# An Assessment of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska


**Completed by:**
Teresa C. Kulig, Ph.D.
Sadaf Hashimi, Ph.D.
Valeria Torres-Rivera, M.S.
Kaitlyn Swanberg, M.A.
Morgan Goslar, M.A.

SCHOOL OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

# An Assessment of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska

## *June 2025*


Teresa C. Kulig, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Co-Director, Victimology and Victim Studies Research Lab
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Email: tkulig@unomaha.edu

Sadaf Hashimi, Ph.D.
Co-Principal Investigator
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Co-Director, Violence and Intervention Policing Research Lab
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Email: shashimi@unomaha.edu

Valeria Torres-Rivera, M.S.
Graduate Research Assistant
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Email: vtorres-rivera@unomaha.edu

Kaitlyn Swanberg, M.A.
Graduate Research Assistant
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Email: kswanberg@unomaha.edu

Morgan Goslar, M.A.
Graduate Research Assistant
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Email: mgoslar@unomaha.edu



This project was supported by The Howard G. Buffett Foundation and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Graphic Design by Tara Grell
Public Communications and Creative Coordinator
Center for Public Affairs Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha




## Funding


This project was supported by funding from The Howard G. Buffett Foundation and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors.


## Acknowledgments


The authors extend their sincere gratitude to the survivor who contributed to this study and the many stakeholders and service providers whose time, insights, and experiences made this work possible. Their support, effort, and responses provided the foundation for the data and analysis presented in this report.

We are especially grateful to Glen Th. Parks for his unwavering support that made this project possible, and to Brent Bockstadter, Anna Brewer, and Joe Jeanette for sharing their time, expertise, and ongoing commitment to this assessment. We also wish to acknowledge the many other Advisory Board members who contributed significantly to this work but preferred not to be individually named. This project was substantially improved based on their collective feedback and guidance.

Lastly, we would like to express our appreciation to Sam Robertson, Jane Anderson, and Amy Fleischauer at The Howard G. Buffett Foundation for their oversight, comments, and support of the project.


## Citation


Kulig, T. C., Hashimi, S., Torres-Rivera, V., Swanberg, K., & Goslar, M. (2025). *An assessment of labor trafficking in Nebraska.* University of Nebraska at Omaha.

# Table of Contents

# Executive Summary

## Background

Labor trafficking victimization is a public health concern that requires a coordinated societal response to guide victim[1] services and support, ensure offender accountability, and promote broader community safety (Greenbaum, 2020). In order to implement effective prevention and intervention strategies, we need to deepen our understanding of the pathways that lead to labor trafficking—a crime for which the nature and scope remain largely unknown (Dank et al., 2021; Franchino-Olsen et al., 2022; Zhang, 2012b). To address these gaps, the current study conducted an assessment of labor trafficking in Nebraska, where knowledge about these events is elusive.

## Method and Research Questions

This multi-phased study was conducted over a two-year period (July 2023 – June 2025). Data used to inform the conclusions of this report came from three sources: (1) a literature review on labor trafficking, (2) a survey, and (3) interviews. The purpose of the literature review was to understand the scope of research on labor trafficking and to inform the creation of interview and survey instruments. The survey was administered to a database of nearly 15,000 stakeholder and service provider contacts across Nebraska in diverse sectors (e.g., law enforcement, legal clinics, transportation services, mental health providers, medical services). Responses from the survey were used to identify professionals in the field who have worked on labor trafficking cases or with survivors in Nebraska. Once identified, interested respondents with experience were contacted about scheduling an online interview. A survivor information sheet was also provided to respondents who requested these details to share with survivors in their network. Survivors interested in sharing their experiences had to reach out to the research team directly to schedule an interview in their preferred format and language.

This study was guided by three **research objectives**:

1. What is the nature of labor trafficking in Nebraska?
2. What are the challenges of law enforcement and legal actors when investigating labor trafficking?
3. What are the challenges of service providers when responding to labor trafficking survivors?

## Summary of Findings

A total of 582 valid **recruitment survey** responses were received from stakeholders and service providers. Of these, *170 respondents had experience with labor trafficking cases or working with survivors in Nebraska*. These respondents generally worked with fewer than five cases or survivors and predominantly interacted with adults, children, and foreign-born individuals. Survivors were noted as experiencing trafficking in domestic work, restaurants or food service, agriculture, housekeeping/cleaning services, factories, construction, and hospitality industries. Traffickers were noted as using threats, false promises, financial harm, legal documentation, and physical means to control victims.

**Interviews** were completed with *26 stakeholders and service providers*, in addition to *one survivor* of labor trafficking. The stakeholders and service providers represented community service providers, law enforcement agencies, immigration and refugee support organizations, state government, and legal organizations. On average, the respondents were in their current position for approximately 6 years, with a range from 1 to 17 years. Most of the respondents reported between one and five years of experience with labor trafficking. Themes from interviews were organized by the three research objectives, with key takeaways summarized below:

[1] The terms "victim" and "survivor" are used interchangeably throughout this report in recognition that not all individuals who experience these harms use a single term (e.g., Cullen et al., 2023; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).



### Research Objective #1
**Nature of Labor Trafficking**

- Survivors were often described as Hispanic or Latino, foreign-born, and adults or children
- Venues included domestic work, food service, farms, cleaning industry, factories, and construction
- Vulnerabilities of survivors included a lack of documentation, prior experiences of abuse, and language barriers
- Traffickers were generally known to the victim
- Survivors were hesitant to report due to fears of retaliation, fears of deportation, and mistrust of police
- Many survivors did not recognize their victimization
- Pathways to exit included help from community members and providers

### Research Objective #2
**Investigations**

- Only some respondents were involved in investigations
- Tips came from formal reporting systems and survivors working with community providers
- Police also recognized risk markers in the field during regular duties
- Challenges included inconsistent coordination, outdated protocols, unclear referral pathways, lack of standardized procedures, limited information at time of contact, survivors' fear and mistrust of police, language barriers, and inadequate cultural responsiveness
- Building rapport with survivors, rapid responses, and training combined with peer mentoring supported investigative efforts

### Research Objective #3
**Service Provision**

- Most respondents provided services or made referrals
- Common needs of survivors involved housing, legal, mental health, translation, employment, and basic necessities
- Challenges included limited agency resources and coordination, inadequate training, lack of transportation, cultural and linguistic barriers, building trust with survivors, and legal considerations
- Barriers were exacerbated in rural areas with limited resources
- Maintaining regular contact with survivors, expanding support networks to enable more efficient coordination, and formalizing training protocols within agencies helped overcome challenges

## Recommendations by Actionable Item

A key purpose of the current project was to inform actionable items associated with each of the three research objectives. These actionable items sought to deepen our understanding of labor trafficking in Nebraska and identify paths forward when responding to these crimes and supporting survivors. Separate recommendations are provided below, with details for a coordinated response through a **Center on Labor Trafficking (CLT)** presented in the report:

### Actionable Item #1
**Inform Identification and Education Campaigns**

1. Prioritize labor trafficking in community campaigns
2. Integrate screening tools for practitioners
3. Share information with at-risk populations

### Actionable Item #2
**Responses for Justice and Legal Systems**

1. Offer training on cross-agency collaborations
2. Leverage community leaders and place managers
3. Build rapport with at-risk groups to create trust
4. Provide all police guidance during routine investigations
5. Track all labor-related investigations

### Actionable Item #3
**Responses for Service Provision**

1. Take stock of resources and make targeted investments
2. Give providers resources to use during service delivery
3. Maintain consistent contact with survivors
4. Facilitate transportation using existing infrastructure

# An Assessment of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska

## Statement of the Problem

Labor trafficking is broadly defined as compelling another person to work through the use of force (e.g., physical harm), fraud (e.g., false promises), or coercion (e.g., threats of violence) where they cannot escape from the situation or cannot escape without suffering serious harm (Forced Labor [2000], as amended; Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, as amended). Although estimates of trafficking exist, the true prevalence of these crimes is unknown (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). When victims[2] are identified, however, they often involve vulnerable populations—people looking for a better life for themselves or their families when recruited (e.g., foreign-born individuals; Owens et al., 2014; Zhang, 2012a, b). Traffickers harm victims in diverse settings (e.g., domestic servitude, forced work in factories) by engaging in means of ongoing control (e.g., threatening deportation, threatening family members, sexual violence) that can result in substantial and lasting consequences (e.g., head trauma, physical injuries) (Bracy et al., 2021; Letsie et al., 2021; Ravi et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2021).

The hidden nature of these crimes makes it difficult to identify, hindering society's ability to respond effectively (Farrell et al., 2019; Farrell & de Vries, 2020; Greenbaum, 2020; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). When we fail to identify labor trafficking, victims do not receive services and support, traffickers continue offending, and community responses are inefficient. Before effective prevention and intervention efforts can be implemented, we need to understand the pathways to labor trafficking (Franchino-Olsen et al., 2022; Greenbaum, 2020). Models used to identify sex trafficking and related responses have proven useful (Barnert et al., 2022; Dank et al., 2017; Franchino-Olsen et al., 2022; Kulig, 2022; Macy et al., 2023). Moreover, although some research on labor trafficking exists, very little is known about these crimes, including the harms victims experience, trajectories of exploitation, how law enforcement and providers could better respond to these crimes, the ongoing challenges victims face once identified, and the role of context in shaping these factors (e.g., Bracy et al., 2021; de Vries & Farrell, 2018; Farrell et al., 2020; Fukushima, 2020; Novak et al., 2021; Owens et al., 2014; Preble et al., 2023; Zhang, 2012a, b; Zhang et al., 2014).

To address these gaps, the current study conducted an assessment of labor trafficking in Nebraska, where knowledge about these events remains elusive. Nebraska's population—estimated to be approximately 2 million people in 2024—is not the largest compared to other states, but it has some unique features (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024a). For example, the population continues to grow but is not evenly distributed. The median county population in 2022 was around 6,000 individuals, with approximately 66% of the total Nebraska population residing in several metropolitan counties (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024b). This disparity reflects a growing trend over time, where population gains occur in metropolitan areas while residents in non-metropolitan counties continue to decline (Nebraska Chamber Foundation, 2024; U.S. Census Bureau, 2024b). Nebraska's economy is also robust, with large agriculture, livestock, food processing, and manufacturing sectors; other notable strengths include growth in technology and business services (Nebraska Chamber Foundation, 2024). The unemployment rate in the state is low—estimated to be 2.1% in 2024—with few disengaged workers to fill expanding industry roles (Nebraska Chamber Foundation, 2024). Given the state's overall growth, stakeholders have raised concerns about attracting and retaining talent to fill skilled labor shortages. One proposed solution has been to increase the immigrant population in the area to meet workforce needs (Nebraska Chamber Foundation, 2024).

[2] The terms "victim" and "survivor" are used interchangeably throughout this report in recognition that not all individuals who experience these harms use a single term (e.g., Cullen et al., 2023; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).



In this context, Nebraska has distinct aspects that could affect the nature of labor trafficking and has sought to proactively respond by updating legislation, facilitating trainings, and engaging in community awareness campaigns (Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Report, 2023, 2024). Investigations over time have revealed that exploitative labor practices exist, but few formal charges for labor trafficking have been made. These incidents tend to involve vulnerable individuals (e.g., children, foreign-born individuals) and occur in industries vital for the state's robust economy, illustrating the opportunities for harm in the infrastructure. For example, in 2022, investigators identified a slaughterhouse cleaning service company that employed children in dangerous conditions (Pelley, 2023). A total of 102 minors across 13 different plants in eight states were identified as being employed by Packers Sanitation Services Incorporated (PSSI), but it was a middle school in Grand Island, Nebraska, that alerted authorities to these concerns. A 14-year-old girl came to school with acid burns on her hands and knees after she had been working nights cleaning a slaughterhouse at the edge of town for PSSI. No one was formally charged with labor trafficking in the case, even though there were legal ramifications for the company's actions. In another case in 2024, a woman was arrested and charged with labor trafficking of a minor for forcing her relative to work to pay back the money used to travel from Guatemala to the United States (Winder, 2024). The girl was forced to work in a restaurant and a cornfield, had to pay her relative to be driven to and from school, had her immigration documents taken from her, and was threatened with deportation.

It is evident, then, that Nebraska has the potential to be a location where labor trafficking occurs, even though there are few formal charges or convictions against perpetrators (cf. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2018). The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine how labor trafficking occurs by engaging with stakeholders, service providers, and survivors. The ultimate goal was to learn about individuals' experiences and challenges with labor trafficking in Nebraska, which can guide the next steps for response efforts. Below, we detail the current study's research objectives and methods before summarizing the results from the project.

# Current Study

This project used a multi-phased approach to provide an exploratory overview of labor trafficking in Nebraska. **This study does not provide a prevalence estimate for labor trafficking in Nebraska.** We administered a survey to practitioners and interviewed stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement), service providers (e.g., mental health, legal), and a survivor of labor trafficking to answer the following three **research objectives**, with corresponding **actionable items**:

1. **What is the nature of labor trafficking in Nebraska (e.g., venues, recruitment and control tactics, relationships to traffickers, escape, ongoing challenges and needs of survivors, perceptions of interactions with providers, law enforcement, or others)?**
   - ***Actionable Item:*** *Provide an overview of what labor trafficking "looks like" in Nebraska to inform identification efforts and awareness/education campaigns.*

2. **What are the challenges of law enforcement and legal actors (e.g., prosecutors) when investigating labor trafficking (e.g., definitions, interactions with survivors, perceptions, investigative techniques, administrative processes)?**
   - ***Actionable Item:*** *Identify the key issues when detecting these crimes and offering legal assistance, and provide recommendations on ways the Nebraska justice/legal systems can address these issues.*

3. **What are the challenges of service providers when responding to labor trafficking survivors (e.g., health issues, documentation, location/access to services, translator needs, cultural barriers)?**
   - ***Actionable Item:*** *Identify the key challenges in responding to the physical, psychological, social, employment, and educational needs of labor trafficking survivors and provide recommendations on ways Nebraska can mitigate these issues.*



# Method

The study was conducted over two years, beginning on July 1, 2023.[3] At the project's outset, an advisory board consisting of 11 members—including practitioners, service providers, and subject matter experts—offered guidance on the study's design, data collection processes, and findings. The study was carried out in phases, with each phase's findings informing the next. A detailed summary of each of the five phases is provided below.

## Phase I: Literature Review

The purpose of the Phase I literature review was to understand the scope of the literature on labor trafficking and to inform the creation of interview and survey instruments for the study. The literature search was conducted between July and October 2023, using various search terms and databases to locate relevant publications.[4] The studies must have collected data (e.g., surveys, interviews) or used a secondary data source (e.g., administrative records, case files) in their analysis related to stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, legal actors), service providers (e.g., medical professionals, counselors, case workers) and/or victims/survivors. The studies could be conducted in any country and at any time, but had to be published in English. Dissertations/theses and other publications that did not fit the aforementioned inclusion criteria were excluded from the review (e.g., literature or theoretical reviews). In total, 68 research studies or reports were included in the review.[5]

## Phase II: Stakeholder/Service Provider Database

Phase II laid the groundwork for the project, establishing the initial framework and marking the project's official launch. The research team developed a comprehensive stakeholder and service provider database to identify individuals and agencies with expertise or experience in labor trafficking cases or survivor support. The database guided the study and helped define our sample population. Contacts within the database were organized based on (1) searches for agencies, stakeholders, and service providers in Nebraska and (2) advisory board recommendations.

Most of the database contacts were identified through a targeted and thorough search process to identify potential stakeholders and service providers. In other words, the research team sought to cast a wide net to identify agencies and individuals that could possibly come in contact with labor trafficking survivors or work on labor trafficking cases. The searches focused on diverse sectors, including law enforcement, legal services, immigration and refugee assistance, healthcare, housing, education, behavioral and mental health, victim advocacy, and other social services. Data were initially collected through an online search primarily focused on Nebraska's four largest cities: Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, and Bellevue. Locations were chosen due to their higher population density in the state and the likelihood of having professionals with direct or past experience working on trafficking cases.[6] Online searches for agencies, stakeholders, and service providers

[3] Before data collection began, the study received approval from the University of Nebraska Medical Center's (UNMC) Institutional Review Board (IRB).

[4] The search terms used for the literature review included "labor trafficking," "exploitative labor," "labor exploitation," "domestic servitude," "forced labor," "modern slavery," "peonage," and "debt bondage." Combinations of words and terms were also searched (e.g., "modern slavery" and "victim," "labor trafficking" and "interviews"). These terms were searched in the following databases: Web of Science, Journal Storage, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, and UNO Criss Library. Journals that are likely to publish research on human trafficking were also searched (e.g., *Journal of Human Trafficking, Victims & Offenders, Global Crime*).

[5] Literature searches continued throughout the duration of the project to identify potential new publications. These additional searches resulted in a total of 115 research articles being collected that met the stated inclusion criteria. The literature reviewed in this report focuses only on the research that informed the study's instruments.

[6] This search was later expanded to capture more agencies and individuals working across Nebraska (e.g., government employees, school systems).

were conducted from August 2023 to December 2023 using search terms and engines,[7] professional directories (e.g., state bar associations, healthcare provider lists, LinkedIn), and official agency resource websites. Each individual or agency in the database was matched with a valid personal or professional email address when available. While many personal or professional email addresses were accessible through official websites or public directories, others were either missing or substituted with generic organizational emails (e.g., a general inquiry email account to contact). In these cases, an email and/or phone call was made to the agency to provide an overview of the project's purpose; contact information for the most appropriate person within the agency was then requested so the research team could reach out to them directly.

In addition to online searches, the team also consulted advisory board members for guidance and referrals to key stakeholders and service providers who may not have been identified through initial searches. Their guidance helped strengthen the database's comprehensiveness by filling potential gaps and furthering our outreach efforts. In total, approximately 15,000 contacts were included in the database.

## Phase III: Instrument Development

The instruments that were developed for Phase III of the current project were adapted from the literature review of existing research on labor trafficking, state and federal legislation (Forced Labor [2000], as amended; Nebraska Revised Statutes 28-830 and 28-831, Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, as amended), and feedback from the advisory board, funder, and interviewers (for interview protocols). Together, three primary instruments were developed to collect data from respondents: (1) recruitment survey, (2) stakeholder/service provider interview protocol, and (3) survivor interview protocol. The final versions of each instrument were also modified to ensure that respondents could complete them within the estimated timeframes.

### *Recruitment Survey*

The recruitment survey was developed to assess stakeholders' and service providers' experiences with labor trafficking in Nebraska. Items and instructions were largely adapted from prior research by Owens and colleagues (2014) and state/federal legislation. The survey was divided into sections where answers to questions could branch into relevant follow-up items. That is, depending on respondents' answers, they were directed to questions that assessed additional details on their experiences (or lack thereof). The survey included items tapping into respondents' (i) demographics and background, (ii) experience with labor trafficking cases and survivors in Nebraska, (iii) interest in participating in an interview, and (iv) interest in sharing study details with survivors in their network. The survey took approximately 5 minutes to complete. The survey questions are provided in **Appendix A**.

### *Stakeholder/Service Provider Interview Protocol*

The stakeholder and service provider interview protocol was used to gather more detailed information about respondents' experiences with labor trafficking in Nebraska. The protocol was divided into the following sections: (i) general background and knowledge of the respondent, (ii) experiences of labor trafficking in Nebraska, (iii) experience with labor trafficking investigations, (iv) experience with service provision for survivors, and (v) final comments or thoughts. Interview questions were largely adapted from prior research and aligned with the legal definition of labor trafficking in legislation (Farrell et al., 2008; Kulig et al., 2023; Novak et al., 2024; Owens et al., 2014; Preble et al., 2023; Recknor et al., 2018; Schwarz, 2017; Schwarz et al., 2019; Sokat, 2022; Zhang, 2012a; Zhang et al., 2014). The stakeholder/service provider interview protocol questions are provided in **Appendix B**.

[7] Common search items included a variety of key words, such as "labor trafficking services + [city]," "anti-trafficking organizations + [city]," "victim services + labor trafficking," "immigration legal assistance + Nebraska," "human trafficking + healthcare providers," "[city] + behavioral health + trafficking," "refugee services + [city]," "support for trafficking victims + [city]," and "legal services + survivors + [city]."



### *Survivor Interview Protocol*

The survivor interview protocol was used to learn about labor trafficking experiences directly from individuals who have been harmed in Nebraska. The questions and sections mirrored some aspects of the stakeholder/service provider protocol but were tailored to gather firsthand insights about these harms. Prior literature was used to guide questions (Farrell et al., 2008; Kulig et al., 2023; Novak et al., 2024; Owens et al., 2014; Preble et al., 2023; Recknor et al., 2018; Schwarz, 2017; Schwarz et al., 2019; Sokat, 2022; Zhang, 2012a; Zhang et al., 2014). The interview was organized to collect information about the survivor, including their (i) background information, (ii) recruitment, (iii) travel to job location, (iv) employment and trafficking experience, (v) removal or escape from the trafficking situation, (vi) experiences with police and legal professionals, (vii) experiences with service providers, (viii) current situation and hopes for the future, and (ix) final comments or thoughts. The survivor interview protocol questions are provided in **Appendix C**.

## Phase IV: Recruitment Survey Administration

Phase IV of the study involved distributing the recruitment survey (Phase III; see **Appendix A**) to the stakeholders and service providers identified in the database developed during Phase I. The survey was administered using Qualtrics (2024), an online software for designing, managing, and disseminating surveys. An initial email was sent to the contacts in the stakeholder and service provider database to assess their experiences with labor trafficking. In the email, the respondents were provided with an overview of the project and a link to complete the survey in Qualtrics; they were also encouraged to share the email with other professionals in their networks whom they thought would be appropriate for the study. Two reminder emails were sent to respondents to encourage participation.[8] These reminders were sent several weeks apart and scheduled with consideration for holidays and typical time-off periods to maximize the likelihood of receiving a response. The survey was initially distributed in April 2024 and was formally closed in November 2024.

## Phase V: Interviews

In Phase V, interviews were conducted with both (1) stakeholders and service providers and (2) a survivor of labor trafficking. All interviews were conducted by trained staff at the Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR), a university-based research center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln specializing in survey and qualitative data collection.[9] The interview process for each group of respondents varied in structure, focus, and content. However, all respondents had to be at least 19 years of age or older to participate. The differences in approach were intentional to ensure that each group's unique perspective was captured in a respectful and meaningful way.

### *Stakeholder/Service Provider Interviews*

To identify stakeholders and service providers to interview, respondents were asked two key questions in the recruitment survey: (1) whether they had direct experience with labor trafficking and (2) whether they were willing to be interviewed (see **Appendix A**). Stakeholders and service providers who responded "yes" to both questions in the recruitment survey were sent an email invitation to participate in an interview for more details on their experiences. Again, up to two reminder emails were sent to encourage participation, and these reminders were sent several weeks apart. To compensate stakeholders and service providers for their time, a $50 Amazon gift card was offered upon completion of the interview.[10]

[8] Per the UNMC IRB criteria, the research team was permitted three total contact attempts for the purpose of recruitment.
[9] More information about BOSR can be found here: https://bosr.unl.edu/
[10] As discussed later in this report, the incentive for stakeholders and service providers was incorporated later in the project to assist in recruitment efforts.

Each respondent participated in a single, semi-structured online interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Before the interview began, verbal informed consent was obtained from each respondent, reminding them that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could end the interview at any time. The interviewer clarified that the questions would center on their professional experiences and organizational practices rather than personal details or sensitive client information. The interviewer also provided a definition of labor trafficking for context.[11] Interviews were audio recorded with the permission of respondents.[12] Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, respondents were also provided with a list of support resources after the interview upon request.

Each interview transcript was de-identified and assigned a unique case number to protect confidentiality. The research team removed any potentially identifying information from the transcripts and aggregated responses to protect respondents' identities. Any identifying information used for interview coordination, such as names, email addresses, and other scheduling details, was stored separately and securely, accessible only to members of the research team.

### *Survivor Interviews*

To identify survivors to interview, the research team used an indirect outreach approach that relied on stakeholders and service providers to share study information with their survivor networks.[13] In the recruitment survey, the stakeholders and service providers who had direct experience with labor trafficking were asked whether they would be willing to share study information with survivors they know—the respondents who answered "yes" to the item were sent a Survivor Information Sheet to share (see **Appendix A**). The Survivor Information Sheet outlined the study's purpose, what to expect during the interview, the types of questions that would be asked, information on compensation, how their information will be kept confidential, and project staff and funding details. Materials were distributed in English and Spanish, with the option for stakeholders and service providers to request further translations as needed. A secure email address was also provided for survivors to contact the research team if they were interested in participating in the study. Survivors interested in sharing their experiences had to reach out to the research team directly to schedule an interview.

Survivor interviews were designed to last approximately 60 to 120 minutes. Respondents were allowed to choose their preferred interview format—by phone, in person at a location of their choice, or online. Both English- and Spanish-speaking interviewers were available to complete interviews, with translation services available for other languages as needed. Interviews were audio recorded with permission.[14] Respondents were offered a $100 gift card from Amazon or Visa for their time as an incentive. Interviews were scheduled to be conducted between May 2024 and November 2024.

To protect the confidentiality of the survivor interviewed, the transcript was de-identified and assigned a unique case number. All potentially identifying information was removed from the transcript, and only aggregate themes were discussed based on their responses. Any identifying information used for interview coordination was stored separately and securely from the study data.

[11] The following definition was reviewed: "Labor trafficking involves some means, such as force, coercion, or fraud, to compel victims to work. In these situations, victims believe they cannot escape from their traffickers, or cannot escape without suffering serious harm. Examples of means may include:

(i) Physical restraint, physical violence, or controlling/monitoring free movement and communication;
(ii) Threats of violence, threats of deportation, threats of the legal system, or threats against family or friends;
(iii) Controlling or threatening to control access to substances (e.g., drugs, alcohol);
(iv) Destroying, concealing, or confiscating legal documents (e.g., passport, immigration documents);
(v) Exploiting another person's disability (e.g., functional or mental impairments);
(vi) Causing or threatening to cause financial harm, including through labor or services in payment toward a real or supposed debt; or
(vii) Making false promises or lying about payment or conditions of work."

[12] All respondents agreed for the interview to be audio recorded to capture responses verbatim.

[13] To further broaden recruitment efforts, the team also emailed the National Survivor Network study materials to share with survivors in hopes of connecting with a wider pool of participants.

[14] The survivor who participated agreed for the interview to be audio recorded to capture responses verbatim.



# Results

The results from the current study are presented by each phase, including key findings from the literature review, recruitment survey responses, and stakeholder and service provider interviews.

## Literature Review on Labor Trafficking

The literature review explored current research on labor trafficking, emphasizing key themes such as definitions, risk factors, and identification challenges. By reviewing scholarly studies and insights, this review aimed to synthesize existing knowledge and provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue from prior works. Below is a brief overview of the studies included in the review, a summary of key themes from the field, and details on how the literature review informed the current assessment of labor trafficking in Nebraska. A more detailed summary of the literature review is provided in **Appendix D**.

A total of 68 published research articles met the inclusion criteria for the current review. These studies were published between 2000 and 2023. Of these articles, approximately 50% focused on labor trafficking internationally, while 45.6% focused on labor trafficking domestically. A few studies were both internationally and domestically based (4.4%). Namely, 47.1% of the articles were based in North America, followed by Europe (20.6%), Asia (17.6%), Africa (2.9%), Oceania (2.9%), Central America (1.5%), South America (1.5%), Latin America (1.5%), and research spanning multiple continents (4.4%). Regarding data, study design, and methodological approach, most articles were based on a subsample of adults (79.4%), employed a qualitative approach (72.1%), and used interviews or focus groups (47.1%). Lastly, because there is no universally accepted definition for labor trafficking across agencies and organizations (e.g., Farrell et al., 2020; Recknor et al., 2018), studies varied in their definitions of labor trafficking, primarily using the federal (39.7%) or international (27.9%) definition. In contrast, others used a state/country-specific definition (5.9%), used more than one definition (4.4%), or did not provide a clear definition that aligned with federal, international, or state/country-specific definitions (22.1%).

An analysis of prior literature identified several key themes, focusing on the characteristics and experiences of survivors. In particular, some individuals faced additional vulnerabilities of being exploited for labor, including immigrants/migrants, refugees, children, and homeless youth (e.g., Bhukuth, 2005; Gilbert et al., 2018; Moton et al., 2023; Murphy, 2016; Wright et al., 2021; Zhang, 2012a). Certain types of labor trafficking may also affect certain populations disproportionately. For example, some research found that females may be more likely to experience *domestic servitude*, whereas males may be more likely to experience *forced labor* (e.g., Oram et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2021). Victims may be recruited through direct contact with their abuser, a family member, an acquaintance, or a false job advertisement (e.g., Letsie et al., 2021; Murphy, 2016; Owens et al., 2014; Stanford et al., 2021). When identified, these individuals may be subjected to the criminal justice system through arrest (e.g., immigration violations, defending themselves when attacked, forced criminality during exploitation) rather than being identified and rescued as victims (e.g., Galemba, 2021; Owens et al., 2014). Victims were likely to experience psychological, physical, and sexual violence during their exploitation, which could result in considerable short-term and long-term consequences (e.g., Barrick et al., 2013; Hopper & Gonzalez, 2018; Letsie et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021; Zhang, 2012a).

The key purpose of conducting this assessment was to inform the development and administration of the current study. In this way, prior work informed each aspect of this project, including the mixed-method design (i.e., collecting both quantitative surveys and more in-depth qualitative interviews), survey instrument, and interview protocols (Owens et al., 2014; Westwood et al., 2016). Specifically, we relied on the work of Owens and colleagues (2014) as well as others to inform our language, themes, and question wording (e.g., Farrell et al., 2008; Novak et al., 2024; Preble et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2014). These studies informed the development of the interview protocol, guiding the inclusion of questions related to respondents' lived experiences, the

characteristics of labor trafficking, and their roles in the identification and investigation of cases. For the survivor interview protocol, special attention was given to asking questions about their labor trafficking and employment experiences in a sensitive manner (e.g., Owens et al., 2014; Preble et al., 2023; Sokat, 2022; Zhang, 2012a; Zhang et al., 2014). In addition, we drew extensively on the insights of stakeholders and service providers to deepen our understanding of the scope and nature of labor trafficking in Nebraska. Their experiences and perspectives were critical in identifying larger patterns, trends, and gaps in exploitation and services that may have otherwise gone undetected (e.g., Schwarz et al., 2019).

## Recruitment Survey Responses

The recruitment survey was sent to 14,733 email addresses in the stakeholder and service provider database.[15] Of these, 6,540 emails were undeliverable. By the end of the survey period, 870 responses had been received. After excluding 42 duplicate entries and 246 responses classified as spam or incomplete, the final sample consisted of 582 valid responses.[16] Below is an overview of respondents and their experiences with labor trafficking. Due to some respondents not answering all questions, there can be missing responses so estimates may not total to 100%. **Note that the estimates provided are based on responses received—they cannot account for the overlap of cases or survivors across respondents and cannot inform the prevalence of labor trafficking.** Still, these estimates give us a sense of where and how labor trafficking is happening in Nebraska based on respondents' experiences.

### *Overview of All Respondents*

The recruitment survey responses of the 582 valid responses revealed several key findings (see **Table 1**). More than half of the respondents (55.3%, $n = 322$) across the sample of stakeholders and service providers reported not knowing which definition of labor trafficking their organization followed. Among those who knew their definition, 31.6% ($n = 184$) reported following the Nebraska legislation. Most respondents used a single definition (65.5%, $n = 381$). Stakeholders and service providers tended to operate in urban (71.3%, $n = 415$) and rural (58.8%, $n = 342$) metropolitan statistical areas (MSA), with 36.4% ($n = 212$) serving in a single MSA. Among the 582 respondents, 170 individuals (29.2%) reported having professional experience with labor trafficking cases and/or working with survivors. Respondents without such experience often explained that they had not encountered labor trafficking in their professional work or that their roles did not involve direct interaction with survivors.

[15] Recipients were also encouraged to share the survey link with colleagues; as such, the total number of individuals who ultimately received the survey indirectly is unknown. However, of the 582 valid responses received, 492 respondents (84.5%) were confirmed to be from the stakeholder and service provider database.

[16] Incomplete responses were defined as missing required information such as age (i.e., being at least 19 years of age or older), name, and/or contact details to validate the submission and send follow-up participation details as applicable.



