



## Transportation and Human Trafficking: Recent Data

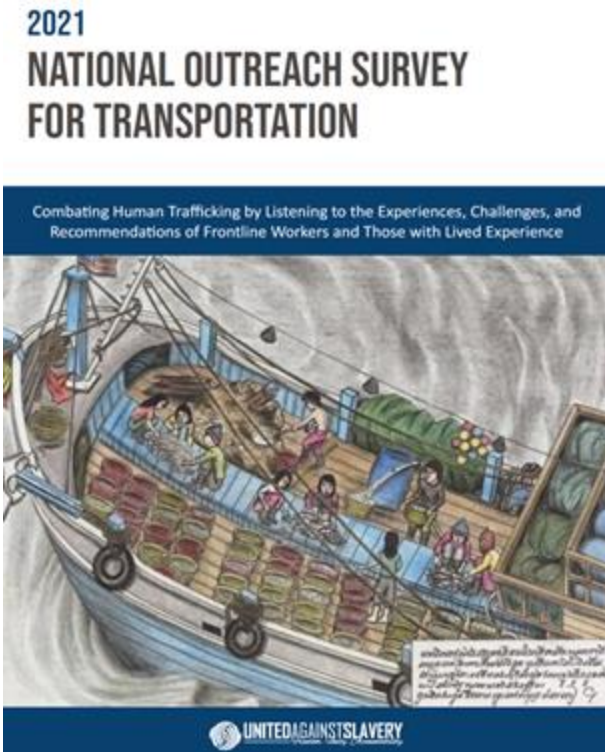
---

Kezban Yagci Sokat, PhD  
Christi Wigle

Safeguarding Travel: Transportation's Fight Against Human Trafficking Webinar  
April 30, 2025

# Disclaimer

---



Initial funding for the National Outreach Survey for Transportation (2021), was provided under the first-ever 2020 USDOT Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award, #27231. Additional funding was provided by the Morristown Airport, the Maryland Transportation Institute and the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (survivor compensation for participation in the NOST), Downtown Franklin Rotary Grant, United Against Slavery, and donations from Senior Leadership.

To access the NOST Report and supporting tools:  
<https://www.unitedagainstslavery.org/nost-2021>

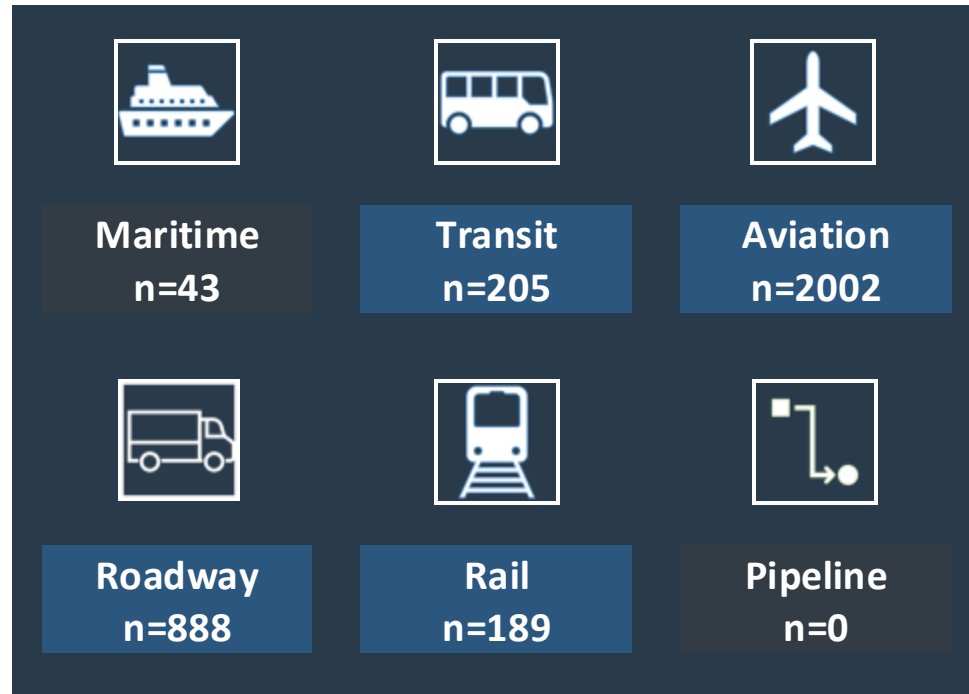
Detailed results from this presentation can be reached at Yagci Sokat et al. (2024a), Auguste et al. (2024), Wigle and Baglin (2023).

