1
Questioning	0	0	2	0	1
Culturally Specific Identity (e.g. Two-Spirit)	0	0	0	0	2
Unknown/Declined	0	3	2	1	3

*Respondents may identify with more than one gender and therefore may be recorded in multiple gender categories.

Table 4: Race and Ethnicity of Respondents with Experience of Forced Work*					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Indigenous	0	19	46	33	43
Asian or Asian American	0	14	17	12	15
Black, African American, or African	0	139	229	114	180
Hispanic/Latina/e/o	0	150	255	175	296
Middle Eastern or North African	0	0	0	0	2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	1	3	3	3
White	244	140	198	145	213
Other	0	34	28	76	36
Declined/Don't Know	0	13	27	97	17
*Respondents may identify with more than one race/ethnicity and therefore may be recorded in multiple categories.					

Table 5: Sexual Orientation of Respondents with Experience of Forced Work*					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Straight	562	398	611	391	644
Gay	11	10	20	9	10
Lesbian	5	6	1	1	2
Bisexual	28	19	42	23	29
Unsure	7	2	12	3	7
Other	4	2	0	3	7
Declined/Don't Know	9	5	7	8	10

Table 6: Age Group of Respondents with Experience of Forced Work*					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
25-34	150	84	151	83	147
35-44	157	122	195	129	203
45-54	188	116	181	111	189
55-59	79	59	65	46	70
60-61	10	19	28	19	32
62-64	24	21	35	23	34
65-69	16	17	30	20	23
70-79	3	4	6	7	10
80+	NA	NA	2	NA	1

Table 6: SPA (Service Planning Area) of Respondents with Experience of Forced Work*					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
SPA 1	14	8	2	10	27
SPA 2	103	75	81	52	120
SPA 3	42	28	21	19	42
SPA 4	157	136	298	146	172
SPA 5	138	81	121	60	121
SPA 6	72	65	103	88	145
SPA 7	46	24	26	27	42
SPA 8	55	25	41	36	40
*The location reported is the location of where the survey is administered.					

Table 7: Details of Other Forced Work Category					
	2019	**2020**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Assistant	*NA*	2	2	2	6
Car, Auto, Bike Work	*NA*	17	38	21	35
Carework	*NA*	0	1	0	1
Cleaning And Maintenance	*NA*	6	17	13	19
Clothing	*NA*	1	2	2	5
Construction	*NA*	56	99	61	0
Cosmetology	*NA*	1	1	1	1
Delivery	*NA*	0	2	4	6
Electrician	*NA*	1	2	1	1
Field Work	*NA*	1	2	3	0
Food Services	*NA*	1	6	1	5
Gas Station	*NA*	2	2	2	2
Handywork	*NA*	4	6	7	1
Hotel Motel	*NA*	3	1	1	2
Labor	*NA*	24	33	19	24
Landscape	*NA*	2	13	8	5
Manufacturing	*NA*	2	9	3	1
Moving	*NA*	1	6	1	5
Office Work	*NA*	1	4	1	6
Painting	*NA*	2	5	2	3
Prison	*NA*	5	28	8	6
Recycling	*NA*	3	7	3	4
Sales	*NA*	11	11	8	15
Security	*NA*	5	7	6	10
Telemarketing	*NA*	6	2	4	2
Trucking	*NA*	2	7	0	5
Warehouse Work	*NA*	12	22	17	17
Other	*NA*	62	91	67	97

HUMAN TRAFFICKING SUMMARY (2025)

Response	Count	Percent
No	3,043	71.05%
Yes	843	19.68%
Missing / No response	397	9.27%
Total Respondent	4,283	

FORCED WORK SUMMARY (2025)

Type of Forced Work	Yes	No	Percent Yes
Sex	23	779	2.87
Agri	57	745	7.11
Sales	21	781	2.62
Restaurant	78	724	9.73
Household Work	88	714	10.97
Illegal	14	788	1.75
Construction	224	578	27.93
Other	406	396	50.62

LOS ANGELES HOMELESS SERVICES AUTHORITY
LAHSA

Admin Use Only

Ticket #: 234336
Analyst Initials: SMW
Unit: D&R

Demographic Brief

Experiences of Human Trafficking and Sexual Abuse Among Persons Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care from the 2024 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count

Request Date: April 22, 2024

Data Source (if applicable): 2024 Unsheltered Demographic Survey and PIT Count
Date completed: March 25, 2025
**If you have any questions or concerns please submit a ticket at https://lahsa.freshservice.com/support/home.*

Results

Table 1a. Experiences of Human Trafficking Among Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care,[a] 2024

Estimated Total Population				
Category of PEH [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
All Unsheltered Adults, 18+ years of age	47,866	46,273 – 49,459	6.7%	100.0%
Estimated Category Subpopulation of Adults, 18+ years of age				
Whether Reported Human Trafficking Experiences [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
No	38,635	33,694 – 43,575	25.6%	80.7%
Yes	9,231	5,619 – 12,843	78.3%	19.3%

Table 1b. Experiences of Human Trafficking Among Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, 2024

Estimated Total Population				
Category of PEH [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
All Unsheltered Adults, 18+ years of age	28,276	27,380 – 29,172	6.3%	100.0%
Estimated Category Subpopulation of Adults, 18+ years of age				
Whether Reported Human Trafficking Experiences [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
No	22,611	17,939 – 27,283	41.3%	80.0%
Yes	5,665	2,692 – 8,639	105.0%	20.0%

Table 2a. Experiences of Sexual Abuse Among Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care,[a] 2024

Estimated Total Population				
Category of PEH [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
All Unsheltered Adults, 18+ years of age	47,866	46,273 – 49,459	6.7%	100.0%
Estimated Category Subpopulation of Adults, 18+ years of age				
Whether Reported Sexual Abuse [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
No	39,916	33,396 – 46,436	32.7%	83.4%
Yes	7,950	4,752 – 11,148	80.5%	16.6%

Table 2b. Experiences of Sexual Abuse Among Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, 2024

Estimated Total Population				
Category of PEH [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
All Unsheltered Adults, 18+ years of age	28,276	27,380 – 29,172	6.3%	100.0%
Estimated Category Subpopulation of Adults, 18+ years of age				
Whether Reported Sexual Abuse [b]	Number	95% Confidence Interval	Relative Uncertainty[c]	Percent
No	23,425	17,230 – 29,621	52.9%	82.8%
Yes	4,851	2,229 – 7,472	108.1%	17.2%

Source. Demographic Survey and PIT Count facets of the 2023 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count.
Notes. [a] The LA CoC does not include the Pasadena, Glendale, and Long Beach CoCs.
[b] See Methodology for details.
[c] Generally, estimates with Relative Uncertainty < 65% can be interpreted confidently; estimates where 65% ≤ Relative Uncertainty < 130% may need to be interpreted cautiously; and estimates with Relative Uncertainty ≥ 130% are not reported because their uncertainty is too great for reliable interpretation.