**Table 1. Overview of Recruitment Survey Respondents (*N* = 582)**

| | *n* | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Organizational Labor Trafficking Definition Adopted[a] | | |
| Nebraska Legislation | 184 | 31.6 |
| Federal – TVPA | 157 | 27.0 |
| Federal – Forced Labor | 118 | 20.3 |
| Other[b] | 29 | 5.0 |
| I'm Not Sure | 322 | 55.3 |
| Missing | 45 | 7.7 |
| Number of Definitions Adopted | | |
| 1 Definition | 381 | 65.5 |
| 2 Definitions | 53 | 9.1 |
| 3 Definitions | 90 | 15.5 |
| > 4 Definitions | 13 | 2.2 |
| Missing | 45 | 7.7 |
| Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) Served[c] | | |
| Urban | 415 | 71.3 |
| Rural | 342 | 58.8 |
| Suburban | 302 | 51.9 |
| Other[d] | 80 | 13.8 |
| Missing | 43 | 7.4 |
| Number of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) Served[e] | | |
| 1 MSA | 212 | 36.4 |
| 2 MSA | 86 | 14.8 |
| 3 MSA | 209 | 35.9 |
| 4 MSA | 32 | 5.5 |
| Missing | 43 | 7.4 |
| Experience Working with Labor Trafficking Cases/Survivors[f] | | |
| Yes | 170 | 29.2 |
| No | 360 | 61.9 |
| Missing | 52 | 8.9 |

*Note*: TVPA = Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Although there were 582 valid responses, some specific questions may have been skipped by respondents. As applicable, these responses are captured as "Missing."

[a] This category is not mutually exclusive. The respondents could choose more than one option, therefore the columns will not equal 100%.

[b] The respondents provided written details such as "we do not classify labor trafficking."

[c] This category is not mutually exclusive. The respondents could choose more than one option, therefore the columns will not equal 100%.

[d] "Other" included responses such as "international."

[e] Indicates if the respondent selected one or more MSAs in their response

[f] The question stated: "In a professional role, have you ever worked on labor trafficking cases or with labor trafficking survivors in Nebraska?"

### *Overview of Respondents with Labor Trafficking Experience*

Responses for the subsample of 170 individuals with labor trafficking experience are provided in **Table 2**.[17] Of the respondents who had worked on labor trafficking cases or with survivors, approximately 70% had five years of experience or less (<6 months: 15.3%; 6 months – 1 year: 14.7%; 1 – 2 years: 18.2%; 3 – 5 years: 21.8%), with approximately one-quarter of respondents having more than six years of experience (26.5%; *n* = 45). The respondents most often indicated having involvement in fewer than five cases[18] (51.2%, *n* = 87) and working with fewer than five survivors (51.2%, *n* = 87). The most commonly served populations included adults (75.9%, *n* = 129) and foreign-born individuals without legal documentation (62.9%, *n* = 107). However, children (45.9%, *n* = 78) and foreign-born individuals with legal documentation (36.5%, *n* = 62) were also common populations served. Most respondents—55.3%—served between two (26.5%, *n* = 45) and three (28.8%, *n* = 49) different types of populations.

**Reflecting on the Findings: U.S.-Born Survivors**

Approximately 30% (n = 52) of respondents indicated they worked with U.S.-born victims (see **Table 2**). However, reflecting on the lack of context for this response option raises concerns that it may not accurately represent the nature of these cases.

Importantly, we are not able to distinguish whether "U.S. born" individuals were (i) *children of U.S. Citizens*, (ii) *children of foreign-born individuals*, or (iii) *born in the United States but left and came back* (e.g., children born in the U.S. who then left at a young age and came back when they were older). The latter two situations could create vulnerabilities similar to foreign-born victims (e.g., targeted because of parents' immigration status, being newer to the United States, language barriers).

To fully understand the scope of what "U.S. born" means, future research should expand this question to tap into these potential nuances for clarification on these circumstances. **In this context, the U.S.-born estimate should be interpreted with caution.**

Approximately 64.7% (*n* = 110) of respondents noted that the survivors they supported had been exploited in one to three different types of venues. **Figure 1** presents venues of exploitation as reported by respondents. Most frequently, respondents were familiar with labor trafficking in domestic work/servitude (50.0%, *n* = 85), restaurants or food service (35.9%, *n* = 61), agriculture/farming (35.3%, *n* = 60), and housekeeping/cleaning services (25.9%, *n* = 44). However, factories (20.6%, *n* = 35), construction (20.0%, *n* = 34), and hospitality/hotels/motels (18.8%, *n* = 32) were also common.

**Figure 2** presents means of exploitation as reported by respondents. In assessing the types of means of control used, the respondents identified threats of violence/the legal system/against loved ones (70.6%, *n* = 120), false promises/lies (60.0%, *n* = 102), financial harm (45.9%, *n* = 78), destroying/concealing/confiscating legal documents (44.7%, *n* = 76), and physical restraint/violence/controlling or monitoring movement (44.7%, *n* = 76) as tactics employed. Further, victims were noted as generally experiencing more than one type of means of control during their trafficking situation (1 – 2 types: 26.5%; 3 – 4 types: 39.4%; 5 – 6 types: 19.4%; 7 – 8 types: 7.6%).

[17] Out of the 170 respondents with labor trafficking experience, 114 indicated an interest in being interviewed for the study and 77 requested to be sent study details to share with survivors in their network.
[18] A "case" was broadly defined as an incident or set of circumstances under investigation or review.

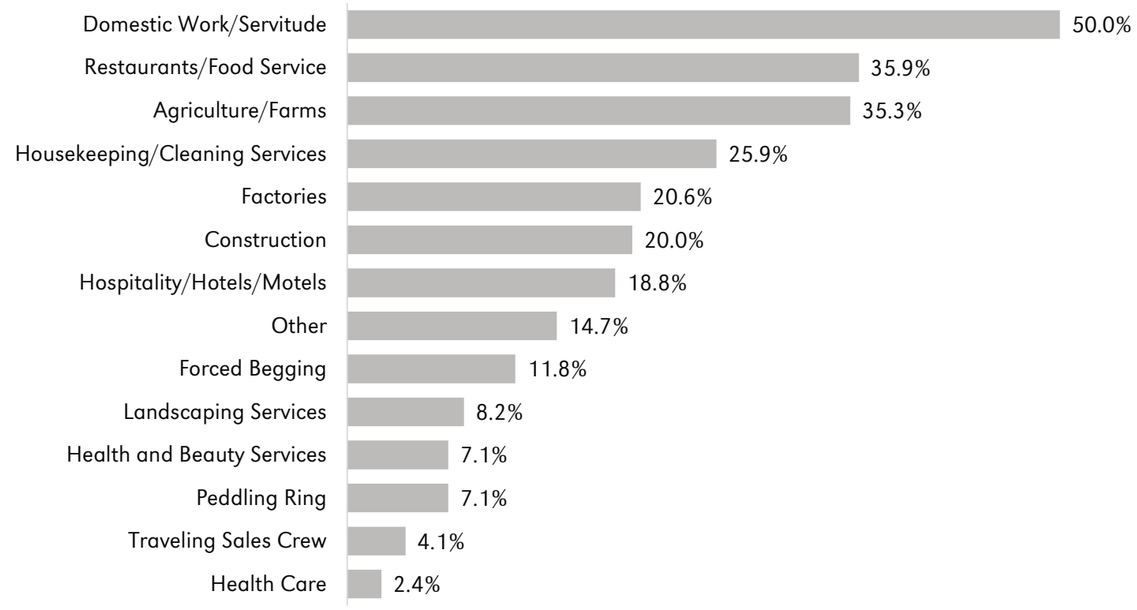


**Table 2. Overview of Respondents with Labor Trafficking Experience (*N* = 170)**

| | *n* | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Number of Labor Trafficking *Cases* Worked[a] | | |
| None | 18 | 10.6 |
| Fewer than 5 | 87 | 51.2 |
| 5 – 10 | 37 | 21.8 |
| 11 – 15 | 12 | 7.1 |
| 16 – 20 | 6 | 3.5 |
| More than | 5 | 2.9 |
| Missing | 5 | 2.9 |
| Number of Labor Trafficking *Survivors* Served | | |
| None | 12 | 7.1 |
| Fewer than 5 | 87 | 51.2 |
| 5 – 10 | 33 | 19.4 |
| 11 – 15 | 10 | 5.9 |
| 16 – 20 | 9 | 5.3 |
| 21 – 30 | 4 | 2.3 |
| 31 – 40 | 1 | 0.6 |
| 41 – 50 | 2 | 1.2 |
| More than 51 | 6 | 3.5 |
| Missing | 6 | 3.5 |
| Populations Served[b] | | |
| Adults | 129 | 75.9 |
| Children | 78 | 45.9 |
| U.S. Born (*interpret with caution*)[c] | 52 | 30.6 |
| Foreign-Born Individuals Without Documentation | 107 | 62.9 |
| Foreign-Born Individuals With Documentation | 62 | 36.5 |
| Other[d] | 5 | 2.9 |
| Missing | 5 | 2.9 |

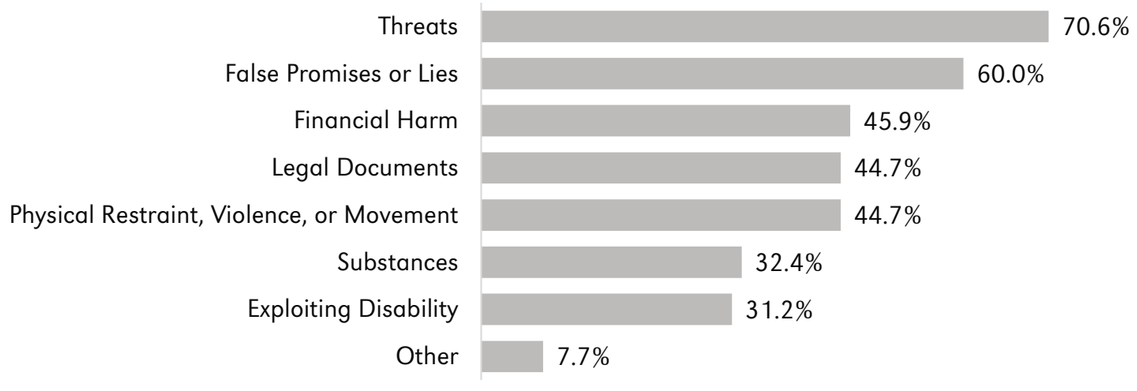
*Note*: Although there were 170 valid responses, some specific questions may have been skipped by respondents. As applicable, these responses are captured as "Missing."
[a] A "case" was broadly defined as an incident or set of circumstances under investigation or review.
[b] This category is not mutually exclusive. The respondents could choose more than one option, therefore the columns will not equal 100%.
[c] This estimate should be interpreted with caution due to a lack of context on the nature of these cases. We are not able to distinguish whether "U.S. born" individuals were (i) *children of U.S. Citizens*, (ii) *children of foreign-born individuals*, or (iii) *born in the United States but left and came back* (e.g., children born in the U.S. who then left at a young age and came back when they were older). The latter two situations could create vulnerabilities similar to foreign-born victims (e.g., targeted because of parents' immigration status, being newer to the United States, language barriers).
[d] "Other" includes responses such as "women."

**Figure 1. Venues of Exploitation as Reported by Respondents (*N* = 170)**




*Note*: Respondents could choose multiple options; therefore, the total will not equal 100%. This question was skipped by some respondents (9.4%, *n* = 16). "Other" included written responses such as "education," "meat packing plants," "massage parlors," "train jumpers," "nail saloon [sic]."

**Figure 2. Means of Exploitation Types as Reported by Respondents (*N* = 170)**




*Note*: Respondents could choose multiple options; therefore, the total will not equal 100%. This question was skipped by some respondents (7.1%, *n* = 12). "Other" included written responses such as "sex trafficking" and "forced criminality."



## Stakeholder/Service Provider Interviews

Insights from interviews with stakeholders and service providers shed light on the nature and scope of labor trafficking in Nebraska, as well as how systems currently respond. In addition to deepening our understanding of state-level dynamics, these findings contribute to a broader body of research on labor trafficking. The results are first organized to provide a brief overview of the respondents and their agencies. Then, key thematic areas are presented by research objectives that capture the experiences, perspectives, and challenges identified by respondents.

### *Overview of Agencies, Services, and Respondents*

The current findings are based on 26 interviews with individuals who have experience working with labor trafficking survivors or on cases in Nebraska.[19] A descriptive overview of these respondents is provided in **Table 3**.

Respondents represented a variety of agency types, with the largest proportion from community service provider agencies (38.4%, *n* = 10), followed by law enforcement agencies (23.1%, *n* = 6), immigration and refugee support organizations (15.4%, *n* = 4), state government agencies (15.4%, *n* = 4), and legal organizations (7.7%, *n* = 2). The respondents noted that their organizations generally applied definitions from the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (69.2%, *n* = 18), Nebraska legislation (57.7%, *n* = 15), and federal Forced Labor legislation (53.8%, *n* = 14). However, some respondents were unsure how their organization defined labor trafficking (19.2%, *n* = 5).

In line with the types of organizations represented, the respondents themselves had a diverse mix of roles as law enforcement agents (26.9%, *n* = 7), administrators (19.2%, *n* = 5), program managers (19.2%, *n* = 5), service providers (19.2%, *n* = 5), and legal professionals (15.4%, *n* = 4). On average, the respondents were in their current position for approximately 6 years (standard deviation [SD] = 3.86), ranging from 1 to 17 years. All respondents spoke English. The majority spoke only English (57.7%, *n* = 15), while several reported speaking both English and Spanish (34.6%, *n* = 9). Some respondents were fluent in multiple languages (7.7%, *n* = 2). Respondents' experience with labor trafficking varied. Over half (57.7%, *n* = 15) reported having between one and five years of experience. Smaller but nearly equal proportions had less than one year (19.2%, *n* = 5) or more than six years of experience (23.1%, *n* = 6).

The respondents highlighted specific types of labor trafficking services and activities their respective agencies and organizations offered. These services are presented in **Table 4**. Legal services were the most frequently provided (61.5%, *n* = 16), followed by advocacy (53.8%, *n* = 14), immigration support (42.3%, *n* = 11), indirect support (42.3%, *n* = 11), and mental health services (42.3%, *n* = 11). Other frequently mentioned services included case management (34.6%, *n* = 9), shelter and housing assistance (30.8%, *n* = 8), family support (30.8%, *n* = 8), employment services (30.8%, *n* = 8), education support (26.9%, *n* = 7), and immediate needs, such as food, clothing, and hygiene products (26.9%, *n* = 7). Fewer respondents offered financial services (23.1% *n* = 6) or language support (23.1% *n* = 6). Medical care (15.4%, *n* = 4) and transportation services (15.4%, *n* = 4) were the least common services provided by organizations represented in the sample.

This diversity in agency types, roles, and services offers valuable insight into the broad range of experiences in identifying, preventing, and responding to labor trafficking in Nebraska.

[19] On average, interviews lasted approximately 54 minutes. Notably, an early interview lasted longer than two hours, and another interview was conducted with two individuals from the same agency at once. These interviews thus were outside the scope of the anticipated length of the interviews. Modifications to the protocol and interviewer approach were implemented, with the remaining interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes, on average.

**Table 3. Descriptive Overview of Interviewed Stakeholders/Service Providers (*N* = 26)**

| | *n* | Percent/Mean (SD) |
|---|---|---|
| Overview of Agency Type | | |
| Community Service Provider | 10 | 38.4 |
| Law Enforcement Agency | 6 | 23.1 |
| Immigration and Refugee Support Organization | 4 | 15.4 |
| State Government Agency | 4 | 15.4 |
| Legal Agency | 2 | 7.7 |
| Role Type | | |
| Law Enforcement Agent | 7 | 26.9 |
| Administrator | 5 | 19.2 |
| Program Manager | 5 | 19.2 |
| Service Provider | 5 | 19.2 |
| Legal Professional | 4 | 15.4 |
| Time in Position | | |
| Years (average [SD]) | 26 | 6.06 (3.86) |
| Years (range) | 26 | 1-17 |
| Languages Spoken | | |
| English Only | 15 | 57.7 |
| English and Spanish | 9 | 34.6 |
| Multiple Languages | 2 | 7.7 |
| Years of Labor Trafficking Experience | | |
| Less than 6 months | 2 | 7.7 |
| Between 6 months and 1 year | 3 | 11.5 |
| Between 1 and 2 years | 7 | 26.9 |
| Between 3 and 5 years | 8 | 30.8 |
| Between 6 and 10 years | 2 | 7.7 |
| More than 10 years | 4 | 15.4 |

*Note*: SD = standard deviation.

**Table 4. Services Provided by Respondents' Agencies (*N* = 26)**

| Service Provided | *n* | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Legal | 16 | 61.5 |
| Advocacy | 14 | 53.8 |
| Immigration | 11 | 42.3 |
| Indirect Role | 11 | 42.3 |
| Mental Health | 11 | 42.3 |
| Case Management | 9 | 34.6 |
| Shelter and Housing | 8 | 30.8 |
| Family Support | 8 | 30.8 |
| Employment Support | 8 | 30.8 |
| Education Support | 7 | 26.9 |
| Immediate Needs | 7 | 26.9 |
| Financial Support | 6 | 23.1 |
| Language Support | 6 | 23.1 |
| Medical | 4 | 15.4 |
| Transportation | 4 | 15.4 |

*Note*: The categories are not mutually exclusive, as respondents could identify multiple types of services provided by their agencies. As a result, percentages do not add up to 100%.

# *Research Objective #1: What is the Nature of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska?*

To understand the scope and complexity of labor trafficking, it is essential to examine the characteristics of those most affected and the contexts in which exploitation occurs. This section outlines 11 themes that provide an overview of what is known about the nature of labor trafficking in Nebraska: (1) demographics of survivors, (2) vulnerabilities of victims, (3) venues of labor trafficking, (4) methods of recruitment, (5) relationship to trafficker, (6) means of ongoing control, (7) working and living conditions, (8) pathways to exit, (9) unique aspects of Nebraska for trafficking, (10) overlap between sex and labor trafficking, and (11) overlap between forced criminality and labor trafficking. Subthemes within these broader categories are highlighted in *red*.

## *1.1. Demographics of Survivors*

The respondents offered insights into common characteristics of labor trafficking survivors. While *age* is a key factor, there were inconsistencies in what stakeholders and service providers saw across the state. For example, survivors often can be under the age of 18 years, with reports that this age group has been increasing over the years. One respondent recalled, "Well, we have a spike in underaged, and I say under age, under the age of 18, single children that are coming across the border" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). However, other respondents also reported survivors who are adults, with some being in their twenties, thirties, and forties:

> I think age, parents. I don't know that I've seen any young teenagers. I don't know. I think when I've got really young parents or like teenagers, I haven't seen it. The parents that I've experienced it with are like thirties, thirties, forties, late twenties I think is probably the youngest situation. So it's families that are slightly older or just not kids and not little. (*Administrator*)

Discussions of *race and ethnicity* in the interviews overwhelmingly pointed to Hispanic or Latino individuals as being disproportionately affected by labor trafficking. One respondent stated, "We work with a lot of Hispanic immigrants..." (*Program Manager*). Another respondent reiterated these sentiments: "I'm pretty shocked to see that is a lot of mostly Hispanics coming in for labor trafficking" (*Service Provider*). But this perception varied, where other respondents reported working with Asian or Indian victims. There was no clear racial or ethnic trend among survivors, with individuals coming from many different parts of the world and racial/ethnic backgrounds. For example, one respondent recalled, "But I've seen people from all different...all different races, ethnicities" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

Victims' *gender* was also inconsistently referenced among respondents, with different experiences on populations served. For example, several respondents noted that the survivors they worked with were primarily female. A program manager mentioned that this may just be representative of individuals who reported: "Generally, we have experienced, it's been with females, but those might just the main ones that come forward" (*Program Manager*). Other respondents highlighted that labor trafficking survivors they worked with were mostly males. As discussed by one respondent, "Primarily, mostly males come into the program for labor trafficking" (*Service Provider*). These discrepancies may have more to do with the type of industry of exploitation and the services offered by organizations. Some respondents discussed how these factors can play a role in what they see in the field when working with both males and females:

> I've just seen that the more vulnerable population for labor trafficking are women and children. And in the au pair or nanny context, I mean you have a single female who's in a house, you know, working for a family and is at the mercy of that family. (*Legal Professional*)

> I guess...it's been in the construction industry, which typically is males that are in that industry. But then also I've seen it in food services too, which I've represented clients, both male, female in that realm. (*Legal Professional*)

> It's mostly males. But it just depends on what the destination is, if it's gonna be a mixture of females. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Although a clear pattern did not emerge for gender, nearly all respondents noted that many survivors they worked with were foreign-born females or males who did not speak much or any English.

The *victim's place of origin* also points to some patterns in labor trafficking in Nebraska. Many respondents reported that survivors of labor trafficking were immigrants who came from Central, Latin, North, and South America, highlighting the opportunity of trafficking from the North and South American continents. Other respondents noted that the survivors they encountered were from India, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, and China. Notably, a couple of respondents said they had also worked with individuals born in the United States, whereas other respondents explicitly stated that they had never worked with an American labor trafficking victim. One respondent emphasized that the nationality of survivors often varies by venue, such that individuals trafficked in agriculture, construction, or restaurant settings may differ in background from those found in hotel- or domestic servitude-related cases. As such, no single at-risk demographic group emerged in Nebraska, highlighting the importance of considering a broader range of vulnerabilities among foreign-born individuals specifically.

## *1.2. Vulnerabilities of Victims*

Labor traffickers strategically target individuals they perceive as vulnerable, often due to factors including their legal status, limited understanding of their rights, histories of trauma and abuse, or age. Respondents frequently noted that traffickers often *assessed signs of vulnerability and tailored their approach* to manipulate and exploit these individuals. For example, one law enforcement agent stated:

> I think they are able to identify people that have that look. They're able to seek out those people that they know are vulnerable just by looking at them, how they act, how they interact with other people, whether they're coming off a bus, coming off a train. Maybe they're homeless and they're able to see that and know exactly what to say and how to appeal to them to exploit them. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

These sentiments align with factors that can make individuals yearn for a better life or to improve situations for their loved ones. For example, some survivors may already be in *existing debt* or have to provide for their families, which creates an opening for traffickers to offer a job or situation that seems like a solution. One program manager highlighted this point of seeking opportunities as an indicator for traffickers:

> I think what made them vulnerable though was them needing to pay off debt. Them needing to support their family and pay off debt and have a financial income. So I guess, is there vulnerability seeking opportunity? (*Program Manager*)

Other victims may *lack social support systems* entirely or leave behind a support system. A law enforcement agent mentioned how having few family members or friends can impact how traffickers can manipulate and exploit them:

> There are people who have throughout, for some reason, for a variety reasons in their life, they lack a support network. They're alienated from their family. They are having personal issues and they leave a, what I would consider a solid environment, to go out on these promises of grand rewards and fun. And then, you know, the next day they're in a different city and then a day or two later, they're in a completely different state, so they have no support were they to leave (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Many respondents highlighted *immigration status* as a major factor in their clients' vulnerability to exploitation. Individuals lacking documentation or legal citizenship were noted as being especially susceptible to traffickers who use the threat of legal action or deportation as a means of control. This status was noted as being central in *limited education* or an *incomplete understanding of legal rights* that can leave victims unaware of labor law violations, making them easier to exploit. As exemplified below:

> I think every single family that I've worked with with labor trafficking have been minorities, undocumented, or if they are documented, their legal status is like refugee, they have a green card, something along those lines. Where they're not from the U.S. and they're just not as familiar with employment regulations and what a healthy workplace looks like. (*Administrator*)

> Ignorance of the law. A lot of the times they don't understand, like their obliviousness is so easy to exploit for a trafficker, like they can tell them whatever and it's gospel because they're never gonna hear any different. So they can, you know, they can always hold that over their head. It's like, "Well, if you don't work for me in the way that I want you to, I can turn you over to INS [Immigration and Naturalization Services] or whoever and you're gonna be deported tomorrow." (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Relatedly, *language barriers* also increased vulnerability, particularly for victims who did not speak English as their first language. A law enforcement agent noted that "in particular…language is definitely something I would say that makes people more vulnerable" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). In this way, respondents noted that language barriers can also create isolation and facilitate opportunities for traffickers to exploit victims.

Other survivors also have *histories of trauma or abuse*, which may increase their vulnerability to further victimization. A program manager referenced that diverse types of abuse in a victim's past can be an opportunity for traffickers searching for targets that may have fewer social support systems or external help:

> I think the majority of the survivors we've served have experienced some form of intimate partner violence along with experienced some form of childhood trauma, whether it be foster care, poverty, sexual abuse, incarceration, or death of a parent. There has been some sort of precursor typically to folks who become more vulnerable to trafficking, absolutely. (*Program Manager*)

As previously discussed, *age* is another significant vulnerability. Children or minors are especially at risk, as they may be trafficked away from their families and support networks. However, respondents also noted that older individuals can become isolated if they are moved far from loved ones in other cities. As stated by one respondent:

> So definitely their age. I mean, when you have a minor and even in one situation the victim was older. This was a domestic worker type situation where the person was advanced, I mean, I'm trying to think the best way to describe that. I don't want, I don't wanna say…They were an older individual who didn't have a lot of options in the home country and would pretty much do whatever they were told to do in the U.S. So the age definitely. (*Legal Professional*)

### *1.3. Venues of Labor Trafficking*

Individuals experiencing labor trafficking can be exploited across a wide range of venues, showcasing that traffickers are not within a particular industry or sector in Nebraska. However, the *type of work* where labor trafficking flourishes generally involves difficult and labor-intensive jobs that could inform opportunities for intervention. As noted by a law enforcement agent:

> I would say as far as the type of work, I would say the type of work pretty much remains consistent. It's gonna be a lot of those lower end, more labor-intensive jobs. A lot of it's gonna probably be some of the restaurant industry, packing houses, agriculture, those type of areas. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)



Other respondents echoed these concerns within specific sectors. Industries such as *agriculture and farm work* emerged as a prominent setting, with one respondent referencing a problematic tomato plant in Nebraska or the prevalence of chicken and pig farms. *Domestic servitude*—such as cooking, cleaning, or caring for children within a household—was reported as well, particularly among women. Respondents also noted that while *factory/manufacturing work* in meat-packing and processing plants remains a common exploitation site, *construction* is increasingly emerging as a significant area of concern. *Hotels*, *nail salons*, and *restaurants* were also mentioned as venues where labor trafficking occurs. For example, one respondent noted, "Restaurants. I would say those are the major ones" (*Legal Professional*).

Exploitation within the *cleaning industry* was identified as a concern across multiple settings, including schools, businesses, slaughterhouses, and hotels. Notably, one respondent highlighted the overlap between factory and cleaning work, explaining that contracted cleaning companies—not the factories themselves—were responsible for trafficking abuses: "It's cleaning companies contracted by packing plants. It's not the packing plants. But where it gets problematic with trafficking, it's the companies hired to come in at night and clean the equipment" (*Legal Professional*). Another respondent noted that "most of the cases that we have received have involved cleaning industry…where people…cleaning schools, cleaning offices, they never get paid" (*Administrator*). For example, while the exploitation may occur within factories or buildings, it is typically the cleaning service providers, rather than the businesses hiring them, who are responsible. In many instances, the companies receiving the services may be unaware of the exploitative practices.

### *1.4. Methods of Recruitment*

Labor traffickers use a range of recruitment methods to lure survivors into their trafficking situation. As discussed later, some of these tactics are also used to facilitate ongoing control. However, the methods reviewed here refer only to how traffickers initially recruit or gain access to victims.

A prominent theme in recruitment is the use of deception or lies. In particular, *job advertisements* or *false promises* of "easy work" or money were a prominent method. As previously discussed, however, the work survivors are compelled to engage in is almost always difficult and labor-intensive. Traffickers generally present an appealing but inaccurate picture of the job to gain trust. Sometimes, these advertisements come directly from the employer, while other times, survivors learn about these employment opportunities through word of mouth, often from family or friends. A related tactic is the *bait and switch*, where the initial job conditions match what was promised, but the situation shifts at some point and turns into labor trafficking (e.g., after the victim is isolated or at the site). One respondent described these acts by noting, "It's fraud, it's deceit, it's trickery, it's strategic, it's intentional. It's a very slow process" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

Individuals subjected to labor trafficking may also experience *debt bondage*, where they are burdened with a debt they are compelled to pay through forced labor. These debts may be the result of the trafficker paying for the survivor's transportation to the United States or living expenses, which they are then expected to pay back through labor. As one respondent put it, a trafficker might say, "Oh, we paid for your travel here. We paid for your visa processing, we paid for your plane ticket. And you've gotta, and you've gotta repay that" (*Legal Professional*).

Another recruitment tactic that traffickers used was when *smuggling turned into trafficking*. Traffickers may be part of the smuggling process to get victims across the border, or they may pick individuals up from the border after they have been formally processed. It is possible that survivors may view the smuggling assistance as a way to find new work opportunities, or they may already have a known job lined up after their arrival and need help getting to Nebraska. Namely, a lack of legal documentation can then create a lever for traffickers to threaten victims once they are under their control.

### *1.5. Relationship to Trafficker*

Survivors of labor trafficking can have various relationships with their traffickers, ranging from distant employer-employee dynamics to deeply personal or familial connections. In most of these cases, however, the victim is generally aware of or knows the trafficker in some capacity before the trafficking begins. This reality means that traffickers oftentimes used their existing relationships to facilitate their crimes.

For example, some respondents reported that the trafficker can be a *family member* or *an acquaintance of the family*, which can create a devastating dynamic of broken trust and vulnerability. In these cases, how traffickers target victims can be complicated, as noted by some respondents:

> Most of the times the traffickers either know a family member or they're within the family or they're connected through games, through looking for housing, looking for ways to make money, and they communicate for months before. (*Administrator*)

> So much labor trafficking is perpetuated by aunts and sisters and expecting their young wards to work. And often the kids depend on that aunt or sister for, you know, their wellbeing and their housing. While they should, while these aunts and sisters and uncles and brothers should not be compelling minors to, you know, get false papers, clock in at 11:00 PM to wipe down slaughterhouse equipment with caustic chemicals, like, don't do that…It's actually often relatives, and if we put these folks behind jail, we're just going to end up with a bunch of kids in the foster care system… (*Legal Professional*)

Another respondent noted that traffickers may act or pose as a *significant other*—a tactic commonly seen in sex trafficking cases but can also happen with labor trafficking. In these cases, the trafficker may promise a relationship and then use that to exploit the victim. In other interviews, respondents noted that sometimes the trafficker and survivor are *known to one another* in some way, which could include gaming (e.g., communicating for months in advance) or even living under the same roof. One respondent remarked on the cases they worked on: "A lot of the situations that I see, they're actually living in the same home as the trafficker" (*Program Manager*).

In some cases, traffickers may be individuals within the community, such as *employers* or *neighbors*, who become engaged in trafficking. These may be individuals for whom there was not much of a relationship before the victimization. For example, a respondent noted that in one case, "…it was [their] employer. I don't think there was any prior relationship before that" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). Relatedly, traffickers and survivors might have an *unknown relationship*, being complete strangers before the exploitation: "They almost never know each other" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

### *1.6. Means of Ongoing Control*

Traffickers use a range of tactics to maintain control over survivors, including physical violence, psychological abuse, and degradation. Even when not physically harmful, many of these methods are still effective at trapping victims—by making escape feel impossible without risking further harm or hardship.

In particular, respondents noted that traffickers used a variety of threats, including *threats against family or friends*, *threats of deportation or the legal system*, and *threats of violence* (e.g., decapitation, killed). Some respondents were able to identify how children and families, in particular, were used against victims to keep them compliant:

> I think the only other thing that I would add is about children and how children are also used. So if a parent has children, oftentimes their trafficker will use them as leverage to have the survivor engage in a variety of things at the risk of their children being okay. (*Program Manager*)

> So that would be more of the coercive portions with, "I'll hurt your family. We're not gonna protect your family anymore." (*Law Enforcement Agent*)



Another common tactic involved *controlling or destroying legal documentation*, such as visas, passports, or other forms of identification. These tactics may be particularly effective with foreign-born individuals. A legal professional noted how multiple survivors had their documentation destroyed: "All of them. They all got their stuff destroyed" (*Legal Professional*). This tactic rendered survivors unable to prove their legal status and made them susceptible to immigration-related threats, such as threats of getting the legal system involved or deportation. Another respondent explained how traffickers do not always forcibly take away documentation, but gain access and then confiscate them:

> Make copies of their document, well, supposedly that's the excuse. They're gonna make copies because there's a legitimate job. So they need to provide these documents and they're gonna make copies, and then clients don't see their documents anymore. (*Service Provider*)

*Restricting or monitoring movement and communication* was another way traffickers maintained control over victims. Survivors were often isolated from the outside world, with traffickers restricting or controlling their access to communication devices. As one respondent described, "Most of the traffickers control that way of communicating. They take away cell phones. They do not allow them to have their own email or Facebook. They cancel all those way[s] of communication" (*Administrator*). Another respondent highlighted how victims may not be given access to the internet, so they cannot reach out to family members.