# National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

---

- United Against Slavery was the first-ever U.S. Department of Transportation Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award recipient
- NOST is a comprehensive survey primarily for multiple modes of transportation.
- The survey aimed to identify what is and is not working on the frontlines of counter-human trafficking efforts and document unresolved challenges and recommendations from
  - 1) transportation personnel
  - 2) victim service providers
  - 3) trafficking survivors, including men, women, LGBTQ+, children, Indigenous, and survivors with disabilities
- Remain survivor- and trauma-informed throughout the entire project

# Methodology: Considerations in Designing a Survey on Human Trafficking & the Transportation Sector



n=U.S. Respondents

Supporting role. Diverse geographies.  
Safety-oriented workforce. Frontline posts.

## Variables

- Exposure
- Understanding
- Authorities & HT Legislation
- Managing “The Ask” Observe, Identify, & Report
  - Current Protocols
  - Best Practices
- Risk Tolerance

# NOST Collaborative Research Model

---

**120+** Collaborators with 3,896 Participating Respondents

## Advisory

- Survivor Leader Advisory Council (SLAC)
- University Transportation Centers
- Lived Experience Experts
- Field Experts
- Academics

## Recruitment Methods

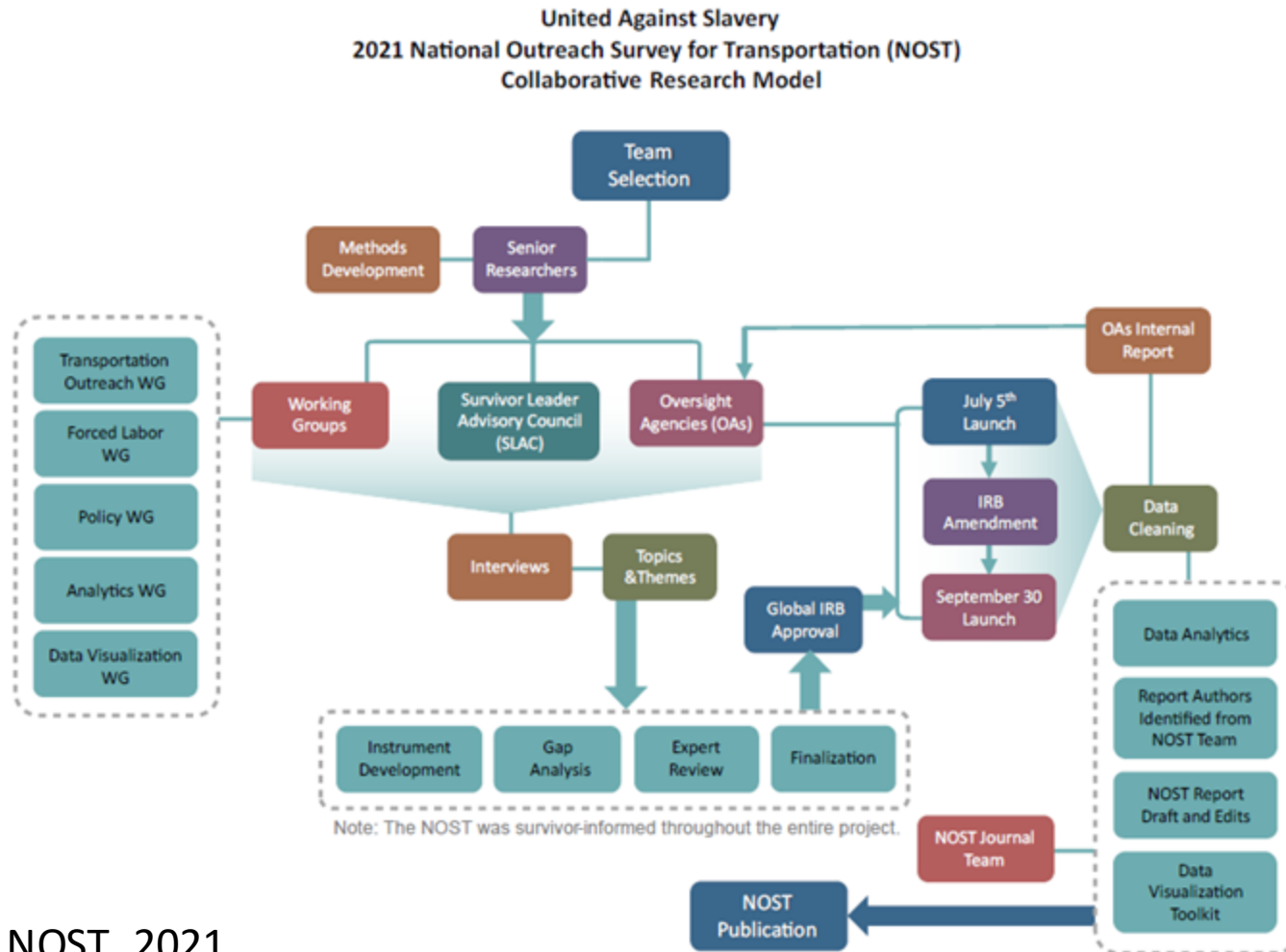
- Mixed Methods
- Advantages & Limitations

## Distribution Methods

- 54 agencies & organizations distributed the survey
- “Oversight Agencies” (OA) - An agency or organization that distributes the NOST to their employees, members, or contractors

Global IRB approval: May 2021

# NOST Collaborative Research Model



NOST, 2021

Closing the gap with  
data and collaboration

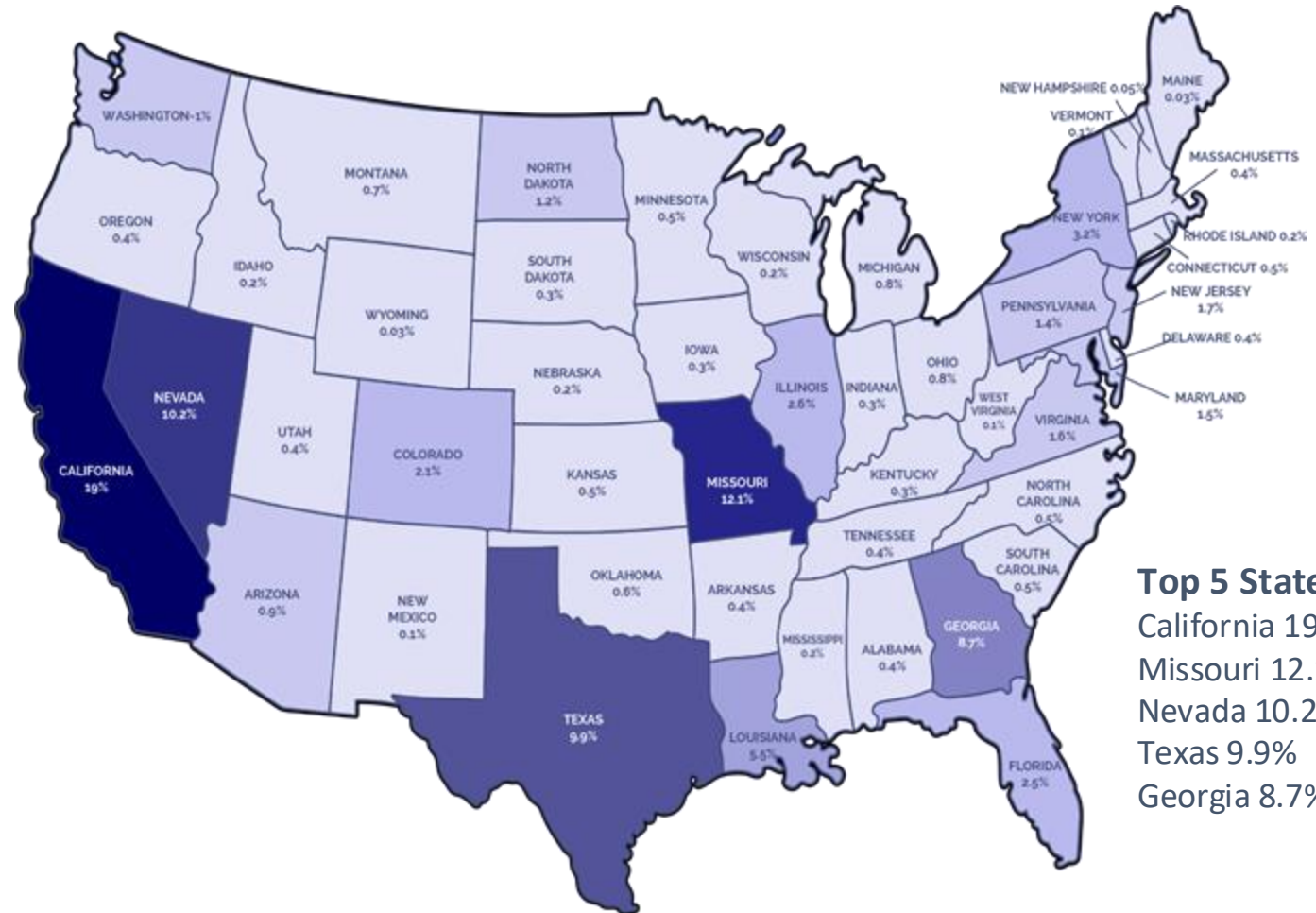
“It was an impressive cooperative effort. It brought together several individuals and institutions that might not have otherwise worked together.”

*Transportation Institute  
Working Group Member*

# NOST Demographics: 96% in the United States

## Missouri State DOT Feedback

“ We used the (data) slide to discuss the need for additional security including cameras at our rest stops and welcome centers. We are still in the funding stages, but this was helpful to bring the detail to the attention of our team.”