Respondents also noted that *debt bondage* was commonly used to keep victims trapped in exploitative situations. Survivors were often burdened with debts they were expected to repay, yet the conditions made repayment nearly impossible. Even when initial debts were agreed upon, such as loans or travel expenses to come to Nebraska, traffickers frequently added new fees or inflated charges, ensuring the debt never diminished. In some cases, victims were forced to take on debts they never consented to under the pretense of covering recruitment or sponsorship costs. As recalled by one respondent:

> Sometimes the situation arises where it's, "Oh, we paid for your travel here. We paid for your visa processing, we paid for your plane ticket. And you've gotta, and you've gotta repay that." And that's not how the immigration law works in terms of visa sponsorship. (*Legal Professional*)

In this way, the traffickers are aware of the intentional financial burden being placed on victims so that they can continue to benefit from their labor.

In some cases, traffickers *exploited a survivor's physical or mental health conditions*. For example, access to services may be withheld or manipulated to make the victim reliant on the trafficker. As one legal professional explained, "It becomes apparent to the employer that someone may have a mental health issue. They're overly anxious, they're paranoid, and then they take advantage of that" (*Legal Professional*). In another case, the respondent highlighted a medical condition that made the survivor vulnerable, but also how it affected them mentally:

> We had an instance of someone that they had an illness where they [*medical condition*]…And the trafficker was withholding [*their*] medications. [*They*] also, because the individual had went through a lot mentally, [*they*] had a lot of anxiety…[*They*] was being hospitalized…and then the trafficker will visit [*them*] in the hospital and mess [*them*] up more emotionally. (*Service Provider*)

In these cases, escaping from the exploitative situation did not guarantee that the survivor was free from the trafficker's influence. The trafficker used multiple tactics to try and maintain control over the survivor, even when the survivor was receiving services in a formal setting where people were present to protect them and intervene. Another respondent noted how—rather than withholding medication—one trafficker was over-providing medicine to influence the victim: "Yeah, [*they*] had [*medical condition*]. So basically, the trafficker was toying with [*their*] access to [*their*] own medication. But instead of depriving it, [*they*] was overdoing it" (*Legal Professional*)

Likewise, we found that *substances* may be used as tools of manipulation. In cases of labor trafficking, traffickers were reported to manage access to drugs or alcohol. Specifically, several respondents noted that traffickers facilitated access to substances like opioids, methamphetamines, and alcohol as a means of maintaining dependency and control.

Examples of *physical abuse* and *physical restraint* to control victims were less common in cases that stakeholders and service providers worked on. In these instances, the respondents were aware of victims being physically locked in a building/room or strangled. Of course, this does not mean that these experiences did not happen more often across Nebraska. However, the identified cases among the respondents may indicate that other tactics were more effective at maintaining control over victims (e.g., threats, destroying or controlling legal documentation).

### *1.7. Working and Living Conditions*

Survivors of labor trafficking endured challenging and often substandard working and living conditions when they were exploited.

Although the nature of the work could change, the respondents indicated that conditions were *generally unsafe* for individuals. These conditions included being enclosed in an extremely hot space (e.g., temperature in houses exceeding 130 degrees), exposure to caustic chemicals, and working in unsanitary conditions. In another example, children were forced to panhandle on a busy street while the trafficker was watching close by:

> I showed up with water 'cause it was so hot…comes up behind me and [*they're*] in my face and [*they*] got a cell phone and [*they*] got an air-conditioned car. [*They're*] sitting out there with three kids on a busy intersection. They could get hit by a car, they could get, I mean, the car could run over a stick and the stick could snap and hit the kid in the face, or I don't know what could happen. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Individuals in these working conditions were also expected to work *excessively long hours* without adequate *food or drink*, with one respondent reporting that victims were forced to work shifts of up to 12 hours a day, six days a week. During these long days, victims may only be given one meal a day, if anything. In some instances, respondents added that survivors were used to working long hours and not making much money—noting that, in the United States, the cost of living and pay differ from what they are used to. Of course, this can contribute to individuals not self-identifying or recognizing that their experiences are not "normal" or legal.

Survivors were also subjected to *overcrowded living conditions*, such as groups of people confined to a single apartment, as noted by one respondent:

> [*They*] was taken, [*they*] was forced to work that day all the way till really late. They had said that they were gonna provide [*them*] meals. They did not feed [*them*] that day. [*They*] was taken to the apartment where [*they*] describes there was probably about 19 to 20 other individuals in a small apartment where people were crammed. People would walk over each other just to go to the restroom. (*Service Provider*)

Other respondents described victims being forced to sleep in trailers with holes in the floor or on cots in the basement of their workplace.



### *1.8. Pathways to Exit*

The pathways survivors took to exit their trafficking situations were often shaped by the support they received from various sources.

Informal networks—particularly *friends and family members*—often played a critical role by helping survivors recognize that what they were experiencing was unacceptable. As one respondent stated, "A lot of times it's the informal supports, so the family members, the people that are gonna be with these families when we're not involved, are the biggest supports for families to get out of these situations" (*Administrator*). Another respondent echoed these sentiments by stating: "But eventually, again, sometimes it takes like family or themselves just to have an epiphany about, like, 'This isn't right, like, I'm not getting paid,' or, 'This is not the conditions I was promised'" (*Legal Professional*).

Another important support resource included *community members*, including individuals at schools, in churches, and during medical visits who have interacted with survivors during their exploitation. One respondent highlighted the impact that seemingly simple or everyday interactions can have in helping people escape:

> Through churches. So they'll go to church on a weekend and they'll…either people will see it at the church or they'll trust someone at the church that they can disclose to. School resource officers. I've had school resource officers that do those positive drips, positive drips, and ultimately the students feel safe in reporting to the teacher. Educators seeing the kids falling asleep in school and they're concerned about their safety and they pull them in. But the teachers have built that positive trust relationship. Healthcare providers might see someone for an injury. And it's like, "Well, why do you have this big gash on your leg?" "Oh, I was working at a slaughterhouse." "Okay, well you're 15-years old, you know, you shouldn't be working there." So a lot of it is education and prevention efforts are paying off 'cause people are able to identify and then when they identify it, they know where to report it." (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

However, as highlighted by respondents, successful exits often depended on building trust and having an awareness of what trafficking looks like. In many cases, victims were not physically confined—they maintained some contact with community members during their exploitation—creating opportunities to disclose their experiences and seek help.

The importance of *formal support networks*, such as law enforcement and government agencies, was another common theme among respondents. These agencies comprised local law enforcement and other divisions, including the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division, the Department of Children and Family Services, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. One respondent even highlighted an unexpected source of support for survivors—the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The DMV assisted in suspending approximately 20 flagged licenses after they all listed the same home address before contacting the management of the company. In this instance, the address led to a bunkhouse on the company's property. This example also highlights the investigative work necessary to identify and assist potential victims who may not recognize their situation as exploitative.

A few respondents also mentioned *community organizations and providers* that assisted in creating pathways of escape for survivors in addition to serving as a support system. For example, one respondent stated:

> There are a lot of really good, you know, nonprofits, a lot of really good pro bono providers that specialize in this and work closely with victims like this that can get them the mental health they need, can get them to housing, all those type of things. Yeah. And those are great, great organizations. (*Legal Professional*)

Other respondents noted that exiting an exploitative situation can be a gradual process. For example, one respondent noted, "Kind of like advocates in our program. They might build relationships with them while they're still in the situation to help them get out eventually" (*Program Manager*). Another respondent emphasized the role of providers in helping survivors recognize that what they are experiencing is a crime. Hence, they feel like they can escape:

> The hardest thing is they have to realize that they're in that situation and that it's not okay, the way they're being treated. And there are other ways that you can survive. You know, this person doesn't have all the keys for your survival just because you feel like you don't have a community, like you do have a community around. So it's just helping them understand what's going on because a lot of times traffickers are so tricky and good at the way that they manipulate, that you might think that you're okay or you might think that this is just how things are in America, or, you know, whatever. I think that's the biggest step, is helping them. (*Service Provider*)

Having access to constant support and building trust over time can result in helping survivors successfully escape trafficking situations.

In other cases, survivors were responsible for their *own escape*. Although resources may have been provided later to assist them after their exploitation, the actual exit was on their own accord. For example, respondents discussed cases where victims could seize small opportunities to flee their traffickers and reclaim their freedom. As exemplified by one respondent, the victim ran when they were able:

> In the situation that I'm thinking of, [*they*] just left from there. [*Their*] situation is, where [*they*] was staying, they boarded up the windows and things like that. But [*they*] just waited for an opportunity where [*they*] could run out the door, and [*they*] did. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

In another case, the victim was able to figure out the Wi-Fi password and then communicate with someone to help them escape. The resilience of survivors to strategize their own exit strategy is particularly inspiring, especially when they may not be familiar with the local area or language.

There were inconsistencies regarding whether survivors of labor trafficking used a *hotline* as a pathway for their escape. Some respondents recalled that their clients used a hotline to report their circumstances, for example: "We had minors actually report to the hotline and report even family members that were exploiting them to work" (*Service Provider*). Other respondents, however, had different experiences. When asked if survivors have used a hotline to report their experiences, a respondent stated: "Never. They don't. You know, and sometimes it's so even when we get involved, they don't want it to be a big deal. They just want it to go away" (*Administrator*).

### *1.9. Unique Aspects of Nebraska for Trafficking*

Respondents identified several factors specific to Nebraska that may contribute to the facilitation of labor trafficking. One such factor is the presence of certain *industries and venues* across the state. For example, construction companies were noted as a prominent venue that could facilitate trafficking, given the growth in the housing market. Other industries referenced included agriculture and massage parlors. Another respondent mentioned the high number of factories and, as highlighted earlier, the role of the cleaning industry:

> I think we do have a lot of factories here. And a lot of cleaning situations. Like a lot of janitorial, things like that work. I think because we do meat, we do have like a lot of packing plants and stuff like that. It could be easy for people to kind of start engaging in those things or being recruited basically. (*Service Provider*)

In this context, many prominent industries are concentrated in rural Nebraska. One respondent noted that some areas of the state are isolated from the more urban cities. This isolation impacts survivors by creating a barrier to accessing services or getting help to escape their labor trafficking situation—thus giving traffickers greater control.



Nebraska economy sectors often have demanding jobs that rely on a steady supply of labor, which can create opportunities for exploitation. The respondents noted that Nebraska's relatively *low unemployment rate* and *labor shortage* make it an appealing destination for individuals seeking job opportunities. According to respondents, many seeking work-related opportunities are immigrants who may lack proper documentation, placing them at greater risk of being exploited by employers. One respondent explained:

> I think Nebraska has a lot of industry within this…a lot of work within this industry that we've talked about that might be sought after out of some individuals who maybe are migrant workers looking for opportunities to work and to get money. Such as food plants, processing plants, factory work. (*Program Manager*)

Another respondent highlighted how children are also vulnerable to these opportunities, especially if they are expected to provide for their families:

> I think maybe what is becoming more, not that it wasn't happening before, but we're becoming more aware of it, is the child labor trafficking…But I think that is something that might be changing in the sense, again, that maybe we're more aware of it and it's always happened, but just that we're getting more and more vulnerable kids in the state. And those kids are desperate to work and send money back to get their families outta poverty. And so they don't see it as an issue that they're 14, working 14-hour days. They're happy to do it. They wanna do it. And so there's a big vulnerability and a huge opportunity to take advantage of them. (*Administrator*)

A few respondents mentioned the role of the major interstate in Nebraska—*I-80*—in addition to *large tourist or sporting events* that bring people to the state:

> Travel on I-80, tourism…with the sort of nationwide and international events. High dollar amount. I think all types of trafficking is increases. (*Administrator*)

However, other respondents noted that *trafficking happens everywhere*, and they did not believe there was "anything specific to Nebraska…that would lend itself to the prevalence of labor trafficking" (*Legal Professional*).

### *1.10. Overlap between Sex Trafficking and Labor Trafficking*

Based on respondents' experiences, sex trafficking, and labor trafficking do occur in complex and nuanced ways. Several respondents reported cases where there was a clear intersection between the two forms of exploitation, for example, instances where *sex and labor trafficking overlapped*. Many respondents indicated that survivors had experienced both sex trafficking and labor trafficking simultaneously. As shared by one respondent:

> So the survivors that we most often work with are survivors who have been exploited for both sex and labor. Typically there is a portion of a promise of some form of a job that didn't exist. There is the use of substances to entice the survivor, and or there's a relationship of love that is essentially promised as well. Would be another means. But upon the survivor engaging in the relationship or engaging in the promise to work, then they are forced into selling sex. Sometimes it's been domestic servitude, but not to the extent where it was only domestic servitude. There was a combination of that as well as exchanging sex and not just with the perpetrator, but with multiple people. (*Program Manager*).

In these instances, victims were forced to engage in commercial sex acts in addition to performing labor for their traffickers. Relatedly, some respondents viewed *forced sex as an inherent component of labor trafficking*, which linked the two. As one respondent stated, "So, I just wanna be clear with you, sex is a form of labor" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

In other cases, respondents noted instances of *sexual exchanges occurring within labor trafficking contexts*, but whether these situations met the formal criteria for "sex trafficking" was unclear. For example, in response to being asked if they noticed an overlap between sex and labor trafficking, a respondent shared, "Not really, but it is the managers or the person, the supervisors. They try to tell them, the ladies, about something like that. Something favor sex...." (*Service Provider*). Similarly, a program manager reflected on the ambiguity: "I mean, no. I mean, I guess sometimes it might turn into where they would force them to like have sex with somebody for an exchange, but like, I don't know if you would consider that because they're not necessarily doing it voluntarily. It's not their decision to do that, and they're not wanting to. You know? So, I don't know" (*Program Manager*).

These accounts highlight that while some respondents were aware of sexual exploitation occurring during labor trafficking, the nature and extent of these acts were not always clearly defined or well understood. This ambiguity contributes to challenges in identifying and categorizing trafficking experiences.

### *1.11. Overlap between Forced Criminality and Labor Trafficking*

Some respondents reported an *overlap with forced criminality*—situations in which individuals were compelled to engage in crimes while being trafficked for labor. Examples included drug ingestion, robbery, theft, and selling or smuggling drugs, all occurring simultaneously within forced labor. One respondent recalled a case involving youths: "I remember there being like a forced labor situation. And that one actually did involve teenagers. A forced labor situation. And there was like physical assaults, robbery, breaking and entering, that kind of thing" (*Administrator*). Other respondents discussed engagement in sex work as a form of forced criminality, highlighting the complex intersection of labor trafficking, potential sex trafficking, and coerced criminal behavior. For example, one respondent shared: "Like drug smuggling, just like lying, using false documents to work. Also like sex trafficking, right? Being sex worker. Mainly that" (*Legal Professional*). The respondents also mentioned that victims were often arrested for crimes they may have been forced to commit during their exploitation.

Although some respondents identified an overlap, others noted that *forced criminality did not occur* in cases they had worked on. Instead, respondents referenced other unlawful behaviors or situations that they did not believe fit the criteria (e.g., using false documents, forced work that left children at home alone, status offenses for minors who missed school due to work).

Overall, forced criminality was identified as a component of labor trafficking experiences for some respondents. However, the nature of these acts—and their overlap with other forms of trafficking—was, again, not always clearly understood or easily categorized by respondents.

## Considering "Fraud" in the Context of Legal Criteria

When examining the definitional components of labor trafficking, it's important to recognize that criteria are not consistent across sources (see also Zhang et al., 2014). The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act definition (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, as amended)[a] includes "fraud" as a mean that traffickers use to compel victims to engage in labor. However, neither the federal Forced Labor definition (2000, as amended)[b] nor the Nebraska Revised Statute 28-830 criteria of forced labor[c] under the labor trafficking[d] definition specify "fraud" in their language. In these cases, "fraud" may be a component of a labor trafficking situation, but it would require additional means (e.g., force or threat) to be legally classified as such. In combination with the fact that respondents apply both federal and state legislation to classify labor trafficking in Nebraska, it is important to consider the role "fraud" has in these crimes.

Approximately 81% ($n = 21$) of respondents interviewed noted that "fraud" or false promises were a type of mean used to control victims. Controlling or threatening to control substances (88.5%, $n = 23$), threats (88.5%, $n = 23$), financial harm (80.8%, $n = 21$), and destroying/concealing/confiscating legal documents (76.9%, $n = 20$) were also discussed. Other types of means were present in cases that stakeholders and service providers worked on, but not as consistently across respondents (physical restraint, violence, or controlling/monitoring movement: 69.2%, $n = 18$; exploiting a disability: 42.3%, $n = 11$).

Overall, it may be that aspects of fraud alone do not need to determine if someone is a victim of labor trafficking given the variety of means that traffickers use. This may also indicate that respondents can rely on diverse criteria when proving the legal definitions are being met. In other words, respondents' descriptions of labor trafficking in Nebraska included a variety of means in addition to "fraud" to identify these cases or survivors (see also **Table 2**).

[a] Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 USC § 7102 [11][B]). *Involuntary servitude*—a condition of servitude induced by means of any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process (22 USC § 7102 [8]). *Debt bondage*—the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by debtor of his or her personal services or those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined (22 USC § 7102 [7]).

[b] Whoever knowingly provides or obtains the labor or services of a person by any one of, or by any combination of, the following means—(1) by means of force, threats of force, physical restraint, or threats of physical restraint to that person or another person; (2) by means of serious harm or threats of serious harm to that person or another person; (3) by means of the abuse or threatened abuse of law or legal process; or (4) by means of any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause the person to believe that, if that person did not perform such labor or services, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint.

[c] Forced labor or services means labor or services that are performed or provided by another person and are obtained or maintained through: (a) Inflicting or threatening to inflict serious personal injury, as defined by section 28-318, on another person; (b) Physically restraining or threatening to physically restrain the other person; (c) Abusing or threatening to abuse the legal process against another person to cause arrest or deportation for violation of federal immigration law; (d) Controlling or threatening to control another person's access to a controlled substance listed in Schedule I, II or III of section 28-405; (e) Exploiting another person's substantial functional impairment as defined in section 28-368 or substantial mental impairment as defined in section 28-369; (f) Knowingly destroying, concealing, removing, confiscating, or possessing any actual or purported passport or other immigration document or any other actual or purported government identification document of the other person; or (g) Causing or threatening to cause financial harm to another person, including debt bondage.

[d] Labor trafficking means knowingly recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining by any means or attempting to recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide, or obtain by any means a person eighteen years of age or older intending or knowing that the person will be subjected to forced labor or services.

# *Research Objective #2: What are the Challenges in Investigations?*

Investigating and prosecuting labor trafficking presents a unique set of challenges for professionals across various sectors. Respondents described a range of experiences—both with and without direct involvement in such cases—that shed light on the complexities of identifying, building, and pursuing labor trafficking cases. Eight key themes are outlined below: (1) distinguishing labor trafficking and labor exploitation, (2) experiences and roles in investigations, (3) tips and referrals for investigations, (4) challenges when investigating labor trafficking, (5) strategies to overcome challenges, (6) case successes, (7) the most important aspects to consider, and (8) envisioned roles for respondents who are not directly involved in investigations. Subthemes within these broader categories are highlighted in *red*.

## *2.1. Distinguishing Labor Trafficking and Labor Exploitation*

Stakeholder and service provider interviews revealed varying perceptions of how labor trafficking is defined. Respondents generally described labor trafficking regarding the means of control involved and how these elements align with Nebraska and/or federal legal definitions. These means could include elements of force (e.g., violence), fraud (e.g., deception or lies), or coercion (e.g., threats). In other words, determining whether traffickers compelled victims to work through force, fraud, or coercion was central to identifying labor trafficking.

> In Nebraska, ***labor trafficking*** can generally be distinguished from ***exploitative or abusive labor practices*** by the means used to compel someone to work and whether they can escape or do so without suffering serious harm.
>
> For example, an employer offering someone a job at a certain wage and then not paying them at all or not paying them the agreed upon amount is a form of deception and is unfair. It may also be a crime. However, it may not legally be defined as "labor trafficking" unless the individual is compelled to work through some means where they either cannot escape the situation or cannot do so without suffering serious harm (e.g., physical violence, threats of deportation, documents confiscated).

A related concept to "labor trafficking" is "labor exploitation" or other abusive labor practices. Respondents were asked how they differentiated between these concepts when working on cases or with survivors in Nebraska. Generally, they noted that the signs often appear similar and that survivors' experiences rarely fall neatly into one category. Instead, each case must be examined individually. The themes from these discussions illustrate how respondents navigated these complexities and attempted to reconcile and classify their experiences.

One way in which respondents distinguished labor trafficking from exploitation was the *explicit presence of force* to make individuals work. Respondents generally recognized that victims were being treated unfairly or deceived somehow. However, they noted that in many cases, individuals were not physically forced to remain in their jobs. For example, some respondents emphasized that the absence of overt force—despite exploitative conditions—would be classified as labor exploitation rather than labor trafficking:

> And so somebody may be living with somebody, for instance, and working for them, but can come and go as they want. But they think that staying there is okay. And so it's not really forced, but it's evident that the person is taking advantage of the person that's there working essentially. And so I guess that would be where I would consider it exploitation and not necessarily trafficking. (*Program Manager*)

> We do see where people are taken advantage of, primarily in like construction and independent contractor and those kind of fields. But they're not being forced. It's not, they're just being treated, paid unfairly. (*Program Manager*)

Other respondents emphasized that distinctions could be made as to *whether the survivors were brought in to be exploited*. For example, trafficking was described as involving deception at the outset, such as being misled into traveling for work under false pretenses. At the same time, exploitation entailed similar abuses of power but without that initial deception. Some respondents noted that in Nebraska, labor trafficking cases may involve individuals who were intentionally brought to an employer for the specific purpose of being exploited:

> Most of the individuals come willingly looking for jobs and just trying to get, make ends meet. And I think that the companies kind of take advantage of that, reduce wages. They don't provide like, you know, benefits…Versus labor trafficking, they might actually be brought in to be exploited. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

> Labor trafficking will be when the person is brought here for the purpose of that. You know, when they are led to believe that they'll come here, they'll have, you know, and work in a certain field and those sort of thing. But in fact, when they come, they only serve the purpose of somebody as that number one, have lied to them…on the other side, labor exploitation is when these people are here and they use 'em to work in some industry or to make them work and not really receive the remuneration that they earn or actually deserve, so they make 'em work on a lower rate or make 'em work so much and really not paying them for the hours that they are owed." (*Administrator*)

> Well, I mean, I guess that's…I would say that trafficking is the bringing of somebody from one place to another for work, whereas maybe that's not quite the same as exploitation. I guess is one, is maybe the big thing. But obviously I think there's often exploitation in trafficking. So again, the typical scenario I see whether it's the person being brought from a foreign country or from even another state to, again, usually Nebraska in my case, it's just they get brought here, promised things, and then they're not paid, or they're not paid adequately, or they get treated worsely by threats of deportation. So that's, again, what I kind of see in this realm. (*Legal Professional*)

Generally, these respondents differentiated the role of recruiting victims, emphasizing the use of deceptive tactics to lure individuals into trafficking situations.

Several respondents also emphasized the complexities surrounding the *role of consent*. For example, while an individual may initially agree to work, that consent does not exclude later experiences of abuse or control by their employer. However, this initial agreement can complicate identifying a situation as trafficking for investigators. As one respondent explained:

> They're free to leave, and if you're willing to go and do a job for a dollar an hour and you're happy doing it, and then all of a sudden one day you get mad and you're like, "I'm being trafficked." It's like, "No, you're not being trafficked. You took that job voluntarily. You were free to leave. You didn't have to take that job." You know?…It meets the elements of this crime; it doesn't meet the elements of that crime…And I'm not saying that they're not being labor trafficked but with limited resources, I have an obligation to go after the person that's being labor trafficked right this minute, and if it's a child, it even goes to a higher priority. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Other respondents highlighted that trafficking is less about initial consent and more about what happens after they work: "It's a matter of control. If the individual feels that they cannot escape it…it's a hard thing to say 'cause I feel like I've witnessed both" (*Program Manager*).

*Autonomy*, and specifically, a lack thereof, was repeatedly described as a core distinguishing factor between labor trafficking and labor exploitation. Respondents noted that survivors who no longer had the freedom to leave their jobs, access services, or make decisions about their lives were in trafficking situations. "When they no longer have freedom to decide to stay at that labor…they don't have freedom to leave or they're being promised something they're not being provided" (*Legal Professional*). Similarly, other respondents noted:

> For labor exploitation, I think people are able to leave. And they're not threatened to have their family members hurt or kill or withhold the documents. (*Administrator*)

> For labor exploitation, from my understanding is, if somebody is still getting paid or not 100 percent reliant on whatever person in power that they're working with, and trafficking there is like a very clear lack of autonomy in a person. (*Service Provider*)

Thus, respondents highlighted that being able to distinguish a loss of personal agency at the hands of their employer was a key factor in determining when these experiences crossed into trafficking.

Another major theme in separating trafficking from exploitation was the presence or absence of *fear*. Fear—whether rooted in threats, immigration status, or manipulation—was perceived as a key marker that a case may constitute labor trafficking rather than just exploitation. As noted by one respondent: "If the person is in fear, that would be more than exploitation" (*Service Provider*). Even in the absence of physical force, fear was noted as being a powerful tool that prevented victims from leaving or disclosing their abuse. Another respondent noted that "When they start withholding their right to walk away from employment through fear or control of documents…it starts hitting into that trafficking part of it" (*Service Provider*). Others noted that survivors may not acknowledge they are being controlled due to fear of retaliation or consequences: "They're not going to work on their own free will…which never happens because they're afraid of the repercussions" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

Several respondents emphasized that labor trafficking often has an *immigration component*. Immigrants were perceived as particularly vulnerable by respondents, especially if they were newer to the United States or lacked legal documentation. As noted by one respondent:

> I guess in my definition, I would say that labor trafficking [is] geared more towards migrants and people that maybe don't have a solid placehold in the United States versus the exploitation I would gear towards more people that maybe you're looking for work and already established in the U.S. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Other respondents echoed that traffickers often target newly arrived migrants or undocumented workers, who may have limited access to support networks, legal recourse, or services. "I view labor trafficking as there's definitely an immigration component. Labor exploitation may just be the working conditions, the wage, something like that" (*Legal Professional*). A respondent further added, "Those who are undocumented. They are the most prime, in my opinion, to be victim of labor trafficking. They can be brought from here to here" (*Administrator*).

Finally, respondents identified *withholding documents*, such as passports or work permits, as a common coercive tactic that crosses the boundary between exploitation and trafficking. Unlike issues related to wages or verbal threats, respondents viewed this practice as a clear red flag that signaled potential trafficking. One respondent noted: "Withholding passports, that kind of thing could certainly tip it over to trafficking" (*Service Provider*). Other respondents described how this tactic restricted freedom and reinforced dependency, tapping into elements of autonomy and consent. As described by a law enforcement agent, "So holding onto those documents or something may be held over them where they feel like they cannot leave" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).



## *2.2. Experience and Roles in Investigations*

Not all respondents had experience working on labor trafficking investigations. The respondents with experience described a range of roles reflecting diverse responsibilities across agencies, jurisdictions, and professional disciplines. While some respondents were directly involved in formal investigations and efforts to pursue criminal charges, others contributed through supporting roles.

**Direct Involvement in Investigations.** *Law enforcement personnel* were primarily responsible for leading or supporting investigations. The respondents described a range of responsibilities, spanning from identification, investigations, and fostering collaborations. Specifically, these roles included roadside stops, interviews, documentation, and coordination with federal agencies. However, officers commonly noted that their investigations rarely progressed to prosecution. For example, "We would arrest the driver, and then we would transport the victims, and ICE [*Immigration and Customs Enforcement*] would basically handle it from there. They would handle all the charges. They would handle all the help for the victims" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). In smaller jurisdictions, law enforcement personnel acted more as gatekeepers, referring suspected trafficking cases to federal or specialized agencies because they lacked the resources or capacity to handle them internally. One respondent noted:

> I tried to pass a lot of this information on to HSI [*Homeland Security Investigations*], INS [*Immigration and Naturalization Services*], several other outside agencies that have a little bit more specialty in dealing with them, because like I said, we're a small agency… And our resources are pretty limited. And so I tried to get the ball rolling on bigger investigations, but I think we're kind of small fish compared to a lot of what they're dealing with. So, bottom of the list type deal. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

A subset of respondents also held positions specifically dedicated to *child and juvenile investigations*, especially during the early investigative phase. These individuals often led early case documentation, affidavits, and testimony in cases involving minors. As one respondent described, "We went and investigated… wrote up my affidavit, requested the file, testified on what I witnessed and what the child victim disclosed" (*Program Manager*). Considering the population being supported, the customized approach for investigating crimes against children also presented its own challenges, such as addressing the physical neglect of the child's needs or involving Child Protective Services.

Other respondents participated in formal human trafficking *investigative task forces or multidisciplinary teams* designed to enhance coordination, streamline information sharing, and improve agency outcomes. As described by one agent: "You'd have more deputies, troopers, or officers that can help you investigate it. So just having that network and then reporting it to the human trafficking task force/hotline" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). However, respondents noted that the effectiveness of these task forces varied widely depending on agency buy-in, communication processes, and survivor availability.

**Supporting Roles in Investigations.** Some roles were described as intersecting with—but distinct from—traditional investigative work. Rather than gathering evidence in the field, many focused on assisting survivors in pursuing legal civil remedies or immigration relief, such as T visa certifications. In more complex cases requiring additional *legal advocacy*, respondents served as intermediaries between survivors and law enforcement, facilitating communication and coordination between the legal system and investigative efforts. As one respondent in this role mentioned:

> I specialize in representing individuals who have been victims of violent crime or severe forms of trafficking…I've also worked with just local law enforcement agencies to help my clients get what is called T-certification. (*Legal Professional*)

Some legal providers navigated dual roles, offering procedural guidance and documentation support to both survivors and, in some cases, employers under investigation. For example, one respondent noted: "Sometimes I'm on the side of the employer…and oftentimes I'm on the side of the victim, providing assistance and legal counsel to them" (*Legal Professional*). These roles underscore the importance of legal advocates in upholding their clients' rights while supporting other aspects of investigations, such as documentation.

While still operating under investigative roles, other professionals, such as *forensic interviewers*, played a vital role by conducting trauma-informed interviews, particularly in cases involving minors. These interviews, typically requested by law enforcement officials or service agencies, aimed to reduce the number of times victims had to recount their stories.

Other respondents described the involvement of broader multidisciplinary teams that prioritized *survivor stabilization* once identified. Their roles focused on building trust, addressing survivors' immediate needs, and ensuring a coordinated approach to legal and social service systems. In these instances, social workers or partner agencies led the initial engagement, ensuring basic needs were addressed before initiating legal processes. One law enforcement agent explained these teams' roles and responsibilities: "Often they have social work needs that need to be addressed first…so I lean on my social work team" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). This approach allowed for trauma-informed engagement while laying the groundwork for more formal investigations and potential cooperation from survivors.

### *2.3. Tips and Referrals for Investigations*

Law enforcement personnel often served as an initial contact or entry point for identifying survivors of labor trafficking. Tips about potential labor trafficking cases or referrals to law enforcement came from multiple sources. As a result, it was not always immediately clear that an individual was a survivor of labor trafficking at the time of identification or when an investigation was initiated.