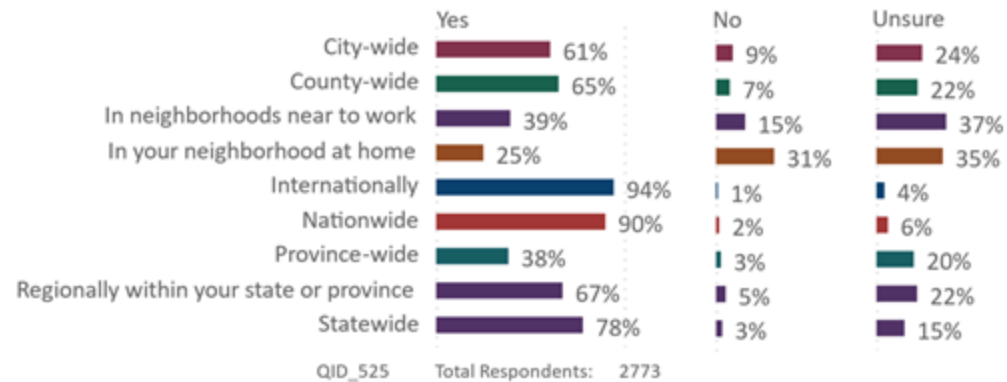
## Top 5 States Participating

California 19%  
Missouri 12.1%  
Nevada 10.2%  
Texas 9.9%  
Georgia 8.7%

# General Awareness about Human Trafficking

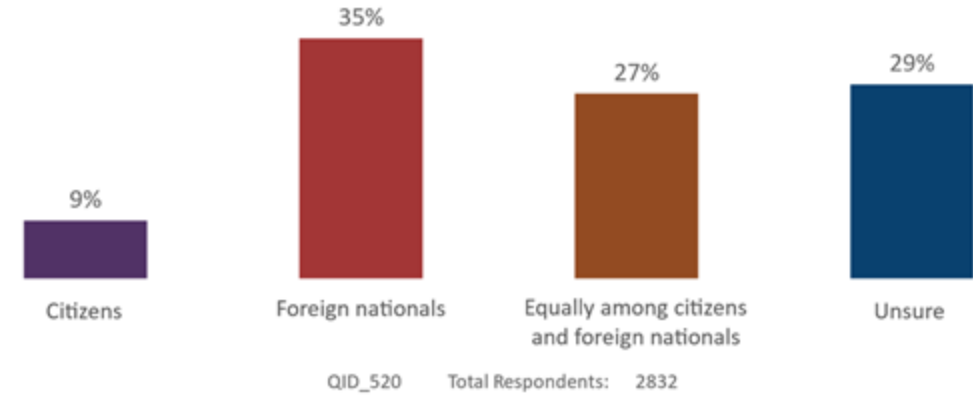
## Current Knowledge & Perceptions Can Prevent Identification

### Do you consider human trafficking a problem?



Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment.  
Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

### Which population do you think is trafficked more in your community?



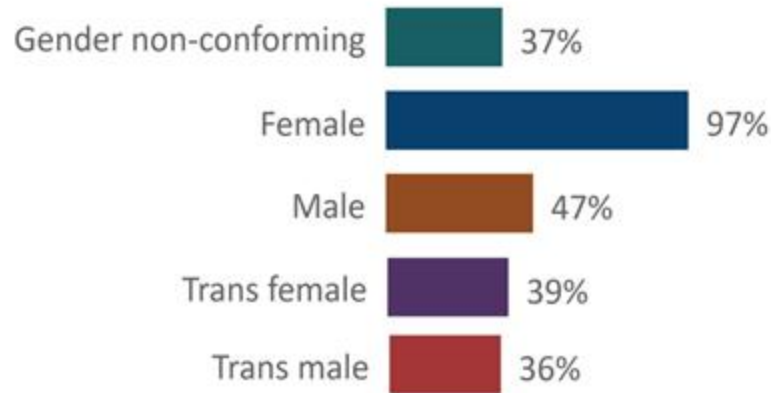
Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment.  
Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)