One way that police learned about potential labor trafficking was when *survivors were already connected to community providers* and redirected to them. After building trust, the providers encouraged survivors to report to law enforcement. For example, one respondent noted:

> So it's self-referrals, it's hotline tips. It's people in the community that have seen something and they're reporting something. There are nonprofit organizations that served as advocacy for these survivors of labor trafficking. And they might call in and report something, or they might tell a survivor, "Hey, I have a really good friend and you can trust [*them*]. I work with [*them*] all the time. Can I call [*them*] and have [*them*] come down here right now?" It's people just reporting information to law enforcement so law enforcement can act on it. It's really hard to identify labor trafficking without a tip or a lead. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Another way police learned about potential labor trafficking was during seemingly unrelated investigations where officials were able to recognize *trafficking indicators during regular duties*. These encounters often began as responses to typical traffic stops or minor violations, but subtle behaviors, such as fear, anxiety, or avoidance, raised concerns. This awareness prompted law enforcement officials to investigate further to determine whether exploitation occurred. For example, two respondents described how these signs can emerge in everyday interactions:

> Their driving patterns when they see us. And that's usually how we get into contact with them because obviously the driver is anxiety because [*they*] know that…breaking the law. So you'll see them same patterns as you would with any other criminal behaviors, like transporting narcotics or something. But even when we stop 'em, they don't reach out. The only way we can do anything is if they tell us they're not there on their own free will right now. So we usually have to let 'em go. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

> They get either pulled over for something minor, like a traffic violation. And then while conducting that investigation or while trying to verify information, that's when we start to find out that, "Okay, none of this is adding up. Like, for example, [*they*] had a completely falsified social security number, a different name on [*their*] driver's license than the name that [*they*] gave us. And the [*they*] were actually very nice, very cooperative. So that's kind of what, and that leads me to, you know, question whether or not, their payment is also being fair or any of that. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Similar behavioral indicators were also present after or during an arrest. However, these indicators were likely to manifest in correctional settings, where victims showed signs of fear and anxiety. These reactions suggested underlying concerns, prompting staff to question this distress:

> A lot of times they come in and they're pretty jittery. They're pretty anxious about being in jail and what's gonna happen. You know, is their trafficker gonna be upset? And also is the trafficker gonna get out right away, right? Or get them out. And we've experienced that a lot where they're not wanting to leave jail and they've been bailed out and we can't keep 'em when they've been bailed out. (*Service Provider*)

Other tips came from *formal reporting systems or task forces*, which were passed to law enforcement to investigate. For example, one respondent explained that tips often come through Nebraska's task force: "Through a complaint of some type or a referral from the Nebraska Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force. For labor trafficking, we have not many…" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). Similarly, other referrals stemmed from more outputs, such as reports, cases, and incidents, where respondents identified concerns during regular duties or tips reported to the agency:

> How labor trafficking is brought to our attention sometimes is just us reading…reports and catching those details. Sometimes it comes in as a tip. Sometimes it's both of those. It could be a CPS [*Child Protection Services*] worker who's working with a family who has some concerns and they come down and talk to us. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

These accounts underscore the importance of early identification protocols and the important role that informal means, such as hotlines, tips, and referrals, play in helping investigators recognize and pursue potential labor trafficking cases. These examples show how law enforcement involvement often began in indirect or unexpected ways, reinforcing the need for awareness and coordination across agencies.

### *2.4. Case Challenges*

Across interviews, respondents identified a variety of ongoing challenges that limited their ability to effectively investigate labor trafficking cases and provide consistent support to survivors. These challenges are organized into key themes: organizational/structural, survivor, and cultural considerations.

**Organizational/Structural Considerations.** Organizational or structural factors played a role in how labor trafficking cases were able to proceed in Nebraska. A recurring theme among respondents was a *lack of coordination between agencies and/or establishing the main agency* for investigation. The respondents frequently described breakdowns in communication, delayed referrals, and uncertainty about which agency should lead an investigation. For example, one law respondent discussed issues when trying to coordinate investigations or obtain guidance:

> We try to involve state and local courts and get their opinions…and possibly DHHS [*Department of Health and Human Services*], depending on the child, the victims that are there. But most of 'em won't do anything unless there's criminal charges present. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Another respondent spoke to the confusion at the local level when initiating investigations:

> Who's gonna be the best agency...There's a lot of agencies that don't have experience with trafficking. So just getting the initial ball rolling and establishing who's the best point of contact to lead an investigation like this. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

These gaps frequently led to missed opportunities for early intervention and heightened the risk that survivors would not receive the support they needed. Respondents emphasized the need for a clear point of contact and stronger collaboration across jurisdictions and professional disciplines.

Another important consideration involved *investigative blind spots*. Limited information at the time of initial contact often made it difficult for professionals to grasp the full scope of the situation, particularly when labor trafficking was misidentified or overshadowed by other offenses, such as domestic violence or sexual assault. "We get called in and the cooperation generally is not that great," explained one respondent, further elaborating that "The suspect is in the next room or right outside the emergency room...so that's a difficult one if you're trying to figure out if it's domestic assault" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). In addition to initial investigative challenges, delayed reporting further complicated efforts to build strong cases: "The amount of time that can pass from some of these acts to when it is reported can be an issue...A lot of times there's just no way to corroborate a lot of things that are said" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). In such cases, survivors may be left without any recourse through the justice system while traffickers continue to operate within their communities.

Even when trafficking was clearly and timely identified, respondents expressed concerns over *delays in arrests or, in many cases, lack of arrests* altogether. As previously noted, arrests and prosecutions for labor trafficking were rare. More commonly, traffickers were charged with related offenses, providing some avenue for accountability, though far from ideal. One respondent shared, "I've never had a case where we've arrested the actual trafficker unless there were other criminal charges present" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). Others highlighted how quickly suspects could be released even when arrests were made. As one law enforcement agent explained, "Their bond is posted, and they're gone. After I get off shift, you know, two hours later, they're bonded out" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). This perceived inability of the justice system to effectively hold traffickers accountable not only discouraged investigators but also contributed to a breakdown of trust in the system among survivors.

**Survivor Considerations.** One of the most significant challenges highlighted by both legal and law enforcement professionals was the difficulty of advancing labor trafficking cases, largely due to *survivors' credibility and willingness to testify*. Concerns over safety of their family were also central in decisions to cooperate with investigations. A question posed to one service provider from a client was: "Okay, I comply with testifying. And I do everything, and I'm safe here, but what happens to my family in [*home county*]?" Even when trafficking indicators were present, respondents explained that cases often stalled because survivors were either unwilling or unable to testify. Additional barriers included the challenge of proving coercion, the lack of physical evidence, and concerns related to the perceived credibility of survivors during the trial. As described by one respondent:

> It's really difficult to prove and victims aren't always willing to testify that it makes it difficult to prosecute...You also have issues with credibility on the part of the victim, whether it's of their substance abuse or just their own memory of things. It's all working against us. (*Program Manager*)

This reluctance was often linked to a deep fear of retaliation from traffickers, deportation, and the justice system itself. The respondent continued:

> The willingness of the witness, they were already conditioned to not talk and not really share information. They were already conditioned to think like they deserved it, they owed 'em money. This is fair, this is what they have to do. So I think when they're being told that's not true, it's, who do you believe at this point? (*Program Manager*)



Relatedly, respondents noted that it was not uncommon for survivors to be arrested or charged for crimes committed while they were being exploited (e.g., drug use/possession, prostitution, illegally obtaining documentation, panhandling, petty theft). These circumstances placed *survivors in the position of defendants*, creating significant barriers to building trust and rapport within the justice system. For example, as noted by one respondent:

> But what we see as like a fairy tale of promises, like, "You're gonna have a better life. You're gonna have better pay, and we're gonna provide housing. We're gonna do all these things for you." And then once they're there, some of our clients were actually getting arrested for working illegally in the United States, and they were just being victims of trafficking. One of our clients got arrested three times before...I'm sorry, that it was a labor trafficking situation. So here our clients getting criminal backgrounds and getting slammed with the justice system, not knowing that these are actual victims of trafficking and they're being forced to work. So we have seen that as well. And when we're trying to fix documentations, those are barriers that we have ran into, where people just think they're working not legally in the United States and they're getting charged. And then out of nowhere, they were actually... victims of labor trafficking. (*Service Provider*)

As a result, testifying—whether against their traffickers or in their own defense—was rare. Many survivors chose to accept plea deals rather than face the uncertainty of a trial. This dynamic made it even harder for survivors to recognize and speak about their exploitation, let alone place faith in a system that had also criminalized them.

Another critical theme was the survivor's own understanding—or lack thereof—of their victimization. Several respondents noted that *survivors did not recognize their victimization* or identify their experience as labor trafficking. This lack of recognition was due to shame, fear, or understanding of their legal rights. A respondent explained this: "Victims not being able to talk. Victims not wanting to get out, or they don't feel victimized. They don't feel like a victim" (*Program Manager*). Respondents further noted that a lack of self-recognition among survivors often prevents cases from progressing, with several emphasizing that understanding one's own victimization is a gradual process that requires time, trust, and support. As one respondent said:

> It's not gonna be like, "Have you been trafficked?" "Yes." And sometimes it doesn't get...all the pieces don't come together immediately. But other times it's subtler, and it's a source of shame and anger. (*Legal Professional*)

Finally, deep-rooted *fear and mistrust of law enforcement* emerged as structural barriers that hindered survivor engagement. Respondents stressed that undocumented survivors, in particular, often associated law enforcement with risk, not safety or support. The respondents noted that while law enforcement is necessary to proceed with an investigation, it can also be a direct hindrance:

> I think fear, intimidation, distrust, not just of those specific people, but of what police represent to them, of the authority that they have, the power differential. The lies that maybe they've been told if they're undocumented, so much. (*Administrator*)

> Law enforcement being involved...can be scary and keep people from moving forward. (*Program Manager*)

This dynamic made it difficult to build trust and reassure survivors that they had rights and were entitled to protections.

**Cultural Considerations.** Relatedly, a *lack of cultural representation and awareness* created barriers for investigations and survivors. Some respondents shared that it was difficult to fully understand the lived experiences of survivors from diverse backgrounds, especially those from Indigenous or remote Central American communities. While some respondents recognized that this challenge was due to their lack of cultural competency, others highlighted systemic issues that left agencies unprepared to serve these populations effectively. For example, one respondent stated that, "We're set up for failure. There's no foundation of trust between us and these communities. The cultural barriers are just too great to overcome" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). We found that respondents often wanted to offer support or assistance but found themselves unable to bridge the gap between survivors and available resources.

*Difficulties communicating* with survivors who spoke languages or dialects outside of English or Spanish were often cited. While most agencies were equipped to assist Spanish-speaking survivors, many lacked access to interpreters for Indigenous languages, certain Central American dialects, and Southeast Asian or Chinese dialects such as Mandarin and Cantonese. Respondents expanded on these experiences, outlining how they may impede investigations:

> Language barrier was huge. And the unwillingness to talk or testify by the individuals was always difficult. And the fact that when you were working with a translator, for example, typically the translator worked for the company, so it's kinda like, "Are you telling them what I'm saying? Or are you adding stuff in?" (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

> There's a huge spike. It's just gonna get worse. Language barriers are huge, huge, huge. We don't have…There's certain dialects that we didn't even touch on. Oh goodness. I can't even think of it right now…It's impossible. You know? And then they say, "Oh, use a language line"…And so you're not able to build a relationship with someone…It's like the flow and the interaction. Like, you engage with someone in their eyes and you smile and you agree. You shake your head when you agree. All that stuff, it's out the window when the translation comes in. And then you'll hope that it's being translated appropriately, you know? And effectively. So I think those are just the barriers. There's so many barriers. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Overall, respondents expressed frustration over their inability to fully connect with survivors, which often hindered their understanding of the exploitation and limited the progress of investigations.

### *2.5. Strategies to Overcome Challenges*

In the face of barriers, respondents shared several promising strategies they have used to improve investigative responses and survivor outcomes in labor trafficking cases. These approaches—born from experience, trials, and, in many cases, frustration—reflect a practical understanding of navigating complex systems while keeping survivors at the center. Many respondents emphasized that although limitations remain, intentional collaboration, survivor trust-building, and staff preparedness can greatly expand what is achievable in these cases.

Respondents highlighted the importance of *building cross-agency partnerships*. Coordination between service providers, law enforcement, legal professionals, and community partners helped address resource gaps, clarify roles, and ensure survivors received more holistic support. These partnerships were particularly critical in cases that spanned multiple jurisdictions or required federal involvement. As described by one respondent: "Because these cases are going to most likely span across multiple states and countries, it's not gonna be feasible to work it if you don't have a federal partner who's on board and willing to help" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). By creating clear lines of communication and mutual understanding across agencies, these collaborations helped prevent duplicative efforts and made it easier to move cases forward.



Equally important was the emphasis on *building and maintaining rapport with survivors*. In contrast to rigid timelines or expectations of immediate disclosure, respondents described the need to meet survivors where they are—emotionally, physically, and psychologically. This often meant allowing survivors to take the lead in their case, even if it involved periods of silence or disengagement with the investigative process:

> Building relationships. Time. So if they're not ready the first time they came in, they might come back once down the road…once they realize or once that relationship is built or they realize that they do wanna get out. (*Program Manager*)

Others echoed that follow-through was key to building credibility by showing "that we're gonna follow through on what we're gonna do. That was a big one to help overcome some of those things" (*Program Manager*).

*Early identification and rapid responses* were consistently highlighted as critical to improving the effectiveness of investigations. Respondents stressed the importance of swift action— during intake, emergency medical visits, or initial traffic stops—to prevent traffickers from fleeing and to secure key information before it could be lost. These early encounters could open the door to more robust investigations if handled appropriately. However, respondents emphasized that everyone working on the investigation needs to understand and fulfill their assigned roles. One law enforcement agent captured this sentiment by stating: "Getting everybody's roles established…what it helps to do is that in future cases, instead of people sitting around…there's already precedent. So that in future cases, things can move, I would say, quicker" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

To address organizational gaps in knowledge and consistency, several respondents described investing in *ongoing staff training and implementing peer mentorship opportunities*. This included developing onboarding protocols, conducting specialized training, and encouraging informal mentorship among experienced staff. This was specifically important during the hiring process:

> We hire new deputies every year. Now they get training at the academy…so that's our challenge is making sure that deputies are looking beyond what the call is and trying to get as much information as possible. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

While some respondents noted that their agencies had formal protocols or onboarding education in place, others relied on their interpersonal skills to connect with survivors: "I go above and beyond to build a relationship with people," continued one respondent, "I meet them where they're at…but I have to do it because otherwise, I can't build that relationship" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

Even with these proactive strategies, it is important to recognize that *not all efforts were successful*. This theme highlights not only the emotional burden professionals face when their efforts fall short but also the limitations of current institutional tools in addressing the complexities of labor trafficking cases. Even well-developed strategies sometimes fail to produce meaningful outcomes, leading to frustration. As one respondent described, despite their dedication to providing support, their interventions were not always enough:

> We've tried every strategy right now, and we haven't overcome any of 'em, so…And if I do detain 'em to try to help 'em, like them juveniles, I would hate to see what repercussions would have against law enforcement…So, I mean, you wanna help 'em, you'd love to take 'em home and try to help them out and get 'em back on their feet to where they can get back to their families, but for lack of a better word, it sucks. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

These strategies reflect a collective effort to improve, even in the face of limitations. They illustrate the persistence, creativity, and commitment of those working to respond to labor trafficking cases and assist survivors. While no single approach can address every challenge, the practices shared by stakeholders offer valuable insights into what is possible and provide hope that meaningful progress can be achieved.

## *2.6. Case Successes*

Although many respondents described persistent barriers to identifying and investigating labor trafficking, several shared examples of meaningful successes—cases in which survivors were identified early, supported, and able to navigate the systems. While relatively rare, these stories offered powerful illustrations of what is possible when survivors' needs are prioritized and when systems work in concert.

Across accounts, a common theme for successful cases was trust-building. Respondents repeatedly emphasized that establishing rapport—through consistency, patience, and nonjudgmental communication—often determined whether survivors remained engaged. This was particularly true in cases involving trauma, gender-based violence, or cultural distrust. One provider shared how transformative this trust can be: "Finally, one of the victims just felt that [*they*] was the safest person for [*they*], which is really surprising to me that it's a man and a female, that [*they're*] coming forward…That's the genuine trust relationship that was built and [*they*] feels safe to disclose" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). This reflection underscores that trust is critical, defying assumptions and creating space for disclosure.

Successes also hinged on *timely interventions*. Several respondents described moments, such as initial encounters, roadside stops, or emergency room visits, where acting quickly allowed for early interviews, evidence collection, and connection to services. As a respondent explained, "Getting that victim interviewed as quickly as possible and identifying those elements of the crime and all the actors" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). This urgency helped solidify elements needed to build a case and signal to survivors that they were a priority.

Importantly, even when survivors did not immediately cooperate, *laying the groundwork for future support* was still considered successful. As one law enforcement officer noted, the long-term impact does not always begin with disclosure: "We plant that seed…They may not take it from us, but the next time, next city, or something like that, they, you know, that seed's been planted—there is some way to get out of this" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

These examples demonstrate that progress often unfolds gradually, through sustained relationships rather than in a single interview or interaction. Collectively, these success stories show that labor trafficking cases *can* progress—even within fragmented systems—when survivors feel safe and supported and when responders are prepared to act with both urgency and compassion.

## *2.7. Most Important Aspects to Consider*

Respondents reflected on what they viewed as the most important factors to consider when investigating labor trafficking, emphasizing that frontline decision-making, interactions with survivors, and relationships within the broader community can either support or hinder meaningful intervention. Therefore, recognizing and addressing these factors is crucial for enhancing system responsiveness and building survivor trust.

One key insight reiterated by law enforcement personnel was that labor trafficking *rarely presents itself as the primary reason for an emergency call or service response*. Officers were rarely dispatched with a known trafficking concern; instead, they often encountered indicators while responding to unrelated issues—such as domestic disturbances, labor disputes, or immigration concerns. As explained by a respondent: "You're not gonna get dispatched to a human trafficking call. It's gonna be something else. So we have to try and train our deputies and look beyond what's going on" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). This underscored the need to equip first responders with the knowledge and tools necessary to identify labor trafficking indicators during routine encounters. Without intentional awareness and proactive screening, key red flags can easily be missed, leaving survivors unidentified and without support.



Respondents consistently emphasized that how professionals interact with survivors can impact whether survivors choose to disclose, accept support, and remain involved throughout the legal or service provision processes. In particular, *trauma-informed engagement and survivor reassurance* were critical. Survivors often feared legal consequences, deportation, or being blamed for their circumstances, particularly those with undocumented status or prior negative experiences with authority figures. Respondents described the importance of affirming survivors' victim status and communicating their rights and protections. As shared by one respondent:

> Communicate to 'em that they're not the ones that are gonna get in trouble. That they're a victim and not, you know, a suspect…Like, "Hey, you're the one being wronged here. We're trying to help you." (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Trauma-informed communication is both compassionate and strategic. By recognizing the impact of trauma on survivors' behaviors and responses, trauma-informed communication reduces fear, fosters trust, and opens the door to continued engagement, support, and, when appropriate, legal intervention.

Beyond direct interactions with agencies, respondents highlighted the powerful influence of *informal community networks and relationships* in supporting survivors. Trusted individuals within a survivor's social circle—such as neighbors, faith leaders, or cultural mediators—often served as crucial bridges, encouraging disclosure and helping connect survivors to services or formal support systems. One program manager highlighted this reality: "Building relationships is important. Whether it be directly with the victim or with, like, supports in their community that can kind of provide that reassurance or like referral or handoff" (*Program Manager*).

This theme underscores that survivor engagement extends beyond formal service systems. Successful identification and case development often hinge on the strength of local community infrastructure and the trustworthiness of individuals in survivors' everyday lives. Strengthening these networks and fostering partnerships with trusted stakeholders can significantly enhance service access and improve survivor outcomes.

## *2.8. Envisioned Role*

Although many respondents had no direct involvement in labor trafficking investigations, several expressed a willingness to contribute in ways that aligned with their agency's objectives, aims, missions, and survivor-centered practices. These envisioned roles centered on advocacy, emotional support, and service coordination early in the investigative process. Additionally, these perspectives highlight how professionals outside of law enforcement can offer a more neutral perspective, aiding in documenting survivor experiences and strengthening cross-disciplinary communication.

Respondents saw their role as essential in guiding survivors through legal processes, offering *advocacy and emotional support*. Grounded in trauma-informed principles, their approach focused on fostering safety and empowerment, enabling survivors to navigate often intimidating or unfamiliar systems with increased confidence and trust. One respondent stated, "I think that it would be a benefit just so that we could kind of explain our role and hopefully benefit the person that's being trafficked, just kind of be a more advocate for them" (*Legal Professional*). Likewise, a respondent added, "If I was put in the position to assist, I absolutely would be a support to the survivor…that would be the role that I would participate in" (*Program Manager*).

Others envisioned their contributions as strengthening *coordination and referral support* between investigative agencies and service providers. Respondents highlighted their ability to make timely referrals and link survivors to critical resources such as housing, healthcare, and legal advocacy. One respondent illustrated this collaborative role: "If we have an active case, we'll definitely alert law enforcement…although the crime we believe is already passed, we wanted to get law enforcement involved or at least let 'em know" (*Administrator*). This perspective reflected a proactive effort to bridge the gap between service provision and investigative response, even when a formal investigation may not be feasible.

Lastly, respondents mentioned that professionals outside of law enforcement can provide *valuable objectivity as neutral parties* in the investigative process, especially when documenting survivor experiences or conveying crucial observations. As one program manager explained, "I could answer any questions. And I feel like I am less emotionally invested, so I can look at things from both sides and say, 'This is what I saw happening'" (*Program Manager*). This perspective highlights the important role of trusted intermediaries in strengthening cross-disciplinary communication and contributing to a more accurate understanding of complex cases. Respondents recognized that meaningful collaboration can happen outside of direct legal involvement, with non-law enforcement professionals playing an important role in supporting survivors during the investigative phase.



# Research Objective #3: What are the Challenges of Service Provision?

Service providers play a critical role in identifying and supporting survivors of labor trafficking. Yet, they often face significant challenges in navigating these cases. This section explores eight themes of service provision for labor trafficking in Nebraska: (1) experiences and roles in providing services, (2) common needs of survivors, (3) referral sources, (4) challenges in providing services, (5) strategies to overcome challenges, (6) case successes, (7) the most important aspects to consider, and (8) envisioned roles for future involvement. Subthemes within these broader categories are highlighted in *red*.

## 3.1. Experience and Roles in Providing Services

Service providers are often among the first and most consistent points of contact for survivors, offering critical support and maintaining engagement for as long as needed or requested by survivors. The diverse roles that respondents filled served as essential support for labor trafficking survivors.

In many cases, *advocacy and case management* were core among respondents offering or facilitating service provision. Unlike investigative roles, which typically focused on evidence collection and legal proceedings, service providers engaged with survivors over longer periods—sometimes weeks, months, or even years. This work required a deep commitment to survivors' well-being, safety, and long-term recovery, often involving time and effort beyond the respondent's designated roles. As one respondent explained, "I advocate a lot and get involved a lot. For me, helping them is personal…I stick with my profession and connect them with resources and help them" (*Service Provider*). Another respondent added, "It just depends case by case…my role is very much to support both the case worker and the survivor in getting their needs met and reaching self-sufficiency" (*Program Manager*). If the respondents could not offer those services directly, they would refer survivors to agencies that could and often help with processing the paperwork. Referrals were especially important in addressing specific needs, as discussed by one respondent: "We just refer them to other organizations that can help with English as a second language, or food pantries, or clothing closets" (*Service Provider*). These efforts helped bridge resource gaps and ensured survivors were linked to appropriate support networks, even when their needs extended beyond the provider's scope.

Another central role involved *service coordination*. These responsibilities included managing appointments, coordinating services, and ensuring survivors remained engaged with supportive systems across legal, medical, mental health, and social services. This work often occurred behind the scenes but was critical to sustaining recovery and preventing re-traumatization. One respondent recalled this coordination vividly: "I make appointments. I call the clients…to attorneys…to doctors…to counselors. And I remind the clients of the appointment early in the morning" (*Administrator*). This hands-on support helped ensure continuity of care and gave survivors a stable foundation to rely on as they interacted with diverse systems.

*Legal navigation and immigration support* also emerged as a critical area of involvement, as many labor trafficking survivors faced complex legal challenges related to their immigration status. Providers frequently assisted survivors in understanding and pursuing legal pathways, including applications for gaining legal status. These efforts often extended beyond providing technical information—many respondents described their role as actively facilitating processes, connecting survivors to attorneys, or personally guiding them through paperwork and documentation. As one respondent explained, "I've helped them try to apply for lawful immigration status based on being victims of labor trafficking…I try to facilitate it to the extent possible if I hear about this" (*Legal Professional*). Others echoed this sentiment, highlighting how their involvement helped survivors access legal protection and stabilize their status in the country.

In resource-limited environments, providers often relied on informal or improvised methods to *triage survivors' needs*. This approach focused on securing basic safety, food, or shelter when long-term solutions were not in place. One respondent shared, "We have helped a victim ourselves…we're able to help them get some apartment here or residence here…we offer [food] all the time" (*Administrator*). Respondents also did their best to meet survivors where they were, as one respondent noted: "We would try to provide them some resources while they were in jail…but a lot of our function was triage" (*Service Provider*). These examples reinforce how service providers function as critical connectors—mobilizing resources quickly and creatively when no formal pathway exists.

In the context of these different roles, respondents also emphasized the emotional and psychological dimensions of their work, particularly the need for any interactions to be informed by *trauma responsiveness*. Many survivors entered services in a state of acute distress, often fearful of systems due to past experiences of dismissal, criminalization, or harm. Service providers described their efforts to create safety, build trust, and affirm survivor autonomy. One respondent noted:

> I notice a lot of them just smile the whole time they're talking about trauma or just something really… You can see that trying to mask, or "This is okay, like, I'm okay, this wasn't that bad," or whatever. And I don't know, it's just about being able to kind of read the room. Like realize if you're making somebody uncomfortable or if something's not working and pivot and go from there (*Service Provider*).

Being able to quickly adapt to each survivor's understanding of their own experience helped ensure a survivor-centered approach throughout the engagement process. This approach also allowed survivors to reengage with systems at their own pace and on their own terms.

### *3.2. Common Needs of Survivors*

Throughout interviews, respondents consistently identified common needs among labor trafficking survivors that extended well beyond initial crisis intervention and continued into long-term recovery.

Among the most pressing concerns was the lack of safe and stable *housing*. Many respondents described long-term housing as both the most urgent and the most difficult resource to secure. One respondent emphasized, "Housing is always the biggest issue. Safe and long-term options are rare" (*Administrator*). Highlighting the shortage of survivor-appropriate housing options, another respondent expanded on the prevalence of this issue: "Well one thing that we need is more housing for victims of trafficking. That's by and far away the biggest challenge is to find appropriate housing, for juveniles especially, who are victims of trafficking" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). Considering that some victims lived with or on the property of their traffickers, housing was identified as a basic necessity both for security and to ensure that traffickers did not have an opportunity to further exploit survivors.

Access to *legal services and support* related to immigration relief, labor rights, and protection orders were seen as pivotal to survivors' ability to remain safe. Several respondents expressed the need for more access to attorneys who can specifically assist with these types of cases. One respondent shared, "If we have any lawyer, we can reach out and talk to them about those issues, and probably we can help better" (*Service Provider*). Legal assistance was often the determining factor in helping survivors feel secure enough to engage with the legal process, seek services, and stay connected with providers. Without legal aid, survivors often remained fearful of immigration consequences, unaware of available legal relief, and unsure about their rights or how to safely navigate the legal process.

*Mental health support* was also a common need that required time and understanding from the provider. Many survivors experienced trauma, heightened anxiety, and emotional distress after their exploitation. These issues were often exacerbated if the survivor was incarcerated, experienced prolonged isolation, or was threatened with retaliation by their trafficker. For example, one respondent emphasized the need for responsive care even in correctional settings: "Universally, they had large amounts of anxiety…we would try to teach a lot of coping skills of dealing with being in jail" (*Service Provider*). Respondents further highlighted the importance of trauma-informed services that included therapy, coping skill development, and emotional regulation.

As previously noted, respondents frequently cited the importance of addressing survivors' *immediate and basic needs*—echoing sentiments such as "it takes a village" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). These services included access to food, hygiene products, medication, and emergency shelter—especially for survivors who had fled trafficking situations with little or no resources. One respondent recalled, "They got away from that, and they needed the basic necessities of life" (*Legal Professional*). Another respondent reflected on how immediate or seemingly simple items need to be considered in order of importance when survivors are identified:

> Maslow's hierarchy of need, right? So first we need safety. We need to put them somewhere that's safe. We need to get them food. We need a hot shower. We need those kind of immediate needs taken care of. Do they need tampons? Do they need diapers? Do they need medication? Do they need to see a doctor? Do they need a toothbrush? You know? And then once you get these people in a safe place, then the rest of it, I mean, they need a job. They need a car and they need to enroll their kids in school. You know, it's just, it's starting all over. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Addressing survivors' early needs was essential to promoting stabilization and supporting long-term recovery, ultimately leading to improved case outcomes.

As stated throughout interviews, the need for *translators* was a common theme among respondents. Again, survivors from non-English-speaking communities, particularly Indigenous or migrant backgrounds, often lacked access to interpretation or translated materials. In response, agencies relied on language lines or staff who could speak the language. However, even with these resources, support was not always readily available to address language barriers. One respondent noted bluntly, "I don't think we have resources in [*that*] language" (*Service Provider*), highlighting the exclusion that some survivors face due to missing communication and representation.

Finally, *employment support* was widely recognized as a necessary element of long-term stability. Respondents emphasized the importance of helping survivors secure legal work authorization, connect with trustworthy employers, and understand their labor rights. One respondent summarized it well: "They usually need help to either find another job or help with how to legally get another job" (*Administrator*). In this way, safe and trustworthy employment was seen as a pathway to empowerment and reintegration where survivors would be less vulnerable to exploitation.

These insights into the common needs of survivors underscore the complex journey toward healing, stability, and empowerment. Addressing these needs requires a sustained commitment to survivor-centered support, spanning from immediate crisis response to long-term reintegration.

### *3.3. Referral Sources*

Referrals to service providers played a pivotal role in labor trafficking response efforts by helping address the diverse needs of survivors. Respondents described a variety of referral pathways, emphasizing how their agencies or organizations connected survivors to appropriate support and resources. While some referrals came through law enforcement, others originated from informal sources—including friends, family, community members, or survivors. In many instances, it was not immediately clear that an individual was a victim of labor trafficking at the time of referral, but they still required support and resources. These referrals often served as critical entry points for identifying labor trafficking indicators and connecting survivors to appropriate services.

Some respondents highlighted the role of law enforcement in identifying and referring individuals to providers. *Law enforcement and legal referrals* often emerged through unrelated duties—that is, during regular routine interactions with the public. Although labor trafficking was not initially identified, officers recognized when someone might need help and connected them to services. One respondent described this process as a warm handoff, explaining how they would typically connect survivors to service providers:

> Just reaching out to victim services, advocates, and telling them what the situation and kind of what their main needs are at that time. As far as the actual service providers that they reach out to, I'm not really a part of that. They're there kind of to be that person for them so I can focus on all the other stuff. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Additionally, there have been some instances involving receiving referrals through both law enforcement and multidisciplinary teams (MDT):

> Primarily they're referred by law enforcement…But then also we receive referrals through [a] high-risk youth MDT, and as a team and partners we decide together if it's a good potential referral. (*Program Manager*)

In contrast to formal pathways, many referrals came from informal networks. Agencies received referrals from *family members of survivors or self-referrals* directly from survivors. These informal contacts were often the first to recognize something was wrong. As one respondent explained, "It's usually from the person themselves or their family" (*Legal Professional*). Word of mouth from other survivors was another way in which they knew an agency or provider could be trusted when they were ready to seek help:

> We get a lot of our referrals…through word of mouth. I've noticed that a lot of labor trafficking victims start identifying other victims that were trafficked as well in the same scenario that they were in. So when…I started working with one survivor of trafficking, labor trafficking, and [*they*] was pleased with the services. So [*they're*] like, "Hey, I know other people. There was like about a [*estimate*] of us that were trafficked." And [*they*] started talking to the victims, and they were afraid to get involved with the program. They were also afraid about getting public charge, not knowing that they are eligible for these public benefits without messing up their immigration status. So it was a lot of building trust within the survivors of trafficking, labor trafficking. And once we built trust with that community, they just started referring clients, and people were calling us like, "We received your number from so and so, and this person gave us your number."…So we, you know, so a lot of times even word of mouth is really big because they trust people within their own community. So they refer people to us that way as well. (*Service Provider*)

Other respondents described that their organizations were structured to allow survivors to reach out directly for support. Specifically, respondents described how their organizations created services designed to be more approachable. One respondent noted, "We also have walk-ins. People that come to the building or call with concerns" (*Program Manager*). Another respondent echoed the importance of being available for sudden engagement: "Yeah, so survivors can call our mainline 24/7, 365 to access shelter. If it is through one of our other referral sort venues, say our advocacy piece of service, referrals for that piece of service, they can self-refer" (*Program Manager*). These options underscore the importance of maintaining open and accessible points of entry and communication. Survivors—and those seeking to support them—may not always turn to formal sources, making visible and approachable alternatives essential for effective outreach and connection.