# General Awareness about Human Trafficking

## Current Knowledge & Perceptions Can Prevent Identification

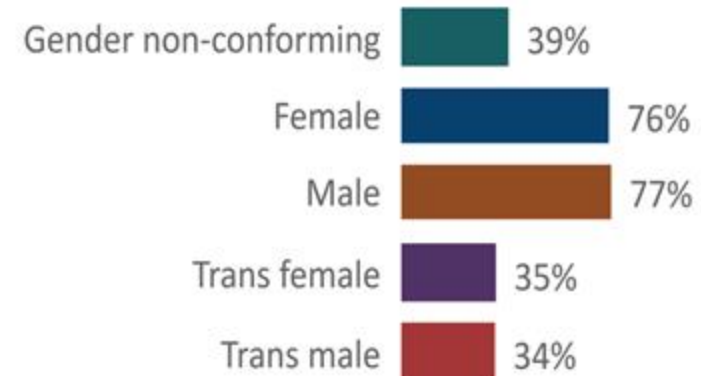
Which gender(s) is vulnerable to sex trafficking?  
Select all that apply.



QID\_521 Total Respondents: 2123

Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment.  
Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

Which gender(s) is vulnerable to labor trafficking?  
Select all that apply.












QID\_522 Total Respondents: 1948

Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment.  
Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

# Training Areas

Would you like to receive human trafficking training in the following areas? Select all that apply.

	 Aviation	 Roadway	 Railway	 Maritime	 Transit	 Law Enforcement	 Service Provider	 Academia	 Other Support Industry
How to identify human trafficking victims	84%	85%	88%	94%	83%	88%	53%	89%	97%
Human trafficking indicators	80%	81%	90%	76%	75%	90%	47%	74%	94%
Human trafficking laws	55%	48%	82%	71%	54%	77%	71%	54%	50%
Indigenous and tribal issues in human trafficking	44%	40%	58%	41%	38%	52%	100%	37%	63%
Learn about labor trafficking	60%	61%	76%	76%	64%	72%	53%	51%	63%
Learn about sex trafficking	60%	61%	77%	71%	63%	73%	47%	54%	63%
Living and working conditions considered abusive	50%	54%	55%	59%	61%	52%	59%	54%	47%
Misconceptions of human trafficking	58%	63%	71%	65%	67%	66%	59%	51%	78%
Protocols on reporting alleged human trafficking	71%	69%	77%	88%	67%	73%	65%	71%	91%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>1650</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>185*</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>

QID\_162 by Group Total Respondents: 3137\*

Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment. \*The total number of respondents equals 3137; however, 185 Amtrak PD respondents are listed under Railway and in Law Enforcement.

Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

# Reporting



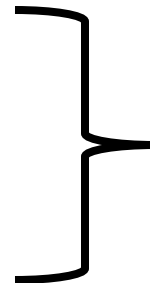
**In your current profession, how many times have you reported potential signs of human trafficking?**

**85%** Have never reported signs of human trafficking

Note: Statistics include multi-mode responses and may not represent any larger population segment. Additional responses include the number of times reporting signs of human trafficking while at work: 1 to 2 (10%), 3 to 4 (3%), 5 to 6 (1%), 7 to 8 (0.3%), 9 to 10 (0.1%), 11+ (0.7%).

Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

Aviation 99%  
Roadway 97%  
Transit 92%  
State DOT 99%  
Law Enforcement 62%



**Have never reported signs of human trafficking**

\* Does not include a complete list of survey respondents who answered this question

NOST, 2021

# Misidentification Concerns & Internal Policies

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Do you have concerns about misidentifying signs of human trafficking in your work environment? (QID_198)	48%	30%	3,551
Would those concerns about misidentification prevent you from reporting signs of human trafficking? (QID_200)	26%	39%	1,666

What concerns do you have about misidentifying signs of human trafficking? Select all that apply.

QID\_199, n=1626

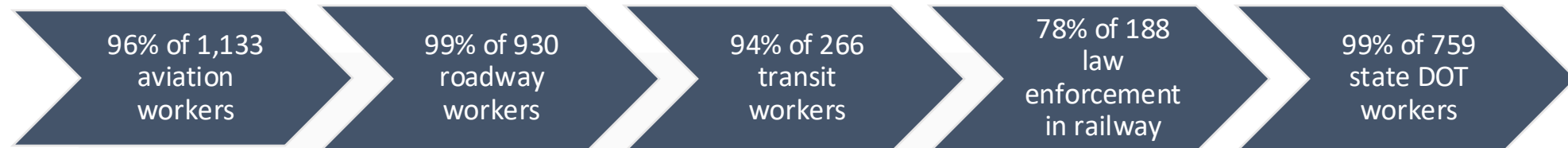
- Being ignored in the future 37%
- Embarrassing the passenger/customer 80%
- Getting reprimanded by my supervisor 33%
- Getting sued by the accused 60%
- Media coverage identifying me 34%

# Compare Responses Between Groups



In your current professional role, have you been approached by someone seeking help to escape an abuser?