Many respondents noted that their agencies received *referrals from multiple sources*, including law enforcement, hotline reports, walk-ins, and nonprofit providers. As noted by respondents from organizations that accepted referrals from multiple sources:

> There's a referral from somebody, whether that is a nonprofit provider…law enforcement…or somebody who may have had initial contact with the victim and they just don't know what the next steps are. (*Legal Professional*)

Agencies and organizations providing services showed flexibility in their enrollment procedures. They were prepared to engage with survivors—or with practitioners—who may have been unsure of the appropriate next steps for assistance.

Finally, several respondents described their agencies not as direct service providers but as *referral bridges*—playing a vital intermediary role by connecting survivors to the appropriate resources. This function was particularly important when individuals had immediate needs, such as food, rent, or legal support. One respondent said, "We don't provide services. We connect the organization with them…We are the bridge for them" (*Service Provider*).

The range of referral sources reflects how each formal or informal referral plays a crucial role in identifying survivors and connecting them to care. Regardless of how survivors enter the system, streamlining and strengthening these connections is important to ensure timely interventions and appropriate service referrals.

### *3.4. Challenges in Service Provision*

Across interviews, respondents identified various challenges that hindered their ability to consistently support survivors. These challenges are further organized into themes within organizational/structural, legal, survivor, and cultural considerations.

**Organizational/Structural Considerations.** A common issue raised by respondents involved survivors' *ability to enter and remain connected to care*. Many providers reported that structural requirements—like proof of residency or identification—routinely blocked survivors from enrolling in essential programs. In other cases, overwhelmed systems forced survivors onto long waitlists or resulted in premature discharge from shelters, leaving them without access to transitional services. Moreover, even when survivors received support in one area, they often lacked continued assistance to address their broader, ongoing needs. As one respondent reflected:

> It takes six months just to see an attorney, and that's if they can even get in. By the time their appointment comes around, they're often being discharged from our program. A lot of clients are lost at that point and don't know how to move forward with their cases. (*Service Provider*)

These discontinuities can disrupt continuity of care and leave survivors without guidance, increasing the likelihood of missed opportunities for relief and service provision.

A *lack of accessible transportation* emerged as another critical barrier to accessing services, particularly in regions with limited public transit options. These gaps in infrastructure can disrupt survivors' ability to attend appointments or stay engaged in services. One provider described the challenge bluntly: "Transportation can be a barrier. Our bus system…just sucks, so I mean, yes and no" (*Administrator*). The problem was even more prominent in rural areas. For example, while urban areas often had more resources, rural communities remained under-resourced or ill-equipped to support labor trafficking survivors who needed assistance with transportation. Several respondents echoed concerns about accessibility, noting that it was not available in specific areas or was rare to find. These responses highlighted how geographic differences across the state can affect equitable access to services.

Institutional limitations such as *resource strain and understaffing* continued to pose persistent challenges. Again, these barriers disproportionately affected rural or under-resourced areas. Providers often reported being overstretched—managing high caseloads with limited staff and frequently traveling long distances to serve multiple clients across wide geographic areas. One respondent recalled, "Not so much providing

resources to the people as it is having resources such as a car with twelve people and I'm by myself" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). The toll of this work often left providers without the time, tools, or support necessary for long-term case management. Many respondents also pointed to chronic underfunding, particularly concerning labor trafficking. While sex trafficking tends to receive more public and institutional support, labor trafficking was frequently described as overlooked or under-prioritized. As noted by an administrator:

> Money is always gonna be the top one, being a nonprofit. You know, it's not, especially for labor trafficking, there's not a lot of funding out there that is specific to that. There's more coming out for trafficking all the time and being able to sort of expand a little bit what those services are and what can be done with those dollars, but there still, I think, is a heavy emphasis on sex trafficking and sex work versus labor trafficking. So I don't think it's a widely thought about enough issue. And then thus there's a lack of people working to support the survivors. (*Administrator*)

Others echoed the legislative and financial obstacles that make it difficult to sustain programming specifically for labor trafficking. "It can be an extreme challenge when you're consistently running against roadblocks…we have some financial resources to assist with private pay options, but that is not every organization…and from a legislation stance, it's a mess" (*Program Manager*).

*Limited agency coordination*—particularly between federal agencies and local community partners—was another major concern. Respondents emphasized that when institutional actors operated without input from trusted community partners, survivors felt alienated, misunderstood, or unsafe. This was especially true when providers lacked contextual knowledge—an understanding of survivors' cultural norms, community dynamics, and lived experiences—critical for building rapport and tailoring services. For example, one respondent noted that, "It's hard for government agencies…to have an effective impact without collaborating with community partners" (*Legal Professional*). These responses underscore the ongoing need to strengthen relationships between state or federal partners and local community organizations to advance effective, survivor-centered outcomes.

Several stakeholders pointed to the need for broader structural changes to increase *community awareness and more targeted outreach*, particularly among service providers, legal professionals, and vulnerable populations. Raising awareness was seen as essential not only for prevention but also for improving the effectiveness of referrals and responses when trafficking does occur. For example, one respondent noted: "It's more awareness…to let people who are in the trenches know that the…immigration lawyer like me also can help…these are some of the more rewarding cases I get to work on" (*Legal Professional*). Namely, expanding the means for targeted outreach can help bridge gaps between the needs of survivors and those positioned to support them—promoting greater alignment and accessibility across services.

**Legal Considerations.** In multiple instances, respondents discussed various *legal aspects* that impacted their ability to provide services fully. For example, one respondent discussed the need to meet the federal legal definition for their clients to apply for and receive a T visa. However, as noted by the respondent, "lawyers will have differing opinions…you have to review the evidence and facts to determine whether this person's gonna qualify" (*Legal Professional*). In these instances, survivors may or may not be able to secure protections and support from a T visa if they cannot prove that they were trafficked for labor through force, fraud, or coercion.

Several other stakeholders described how pending immigration cases could significantly delay or obstruct service provision. For example, one respondent shared their experience on how bureaucratic delays can hinder timely support:

> A big barrier is when they don't have their information about their immigration case. So we end up having to ask the government for a copy of that, and that takes forever. And then sometimes they don't even provide all the information. So that's a big barrier." (*Legal Professional*)



Others noted that survivors were sometimes unaware of specific legal benefits they might qualify for. For example, respondents noted that immigrants can apply for emergency status in Nebraska, emphasizing the need for both legal literacy and access to knowledgeable advocates. However, *a lack of resources within organizations* further increased these challenges. For example, the absence of legal resources and remedies was frequently cited as a barrier. Some agencies lacked legal staff or partnerships, leaving them unable to assist survivors with complex legal needs—such as immigration relief, labor protections, or other legal knowledge. As a respondent stated, "We have no legal, law, lawyer or something, so…that is very complicated for the law" (*Service Provider*), underscoring the urgent need for expanded legal infrastructure within service networks.

Respondents identified additional challenges to providing effective services, particularly in cases involving *juveniles*, with one respondent noting:

> This gets very specific, but in juvenile court, if they are adjudicated on something, that's what we can offer things for. Like what we can offer services for. So if we have someone that was adjudicated for…I'm trying to think of an example. Okay. Let's say a [*person*] was adjudicated for substance use, so [*they're*] struggling with substance use. We can offer services for substance use and we can try to offer services for, but let's say the underlying concern of the substance use was because of trafficking, that one was like the people that [*they*] worked for owned the house. So if [*they*] didn't work a certain amount of time, then [*they*] was not allowed back in the house. It was just not okay. So substance use and homelessness. But if the court orders, we can offer services and they can be voluntary, but the way that our juvenile system works is we can't force them to do things with the court order. So we are kind of limited if the parents aren't willing to. If they're willing to, we can offer services. (*Administrator*)

In these cases, the legal process and available services differed significantly from those for adults, requiring a tailored approach that aligns with the juvenile justice system.

**Survivor Considerations.** Several providers shared that *building trust* with survivors was key to implementing services. Establishing rapport requires time, patience, and a consistent presence—a process that cannot be rushed. A respondent explained: "You just have to build that up by getting to know people…talking to 'em, explaining to 'em" (*Legal Professional*). Another respondent highlighted that having an understanding approach during interactions was central:

> I think it's coming in soft and not…it is a big deal what's happening to them, but not coming in like it's this urgent big deal like, "You are being taken advantage of, and you have to do this, and call the police, and get an attorney." That's just gonna scare them, and they don't understand the concept even sometimes of what it means to be exploited or trafficked. So I would say really, We rely on relationships. So going in and finding out about them and what do they think and what do they want, how's it going for them and leading up to some of those harder conversations about the fact that this is, I mean, that they are a victim of something. (*Administrator*)

In this context, trust went beyond just showing up—it was about being reliable, accessible, and emotionally invested in survivors' lives and successes. Importantly, without trust, survivors were more likely to disengage or be hesitant to disclose information to providers.

**Cultural Considerations.** As discussed throughout this report, respondents noted several cultural considerations that affected their ability to engage with and provide services to survivors. *Inadequate access to interpreters or miscommunications due to language barriers* led to frequent misunderstandings and, in some cases, denial of services. Some respondents noted that when caseworkers were not fluent in a survivor's language, it could lead to loss of benefits or misclassifications on what services survivors qualify for. As described by a respondent, "They put case workers that do not speak the language. So they fail on the part

where they do the interview for the benefits, and they close their case" (*Administrator*). Conversely, language barriers can make it difficult to accommodate survivors' immediate needs, including dietary and religious practices. These barriers can lead to a range of consequences—affecting intake and assessments and causing survivors to be misunderstood, incorrectly screened, or excluded from programs.

Many respondents noted that survivors often *did not recognize their experiences as exploitative* due to cultural norms or prior exposures. Practices such as unpaid labor, withheld documentation, or lack of formal pay systems may be normalized in a survivor's country of origin, making it difficult for them to identify themselves as victims. One respondent observed, "I feel like so much of this is just like normal to them…Like, culturally, what was normalized was not normalized here" (*Administrator*). If survivors are unable to recognize that what happened to them was wrong, it may impact their willingness to engage with services.

Without cultural fluency and a willingness to adapt to different norms and communication styles, even well-intentioned services can fall short, resulting in mistrust and miscommunication. As two respondents reflected:

> Cultural liaisons I feel like are so important, but there are so few of them, so that would be helpful. And that's more than just a translator. 'Cause a translator, I mean, translates, but to have someone that's really more of an in-between with those people…yeah, they're available to families. (*Administrator*)

> You're dealing with someone that's from a foreign country. Diets are different. And what if you have a survivor that's a vegetarian and what if you have a, I mean, it's just a survivor that wants to go to the mosque and pray five times a day. Like where do you find that? Again, I'm probably not the best person to answer this 'cause I'm not a service provider, even though I've learned quite a lot because I feel like I end up becoming one. But I just feel like there's so many needs for these people that just can't be met or the resources are limited. (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

While respondents acknowledged the importance of helping survivors feel seen and understood by bridging cultural norms and expectations, their reflections highlighted the challenges in meeting these needs.

### *3.5. Strategies to Overcome Challenges*

Despite barriers to labor trafficking identification and support, respondents shared a range of practical strategies that have proven effective in alleviating some of these challenges. A shared theme across all strategies was a multidisciplinary and solution-focused mindset. Respondents consistently described efforts to educate partner agencies, build stronger networks, maintain survivor engagement, and foster multi-agency coordination. These efforts reflected what was possible when service delivery was flexible, relationship-driven, and responsive to the needs of survivors.

Building and maintaining trust with survivors was a core practice that required *regular contact and proactive updates*, particularly in cases involving long timelines or survivors who relocated. As one respondent explained:

> We had a monthly Zoom call to check in…give them a case status update…update their address with immigration authority…so when the T visa case was approved the benefits could be mailed to the correct place. (*Legal Professional*)

Communication served not just a logistical function but also a relational one—fostering a sense of support and connection for survivors, even across geographic distances. A program manager echoed these sentiments: "We made sure that every survivor had our contact information and could get ahold of us whenever they needed" (*Program Manager*). This ongoing engagement ensured that survivors were not alone—whether they were navigating the legal system, waiting for updates, or trying to get services—and that they were supported throughout the processes.



Relatedly, respondents highlighted the importance of a long-term strategy for *sustaining and expanding survivor support networks*. Trusted relationships—whether between providers, agencies, or advocates—often enabled quicker referrals, better coordination, and a sense of shared responsibility. Providers sometimes cultivated these networks outside their formal work hours, driven by a deep commitment to improving survivor outcomes. Echoing this, a respondent shared, "I partnered up with so many different organizations in my own time, even during [*weekends*], in order to connect and be able to provide for the clients" (*Administrator*). These efforts were essential to filling systemic gaps, reflecting providers' resilience and creativity in under-resourced, high-pressure settings. Although broader systemic reforms are still needed, these local, smaller-scale responses offer meaningful examples of how harm can be reduced, trust built, and long-term support strengthened for survivors. Notably, respondents were also able to recognize others in the field who were leading meaningful change:

> The best work that I've seen is those folks that work within multiple industries or make those connections. So whether they work in law enforcement and they lean into their passion and really drive that extra work that it takes to go do those extra steps that these survivors need for care. So I think those interpersonal communications with service providers who cares are probably the most effective. And then just sort of speaking out until your lungs break. Continuing to talk about it and make it an issue. (*Administrator*)

In supporting these efforts, another respondent described the importance of proving they were trustworthy: "When I can prove to an advocate or to anybody that like, 'I'm the real deal. When you call me, I'm gonna answer the phone…I'm gonna find an officer'" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). These examples highlight how interpersonal connections—both with survivors and system providers—are often the cornerstone of successful coordinated efforts.

Many respondents described how *diligent advocacy*—both within agencies and across systems—was essential to overcoming bureaucratic delays and misinformation. This often involved educating external partners about survivor eligibility for benefits or legal protections. As one respondent explained, "They [*agency*] weren't really familiarized with those letters of eligibility…so it was kind of educating them…now it's a bit of a smoother process" (*Service Provider*). This type of frontline advocacy helped ensure survivors could access resources they were entitled to while also fostering institutional buy-in for anti-trafficking work into the future. Similarly, another respondent described their dedication to staying informed and intervening when needed: "Trying to do my own research on different resources…and I have to directly deal with law enforcement on their behalf…I try to follow up and do that for them" (*Legal Professional*).

Another way respondents worked to overcome challenges has been to maintain and formalize *training initiatives* to maximize response efforts. Respondents noted that labor trafficking cases often required input from multiple sectors—including law enforcement, healthcare, and child welfare—and that without training, those systems may respond inconsistently or overlook key indicators. Formal efforts to bridge these gaps included developing internal protocols to guide more effective and updated responses within and across agencies. Education sessions, agency initiatives, and procedural updates helped respondents clarify roles and strengthen systematic responses to labor trafficking. A respondent noted that the use of multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings and internal protocol design were particularly helpful:

> We held an MDT with law enforcement, just to understand that whole process of how we should report this as direct service providers, especially involving a minor. So we created, again, program… procedures for that. (*Program Manager*)

These training initiatives contributed to a more coordinated and informed response among stakeholders while facilitating information sharing.

### *3.6. Case Successes*

Respondents shared several meaningful success stories that demonstrated the power of consistent, survivor-centered, and coordinated responses to labor trafficking. Success was not solely defined by legal outcomes but also by personal milestones in survivors' lives, including educational achievement, emotional healing, and renewed trust in systems that had once failed them.

As the most frequently cited successes, respondents described outcomes related to *legal and immigration milestones* such as T visa approvals, work authorizations, access to public benefits, and even prosecutions of traffickers. As some respondents shared:

> Clients actually have gotten the trafficking visa…work permits in order to be able to provide for their families…approved Medicaid with SNAP [*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*] benefits… traffickers get actually arrested and prosecuted…minors get enrolled in school and be on the honor roll and graduate. (*Service Provider*)

> People are able to move forward with their lives when they are connected with… basically everything kind of gets better after they get the employment authorization document. Things can be touch and go, but once people have a employment authorization document, they have a soc. [*social security number*], they can get normal jobs. Their kids can get SNAP. Kids can get Medicaid. They can get a driver's license. They don't have to worry about getting pulled over for driving without a license…so it's easier for them to apply for better housing. It just gets better from there. And so I think, so there's no grand success. It's just like little baby wins. (*Legal Professional*)

Similarly, another respondent reflected on the emotional shift these outcomes created: "Just being able to alleviate the doubt and the fear…to say, 'Hey…now you are [*safe*].' That is a joyful moment for me" (*Legal Professional*). These milestones were not only seen as technical achievements but moments that strengthened survivors' confidence in the system.

*Sustained engagement* was another critical component for both survivor well-being and the effectiveness of legal processes. Reflecting on past situations, a respondent noted that survivors were often left without follow-up after an arrest and only reconnected at trial, which added more distress and feelings of inadequate support. They described a major improvement in communicating and engaging with survivors:

> One of the biggest successes is having advocates in place that are working hand in hand with law enforcement…law enforcement also still stays in touch with their victims. Advocates stay in touch with them. There's good communication. They can help 'em through that process. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

This continuity and consistency helped build trust, reinforced a sense of stability and safety, and reduced the risk of re-traumatization.

Another success noted by respondents was the *gratitude* they received when helping survivors. These instances did not always happen immediately, but were inspiring when they did occur. As recalled by one respondent:

> It's as simple as the gratitude that the survivor shows for just even the small wins. I think that that is such a huge success and oftentimes we take those things for granted from America. We don't recognize just how great we have it. And so I think that those successes are fantastic. But then to go a step further, seeing the big successes, like the client I was just sharing about, [*they're*] actually housed now. And so being able to see that come to fruition is amazing, but also that's not always the reality. And so the taking the small wins keeps us going. (*Program Manager*)



Success in labor trafficking cases was measured not only in legal milestones but also by *case closures* and the survivor's ability to regain stability. While some providers did not witness survivors' long-term progress directly, the absence of future service requests was often interpreted as a sign that the survivor had moved forward independently. As a respondent reflected, "Sometimes that's because they're so successful they don't need me again. And that's great" (*Service Provider*). To respondents, these departures were meaningful—signaling that the support effectively addressed immediate and long-term needs, enabling survivors to move forward independently.

### *3.7. Most Important Aspects to Consider*

In addition to the thematic findings around identification, service delivery, and systemic response, respondents shared broader reflections on the most important aspects to consider when providing services. These insights offered critical direction for future efforts.

Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of *tailoring services to each survivor's unique needs, pace, and goals*. Rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach, respondents noted that approaching survivors with flexibility, empathy, and respect for their ability to make their own decisions was vital—even if survivors' decisions differed from what providers thought they should do. One respondent advised, "Don't try to speed up the case…we forget that clients have self-determination and sometimes those choices are not favorable, what we want" (*Service Provider*). Others emphasized the harm that can be caused by rigid systems that attempt to impose cultural expectations. "By it being person-centered, we can empower families," said one respondent, "We're not shoving them to fit in this little box of what our American culture tells them…but really just supporting and safety and what they envision" (*Administrator*). Other respondents urged greater understanding for survivors who may not want to engage in prosecution but still need services. For example, a respondent stressed the importance of supporting survivors regardless of legal action: "They're not a perfect victim…but still need help. That's what I want [systems] to understand better" (*Administrator*). The survivor-centered approach focused on providing services that respected survivors' timing, emphasized transparency, and supported their autonomy.

Another important consideration highlighted by respondents was the understanding that *trauma may present differently across survivors*. Respondents highlighted the need to move beyond traditional ideas of what a "cooperative" or "credible" survivor looks like. Understanding that emotional withdrawal, resistance, fear, anger, or silence are not signs of failure but can represent common and natural responses. As noted by one program manager, "Everybody responds to trauma and help differently. There is no right way to respond" (*Program Manager*). Rather than expecting survivors to all share similar reactions, respondents agreed that adapting to survivors' unique coping strategies and responses to trauma is essential to promote long-term recovery and trust in the system.

Seen as essential for long-term change, many respondents noted that *labor trafficking remains underreported, poorly understood, and rarely discussed* compared to sex trafficking. This lack of visibility contributes to missed identification opportunities, limited advocacy, and inconsistent policy responses. As characterized by one respondent, "I don't hear about it as much, the more people know…knowledge is power" (*Legal Professional*). The respondents noted that an important aspect of advancing work in this area is for more people to recognize labor trafficking as a serious and real crime, not just a labor violation or immigration problem. A respondent echoed this sentiment: "It's not a paperwork violation…they are a victim and…have a right to pursue a remedy" (*Legal Professional*). Respondents noted that targeting misconceptions and building broader awareness within public and professional networks is needed to shift beliefs and responses.

Finally, respondents stressed that *gaps in resources and accessibility* remain a major challenge in delivering effective services. As noted throughout this report, without access to safe housing, accessible services, or language interpretation, many survivors are unable to successfully exit trafficking situations. Services need to

be available and responsive not only to the immediate needs of the survivor, but also the long-term prospects for them to thrive (e.g., future employment and income). As one respondent noted: "Why would they leave just to make it harder?...Because if we're not able to meet those needs, the survivor is not gonna wanna leave that situation" (*Program Manager*). Echoing this, another respondent discussed similar concerns of strain and overcapacity that impacted both survivors and stakeholders: "We need more agencies and more services...we can't do it all" (*Service Provider*). However, when services exist in theory but remain inaccessible in practice, the shortages directly hinder survivors' access and potentially place them in vulnerable situations. A law enforcement agent reflected on trying to connect survivors to resources:

> I feel like a lot of advocacy groups over promise and under deliver...They're always full. Or, "We don't have one," or, "We can't pay for that," you know? So I think that we, and I'm not criticizing them, they just either need to be funded better or they need to have more resources and so do we. Everybody needs more resources to help these people. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Ensuring that services that are promised are widely available—in location and capacity—is essential to avoid overwhelming providers and ensure survivors receive the support they need (and are promised). Having the best intentions but being under-resourced can still turn survivors away, increasing their risk of instability and harmful consequences.

### *3.8. Envisioned Role*

Almost all respondents were actively involved in direct service provision or referrals for labor trafficking survivors. In a few cases, however, respondents noted they were not engaged in active cases. The respondents reflected on why they were not actively involved in service provision and how they envisioned their role could look in the future.

**Reasons for Lack of Involvement.** Respondent's lack of involvement was not typically due to disinterest; rather, they reflected on situational, institutional, or timing-based barriers. For example, respondents described having initial engagement with survivors—such as during investigations or intake interviews—only to *lose all connection* once the survivor moved, was terminated from employment, or went into hiding. A respondent described this challenge in their work: "Once we had spoken with 'em...the company would usually fire 'em or let [*them*] go...I never saw [*them*] again. And as far as [*their*] contact information, good luck" (*Law Enforcement Agent*).

Other respondents described *temporary periods of inactivity* in their agency's involvement in active cases. Although the gap often stemmed from a lack of active cases needing support, it did not reduce the agency's capacity to respond in their staffing, expertise, or overall preparedness. As a respondent described it, "I'm sure that we'll be in the process again next year...but right now, no. There's nothing" (*Law Enforcement Agent*). While agency engagement often depended on active cases, maintaining continuity and communication with providers was key to improving readiness and building experience once a case emerged.

**Envisioned Roles for the Future.** Even among those respondents not actively involved in service provision, most expressed a clear interest in contributing to these response efforts. In particular, respondents envisioned being involved in *survivor education, advocacy, and resource coordination*. For example, a law enforcement agent shared:

> Providing them with information on what is right. Like, you know, explaining to them, "This is not your fault, this is the fault of the employer...Here's your rights as a worker," you know, and try and help 'em through that process. I mean, I know that doesn't fall directly on us...But we can get the ball rolling on it. (*Law Enforcement Agent*)

Lastly, while some respondents acknowledged that certain responses were beyond their professional roles or agency capacities, they stressed the importance of creating pathways for survivors to access protection and support.



## A Survivor's Perspective

This case study draws on an in-depth interview with a survivor of labor trafficking in Nebraska. Grounded in lived experience, this section explores a survivor's perspective on the nature of labor trafficking in Nebraska, as well as the challenges related to investigation and service provision.[a]

***Research Objective #1: What is the Nature of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska?***

Their most recent experience of labor exploitation was not an isolated incident, but part of a broader pattern of exploitation they have experienced throughout their life. They reported feeling coerced into accepting the job and were subjected to multiple forms of labor trafficking, including work in construction, cleaning, maintenance, and childcare. They also shared details about the conditions they were forced to live in, describing them as harsh and unsafe, with persistent plumbing problems and rodent infestations. In addition to the poor living environment, the traffickers confiscated their personal documents, including their identification and passport, and imposed financial demands in the form of forced fees. They emphasized the ongoing psychological and emotional abuse they endured, in addition to how they were restricted in their movements with limited access to basic necessities, such as food.

***Research Objective #2: What are the Challenges in Investigations?***

Initially, they did not report the trafficking to the authorities. It was only more recently that they chose to reach out independently to police and attorneys to share what had occurred. They described feeling supported by the legal professionals they engaged with, noting that these individuals were affirming and acknowledged the validity of their trafficking experience. Despite this positive interaction, no one was ultimately arrested or prosecuted for the crimes committed against them. Reflecting on their journey, they offered a piece of advice for working with others who have experienced labor trafficking: be mindful that not all survivors may recognize they are being victimized, particularly in the moment.

***Research Objective #3: What are the Challenges of Service Provision?***

They sought assistance with therapy and housing after their trafficking experience, but reported difficulties in obtaining financial resources, including grants and general funding. They emphasized that service provision in Nebraska could be improved by involving survivors of labor trafficking in training efforts, helping practitioners learn how to communicate effectively, and providing meaningful support. In particular, they suggested that reducing long wait times and loosening overly rigid eligibility requirements would help more survivors access needed services. They also noted the importance of recognizing that labor trafficking can take many forms, and that no two experiences are alike, thus making it critical for service providers to approach each case with flexibility and awareness. In offering advice to others preparing to seek help, they encouraged taking full advantage of available resources—especially those that are unbiased and truly supportive.

***Looking to the Future***

Despite their significant trauma, they expressed a sense of hope and resilience. They described being in a better place now and spoke of their aspirations to improve their lives and their families' lives, along with a continued commitment to advocating for social justice. Their experience and insights highlight the value of survivor-led programming, both as a tool for educating practitioners and as a source of empowerment for fellow survivors.

[a] Given the sensitive nature of the interview, broader themes aligned with the study's research objectives are discussed to protect the survivor's identity.

# Next Steps for Nebraska: Reflecting on Actionable Items

A key purpose of the current project was to inform actionable items associated with each of the three research objectives. The framework served as a foundation for our study design, guiding both the development of interview protocols and our engagement with stakeholders and service providers. These actionable items sought to deepen our understanding of labor trafficking in Nebraska and identify paths forward when responding to these crimes and supporting survivors. This section provides overviews summarizing what we have learned about labor trafficking in Nebraska and outlines several recommendations based on the survey responses and in-depth interviews. Recommendations for a coordinated response through a **Center on Labor Trafficking (CLT)** that could organize and facilitate these efforts is also reviewed.

## *Actionable Item #1:* *Provide an overview of what labor trafficking "looks like" in Nebraska to inform identification efforts and awareness/education campaigns*

### Overview of the Nature of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska

The respondents highlighted unique features of Nebraska that may contribute to labor trafficking, including robust industries or sectors across the state (e.g., agriculture, domestic servitude, factories, cleaning industry) and the stark division between rural and urban settings that can isolate victims. Survivors of labor trafficking in Nebraska did not represent a single demographic or country of origin; however, they were overwhelmingly described as Hispanic or Latino and at-risk, foreign-born adults and children. These survivors were recruited into their trafficking situations through false job advertisements, debt bondage, deception, and other forms of manipulation. Survivors of labor trafficking often faced diverse vulnerabilities, including a lack of documentation, prior experiences of abuse, language barriers, and other compounding challenges. Traffickers exploited these vulnerabilities through tactics such as deception, confiscation of documentation, and threats directed at survivors or their loved ones.

Survivors of labor trafficking frequently endured hazardous working and living conditions, including overcrowded housing, unsanitary environments, and exposure to harmful chemicals. While less common, some survivors also experienced sex trafficking or were coerced into criminal activity. Exploitation was often carried out by individuals known to the survivor, which further complicated the dynamics of control and trust. Many survivors were hesitant to report their experiences to legal authorities due to fears of retaliation, deportation, or a general mistrust of the criminal justice system. Additionally, some did not recognize themselves as victims, which created significant barriers to accessing services and support. When survivors were able to leave their trafficking situations, many did so with the help of community members or advocates, while others managed to escape independently and seek assistance.

### Recommendations/Key Considerations

Based on the responses received, a series of recommendations are provided to help Nebraska improve its efforts to identify and respond to labor trafficking. Below, we outline key considerations to guide the development of effective identification efforts and awareness/education campaigns for labor trafficking in the community more broadly:

**Prioritize Labor Trafficking.** A recurring theme across respondents was the need to prioritize labor trafficking in the social narrative to be viewed as a real and serious crime. In particular, the respondents recognized that sex trafficking was most often the topic in the media or awareness campaigns. Although respondents in Nebraska also noted the overlap between sex trafficking and labor trafficking, there was a recognition that labor trafficking should be featured more dominantly in discourse (see Zhang, 2012b). Notably, the Nebraska Attorney General's Office (2025) has accessible resources and videos already posted to their website (see https://ago.nebraska.gov/identifying-trafficking-0). These videos break down the definitions of both sex and labor trafficking in Nebraska, the nature of these crimes, their signs, and what to do if someone suspects trafficking (i.e., call the Nebraska hotline or 911 if an emergency). In this way, the state has a foundational platform for individuals to access essential information and guidance.

To reach a wider audience, it would be beneficial to do broader community campaigns in areas where at-risk populations may be located (e.g., immigrant populations) or in industries or sectors that were identified as places where labor trafficking occurs in the state (e.g., agriculture, factories, restaurants/food service, construction). These community campaigns may include billboards or flyers around town, in addition to working with local businesses to post materials and guidance on what to do if someone needs help (e.g., Savoia et al., 2023). These spaces offer a unique opportunity to educate the public by incorporating anti-trafficking messages into materials, such as menus, placards, or digital displays, that inform customers about the signs of labor exploitation and provide resources like hotline numbers or local support services (e.g., Savoia et al., 2023). Establishments demonstrating compliance with labor laws can leverage this messaging to affirm their commitment to ethical practices. In doing so, they not only contribute to broader community education but also differentiate themselves as socially responsible businesses. This visibility may enhance their reputation while simultaneously encouraging accountability among businesses that are less compliant. As materials circulate, they may raise awareness and also help normalize conversations about labor trafficking, equipping a wider spectrum of community members with the tools to identify warning signs and support individuals who may be at risk. Ultimately, such efforts help normalize anti-trafficking standards within the service industry and foster a culture in which ethical labor practices are both expected and rewarded.

Notably, any campaigns should make sure to use accessible and trauma-informed language that describes what labor trafficking can "look like" to avoid confusion between how community members may define these crimes and the legal criteria (e.g., Fisher, 2009; Kulig, 2022). For example, materials should explain what behaviors can encompass labor trafficking (e.g., being made to work through threats of deportation, being made to work through physical violence) to avoid miscommunication on what community members should look for. In other words, the descriptions should explain labor trafficking using behaviorally specific language rather than using the term "labor trafficking" alone to raise awareness.

**Integrate Screening Tools.** As another way to improve identification in the community, professionals can use screening tools to recognize potential indicators of labor trafficking (Hogan and Roe-Sepowitz, 2023). These tools are aimed at quickly assessing whether someone may be trafficked for labor (e.g., means used to control someone), but are not meant as a replacement for a full investigation to determine whether someone meets the legal criteria. Professionals in diverse settings could benefit from having a resource to flag whether additional help or resources are needed. In this way, a screening tool can provide guidance on signs or indicators for individuals who may come into contact with labor trafficking victims, even if they do not work with this population frequently. Some of these tools can be administered in nearly two minutes, making them accessible for those in fast-paced environments, such as law enforcement or healthcare settings (e.g., Chisolm-Straker et al., 2021; Macy et al., 2023). For example, one four-item tool developed for emergency department settings provides a quick series of questions to assess whether labor or sex trafficking is occurring (see Chisolm-Straker et al., 2021).[20]

[20] Adapted from Chisolm-Straker and colleagues' (2021) RAFT items: (1) Have you ever worked, or done other things, in a place that made you feel scared or unsafe? (2) Have you ever been tricked or forced into doing any kind of work that you did not want to do? (3) Have you ever been afraid to leave or quit a work situation due to fears of violence or threats of harm to yourself or your family? (4) Have you ever received anything in exchange for sex (for example, a place to stay, gifts, or food)?

Notably, screening tools to identify human trafficking are being implemented in some agencies and organizations across Nebraska. For example, the Providing Avenues for Victim Empowerment (PAVE) tool is a human trafficking screening, assessment, and referral-making management system designed to be used across diverse settings (HTI Labs, 2025). Individuals or agencies seeking to integrate tools into their existing procedures could also consider the Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT), a validated screening instrument available in both a short and long version to fit the needs of agencies (Simich et al., 2014). Primarily focusing on personal background, work, migration, and living and working conditions, the TVIT can be adopted into an agency's ordinary screening protocols.[21] Other tools, of course, exist and can be implemented as appropriate for the context (e.g., Clawson & Dutch, 2008a; Macias-Konstantopoulos & Owens, 2018; Macy et al., 2023; Ohio Department of Children & Youth, n.d.). However, any tool or items integrated into agency or organizational practices should be validated by prior research (Macias-Konstantopoulos & Owens, 2018).

**Develop and Share Targeted Information with At-Risk Populations.** Respondents emphasized that many individuals from vulnerable populations—particularly undocumented and immigrant communities—often lack awareness of their rights and may not recognize their experiences as exploitation or criminal acts. In Nebraska, Hispanic or Latino immigrants were noted as being vulnerable to labor trafficking, with the caveat that not one race/ethnic group was targeted exclusively. To address this gap and reduce the risk of ongoing harm, it is critical to develop outreach materials that are both culturally responsive and accessible. These resources should be co-created with input from survivors with lived experience and practitioners with direct or indirect experience working with affected communities (e.g., Lockyer, 2022). For example, the Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha has done extensive work to address issues within the Latino population.[22] It would be beneficial to incorporate OLLAS when tailoring materials and reaching out to at-risk groups to assist with dissemination efforts. Incorporating key players' perspectives in resources is vital for ensuring that the content is not only trauma-informed and culturally relevant but also delivered in formats that are most likely to engage and inform the intended audience—such as visual media, multilingual brochures, or personal narratives that reflect familiar realities and voices.

To ensure outreach efforts are both effective and far-reaching, it is essential to strategically disseminate these materials through trusted channels. Respondents emphasized that many survivors hesitated to seek help from formal systems due to fear, mistrust, and systemic barriers.[23] To address this, partnering with trusted community messengers—such as churches, local organizations, ethnic media, and schools—can significantly enhance outreach, visibility, and engagement. We know from prior research that community networks—especially within immigrant communities—play a pivotal role in linking individuals to job opportunities (e.g., Garcia, 2005). While these "referral networks" often serve as gateways to employment, they can also be powerful channels for disseminating critical information, such as guidance on labor rights, immigration pathways, anti-trafficking laws, and resources for recognizing and escaping exploitative situations. These networks can also serve as a vital link between survivors and local service directories, not only helping to bridge the gap between awareness and access to support, but also brokering relationships with legal actors who may be viewed initially with skepticism and hesitation (e.g., law enforcement, legal advocacy). By reaching individuals in familiar, trusted spaces, such efforts are more likely to empower at-risk populations to identify signs of exploitation and take steps toward seeking help.

[21] Follow up analyses of the TVIT indicated that, after controlling for demographic factors, the following items were particularly useful for identifying a labor trafficking situation: (1) Have you ever worked without getting the payment you thought you would get? (2) Have you ever worked in a place where the work was different from what you were promised or told it would be? (3) Did anyone at your workplace make you feel scared or unsafe? (4) Did anyone at your workplace ever harm or threaten to harm you? (5) Have you ever felt you could not leave the place where you worked or lived? (Simich, 2014).

[22] More information about OLLAS can be found here: https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/ollas/about-us/index.php

[23] It will be important to consider context on who is seeking to reach at-risk undocumented and immigrant persons who are vulnerable to labor trafficking. Recent immigration raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at plants, businesses, farms, and factories in Nebraska will likely deteriorate trust in formal systems and create barriers to providers seeking to offer support and resources (e.g., Knapp, 2019; Perales et al., 2025).



**Actionable Item #2:** ***Identify the key issues when detecting these crimes and offering legal assistance, and provide recommendations on ways the Nebraska justice/legal systems can address these issues***

## Overview of Key Issues in Investigating Labor Trafficking

Interviews with legal and law enforcement stakeholders revealed that tips and referrals for investigations often came from formal reporting systems, survivors already connected to community providers, or officers' recognition of potential trafficking indicators during regular job duties. Still, discrepancies in knowledge, experiences, coordination, and survivor engagement were noted. For example, there were inconsistencies in how some stakeholders and service providers distinguished labor trafficking from exploitation, which may affect how practitioners classify these experiences. Respondents also pointed to inconsistent coordination across jurisdictions, characterized by outdated protocols, unclear referral pathways, and a lack of standardized procedures. Such fragmentation frequently caused delays, especially in cases involving undocumented individuals or where state and federal laws overlap.

Additionally, engaging survivors remains a major hurdle. Fear of law enforcement, concerns about deportation, and limited knowledge of legal protections often prevent many survivors from reaching out for help. These fears are further heightened by language barriers, inadequate cultural responsiveness from agencies, and confusion about legal rights and protections. As a result, some survivors avoided contact with authorities altogether or disengaged before cases could advance, reducing the chances for both trafficker accountability and access to vital support services for survivors. Despite these challenges, respondents noted that building and maintaining rapport with survivors, rapid responses, and training combined with peer mentoring were able to support investigative efforts.

## Recommendations/Key Considerations

The findings revealed several important considerations focused on policy, practice, and training to enhance Nebraska's legal response to labor trafficking. These insights underscore recurring challenges and key observations from stakeholders and service providers, highlighting practical opportunities to improve the system's overall effectiveness.

**Offer Training Support on Cross-Agency Collaborations.** The development of standardized and regularly updated training tailored specifically for law enforcement, prosecutors, and legal advocates was recognized as an ongoing need to support investigative efforts (see also Farrell et al., 2020). Such cross-agency collaborations can prioritize building a shared understanding of what labor trafficking looks like in practice by aligning on a clear and unified definition of labor trafficking alongside a standardized protocol for handling active cases.

A key component of this training should clearly define who leads each stage of a labor trafficking investigation—from initial intake to survivor coordination—and include an updated list of shared contacts across agencies. For example, several respondents discussed the importance of formalizing these efforts, noting that having a clear structure before cases arise ensures a timely and coordinated response (see also Pfeffer et al., 2023). This infrastructure needs to be set up in advance, so agents and organizations can apply and adapt as cases are identified. Trainings would also benefit from using real examples from sectors like agriculture, construction, and domestic work to help participants identify red flags, thereby enhancing identification and response efforts. Additional topics may include resources for legal assistance to ensure

survivors fully understand their options and feel safer cooperating with investigations (e.g., T and U visa protections). Once cases are identified and move through the investigative process, all personnel should engage in trauma-informed techniques during interviews, as these individuals may be the first points of contact and need to build trust and rapport with survivors (e.g., Ladd & Weaver, 2018). This trauma-informed approach increases the likelihood that survivors will engage, share critical information, and potentially testify in prosecutions.

Importantly, the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force conducts multiple trainings annually to ensure stakeholders and service providers are aware of the signs and indicators of human trafficking (Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Report, 2023, 2024). These efforts have trained thousands of Nebraskans (e.g., judges, prosecutors, law enforcement agents, medical professionals, advocates). These suggestions are not meant to replace these ongoing efforts, but to supplement them and continue these trainings over time as initial and refresher courses that can also branch out into special topics.

**Leverage Community Leaders and Place Managers.** Many respondents noted that trafficking in Nebraska is concentrated in certain venues or sectors. For example, domestic work/servitude, agriculture, factories, restaurant/food service, cleaning industries, and construction were noted as being places where exploitation occurs. These are also industries that tend to require labor-intensive work—some of which are based in more isolated or rural areas of the state. When police did learn about cases, it often came from community providers or other institutions that sought to assist in connecting survivors to help. In thinking about trying to investigate and identify potential victims, Nebraska law enforcement officials could leverage community leaders and place managers—or individuals that make influential decisions about how a place operates—in this task (e.g., Eck, 2015; Sampson et al., 2010). Specifically, working with prominent community members may create an infrastructure where they feel empowered to report suspected labor trafficking or to serve as a liaison between survivors and law enforcement to facilitate trust (e.g., ask questions to law enforcement on behalf of a victim until they feel ready to come forward).

Community leaders have long been recognized as an important component in creating cultural and developmental capital in an area (Keating & Gasteyer, 2012). Place managers have also gained status as an important piece in crime prevention (Eck, 2015). Although place managers are traditionally discussed in terms of altering their own business practices to reduce crime, this approach may not work for labor trafficking because it may be that the place managers are the ones who are exploiting victims (e.g., factory owner is trafficking workers) (Eck, 2015; Sampson et al., 2010). In this context, law enforcement officials could identify areas vulnerable to labor trafficking (e.g., areas with large immigrant populations or prominent industries and sectors) and seek out the leaders and managers in the surrounding area (e.g., schools, churches, gas stations, restaurants, medical offices). Once identified, these leaders and managers could be trained by law enforcement on the signs and indicators of labor trafficking to look out for, and who to call if they suspect that someone is being harmed. By working directly with specific individuals in the community, police can build rapport, answer questions, and ensure that community members are getting accurate information about labor trafficking (see Barrick et al., 2014). This approach may also help in assigning responsibility to specific community members, potentially increasing their willingness to intervene (e.g., Coker et al., 2017).

**Build Rapport with At-Risk Groups.** Building off the previous recommendation, it will be important for investigators to continue to establish rapport and trust with at-risk groups directly. As noted, respondents discussed that foreign-born individuals were vulnerable to labor trafficking in Nebraska. It was also mentioned that victims in Nebraska did not recognize that what was happening to them was a crime and that they had a general fear or distrust of law enforcement. Addressing these challenges is not going to be a quick fix. However, law enforcement can strive to become a more positive presence in communities by fostering meaningful engagement and constructive interactions instead of forced compliance (e.g., Koper et al., 2022; Saunders & Kilmer, 2021). Namely, when immigrant communities perceive law enforcement—particularly the police—as just and fair, it strengthens the legitimacy of the U.S. justice system, fostering both public cooperation with the police and normative compliance with the law (Kirk et al., 2012; Tyler, 1990). Creating this connection may also be beneficial when there are challenges or issues that need to be addressed. For example, police have challenges in ensuring that the officer who responds to a situation does so appropriately (e.g., trained on labor trafficking, uses trauma-informed approach, takes victim's report seriously), which can impact how they interact and the impression left on victims. If police can create a more positive presence in immigrant communities, then it may shift perceptions that facilitate increased reporting or individuals reaching out for help directly.

**Provide Guidance during Routine Investigations.** A key finding from the current study was that some labor trafficking cases were identified through routine investigations that did not initially present as trafficking (e.g., recognizing that multiple individuals listed the same address on their driver's licenses, employers holding personal documents). There was also uncertainty among some respondents on what distinguished labor trafficking from labor exploitation. In this context, it may be especially important to provide some guidance to law enforcement officers to use in daily interactions with the public—and in any suspected labor abuse violations in particular. Note that this recommendation is not in place of formal training, but meant as a support for individuals that may have less experience in this area.

When trying to determine what guidance would be appropriate, it is important that it is not cumbersome on officers but also not too formulaic that it misses victims. For example, a portable quick-reference guide could include indicators of labor trafficking, interview tips, and key contacts for their area to help responders act quickly in the field (e.g., D'Michelle & Sites, 2015). Interview tips could include asking simple, respectful questions that assess the safety of the individual, such as "Are you free to leave your job if you choose?" or "Do you have your ID, or is someone else holding it?" (see also Chisolm-Straker et al., 2021; Clawson & Dutch, 2008a). These low-pressure, trust-building questions may create a dialogue between the officer and victim for a more detailed disclosure (e.g., Macy et al., 2023). The ultimate goal of these efforts would be to have a resource for officers to access as needed to remind them of what signs may be present in the field and how to respond to them.

**Track All Labor-Related Investigations.** Identifying and tracking labor trafficking is a challenge, making it particularly difficult to assess the scope of the problem or identify patterns across cases (National Academics of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020; Zhang, 2012b). However, collecting reliable and comprehensive data is essential. It can help shed light on the types of cases that are being identified, the pathways through which they come to the attention of law enforcement or service providers, the progression and outcomes of investigations, and the systemic gaps that hinder effective intervention. Without such data, efforts to improve detection, response, and policy development remain limited and reactive rather than proactive and evidence-based (Cockbain et al., 2020).

A systematic tracking system would also be able to identify patterns or trends to understand what aspects make case investigations "successful" (e.g., victims are rescued, perpetrators are held accountable) compared to ones that may fall apart. This tracking system would benefit from not only focusing on suspected labor trafficking, but all labor-related abuses or exploitative practices that come to the attention of law enforcement. As noted by respondents, it is not always evident that a call for service or investigation is related to labor trafficking explicitly. It is possible, then, that investigating "lesser" forms of abuse may uncover labor trafficking or create a point of contact for future disclosures (e.g., Pfeffer et al., 2023). Partnering with the Nebraska Department of Labor would also enhance this tracking system to ensure efforts were not duplicated across agencies. Making a concerted statewide effort to track all forms of labor abuse will be an important avenue for learning how to improve investigative and prosecution efforts over time.

**Actionable Item #3:** ***Identify the key challenges in responding to the physical, psychological, social, employment, and educational needs of labor trafficking survivors and provide recommendations on ways Nebraska can mitigate these issues***

## Overview of Key Challenges in Service Provision

Most respondents interviewed had either directly provided services or facilitated referrals to providers, highlighting the multi-faceted needs of survivors. Labor trafficking survivors often faced complex and ongoing challenges in accessing essential services that support their health, stability, and long-term recovery. Common needs included housing, legal services, mental health support, translation assistance, employment support, and basic necessities (e.g., food, medicine). However, respondents identified several barriers to meeting these needs, such as limited agency resources and coordination, inadequate training, cultural and linguistic barriers (e.g., lack of interpreters), and legal considerations (e.g., immigration status), to name a few. These barriers were especially difficult to navigate in rural areas where resources were described as being even more limited. Because inadequate access to resources and miscommunication between providers and survivors can disrupt care delivery and erode trust, respondents sought to overcome these issues by maintaining regular contact with survivors, expanding support networks to enable more efficient coordination, and formalizing training protocols were strategies to maximize response efforts.

## Recommendations/Key Considerations

The respondents stressed the importance of meeting survivors where they are—adapting to their needs with flexibility and honoring their autonomy, even when survivors declined services or opted not to participate in legal proceedings. The recommendations below seek to draw from these insights to strengthen service delivery for labor trafficking survivors in Nebraska.

**Take Stock of Resources and Make Investments.** Throughout the interviews, a lack of resources and service providers were discussed as prominent themes. In this context, more finances, personnel, and tangible resources (e.g., housing) are needed to support labor trafficking survivors in Nebraska (e.g., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Based on the findings from the current assessment, there are many professionals doing important work, but it is not always clear to them who they can refer clients to for services beyond their agency's scope. To assist stakeholders and services providers as they respond to these complex cases, it is recommended that officials in Nebraska take stock of the resources available and make investments where supports are lacking.

To accomplish this goal, all agencies across the state who provide services to labor trafficking survivors would need to be compiled into a statewide database (e.g., agency name, providers, contact information, services offered). This process would create a working list of providers that agencies across the state could use to identify referral sources for diverse needs. Given that this is a large undertaking, protocols would need to be established to ensure that there is a mechanism for modifying the list as providers enter and exit positions (e.g., regular check-ins with agencies to make sure information is up to date, forms for new providers to fill out). After the service providers are organized, practitioners engaged in this work can carefully examine the resources that are available in Nebraska to guide where investments are needed to strengthen existing efforts or develop new support systems (e.g., can existing services in rural areas be leveraged). This ongoing systematic effort would go a long way to ensure that all service providers have the necessary infrastructure to support survivors' needs.



**Provide Guidance during Service Delivery.** The respondents in the current study noted that some of the referrals came from survivors themselves. However, they also noted that many survivors did not recognize their experiences as labor trafficking. The challenge then becomes how to improve identification and service connections when the provider may not know they are working with a survivor. It is unlikely that all service providers are going to have the advanced training or expertise to address the needs of labor trafficking survivors (e.g., Clawson & Dutch, 2008b). But service providers can still assist in identification and facilitate connections if they are given the right tools. One way to improve these efforts is to prioritize the development of internal policies to guide labor trafficking responses for all staff.

Similar to the recommendation for investigators in the field, service providers with limited knowledge of labor trafficking may benefit from having a protocol within their organization that outlines instruction on the signs of labor trafficking, questions to ask, and who to contact to make sure the survivor is supported. These materials—which could include a guidebook or flowchart—should be created and led by staff with relevant experience and designed to support frontline workers, especially when legal experts or dedicated case managers are unavailable (e.g., Schwarz et al., 2016). This protocol should also include guidance on trauma-informed engagement strategies, legal relief options, and responses both within and across agencies (e.g., law enforcement contacts, referrals). Because service providers may be in sessions with clients when they recognize labor trafficking, agencies should consider have smaller but visible guides accessible for reference in offices or on computers (e.g., informational card, placard). By institutionalizing this knowledge, agencies can ensure that all staff, regardless of role or experience level, are better prepared to identify labor trafficking and connect survivors to appropriate resources and support systems.

**Maintain Consistent Communication.** An ongoing challenge for service providers was losing contact with survivors after they had been enrolled in services. One way in which respondents noted success in mitigating barriers to service delivery included being proactive with communication and having regular contact with survivors. Building on this approach, agencies should consider implementing processes for consistent communication with survivors as part of their organizational processes (e.g., Marsh, 2023). As needed, these efforts may need to be supplemented by multidisciplinary teams or other collaborative partners (e.g., Wozniak & Hussey, 2024).

Service providers can maintain respectful but consistent communication with survivors by assigning a designated point of contact to send a brief monthly text, voicemail, or email to check in. This helps ensure that survivors remain aware of available resources and support at any point, even if survivors are disconnected or have stepped away from seeking resources. These updates should not be intrusive and should be free of pressure and expectations, especially for survivors who might not be ready to engage with providers. When survivors disengage entirely or stop accessing services, the absence of continued outreach can leave them uncertain about whether support is still available or if they are welcome to return. Supporting healing means allowing survivors to move at their own pace, without pressure or expectations. Healing and reintegration can be non-linear journeys, requiring patience, adaptability, and respecting survivors' readiness and choices (e.g., Richie-Zavaleta & Balc, 2024). This consistent, respectful outreach can create a sense of continued support and could help survivors reconnect on their own terms without feeling abandoned or retraumatized.

**Facilitate Transportation to Services.** A common theme throughout the study was that there are limited resources in certain parts of Nebraska, affecting survivors' abilities to receive support. Stakeholders and service providers noted that rural regions of Nebraska—where certain industries that engage in trafficking may also exist—are particularly in need of more resources. Given the broader trend of population decline in rural regions of the state, it is unlikely that substantial gains will be made in terms of increasing service providers in those areas (e.g., Nebraska Chamber Foundation, 2024; U.S. Census Bureau, 2024b).

While expanding existing services, such as Telehealth, offers some potential (e.g., Gray et al., 2015; Vujanovic et al., 2022), it does not fully address the concerns raised by respondents regarding technological barriers—such as poor connectivity—and the difficulty of building rapport without face-to-face interaction (e.g., the absence of eye contact, gestures, or nonverbal cues). As a result, the more pressing goal may be to facilitate transportation for survivors in more rural areas to locations where in-person support is available. Importantly, this recommendation is not intended to shift additional responsibility onto individual stakeholders or service providers. Instead, it calls for a broader, statewide initiative to improve long-distance transportation options across Nebraska. For example, Nebraska's extensive railroad infrastructure is largely dedicated to freight, with an Amtrak passenger train currently serving a limited number of cities (e.g., Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings). Expanding passenger rail services could offer a faster, more coordinated way for survivors to access critical resources. This type of infrastructure investment could be vital in ensuring equitable access to support services for all Nebraskans, regardless of geographic location.

## The Case for a Center on Labor Trafficking

The previous recommendations offer separate, concrete steps that Nebraska could take to respond to these crimes. However, a centralized approach could consolidate these actions and establish a more efficient infrastructure for response efforts. In this context, we emphasize the need for a **Center on Labor Trafficking (CLT)** to facilitate informational and coordination functions based on community needs and best practices.

The CLT would serve as a comprehensive, trusted source of information and services for both the community and practitioners in the field with specific objectives, including (1) facilitating training sessions for stakeholders and service providers, (2) identifying and organizing models for addressing labor trafficking, and (3) serving as a connection point for practitioners seeking resources or assistance with data or research. Although this center would seek to address the noted concerns in Nebraska specifically, it would also be aware of and responsive to broader national efforts within its scope. Ultimately, this type of centralized infrastructure would strengthen interagency collaboration and coordination, while also functioning as an equity-centered approach to ensure that those most at risk—and those supporting them—have the tools, knowledge, and access necessary to advance prevention, improve identification, and facilitate long-term support for survivors.

***Objective #1: Facilitate Training Sessions***

The CLT would support and supplement existing efforts to offer standardized, ongoing training for frontline professionals (Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Report, 2023, 2024). In addition to providing more standardized training topics (e.g., definition, vulnerable populations and risk factors, survivor needs), the CLT would coordinate and host training sessions with local and national guest presenters with expertise and insights into labor trafficking (e.g., investigators who have successfully prosecuted cases, service providers who have successfully implemented interventions). To address concerns about cross-agency collaborations, the CLT would need to work with agencies to clearly define who leads each stage of an investigation, document these procedures for agencies to reference, and maintain an updated list of shared contacts across agencies.

***Objective #2: Identify and Organize Response Models***

A consideration in responding to labor trafficking is "what works." While Nebraska faces unique challenges based on its location, prominent industries, and geography spread, it can still learn from other response initiatives to inform future efforts. For example, Nebraska has relatively limited experience in formally investigating and prosecuting labor trafficking cases; other states have insights that could be adapted to assist in investigative practices (e.g., Dominguez et al., 2024; Pfeffer et al., 2023; Strong, 2021). In this context, the CLT would be responsible for organizing existing models relevant for identifying (e.g., building rapport, screening tools), investigating (e.g., components of agencies who take lead, task forces and champions, processes and protocols used), and prosecuting labor trafficking cases (e.g., characteristics of successful and unsuccessful prosecutions). The selected response models would be summarized in a standardized format for practitioners to review and made accessible through a dedicated CLT webpage. To disseminate these findings, the CLT would hold informational seminars to demonstrate the details of the identified models and discuss how Nebraska might tailor these practices to fit local needs.

***Objective #3: Serve as a Connection Point for Resources***

The CLT would be responsive to community needs and serve as a resource and research hub. Agencies and organizations would be able to approach the CLT to request assistance with research on best practices for specific cases or situations (e.g., research on cultural considerations), educational or informational materials to share with clients (e.g., translated materials), connections to other professionals in the field both locally and nationally (e.g., requests for expert testimony or assistance with specific aspects of an investigation), and data or research needs within their institutions (e.g., leveraging existing data infrastructure to help track cases). The CLT would serve as a centralized connection point for labor trafficking, brokering individuals with the necessary services and resources, while also functioning as a research hub—collecting data, publishing findings, and conducting evidence-based research that informs policy for Nebraska and the broader field.

# Summary of Challenges and Lessons Learned

This study builds on previous research to better understand labor trafficking in Nebraska (e.g., Owens et al., 2014). As a largely exploratory endeavor, several challenges required ongoing adjustments. Below, we outline five main challenges and lessons learned during this process to inform future researchers and practitioners working in this area.

## Spotlight on Lessons Learned

**Lesson #1:** The project would not have been possible without the support and "buy-in" from our advisory board and the practitioners who participated in this project.

**Lesson #2:** Conducting primary research on this topic required adaptations to the project's methods and anticipated timeline.

**Lesson #3:** Early interviews informed changes to question organization and interviewer approach to ensure data collection efforts were within the estimated timeframe.

**Lesson #4:** Recruiting stakeholders and service providers for interviews proved challenging, but carefully timed reminder emails and incentives assisted in these efforts.

**Lesson #5:** Recruiting survivors for interviews was challenging, even with incentives, early translation requests, carefully timed reminder emails to stakeholders and service providers, and contacting the National Survivor Network. Future studies may have to rely on additional methods to maximize participation while protecting confidentiality.

## Challenge #1: Identifying Key Stakeholders for the Advisory Board

The first major hurdle in getting the current study underway was identifying and forming the advisory board. Although this was initially viewed as a "challenge," the outpouring of support and willingness of working professionals to join the advisory board was remarkable. The stakeholders were identified primarily through a "seed" stakeholder known to the research team and from which additional recommendations were identified based on their known experience on human trafficking cases or current role/responsibilities with their employer. At other times, agencies or organizations were selected as important for inclusion, and they would then identify relevant personnel to participate.

The board was a vital component to the project's success as it represented diverse stakeholder, practitioner, and subject matter expert perspectives across 11 members that informed the study's methods and conclusions. In particular, the advisory board provided suggestions on industries and sectors that should be included in the stakeholder/service provider database, shared contact information with the research team to add to the database, provided feedback on question wording and order in instruments, gave suggestions on clarifying instrument instructions including how the legal definition was captured, forwarded the recruitment survey to their networks to encourage participation, and provided feedback on the study's findings. In short, the project would not have been possible without the ongoing support and constructive comments from our board members, stakeholders, and service providers who participated in this project.



## Challenge #2: Needing to Adapt the Study's Methods and Timeline

When the study was first designed, the project was estimated to take two years. Although this overall timeframe was achieved, many modifications were made to project tasks that affected completion time. For example, obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) took longer than anticipated, which delayed the research team's ability to begin data collection. Other delays included modifying study methods to incentivize enrollment for stakeholder and service provider interviews (i.e., adding a $50 Amazon gift card as compensation), translating survivor study materials into Spanish, and updating recruitment materials to share with stakeholders and service providers. While these modifications can be viewed as a normal component of the research process, where flexibility and adaptations are needed to maximize a study's potential, each revision took time, requiring IRB review and approval before implementation. Further, the modifications meant that some project tasks took longer than expected (e.g., recruiting respondents for interviews) and delayed the ability to conduct final analyses. These modifications ultimately strengthened the study by offering valuable insights, even if the outcomes differed from what the research team initially anticipated.

## Challenge #3: Clarifying Interview Organization and Approach

After incorporating all feedback and receiving IRB approval, the finalized interview protocols were used to begin scheduling the stakeholder and service provider interviews. Interviewers from BOSR reviewed the interview protocol and met with the research team to clarify any questions before beginning data collection. Check-ins with interviewers were conducted after each interview to ensure there were no outstanding questions or issues. However, during the early phase of data collection, several challenges emerged that required attention. Notably, one stakeholder/service provider interview extended beyond two hours, taking significantly longer than the estimated 45 minutes. Additionally, there was some confusion regarding the order and focus of questions, affecting both the interviewer's and the respondent's experience.

In response to these concerns, the research team added additional clarification to the interview protocol process for the interviewer (e.g., when to use prompts, why certain questions are being asked, added additional notes for the interviewer on navigating the protocol instructions), met with BOSR to review the updates made to the instructions and questions, and provided guidance on how to ensure interviews stay within the estimated timeframe. These meetings benefited both the research team and BOSR, as future interviews with stakeholders and service providers went much more smoothly, were clearly understood by all parties, and were completed in the estimated time frame or less. For clarity, the organizational changes to the stakeholder/service provider interview protocol were also integrated into the survivor interview protocol. In this way, open communication, regular follow-ups after interviews, and early discussions of concerns helped identify and address challenges in real-time.

## Challenge #4: Recruiting Stakeholders and Service Providers for Interviews

Recruiting stakeholders and service providers with direct experience in labor trafficking in Nebraska proved challenging. This was somewhat unexpected, as the recruitment survey had initially identified a promising number of interested respondents. Of the 582 valid responses in the recruitment survey, 114 respondents with labor trafficking experience said they were interested in being interviewed for the project. Based on initial responses, the research team anticipated reaching its goal of interviewing 80 stakeholders and service providers. However, only 26 interviews were ultimately completed.

To improve recruitment efforts, the research team implemented several strategies, including offering incentives (a $50 Amazon gift card), sending strategically timed reminder emails (e.g., spacing them out, waiting until after summer or holiday breaks), and keeping the recruitment survey open to allow additional stakeholders and service providers to express interest. Notably, these efforts were able to double our interview enrollments.

Those who did participate were actively engaged in anti-trafficking efforts and offered valuable insights that directly informed the research objectives and actionable recommendations presented in this study. However, many stakeholders and service providers did not schedule an interview, suggesting that future efforts may benefit from additional strategies, such as increasing stipend amounts or offering more flexible scheduling options through a shared calendar system.

## Challenge #5: Recruiting Survivors for Interviews

An ongoing challenge throughout the study involved recruiting labor trafficking survivors for interviews. As previously noted, the research team took a passive approach to ensure survivors were not pressured to participate in the research study and to protect their confidentiality. To support this effort, the research team relied on stakeholders and service providers to share study information with survivors in their networks. A total of 77 stakeholders and service providers requested that the study materials be shared with them to forward to survivors they know. Although several survivors contacted the research team about the study, only one survivor completed an interview (Goal = 20 interviews with survivors).

The research team engaged in several tactics to assist in recruitment efforts, including translating survivor study materials into Spanish and securing a Spanish-speaking interviewer in preparation for prospective interviews, sending strategically timed reminder emails and materials in English and Spanish to stakeholders/service providers to share with their network, and sharing study details with the National Survivor Network to broaden out recruitment efforts (upon the recommendation of an advisory board member). Despite these efforts, recruiting survivors proved particularly challenging, and participation remained limited. Future efforts may require alternative, survivor-centered approaches to maximize engagement while ensuring confidentiality. These could include increasing stipend incentives, offering a dedicated phone line with real-time translation services, being available at partner agencies before or after scheduled appointments, or conducting outreach at high-risk industry sites to connect directly with potential participants.



# Conclusion

In summary, labor trafficking remains challenging to understand, identify, and prosecute due to its often hidden and complex nature. Our interviews with stakeholders, service providers, and a survivor further highlight these challenges, providing insight into the scope of labor trafficking in Nebraska and the limitations of current systems in effectively identifying cases and offering appropriate services and support. As this report details extensively, labor trafficking often occurs in industries where exploitative conditions are viewed as normal, making it difficult for victims, who are already in vulnerable situations, to recognize their abuse and access support. These overlapping challenges frequently deter help-seeking behaviors, allowing traffickers to continue operating with minimal consequences.

This reality underscores the necessity to first strengthen current legal and service frameworks to ensure a more effective and sustained response to labor trafficking. Moving forward, every reported case must be treated not as an isolated event, but as a reflection of broader systemic gaps that demand coordinated, intentional action. Legally, these cases require careful attention, thorough investigation, and a strong commitment to pursuing accountability and establishing legal precedents by seeing cases through the criminal court system. Structurally, this entails investing in survivor-centered supports, enhancing cross-sector partnerships, and addressing the underlying conditions that allow labor trafficking to persist.

As a second consideration, more data and research on labor trafficking are essential to fully understand the scope, patterns, and evolving nature of the crime. Without accurate and comprehensive data, developing targeted prevention strategies, allocating resources effectively, or evaluating the success of existing interventions becomes difficult. Specifically, in states like Nebraska, where labor trafficking may be underreported or misunderstood, ongoing research is particularly important for raising awareness, tailoring outreach efforts, and building a legal and service infrastructure that effectively responds to survivors' needs.

Ultimately, only through intentional, coordinated, and data-driven efforts can we begin to shape long-term, sustainable solutions that demonstrate a collective commitment to creating safer, more equitable communities. While Nebraska is fortunate to have dedicated stakeholders and service providers actively working to combat labor trafficking—many of whom participated in this study's survey or interviews—there is still much work to be done. Efforts must continue to improve identification, investigation, and service provision, as well as to ensure persistent and long-term commitment to these initiatives.