## Most Respondents Said No



NOST, 2021

# Survivors of Labor and/or Sex Trafficking

---

Survivors said during recruitment, **46% of 127** human trafficking survivors were promised a transportation ticket if they wanted to leave; **57%** wanted to leave but were not provided with transportation to exit

**32% of 95** trafficking survivors never saw human trafficking awareness information in a bathroom, and **23%** said they rarely saw the same information; **65% of 158** said they never saw a hotline posted during their exploitation

**67% of 155** trafficking survivors said they were relocated; **56% of 94** said that an online booking website was used

# Survivors of Labor and/or Sex Trafficking

**SURVIVOR PROVIDED QUESTION: Which transportation method was used within a country? Select all that apply.**

**Respondents: Survivors**  
**Total Respondents: 159**  
**QID\_49**

“Unsure” -- a follow-up question was not asked to verify if they were unsure of any transportation method used or if they were unsure of all the transportation methods used

	During Recruitment	During Exploitation	During Extraction / Escape	Total Respondents
Aviation	32%	16%	13%	43
Roadway	10%	17%	5%	33
Railway	6%	9%	2%	16
Transit	40%	44%	30%	101
Maritime	16%	17%	11%	42
Vehicles	26%	31%	15%	64
Other	16%	19%	9%	42
Unsure*	33%	42%	16%	97

Note: Statistics include responses from respondents in multi modes and may not represent any larger population segment.  
 \* A follow-up question was not asked if they were unsure of the transportation methods used during each phase or if they didn't remember all transportation methods used in each phase  
 Source: United Against Slavery 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation (NOST)

NOST, 2021

# NOST Results: Victim Service Providers (VSPs)

---

**52% of 41** VSPs had to turn away a client due to a lack of resources, **37%** said more than once

**91% of 33** VSPs said there should be a website to connect donors with nonprofit organizations

**60% of 40** VSPs indicated it is difficult to obtain transportation services for clients in their area



# Where Do We Go From Here with the NOST Frontline Worker Data

---

## Lived Experience Experts

- Ensure the development and implementation of projects are survivor-informed among a diverse population of Lived Experience Experts
- Compensate Lived Experience Experts at the same rate as other subject matter experts

## Collaboration

- Seek funding for staffing to develop an online repository of multi-modal tools & resources accessible by the transportation industry, encouraging collaboration to share existing tools, to reduce duplication of efforts
- Review existing collaboration among federal agencies to strengthen bilateral communication (QID\_122, 183, 241, 255)

## Recommendations & Challenges

- Encourage data-driven decisions to be made in all modes of transportation to improve counter-trafficking efforts
- NGOs to recommend legislation to hold all modes of transportation accountable for enabling and/or transporting victims of human trafficking (e.g., FMCSA rules) (QID\_108 – slide 50)

# Questions

---

**THANK YOU!**

For inquiries, please feel free to contact at [kezban.yagcisokat@sjsu.edu](mailto:kezban.yagcisokat@sjsu.edu)

Christi Wigle, [christi@unitedagainstslavery.org](mailto:christi@unitedagainstslavery.org)

[www.UnitedAgainstSlavery.org](http://www.UnitedAgainstSlavery.org)

Access the full NOST Report by clicking on this QR Code:



# References

---

- Wigle, C., & Baglin, C. (Eds.). (2023). National Outreach Survey for Transportation: Combating Human Trafficking by Listening to Experiences, Challenges, and Recommendations of Frontline Workers and Those with Lived Experience (2021). United Against Slavery. [<https://files.unitedagainstslavery.org/s/d/NOST-2021-Final-Report>]

# References

---

Findings from the NOST study are published in multiple journals:

- Auguste, M., Yagci Sokat, K., Wigle, C., Baglin, C. “Reporting on Human Trafficking Crimes: A National Transportation Survey” *Journal of Transportation Security*, 17, 7 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12198-024-00277-5>
- Yagci Sokat, K., Chi, M\*., Hudlow, J. “Transit Monitoring Capacity Expansion: Analytics for Combatting Human Trafficking” *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 24, 101032 (\*student author) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590198224000186>
- Yagci Sokat, K., Auguste, M., Wigle, C., Baglin, C. (2024) “Forced Labor and Transportation: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives” *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 23C, 100999 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590198223002464>