# References


Barnert, E. S., Bath, E., Heard-Garris, N., Lee, J., Guerrero, A., Biely, C., Jackson, N., Chung, P. J., & Dudovitz, R. (2022). Commercial sexual exploitation during adolescence: A US-based national study of adolescent to adult health. *Public Health Reports, 137*(1_suppl), 53S-62S.

Barrick, K., Lattimore, P. K., Pitts, W., & Zhang, S. X. (2013). *Indicators of labor trafficking among North Carolina migrant farmworkers*. National Institute of Justice.

Barrick, K., Lattimore, P. K., Pitts, W. J., & Zhang, S. X. (2014). When farmworkers and advocates see trafficking but law enforcement does not: Challenges in identifying labor trafficking in North Carolina. *Crime, Law and Social Change, 61*, 205-214.

Bhukuth, A. (2005). Child labour and debt bondage: A case study of brick kiln workers in Southeast India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 40*(4), 287-302.

Bracy, K., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). A four-year analysis of labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics and labor trafficking patterns. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(1), 35-52.

Chisolm-Straker, M., Stinger, E., Strong, D., Loo, G. T., Rothman, E. F., Clesca, C., d'Etienne, J., Alanis, N., & Richardson, L. D. (2021). Validation of a screening tool for labor and sex trafficking among emergency department patients. *JACEP Open, 2*(5), e12558.

Clawson, H. J., & Dutch, N. (2008a). *Identifying victims of human trafficking: Inherent challenges and promising strategies from the field*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Clawson, H. J., & Dutch, N. (2008b). *Addressing the needs of victims of human trafficking: Challenges, barriers, and promising practices*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Cockbain E, Bowers K, Vernon L (2020) Using law enforcement data in trafficking research. In J. Winterdyk & J. Jones (Eds.), *The palgrave international handbook of human trafficking* (pp. 1709-1732). Springer.

Coker, A. L., Bush, H. M., Cook-Craig, P. G., DeGue, S. A., Clear, E. R., Brancato, C. J., Fisher, B. S., & Recktenwald, E. A. (2017). RCT testing bystander effectiveness to reduce violence. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 52*(5), 566-578.

Cullen, J., Stein, E., & Vlam, R. (2023). The continuum of victim to survivor: trauma-informed principles and the impact of language. *Trauma Monthly, 28*(5), 922-926.

Dank, M., Farrell, A., Zhang, S., Hughes, A., Abeyta, S., Fanarraga, I., Burke, C. P., Solis, V. O. (2021). *An exploratory study of labor trafficking among U.S. citizen victims*. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Northeastern University, University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Dank, M., Yahner, J., Yu, L., Vasquez-Noriega, C., Gelatt, J., & Pergamit, M. (2017). *Pretesting a human trafficking screening tool in the child welfare and runaway and homeless youth systems*. Urban Institute.

de Vries, I., & Farrell, A. (2018). Labor trafficking victimizations: Repeat victimization and polyvictimization. *Psychology of Violence, 8*(5), 630-638.

D'Michelle, P. D., & Sites, J. (2015). *Child abuse investigation field guide*. Academic Press.

Dominguez, E. Y., Sandal, M. E., Pukalo, L. M., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2024). A comprehensive analysis of labor trafficking cases in the United States: An 11-year review. *Crime & Delinquency*. Advance online publication.

Eck, J. E. (2015). Who should prevent crime at places? The advantages of regulating place managers and challenges to police services. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 9*(3), 223-233.

Farrell, A., Bright, K., Vries, I., Pfeffer, R., & Dank, M. (2020). Policing labor trafficking in the United States. *Trends in Organized Crime, 23*, 36-56.

Farrell, A., Dank, M., Kafafian, M., Lockwood, S., Pfeffer, R., Hudges, A., & Vincent, K. (2019). *Capturing human trafficking victimization through crime reporting*. U.S. Department of Justice.

Farrell, A., & de Vries, I. (2020). Measuring the nature and prevalence of human trafficking. In J. Winterdyk & J. Jones (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook of human trafficking* (pp. 147-162). Palgrave Macmillan.

Farrell, A., McDevitt, J., & Fahy, S. (2008). Understanding and improving law enforcement responses to human trafficking: Final Report. (Report No. 222752). U.S. Department of Justice.

Fisher, B. S. (2009). The effects of survey question wording on rape estimates: Evidence from a quasi-experimental design. *Violence Against Women, 15*(2), 133-147.

Forced Labor, Pub. L. 106-386, 114 Stat. 1486, codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. § 1589 (2000).

Franchino-Olsen, H., Chesworth, B. R., Boyle, C., Rizo, C. F., Martin, S. L., Jordan, B., Macy, R. J., & Stevens, L. (2022). The prevalence of sex trafficking of children and adolescents in the United States: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 23*(1), 182-195.

Fukushima, A. I. (2020). *A survey of child welfare and labor trafficking in California*. University of Utah.

Galemba, R. B. (2021). "They steal our work": Wage theft and criminalization of immigrant day laborers in Colorado, USA. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 27*, 91-112.

Garcia, C. (2005). Buscando trabajo: Social networking among immigrants from Mexico to the United States. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 27*(1), 3-22.

Gilbert, L., Reza, A., Mercy, J., Lea, V., Lee, J., Xu, L., Marcelin, L. H., Hast, M., Vertefeuille, J., & Domercant, J. W. (2018). The experience of violence against children in domestic servitude in Haiti: Results from the Violence Against Children Survey, Haiti 2012. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 76*, 184-193.

Gray, M. J., Hassija, C. M., Jaconis, M., Barrett, C., Zheng, P., Steinmetz, S., & James, T. (2015). Provision of evidence-based therapies to rural survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault via telehealth: Treatment outcomes and clinical training benefits. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 9*(3), 235.

Greenbaum, J. (2020). A public health approach to global child sex trafficking. *Annual Review of Public Health, 41*, 481-497.

Hogan, K. A. & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2023). Providing services to victims of human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic: A social service agency state-wide survey. *Journal of Social Service Research, 49*(3), 357-376.

Hopper, E. K., & Gonzalez, L. D. (2018). A comparison of psychological symptoms in survivors of sex and labor trafficking. *Behavioral Medicine, 44*(3), 177-188.

HTI Labs. (2025). *Screen, respond, connect, & serve as a community*. Retrieved from https://htilabs.org/pave/

Keating, K., & Gasteyer, S. P. (2012). The role of cultural capital in the development of community leadership: Toward an integrated program model. *Community Development, 43*(2), 147-168.

Kirk, D. S., Papachristos, A. V., Fagan, J., & Tyler, T. R. (2012). The paradox of law enforcement in immigrant communities: Does tough immigration enforcement undermine public safety?. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 641*(1), 79-98.

Knapp, F. (2019, August 8). O'Neill: Mixed emotions one year after ICE raids. *Nebraska Public Media*. Retrieved from https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/oneill-mixed-emotions-one-year-after-ice-raids/

Koper, C. S., Taylor, B. G., Liu, W., & Wu, X. (2022). Police activities and community views of police in crime hot spots. *Justice Quarterly, 39*(7), 1400-1427.

Kulig, T. C. (2022). Measuring sex trafficking: A national-level victimization survey of an at-risk sample. *Justice Quarterly, 39*(6), 1180-1213.

Kulig, T. C., Schlosser, A., VanSlyke, M., Alexander, L., & Doña-Reveco, C. (2023). *Community and network responses for assisting mobile vulnerable populations*. University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Ladd, S. K., & Weaver, L. N. (2018). Moving forward: Collaborative accompaniment of human trafficking survivors by using trauma-informed practices. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 4*(3), 191-212.

Letsie, N. C., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). An eight-year analysis of child labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics, and patterns of child labor trafficking. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 121*, 105265.

Lockyer, S. (2022). Beyond inclusion: Survivor-leader voice in anti-human trafficking organizations. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 8*(2), 135-156.

Macias-Konstantopoulos, W., & Owens, J. (2018). *Adult human trafficking screening tool and guide*. National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center.

Macy, R. J., Klein, L. B., Shuck, C. A., Rizo, C. F., Van Deinse, T. B., Wretman, C. J., & Luo, J. (2023). A scoping review of human trafficking screening and response. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 24*(3), 1202-1219.

Marsh, D. J. (2023). Understanding and pursuing labor trafficking cases collaboratively. *Societies, 13*(4), 85.

Moton, L., Dank, M., Liu, Y., & Hughes, A. (2023). An exploration into the lived experiences of young people forced to beg and sell goods in Kampala, Uganda. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication.

Murphy, L. T. (2016). *Labor and sex trafficking among homeless youth: A ten-city study*. Modern Slavery Research Project. Loyola University New Orleans.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2020). *Estimating the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States: Considerations and complexities: Proceedings of a workshop*. National Academies Press.

Nebraska Attorney General's Office. (2025). *Identifying trafficking*. Retrieved from https://ago.nebraska.gov/identifying-trafficking-0

Nebraska Chamber Foundation. (2024, January). *Nebraska economic competitiveness assessment 2024*. Economic Leadership, Author. Retrieved from https://www.nechamber.com/uploads/1/3/1/6/131641147/ne_chamber_foundation_2024_ne_economic_competitiveness_assessment.pdf

Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force. (2022). *Task force update 2022*. Nebraska Attorney General's Office. Retrieved from https://ago.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/2022%20Human%20Trafficking%20Task%20Force%20Update.pdf

Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force. (2023). *2023 report*. Nebraska Attorney General's Office. Retrieved from https://ago.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/_2023%20Task%20Force%20Report_0.pdf

Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force. (2024). *2024 report*. Nebraska Attorney General's Office. Retrieved from https://ago.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/2024%20Human%20Trafficking%20Task%20Force%20Report.pdf

Nebraska Revised Statute, 28-830 (Human trafficking; forced labor or services; terms, defined). (2017, as amended).



Nebraska Revised Statute, 28-831 (Human trafficking; labor trafficking or sex trafficking; labor trafficking of a minor or sex trafficking of a minor; prohibited acts; penalties). (2017, as amended).

Novak, E., Kulig, T. C., & Doña-Reveco, C. (2024). "I always screen for a t visa": The role of legal representatives in supporting human trafficking victims. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication.

Ohio Department of Children & Youth. (n.d.). *Identifying human trafficking in the child protection system*. Human Trafficking Task Force. Retrieved from https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ocjs.ohio.gov/humantrafficking/links/IdentifyingHumanTraffickingInTheChildProtectionSystem-ScreeningTool.pdf

Oram, S., Abas, M., Bick, D., Boyle, A., French, R., Jakobowitz, S., Khondoker, M., Stanley, N., Trevillion, K., Howard, L., & Zimmerman, C. (2016). Human trafficking and health: A survey of male and female survivors in England. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*(6), 1073-1078.

Owens, C., Dank, M., Breaux, J., Banuelos, I., Farrell, A., Pfeffer, R., Bright, K., Heitsmith, R., & McDevitt, J. (2014). *Understanding the organization, operation, and victimization process of labor trafficking in the United States*. Urban Institute.

Pelley, S. (2023, May 7). From stakeouts to warrants: How federal investigators found more than 100 children cleaning slaughterhouses. *CBS News*. Retrieved from https://www.cbsnews.com/news/government-investigation-into-slaughterhouse-cleaning-company-that-hired-children-60-minutes-transcript-2023-05-07/

Perales, M., Fraser, Q., & Anderson, J. (2025, June 10). Multiple immigration raids reported at plants in Omaha on Tuesday morning. *KETV7*. Retrieved from https://www.ketv.com/article/omaha-immigration-raids-reported-plants/65024010

Pfeffer, R., Barrick, K., Dank, M., Tibaduiza, E., Scalise, P., Yu, L., Hughes, A., & Grossman, R. (2023). *Understanding what works in the successful identification, investigation, and prosecution of labor trafficking cases in the United States: Final report*. RTI International, New York University.

Preble, K., Nichols, A., & Cox, A. (2023). Labor trafficking in Missouri: Revelations from a statewide needs assessment. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 9*(1), 15-32.

Qualtrics. (2024). Qualtrics XM platform [Computer software]. Qualtrics. https://www.qualtrics.com

Rajaram, S. S., & Tidball, S. (2018). Survivors' voices—Complex needs of sex trafficking survivors in the Midwest. *Behavioral Medicine, 44*(3), 189-198.

Ravi, A., Shuman, S., Shroff, N., London-Orozco, C., & Walcott, K. (2022). Physical, mental, and socioeconomic health issues of sex and labor trafficking survivors engaged in primary care services. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 11*(1), 1-9.

Recknor, F. H., Gemeinhardt, G., & Selwyn, B. J. (2018). Health-care provider challenges to the identification of human trafficking in health-care settings: A qualitative study. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 4*(3), 213-230.

Richie-Zavaleta, A. C., & Balc, T. (2024). *From survivor to thriver: Analyzing challenges and support in the reintegration of human trafficking survivors* [Research brief]. Point Loma Nazarene University. Retrieved from https://ht-radar.com

Rose, A. L., Howard, L. M., Zimmerman, C., & Oram, S. (2021). A cross-sectional comparison of the mental health of people trafficked to the UK for domestic servitude, for sexual exploitation, and for labor exploitation. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(3), 258-267.

Sampson, R., Eck, J. E., & Dunham, J. (2010). Super controllers and crime prevention: A routine activity explanation of crime prevention success and failure. *Security Journal, 23*, 37-51.

Saunders, J., & Kilmer, B. (2021). Changing the narrative: Police–community partnerships and racial

reconciliation. *Justice Quarterly, 38*(1), 47-71.

Savoia, E., Piltch-Loeb, R., Muibu, D., Leffler, A., Hughes, D., & Montrond, A. (2023). Reframing human trafficking awareness campaigns in the United States: goals, audience, and content. *Frontiers in Public Health, 11*, 1195005.

Schwarz, C. (2017). *Human trafficking in the Midwest: Service providers' perspectives on sex and labor trafficking*. Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Initiative. The University of Kansas.

Schwarz, C., Alvord, D., Daley, D., Ramaswamy, M., Rauscher, E., & Britton, H. (2019). The trafficking continuum: Service providers' perspectives on vulnerability, exploitation, and trafficking. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work, 34*(1), 116-132.

Schwarz, C., Unruh, E., Cronin, K., Evans-Simpson, S., Britton, H., & Ramaswamy, M. (2016). Human trafficking identification and service provision in the medical and social service sectors. *Health and Human Rights Journal, 18*(1), 181-192.

Simich, L. (2014). *Out of the shadows: A tool for the identification of victims of human trafficking*. Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from https://vera-institute.files.svdcdn.com/production/downloads/publications/human-trafficking-identification-tool-summary-v2.pdf

Simich, L., Goyen, L. Powell, A., & Mallozzi, K. (2014). *Improving human trafficking identification – Validation and dissemination of a screening tool*. Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from https://vera-institute.files.svdcdn.com/production/downloads/publications/human-trafficking-identification-tool-technical-report.pdf

Sokat, K.Y. (2022). Addressing forced labor in supply chains in California. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives, 16*, 100735.

Stanford, K., Cappetta, A., Ahn, R., & Macias-Konstantopoulos, W. (2021). Sex and labor trafficking in Paraguay: Risk factors, needs assessment, and the role of the health care system. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(9-10), 4806-4831.

Strong, S. M. (2021). *Human-trafficking offenses handled by state attorneys general offices, 2018*. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Tyler, T. R. (1990). *Why people obey the law*. Yale University Press.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *Quick facts: 2021*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lincolncitynebraska,grandislandcitynebraska,bellevuecitynebraska,omahacitynebraska,NE/PST045221

U.S. Census Bureau. (2024a, November 25). *State population totals and components of change: 2020-2024*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-total.html#v2024

U.S. Census Bureau. (2024b). *American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2018-2022* [Analysis by Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha].

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (n.d.). *Citizenship and naturalization*. Retrieved from https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/citizenship-and-naturalization

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Social determinants of health*. Retrieved from https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2018, March 20). *2 illegal aliens from India each sentenced in Nebraska to a year in federal prison for labor trafficking, harboring illegal alien*. Retreived from https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/2-illegal-aliens-india-each-sentenced-nebraska-year-federal-prison-labor-trafficking

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. 106–386, 114 Stat. 1464, codified as amended at 22 U.S.C. §§ 7101–7110 (2000).

Vujanovic, A. A., Gordon, M. R., Coverdale, J. H., & Nguyen, P. T. (2022). Applying telemental health services for adults experiencing trafficking. *Public Health Reports, 137*(1_suppl), 17S-22S.

Westwood, J., Howard, L. M., Stanley, N., Zimmerman, C., Gerada, C., & Oram, S. (2016). Access to, and experiences of, healthcare services by trafficked people: Findings from a mixed-methods study in England. *British Journal of General Practice, 66*(652), e794-e801.

Winder, T. (2024, March 29). Lexington woman wanted for labor trafficking of a minor. *KNOP News*. Retrieved from https://www.knopnews2.com/2024/03/29/lexington-woman-wanted-labor-trafficking-minor/

Wozniak, J., & Hussey, D. (2024). A multidisciplinary collaborative approach to human trafficking. In L. Dryjanska, E. K. Hopper, & H. Stoklosa (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on human trafficking: Theory, research, prevention, and intervention* (pp. 255–268). American Psychological Association.

Wright, E. R., LaBoy, A., Tsukerman, K., Forge, N., Ruel, E., Shelby, R., Higbee, M., Webb, Z., Turner-Harper, M., Darkwa, A., & Wallace, C. (2021). The prevalence and correlates of labor and sex trafficking in a community sample of youth experiencing homelessness in Metro-Atlanta. *Social Science, 10*(2), 32.

Zhang, S. X. (2012a). *Looking for a hidden population: Trafficking of migrant laborers in San Diego County*. United States Department of Justice.

Zhang, S. X. (2012b). Measuring labor trafficking: A research note. *Crime, Law and Social Change, 58*, 469-482.

Zhang, S. X., Spiller, M. W., Finch, B. K., & Qin, Y. (2014). Estimating labor trafficking among unauthorized migrant workers in San Diego. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 653*(1), 65-86.

# Appendix A

## Recruitment Survey Questions

**1. Are you 19 years of age or older?**
Yes/No

**2. What is your first and last name?**

**3. What is a good contact email to reach you if we have follow-up questions?**

**4. What is a good phone number to reach you if we have follow-up questions?**

**5. What is the name of the organization that you work for?**

**6. How would you describe the type of organization you work for (for example, law enforcement, medical provider, mental health provider, transportation, education)?**

**7. What is your current position/title within your organization?**

**8. How long have you been working at this organization?**

**9. How long have you been in your current position with the organization?**

**10. What types of areas does your organization primarily serve?** *[check all that apply]*
- Urban
- Rural
- Suburban
- Other: (open response)

**11. What definition of labor trafficking, if any, does your organization use to classify these experiences?** *[check all that apply]*
- Nebraska legislation
- Federal legislation—Trafficking Victims Protection Act and its reauthorizations
- Federal legislation—Forced Labor
- I'm not sure
- Other: *(open response)*

**12. In a professional role, have you ever worked on labor trafficking cases or with labor trafficking survivors in Nebraska?**
Yes/No

If "no"

**13. You indicated that you have not worked on labor trafficking cases or with survivors in Nebraska. Can you provide additional details on why you think you have not had experience in this area in your professional role (for example: no cases have been brought forth, no direct contact with survivors)?**



If "yes"

**14. Throughout your professional career in Nebraska, approximately how long have you worked on labor trafficking cases and/or with labor trafficking survivors?**
- Less than 6 months
- Between 6 months and 1 year
- Between 1 and 2 years
- Between 3 and 5 years
- Between 6 and 10 years
- More than 10 years

**15. Throughout your professional career in Nebraska, what labor trafficking populations have you worked with?** *[check all that apply]*
- Adults (aged 18 years or older)
- Children (aged 17 years or younger)
- U.S.-born individuals
- Foreign-born individuals—without legal documentation
- Foreign-born individuals—with legal documentation
- Other: (open response)

**16. Throughout your professional career in Nebraska, approximately how many unique labor trafficking cases have you worked on? A "case" is broadly defined here as an incident or set of circumstances under investigation or review.**
- None
- Fewer than 5
- Between 5 and 10
- Between 11 and 15
- Between 16 and 20
- Between 21 and 30
- Between 31 and 40
- Between 41 and 50
- More than 50

**17. Throughout your professional career in Nebraska, approximately how many unique labor trafficking survivors have you worked with?**
- None
- Fewer than 5
- Between 5 and 10
- Between 11 and 15
- Between 16 and 20
- Between 21 and 30
- Between 31 and 40
- Between 41 and 50
- More than 50

18. **Throughout your professional career in Nebraska, what types of exploitation have you seen in labor trafficking cases or your work with labor trafficking survivors?** *[check all that apply]*
    - Physical restraint, physical violence, or controlling/monitoring free movement and communication
    - Threats of violence, threats of deportation or the legal system, or threats against family or friends
    - Controlling or threatening to control access to substances (for example: drugs, alcohol)
    - Destroying, concealing, or confiscating legal documents (for example: passport, immigration documentation)
    - Exploiting another person's disability (for example: functional or mental impairments)
    - Causing or threatening to cause financial harm, including through labor or services in payment toward a real or supposed debt
    - Making false promises or lying about payment or conditions of work
    - Other: *(open response)*
19. **Throughout your professional career in Nebraska, what venues have you seen in cases or in your work with survivors where labor trafficking has occurred?** *[check all that apply]*
    - Domestic Work/Servitude
    - Agriculture/Farms
    - Construction
    - Restaurants/Food Service
    - Hospitality/Hotels/Motels
    - Factories
    - Traveling Sales Crew
    - Peddling Ring
    - Forced Begging
    - Landscaping Service
    - Health Care
    - Housekeeping/Cleaning Service
    - Health and Beauty Services
    - Other: *(open response)*
20. **In your professional role, do you currently work on labor trafficking cases or with labor trafficking survivors in Nebraska?**
    Yes/No

    21. **How many labor trafficking cases are you currently working on in Nebraska? A "case" is broadly defined here as an incident or set of circumstances under investigation or review.**
        Open response

    22. **How many labor trafficking survivors are you currently working directly with in Nebraska?**
        Open response

23. **Would it be okay if the research team contacted you at a later date about scheduling an interview?**
    Yes/No

24. **Would you be willing to share information about this study with labor trafficking survivors you know?**
    Yes—please send me more information about this study to share with labor trafficking survivors I know
    No/I do not have current contact with labor trafficking survivors

    25. **Were the survivors you know trafficked for labor in Nebraska?**
        Yes/No/I'm not sure

    26. **Were the survivors you know trafficked for labor in a location other than Nebraska (even if they are/were receiving services in Nebraska)?**
        Yes/No/I'm not sure

# Appendix B

## Stakeholder/Service Provider Interview Protocol Questions

**Part I: Stakeholder/Service Provider General Background and Knowledge**

1. I want to start by learning more about you
    a. Can you tell me about your highest educational background?
    b. Do you speak any language(s) aside from English?
    c. What agency or organization do you work for?
    d. What is your title/position?
    e. How long have you been in your current position?
    f. Can you give us a brief general description of your job and what a typical day is like in your position?
2. What services and/or activities does your organization provide specific to labor trafficking?
3. What type of outreach activity does your organization engage in to identify survivors of labor trafficking?
4. How do survivors typically become involved with your organization or come to your attention? Are there multiple ways that your agency learns about labor trafficking cases (for example: self-referral, law enforcement referral)?
5. Of your total client population, approximately how many labor trafficking survivor clients does your organization serve per month/year? Are these unique clients (or include some recurring clients)?
6. Does your agency use an intake or screening protocol to identify potential survivors of labor trafficking?
    a. If yes, what does this process look like and what formal screening tools are used (if any)?
    b. If no, how are labor trafficking survivors identified by your organization?
7. Have you attended training(s) on the signs/indicators of labor trafficking or techniques to investigate labor trafficking? What type of training have you attended and when?
8. How do you define labor trafficking?
9. How do you distinguish labor trafficking from labor exploitation?
    a. At what point would a labor code violation or labor exploitation turn into labor trafficking?
10. Can you tell me about your work on labor trafficking cases specifically...
11. What types of populations have you worked with? (for example: adults/minors, U.S./foreign-born individuals)
12. How many years of experience do you have working on labor trafficking cases?
13. How many cases have you worked on during your career? How many cases are you working on currently?
14. How many survivors have you worked with directly during your career? How many survivors are you working with currently?
15. How many traffickers have you worked with directly?
16. Do you have experience working in other locations on labor trafficking outside of Nebraska? If so, can you briefly describe that experience?



**Part II: Nature of Labor Trafficking in Nebraska**

17. Can you describe the general characteristics of the labor trafficking survivors you and/or your organization most often work with?
    a. What characteristics do you notice related to:
        ii. Age (adult/minor)
        iii. Race/Ethnicity
        iv. Sex
        v. Country of origin
        vi. Criminal history
        vii. History of victimization
        viii. Prior history of trafficking or exploitation
        ix. Location/state/city/country of survivors
    b. Have you noticed **forced criminality** during labor trafficking on cases you or your organization have worked on? (Forced criminality is when the victim is exploited by being forced to engage in illegal activities [for example: selling/cultivating drugs, committing theft or other crimes])
    c. Have you noticed **sex trafficking** during labor trafficking on cases you or your organization have worked on? (Sex trafficking is when the victim is compelled to engage in sexual acts in exchange for something of value [for example: money, drugs])
18. Was there anything about these individuals that you think made them particularly vulnerable to labor trafficking? Please explain how you think these factors increased vulnerability to labor trafficking.
    a. For example, being a minor, were they unfamiliar with the laws and customs of the United States, have a history of an abusive/neglectful/violent home life, experiencing poverty, lacking a support system, coming from a physically, emotionally, or sexually abusive or neglectful household as a child, or something else?
19. What forms or venues of labor trafficking have you seen in this area?
    a. For example, people can be exploited in different ways, including domestic work/servitude, agriculture, construction, factories, forced begging, restaurant work, nail salons, hotels, or something else.
20. How do traffickers recruit survivors into the labor trafficking situation?
    a. For example, people can be recruited by false job offers, promises of a better life, or in some other way.
21. Can you describe survivors' relationships with labor traffickers? For example, did they know each other before they were exploited (for example: acquaintance, spouse/partner, family, friend)? Or were they strangers?
22. Did labor traffickers use any of the following forms/methods to keep survivors in conditions of labor trafficking...
        i. Physical restraint, physical violence, or controlling/monitoring free movement and communication
        ii. Threats of violence, threats of deportation or the legal system, or threats against family or friends
        iii. Controlling or threatening to control access to substances (for example: drugs, alcohol)
        iv. Destroying, concealing, or confiscating legal documents (for example: passport, immigration documentation)
        v. Exploiting another person's disability (for example: functional or mental impairments)
        vi. Causing or threatening to cause financial harm, including through labor or services in payment toward a real or supposed debt
        vii. Making false promises or lying about payment or conditions of work
    a. Is there anything else that you want to elaborate on or discuss that is not mentioned here?

23. In what ways are survivors able to escape or receive help to escape the labor trafficking situation (for example: survivor sought help, someone reported a tip, law enforcement did an investigation)?
24. Were certain agencies or organizations part of this process of helping survivors escape labor trafficking?
    a. To the best of your knowledge, have any survivor(s), or family/acquaintances reported the incident(s) to the (a) National Human Trafficking Hotline or the (b) Nebraska Human Trafficking Hotline? If so, did they share their experience(s) with this process? Can you tell us about it briefly?
25. In your experience, how connected are traffickers to other individuals that facilitate trafficking (for example: transporters, document fraud experts, money launderers)?
26. At what point do labor trafficking survivors realize (if at all) that they are in a labor trafficking situation or being victimized?
    a. Does this differ by survivor characteristics (country of origin, citizenship) or type of venue (for example: agriculture, domestic servitude, debt bondage)?
27. How common is it for labor trafficking survivors to have friends, family members, and/or co-workers who are also survivors of labor trafficking?
28. Are there any characteristics of Nebraska or region-specific industries that might encourage labor trafficking?
29. Do you think the context in which labor trafficking occurs in Nebraska has changed over time? For example:
    a. Characteristics of survivors
    b. The types of work survivors are recruited for
    c. How survivors are recruited
    d. The types of cases that are brought to your attention/ agency
30. Do you think that survivors may be hesitant to report their experiences of labor trafficking to law enforcement or legal actors (for example: lawyers) in Nebraska?
    a. If so, why do you think they are hesitant?
    b. What do you think would help improve these interactions and increase reporting?

**Part III: Identifying, Investigating, and Prosecuting Labor Trafficking**

31. Have you ever been part of law enforcement investigations, legal investigations, or prosecutions for labor trafficking in any way (for example: active investigator, expert testimony)?
32. [If "no" to Q31] Why have you not been part of any investigations or prosecutions for labor trafficking? Do you think you should be part of these investigations? If so, what do you envision your role as being?
33. [If "yes" to Q31, continue with remaining questions in Part III]
    Can you describe your experiences working on these cases, focusing on broader trends you may have noticed...
    a. Did the case(s) involve criminal activity other than labor trafficking? If yes, what kinds?
    b. Were other survivors involved in the case(s) not served by you or your organization?
    c. Were traffickers or suspects arrested in the case(s)?
        iv. Did the case(s) move forward to prosecution?
        v. If the case(s) progressed, were the suspects charged with "human trafficking" violations or other crimes?
        vi. Were survivors willing to testify?
    d. Do you think these investigations were "successful"? Why or why not?
34. What were some of the *challenges* you noticed when working on these cases?
    i. The age of the survivor (for example: being a minor)
    ii. The definitions being used to identify/classify labor trafficking?
    iii. Lack of evidence to support an investigation or prosecution?
    iv. Experience or knowledge of professionals investigating labor trafficking?
    v. The investigative techniques used (for example: how survivors or suspects were interviewed, time or resources dedicated to investigation)?
    vi. The legal status of the survivors (for example: legal documentation)?
    vii. Administrative processes (for example: getting responses from agencies, getting paperwork filled out on time, filing for legal documentation or protection orders, filing for a T or U visa)?
    viii. Interactions between survivors and investigators or legal actors (for example: fear, distrust, inappropriate interactions)?
    ix. Bonds or relationships between survivors and traffickers?
    x. Cultural or language barriers with survivors?
    xi. Cooperation from survivors?
    xii. Survivors being arrested or deported?
    xiii. Perceptions of investigators when talking to or about survivors of labor trafficking (for example: making inappropriate comments or assumptions)?
35. What strategies did you or others use to overcome these challenges?
36. What were some of the *successes* you noticed when working on these cases?
    i. Did investigators or other legal actors go "above and beyond" to assist survivors?
    ii. Were there supportive collaborations between agencies or organizations? If yes, what agencies worked together to facilitate this collaboration, and how?
    iii. Did survivors receive support from the investigating agencies and/or legal actors?
    iv. Were survivors willing and/or able to cooperate in the investigation in a way they were comfortable with and felt protected?
    v. Was "justice" served in this case? If so, how was justice defined and achieved?
37. What are some of the most important aspects to consider *when identifying, investigating, and prosecuting* labor trafficking in Nebraska to improve "success" in responding to these crimes?
38. Is there anything else we have not discussed about identifying, investigating, or prosecuting labor trafficking cases that you think is important to consider?

**Part IV: Providing Services and Addressing Needs**

39. Have you ever been part of (i) directly providing services to survivors of labor trafficking or (ii) connecting survivors to resources?

40. [If "no" to Q39] Why have you not been part of service provision or connection for labor trafficking survivors? Do you think you should be part of this process? If so, what do you envision your role as being?

41. [If "yes" to Q39, continue with remaining questions in Part IV]
Can you describe your experiences…
    a. What were the most common needs of the clients you served:
        i. Interpreter/translator
        ii. Age of survivor (for example: being a minor)
        iii. Physical needs
        iv. Medical services
        v. Dental services
        vi. Psychological/emotional
        vii. Social considerations (for example: family reunification)
        viii. Employment
        ix. Educational needs
        x. Housing/shelter
        xi. Safety planning
        xii. Food/clothing
        xiii. Legal assistance (for example: continued presence, T visa, U visa, other immigration relief)
        xiv. Substance use treatment
        xv. Childcare
        xvi. English classes
        xvii. Transportation
        xviii. Something else?
    b. Were there any legal considerations that affected your ability to provide services (for example: lack of legal documentation, survivor was a minor)?
    c. Did you think that clients had adequate access to services in their location (for example: being in a rural v. urban area)?
    d. Were translators needed? If yes, what language?
    e. Were there any cultural considerations or barriers that had to be addressed?



42. What were some of the <u>*challenges*</u> (*can include organizational, structural, or cultural*) you noticed when working on these cases?
    i. The definitions being used to identify/classify labor trafficking?
    ii. Lack of evidence to support an investigation or prosecution?
    iii. Encouraging client involvement in the investigation/prosecution of a criminal case related to their labor trafficking experience?
    iv. The legal status of the survivors (for example: legal documentation)?
    v. Administrative processes (for example: getting responses from agencies, getting paperwork filled out on time, filing for legal documentation or protection orders, filing for a T or U visa)?
    vi. Lack of access to resources in their area?
    vii. Interactions between survivors and providers (for example: fear, distrust, inappropriate interactions)?
    viii. Bonds or relationships between survivors and traffickers?
    ix. Cultural or language barriers with survivors?
    x. Cooperation from survivors?
    xi. Survivors being arrested or deported while receiving services?

43. What strategies did you or others use to overcome these challenges?

44. Are there needs you or your organization or other partners have that would help overcome challenges providing services to survivors of labor trafficking?

45. What were some of the <u>*successes*</u> you noticed when working on these cases?
    i. Did providers go "above and beyond" to assist survivors?
    ii. Were there supportive collaborations between agencies or organizations? If yes, what agencies worked together to facilitate this collaboration, and how?
    iii. Did survivors feel supported and assisted in a way that aligned with their needs (for example: physical/emotional needs, housing, employment, educational, legal status)?
    iv. Did survivors define the outcome of their experience as "positive" or helpful?

46. Do you have experience working with survivors who came directly to you without having reported their experiences to the police?
    a. If so, do you report them (*these cases/incidents*) or only report them if the survivor agrees to speak with law enforcement?
        i. Do you encourage the survivor to speak with law enforcement?
    b. In order to receive support or services from you/your organization, is survivor involvement in a law enforcement investigation or prosecution a requirement?

47. What do you think are some of the <u>*most important*</u> aspects to consider when providing services to survivors of labor trafficking in Nebraska to improve "success" in responding to these crimes?

48. Is there anything else we have not discussed about providing services to labor trafficking survivors that you think is important to consider?

**Part V: Conclusion**

49. Do you have any final comments or questions for me? Or, are there questions or topics that we did not cover that we should have?

# Appendix C

## Survivor Interview Protocol Questions

**Part I: Background Information**

1. Can you share what *type of role* the person has who sent you information about this project? Note that we are not asking you to provide any specific names or identifying information (for example: was it a therapist, community leader, lawyer/attorney, doctor, police officer).
2. How old are you? *[Participants must be at least 19 years old to continue the interview]*
3. Where were you born (city/province, country)?
    a. Is this the country/city where you grew up?
4. How would you describe your race and/or ethnicity?
5. What language did you speak at home growing up?
6. What is the language you speak at home now?
7. Can you describe what life was like for you growing up? Was there anything during your childhood that you found especially supportive (for example: loving parents, felt supported)? Or especially difficult (for example: experiencing violence or neglect)?
8. Did you go to school? If so, how many years did you complete?
9. Are you in a relationship or married?
10. Do you have any children?
11. What is your current living situation? (for example: house, apartment, shelter)
12. Do you currently care for or financially support other family members?
13. How old were you when you first started working, and what was your first job?
14. Have you lived and/or worked in other countries before coming to the United States?
15. When did you first come to the United States? Have you ever left the United States and come back for work?

**Part II: Nature of Human Trafficking in Nebraska**

16. How many jobs have you worked where your employer harmed or mistreated you in Nebraska?
    a. Can you briefly describe what the job was for?
        i. Can you briefly describe what each job was for?
            1. Were they the same job or different jobs? (note: they could be working the same job but under different employees)
        ii. Were each of the jobs with the same or different employers?
            1. Were each of the jobs in the same or different locations?
        iii. If they were by different employers, how did you get connected to each job?
17. Can you tell me what city in Nebraska the job was located in where your employer mistreated you? (for example: Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island)
    a. What kind of job was it? (for example: agriculture, construction, factory, hotel, cleaning, restaurant, hospitality)
18. Where were you living when you first learned about the job? (for example: United States [city/state], home country, another country)
19. How did you learn about the job?
    a. About when was it (month/year) when you first learned about the job?
    b. Who told you about the job?
    c. Did you know this person(s) before speaking with them about the job?
    d. Did this person work for a job recruitment company?
20. What did they tell you the job would be like?
    a. Type of work you would be doing
    b. Salary
    c. Hours
    *d. If foreign-born:* Immigration status assistance (green card, work authorization)
    e. Housing/food offered
    f. Other benefits
21. Were there any requirements to take the job? (for example: Education/training/take a test? Prior work experience?)
22. Did you have to pay anyone to take the job? If yes, can you tell me about that.
    a. Who and how much?
    b. How did you finance this? (for example: loans, mortgage, family property; how many people helped you finance this?)
    c. Do you still owe money? If so, How much?
23. To take the job, did you have to sign anything? Can you describe what you signed?
24. What were the factors that helped you decide to take the job?
    a. Did you speak with any family or friends about the job offer? If so, what did they think about it?
25. Did you ever feel forced or threatened to take the job? In other words, did you feel like it was your own decision to take the job or like you did not have a choice?
    a. Who forced you?
    b. What did they do that made you feel this way?
26. What arrangements did you make before traveling to the job location? (for example: apply for a passport/visa, purchase a plane/bus ticket)
27. Please tell me about your travel to the *[Q17: job location]* in Nebraska.
    a. Where and when did your trip begin?
    b. When and where did your trip end?
    c. Did you stop in other countries/cities along the way?
    d. Was this what you were expecting/told?
    e. Modes of transportation (car, plane, bus, on foot for different legs of the trip)
    f. How were you treated on the trip?
28. Did anyone accompany you on the trip?
    a. If so, who?
    b. How many people?
    c. Were these people also going to the United States to work?
29. Did you have to pay more fees for anything along the way for fear that something bad would happen? (for example: you or your family would be hurt)

30. During your trip, did anyone ever hurt you, threaten you, or do anything that made you afraid for your safety?
    a. Harm you in any way? (*Probe:* verbal, physical, sexual, report to immigration)
    b. Threaten to harm you or your family in any way during your trip? (*Probe:* financial, verbal, physical, sexual, report to immigration)
    c. Make you feel like you couldn't come and go whenever you wanted? (*Probe:* unable to leave a safe house, not told where they were, movement monitored)
    d. Take your identification documents (passport, visa, birth certificate, driver's license) and refuse to return them?
    e. Ask you to lie about your identity, the purpose of your trip, or your job?
    f. Prevent you from communicating with others (family, friends, others on the journey)? (Probe: access to phone, money to call, travel companions speak the same language)
31. Did you encounter any police or other U.S. authorities (for example: medical doctors, educators, service providers) upon entering the United States?
    a. Who and in what context?
    b. Did a United States customs official check your documentation when entering the United States?
    c. What kinds of questions did they ask you at customs? Did they ask you about the following:
        i. Your employer?
        ii. What type of work would you be doing in the United States?
        iii. Your past work experience?
32. When [month/year] did you first start working with [*employer/trafficker*] in Nebraska?
33. Can you describe the type of work you did for [*employer/trafficker*]?
    a. Was this the type of work you were initially promised/expecting?
    b. Were you the only worker, or were there others?
    c. Did you sign a contract?
        iv. If yes,
            1. What were the terms?
            2. Was the contract in your native language? If not, did someone read it to you?
            3. Were you allowed to read it before signing it?
            4. Were there terms in it that made you feel uncomfortable?
    d. On average, how many days per week did you work?
    e. On average, how many hours a day did you work?
    f. Were you able to take breaks?
34. Were you ever paid for the work you did for [*employer/trafficker*]?
    a. How much did you get paid for the work you did for [*employer/trafficker*]?
    b. How did you receive the payment? (*Probe:* payment in cash from the employer under the table, through subcontractor under the table, through paycheck/paystub)
    c. Did the [*employer/trafficker*] deduct money from your pay or charge you for things you needed? (for example: rent, food, water, toiletries)
35. Were you able to send money to family and friends back home?
    a. How much and how frequently?
    b. Was it your choice to send money home, or did someone make you?
36. Can you describe what it was like where you lived while working for the [*employer/trafficker*]?
    a. Did you live where you worked?
    b. Could you leave the place you lived whenever you wanted to?
    c. Did you live with other workers? If so, how many?



37. Thinking about your experiences while you were working for the [*employer/trafficker*]—and please feel free to provide details on your experiences with any of the following…:
    a. Did they take your personal documents and belongings? (for example: passport, visa, money, clothing, contact information)
        i. Under what terms/when were you told you would get them back?
    b. Did they try to prevent you from communicating with others (for example: family, friends, other people)? (*Probe:* access to phone, money to call, co-workers who speak the same language?)
    c. Did they make you pay fees for anything? Did they threaten that there would be physical or financial consequences for you and/or your family if you did not pay certain fees?
    d. Did they ask or make you do work that was dangerous, humiliating, degrading, or you didn't want to do?
    e. Did they harm you in any way, including:
        i. Physical abuse (*for example:* beating, kicking, slapping, or something else)
        ii. Sexual abuse (*for example:* unwanted groping, touching, exposing themselves, displaying pornographic materials, requesting sexual favors, sexual assault
        iii. Psychological/emotional abuse (*for example:* making degrading or derogatory comments)
    f. Did they threaten to harm you or your family in any way? (*for example:* financial, verbal, physical, sexual, report to immigration or police)
    g. Did they ever prevent you or make you feel you couldn't come and go whenever/wherever you wanted? (*for example:* unable to leave the workplace, restricting where you can go during non-working hours)
    h. Did they ever deny or not allow you to have adequate food or sleep?
    i. Did they ever tell you that you would not be believed if you tried to seek help?
    j. Did they ever ask you to lie about your identity, your job, or your immigration status?
    k. Did you have access to alcohol or drugs?
        i. For example: Did they ever control your access to alcohol or drugs? Or did they ever try to encourage/ force you to use alcohol or drugs?
    l. Did they deny you pay for work you performed? Did you receive less pay than what you were promised, or were you given a bad check?
    m. Did they ask or make you engage in sexual acts with other people in exchange for <u>something of value</u> (for example: exchanging sexual acts for money, drugs, or something else)? <u>Something of value</u> could be given to you or they may have taken it.
    n. Did they ask or make you engage in crimes? (for example: stealing, growing or dealing drugs)
    o. Was there anything else that happened while you were working for [*employer/trafficker*] that made you uncomfortable or that you thought was harmful to you or your family? Can you describe your experience(s)?
38. Did you feel like you could freely leave this [*employer/trafficker*] if you wanted to?
    a. If yes, what do you think would happen if you left?
    b. If no, why did you think you could not leave?

39. Was there a point when you realized that something was wrong and you were being treated unfairly/victimized?
    a. How long were you working for your [*employer/trafficker*] when you realized this?
    b. Did you consider going to the authorities about your situation, including your church/mosque/temple, police, or anyone in the town you trusted?
        i. If no, why not?
        ii. Did you try going to authorities before you were finally able to leave this [*employer/trafficker*]?
    c. Did you seek advice/help from someone?
        i. If yes, from whom?
            2. What kind of help did they offer/give?
        ii. If no, why not?
40. Did you ever come across or receive information about free services or assistance available in the community where you lived while working for the [*employer/trafficker*]? (for example: medical care, food, shelter)?
    a. If so, how did you get this information? Did you ever use the services or assistance in the community being advertised? What services did you use?
41. Did you encounter any government people such as labor inspectors, police, or other U.S. authorities (for example: medical doctors or nurses, educators, service providers) or people you thought might be able to help (for example: exterminator, postal worker, gardener) while working for [*employer/trafficker*]?
    a. If so, did you ever ask them for help? Why or why not?
42. Did you ever try to contact anyone to discuss the harm you were experiencing while working for [*employer/trafficker*]? (*for example:* friends, family, service providers, church/mosque/temple members, police)
    a. If so, were they helpful? Why or why not?
    b. If not, what prevented you from contacting them? (for example: no opportunity, did not know who to contact, afraid to ask for help)
43. How and when did you leave the harmful and exploitative situation from [*employer/trafficker*] in Nebraska? (*Probe examples:* ran away, sought help, identified by authorities in a raid [A raid is when police conduct a surprise visit to arrest people suspected of breaking the law])
    a. If ran away, what triggered your escape?
    b. Where did you go immediately after leaving the [*employer/trafficker*]?
    c. Did anyone help you after you left the [*employer/trafficker*]?
44. Did you or someone else you know report your experience to the (a) National Human Trafficking Hotline or (b) Nebraska Human Trafficking Hotline? If so, can you share your experience(s) with this process?
45. How soon after you left could you contact family members or friends?
46. Were you or your family ever threatened or harmed after you left?
    a. If so, how and by whom?
47. What concerned you the most ***immediately*** after you left? (Probe: safety, a place to live, work, food, providing for your family, legal status)
48. What concerned you the most ***after you had been away from the [employer/trafficker] for a few weeks***? (*Probe:* safety, a place to live, work, food, providing for your family, legal status)
49. If you were identified in a raid, can you talk a little bit about that experience?
    a. How did the process make you feel? Did you feel that they wanted to help you?
    b. Did you have any warning about the raid?
    c. Do you remember what agency performed the raid? (FBI, ICE?)
    d. Where did they take you once they removed you from the situation? Did you have some place to go? Did you have money, food, clothes?
    e. Did anyone talk to you about services/help you could receive during this time? (For example: legal, medical, travel funds)
    f. At what point in the process did they interview you/take down your statement?
    g. Did they work with an interpreter to conduct the interview? If yes, was the interpreter present then, or did they use someone over the phone?
    h. What services did they offer to you and/or refer you to?
    i. Did the police ever threaten to arrest or detain you?
    j. Do you know what happened to other people involved in the raid?
50. After you left, were you ever arrested or detained for a crime or immigration violation as a result of your experiences?
    a. If yes, do you know who that was (local police, FBI, ICE)?
    b. If yes, do you know what it was for?

**Part III: Identifying, Investigating, and Prosecuting Labor Trafficking**

51. Did you meet with police and/or attorneys **<u>while you were still working for the</u>** [*employer/trafficker*] in Nebraska?
    a. [If "yes" to Q51] Can you tell me about that experience? (for example: who did you meet with and what did you meet about?)
    b. [If "no" to Q51] Did you want to meet with police or attorneys while you were working for your [*employer/trafficker*]? If yes, did you want to meet with police, attorneys, or both? What prevented you from meeting?
52. Did you meet with police and/or attorneys **<u>after you left the</u>** [*employer/trafficker*] in Nebraska?
    a. [If "yes" to Q52] Can you tell me about that experience? (for example: who did you meet with and what did you meet about?)
    b. [If "no" to Q52] Did you want to meet with police or attorneys while you were working for your [*employer/trafficker*]? If yes, did you want to meet with police, attorneys, or both? What prevented you from meeting?

53. Thinking about the [Q51/Q52: police/attorneys] you met with…
    a. Did anyone refer you to the [Q51/Q52: police/attorney]?
    b. If met with attorney/lawyer: Was legal assistance provided by [Q51/Q52: attorney]? (for example: filing protection orders, getting legal counsel)
        i. Did they help you apply for a T-visa, U-visa, continued presence, or other immigration relief?
            1. If yes, what support did you receive?
                a. How long did that process take?
                b. Were you approved?
            2. If no, why not?
    c. Did you want to meet with [Q51/Q52: police/attorney] or feel you had a choice?
    d. Were you asked to testify in court by [Q51/Q52: police/attorney] against your [*employer/trafficker*]?
    e. Did you feel like you were listened to or believed by [Q51/Q52: police/attorney]?
    f. Are there things that the [Q51/Q52: police/attorney] did that made you feel uncomfortable or afraid? (for example: discuss deportation, legal charges against you)
    g. Are there things the [Q51/Q52: police/attorney] did that made you feel protected and safe? (for example: legal protections, connecting you to resources)
    h. Was there anything the [Q51/Q52: police/attorney] could have done to improve their interactions with you?
    i. Did you find your meeting(s) with [Q51/Q52: police/attorney] to be helpful? Why or why not?

54. Do you know if anyone was ever arrested and prosecuted for the crimes committed against you?
    a. If so, who? Was this everyone that was involved? Were there people back in your home country that were arrested for assisting the trafficker?
        i. Did anyone or an agency/organization assist you with this process?
        ii. Did you cooperate with authorities (statement/testimony) to prosecute this case?
            1. If so, how was this experience? (For example: frustrating/supportive, lengthy, interpreters, emotional, costly)
    b. If no one was prosecuted, did you want someone to be?

55. Is there anything that would have made you more comfortable or feel safe reporting your experiences with your [*employer/trafficker*] to the police or other legal authorities in Nebraska (for example: lawyers/attorneys)?

56. Is there anything else we have not discussed about your interactions with police and/or legal actors (for example: lawyers/attorneys, judges) in Nebraska that you think is important to mention?

**Part IV: Providing Services and Addressing Needs**

57. Did you meet with any service providers **<u>while you were still working for the</u>** [*employer/trafficker*] in Nebraska? (for example: doctors, therapists, advocate, substance use provider, shelter staff, immigration support staff)
    a. [If "yes" to Q57] Can you tell me about that experience? (for example: who did you meet with and what did you meet about?)
    b. [If "no" to Q57] Did you want to meet with service providers while you were working for your [*employer/trafficker*]? If yes, who did you want to meet with and why? What prevented you from meeting?

58. Did you meet with any service providers **<u>after you left the</u>** [*employer/trafficker*] in Nebraska? (for example: doctors, therapists, advocate, substance use provider, shelter staff, immigration support staff)
    a. [If "yes" to Q58] Can you tell me about that experience? (for example: who did you meet with and what did you meet about?)
    b. [If "no" to Q58] Did you want to meet with service providers while you were working for your [*employer/trafficker*]? If yes, who did you want to meet with and why? What prevented you from meeting?

59. Thinking about the [Q57/Q58: service providers] you met with…
    a. Did anyone refer you to the [Q57/Q58: service providers]?
    b. What type of help were you seeking from [Q57/Q58: service providers]? What was your most pressing concern?
    c. Can you describe the services offered to you by [Q57/Q58: service providers]?
        i. Physical
            1. Medical services
            2. Dental services
            3. Housing/shelter resources
            4. Food/clothing
        ii. Psychological
            1. Psychological/emotional services
            2. Safety planning
            3. Substance use treatment
        iii. Social
            1. Interpreter/translator (if yes, what languages were offered)
            2. Social considerations (for example: family reunification)
            3. Childcare
            4. English classes
            5. Transportation
        iv. Employment
        v. Educational
            1. Going back to school
            2. Financial aid/scholarships
        vi. Other?
    d. What services were <u>most important</u> in helping you from [Q57/Q58: service providers]?
    e. Were there any services they didn't offer that you needed from [Q57/Q58: service providers]?
    f. How long did you receive services from [Q57/Q58: service providers]?
    g. Are there things that [Q57/Q58: service providers] did that made you feel <u>uncomfortable or afraid</u>? Please explain. (for example: not believe you, dismiss your concerns)
    h. Are there things [Q57/Q58: service providers] did that made you feel <u>protected and safe</u>? Please explain. (for example: listen to your concerns, address the issues that brought you in to see them)
    i. Was there anything [Q57/Q58: service providers] could have done to improve their interactions with you or the services they provided?

60. What improvements can be made to the <u>*services offered*</u> to you in Nebraska? Please explain.

61. Can the <u>*process of receiving services*</u> in Nebraska be improved for you? If so, how? (for example: waiting periods, requirements, access)

62. Is there anything else we have not discussed about receiving services from providers in Nebraska that you think is important to consider?

**Part V: Current Situation, Perceptions, and Hopes for the Future**

63. What impact has this experience had on you? Do you feel it has changed you?
    a. Are there ongoing or outstanding things that you are still working on or towards due to the harm you experienced? (for example: filing for legal status, getting services for medical or mental health needs, financial hardships)
    b. Do you feel safe today?
64. What impact has this experience had on your family?
65. Can you describe what your life is like now?
    a. Are you currently employed?
        i. If yes, what kind of work are you doing?
            1. How did you find your current job?
    b. Did you go back to school?
        i. If yes, what did you study/are you studying?
            1. What do you hope to do with your education?
        ii. If no, do you hope to go back to school in the future?
66. Are you still in contact with or receiving services from:
    a. Service providers (for example: doctors, therapists, advocate, substance use provider, shelter staff, immigration support staff)? If yes, what services do they provide?
    b. Law enforcement or police? If yes, what does this contact look like?
    c. Attorneys or other legal actors (for example: paralegal, judge)? If yes, what does this contact look like?
67. What are your hopes/expectations/plans for the future?
68. Do you ever worry about something like this happening to you again?
69. Given your past experience, what advice would you give to people in similar situations?
70. Do you have any advice for changes that can help prevent this from happening to others?

**Part VI: Conclusion**

71. Do you have any final comments or questions for me? Are there questions or topics we did not cover that we should have?



# Appendix D

## An Overview of Published Research on Labor Trafficking

Labor trafficking victimization is a public health concern that requires a societal response (Greenbaum, 2020). Although the prevalence of these events is difficult to determine, it is evident that labor trafficking is an ongoing issue that needs intervention (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). However, many gaps remain in identifying, investigating, and intervening with individuals impacted by trafficking practices. The following sections outline a review of the literature on these experiences, what is known about the nature of these crimes, gaps in extant research, and factors to inform future research.

**Overview of Published Research.** We conducted a literature review of published research on labor trafficking worldwide between July and October 2023. We searched across five search engines[24] using a combination of search terms[25] and required that each article include original research based on primary or secondary data.[26] To remain inclusive, we did not limit our search to a specific date range or country. Table 1 provides an overview of the identified literature. From 2000 to 2023, 68 published research articles met our criteria for inclusion (see Appendix for a list). Of the 68 articles in our search, approximately 50% focused on labor trafficking internationally, and 45.6% focused on labor trafficking domestically. Namely, 47.1% of research articles were based in North America, followed by Europe (20.6%), Asia (17.6%), Africa (2.9%), Oceania (2.9%), Central America (1.5%), South America (1.5%), Latin America (1.5%), and research spanning multiple continents (4.4%). In terms of data, study design, and methodological approach, most articles were based on a subsample of adults (79.4%), adopted a qualitative approach (72.1%), and included interviews or focus groups (47.1%). Lastly, because there exists no universally accepted definitions and standards of labor trafficking across agencies and organizations (e.g., Farrell et al., 2020; Recknor et al., 2018), studies ranged in how they defined labor trafficking, primarily adopting the federal (39.7%) or international (27.9%) definition. In contrast, others used a state/country-specific definition (5.9%), used more than one definition (4.4%), or did not provide a clear definition that aligned with the federal, international, or state/country-specific definition (22.1%).

**Nature of Labor Trafficking.** Research examining the extent of harm labor trafficking victims experience illustrates that victims are denied basic human rights when they are forced into bonded or debt labor, domestic servitude, coercive labor, and/or child labor (e.g., Letsie et al., 2021). To date, research on labor trafficking has focused primarily on the profile and characteristics of victims (e.g., migrants, foreign-born individuals, domestic citizens, males and females, adolescents and young adults, individuals with an elementary- or high school-level of education), methods of recruitment (e.g., false promises, "bait and switch" tactics, providing for victims, debt bondage, false job advertisements), means used for ongoing exploitation (e.g., psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, threats, physical restraint, deprivation), and venues of exploitation (e.g., fishing industry, agriculture, cleaning services) (e.g., Bracy et al., 2021; Letsie et al., 2021; Pocock et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2021; Zhang, 2012). Some individuals face additional vulnerabilities of being exploited for labor, including immigrants/migrants, refugees, children, and homeless youth (e.g., Bhukuth, 2005; Gilbert et al., 2018; Moton et al., 2023; Murphy, 2016; Wright et al., 2021; Zhang, 2012). Foreign-born victims may also have provided a substantial amount of money to be smuggled into a country where they believed there were more opportunities for work and a better life—traffickers may use this "debt" or vulnerability to coerce and maintain control over individuals during their exploitation (e.g., threatening

[24] Web of Science Database; Journal Storage (JSTOR); Google Scholar; EBSCO; UNO Criss Library Search.
[25] Labor trafficking; Exploitive labor; Labor exploitation; Domestic servitude; Forced labor; Peonage; Debt bondage; Modern Slavery; United States; Sweatshop; Trafficking; Interviews.
[26] The article must have collected data (e.g., surveys, interviews) or used a secondary data source (e.g., administrative records) in their analysis related to stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, legal actors, NGOs), service providers (e.g., medical professionals, counselors, case workers) and/or victims/survivors.

deportation, debt bondage) (e.g., Owens et al., 2014). Certain types of labor trafficking may also affect certain populations disproportionately. For example, while some research finds that females experience *domestic servitude* at higher rates, men may experience *forced labor* at higher rates (e.g., Oram et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2021). Victims may be recruited through direct contact with their abuser, a family member, an acquaintance, or a false job advertisement (e.g., Letsie et al., 2021; Murphy, 2016; Owens et al., 2014; Stanford et al., 2021). When identified, these individuals may be subjected to the criminal justice system through arrest (e.g., immigration violations, defending themselves when attacked, forced criminality during exploitation) rather than being identified and rescued as victims (e.g., Galemba, 2021; Owens et al., 2014). As noted, victims are likely to experience psychological, physical, and sexual violence during their exploitation, which can result in considerable short-term and long-term consequences (e.g., Barrick et al., 2013; Hopper & Gonzalez, 2018; Letsie et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021; Zhang, 2012). For example, short-term consequences may include immediate physical harm stemming from on-site work injuries, such as severe cuts, back and neck injuries, and skin damage (e.g., Pocock et al., 2016), whereas long-term consequences may include a heightened risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, head trauma, musculoskeletal issues, severe anxiety, and depression (e.g., Hopper & Gonzalez, 2018; Oram et al., 2016; Ravi et al., 2022).

**Gaps in Extant Research.** The research on labor trafficking nationwide is sparse, raising concerns about whether victims are appropriately identified and assisted by local law enforcement and social service agencies (e.g., Farrell et al., 2020; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Farrell et al., 2008). Although victimization is difficult to measure in general, identifying victims of labor trafficking and where they reside is particularly challenging. In this way, the prevalence of these events and the nature of these experiences across contexts is largely unknown (e.g., National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). The types of labor trafficking examined in research can also be narrow (e.g., agriculture, farm workers, brokerage system bondage), limiting our knowledge of diverse forms of exploitation (e.g., domestic servitude) (e.g., Bhukuth, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2017). Furthermore, the context in which labor trafficking is examined within venues may be limited to specific cities or counties to explore these difficult-to-identify incidents, which limits the generalizability of the findings even though it can provide important insights into setting-specific conditions of exploitation (e.g., Moton et al., 2023; Muhammad et al., 2010; Zhang, 2012).

**Future Research.** There have been calls for more research across several domains. For example, researchers have expressed a need to study labor trafficking in rural areas of the United States, such as the Midwest (e.g., Preble et al., 2023). Additionally, to better assist with identifying labor trafficking victims specifically, there have been calls to develop a comprehensive screening tool for law enforcement and service providers (e.g., Hogan & Roe-Sepowitz, 2023). Labor trafficking research can also benefit from directly incorporating the lived experiences of survivors, and specifically, more diverse populations of survivors, such as immigrants, youth, and the unhoused population, through survey instruments and interviews into policy and practice (e.g., Bracy et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021).

**Appendix D Citation:** Kulig, T. C., Hashimi, S., Swanberg, K., Torres-Rivera, V., & Goslar, M. (2025). *An overview of published research on labor trafficking*. University of Nebraska at Omaha.



**Table 1. Descriptive Summary of Published Research Articles on Labor Trafficking (*N* = 68)**

| | *n* | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Year of Publication | | |
| 2020 - 2023 | 30 | 44.1 |
| 2015 - 2019 | 24 | 35.3 |
| 2010 - 2014 | 8 | 11.8 |
| 2005 - 2009 | 5 | 7.3 |
| 2000 - 2004 | 1 | 1.5 |
| Country[a] | | |
| International | 34 | 50.0 |
| Domestic | 31 | 45.6 |
| Both[b] | 3 | 4.4 |
| Continent | | |
| North America | 32 | 47.1 |
| Europe | 14 | 20.6 |
| Asia | 12 | 17.6 |
| Africa | 2 | 2.9 |
| Oceania | 2 | 2.9 |
| Central America | 1 | 1.5 |
| South America | 1 | 1.5 |
| Latin America | 1 | 1.5 |
| Multiple Continents | 3 | 4.4 |
| Sample Type | | |
| Adult | 54 | 79.4 |
| Juvenile | 3 | 4.4 |
| Both | 11 | 16.2 |
| Study Design and Data Acquisition | | |
| Interview/Focus Groups | 32 | 47.1 |
| Secondary Data Analysis | 11 | 16.2 |
| Surveys | 9 | 13.2 |
| Case Studies | 1 | 1.5 |
| Multiple Design Types | 15 | 22.0 |
| Methodological Approach[c] | | |
| Qualitative | 49 | 72.1 |
| Quantitative | 7 | 10.3 |
| Mixed Methods | 12 | 17.6 |
| Definition of Labor Trafficking[d] | | |
| Federal | 27 | 39.7 |
| International | 19 | 27.9 |
| State/Country Specific | 4 | 5.9 |
| Multiple Definitions | 3 | 4.4 |
| Not Defined | 15 | 22.1 |

[a] Domestic = articles based in the United States; International = articles based in any country outside the United States.
[b] These studies included countries (1) Argentina and the United States, (2) Philippines and the United States, and (3) Canada and the United States.
[c] Qualitative = studies looking at characteristics or qualities of variables; Quantitative = studies looking at frequencies or numbers of variables; Mixed Methods = studies employ both qualitative and quantitative methods.
[d] Not Defined = includes articles in which the author did not provide a definition of labor trafficking or used a definition from other sources that do not align with the federal, international, or state/country-specific definitions.

## Appendix D Literature Review References


Bracy, K., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). A four-year analysis of labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics and labor trafficking patterns. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(1), 35-52.

Bhukuth, A. (2005). Child labour and debt bondage: A case study of brick kiln workers in Southeast India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 40*(4), 287-302.

Bhukuth, A. (2006). Debt bondage in the brokerage system: A case study of sugarcane migrants in Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of Developmental Issues, 5*(1), 65-84.

Farrell, A., Bright, K., de Vries, I., Pfeffer, R., & Dank, M. (2020). Policing labor trafficking in the United States. *Trends in Organized Crime, 23*, 36-56.

Farrell, A., & Pfeffer, R. (2014). Policing human trafficking: Cultural blinders and organizational barriers. *The Annals of the American Academy, 653*, 46-64.

Farrell, A., McDevitt, J., & Fahy, S. (2008). *Understanding and improving law enforcement responses to human trafficking: Final Report*. (Report No. 222752). U.S. Department of Justice.

Galemba, R. B. (2021). "They steal our work": Wage theft and criminalization of immigrant day laborers in Colorado, USA. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 27*, 91-112.

Greenbaum, J. (2020). The public health approach to human trafficking prevention. *Georgia State University Law Review, 36*(4), 1059- 1074.

Gilbert, L., Reza, A., Mercy, J., Lea, V., Lee, J., Xu, L., Marcelin, L. H., Hast, M., Vertefeuille, J., & Domercant, J. W. (2018). The experience of violence against children in domestic servitude in Haiti: Results from the Violence Against Children Survey, Haiti 2012. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 76*, 184-193.

Hogan, K. A. & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2023). Providing services to victims of human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic: A social service agency state-wide survey. *Journal of Social Service Research, 49*(3), 357-376.

Hopper, E. K., & Gonzalez, L. D. (2018). A comparison of psychological symptoms in survivors of sex and labor trafficking. *Behavioral Medicine, 44*(3), 177-188.

Letsie, N. C., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). An eight-year analysis of child labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics, and patterns of child labor trafficking. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 121*, 1-10.

Moton, L., Dank, M., Liu, Y., & Hughes, A. (2023). An exploration into the lived experiences of young people forced to beg and sell goods in Kampala, Uganda. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication.

Murphy, L. T. (2016). *Labor and sex trafficking among homeless youth*. Modern Slavery Research Project.

Muhammad, N., Shah, M., Alam, I., & Askar, A. (2010). Debt bondage: A sociological study of brick kiln workers in Badhaber, Peshawar, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences, 8*(1), 19-23.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. *Estimating the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in the United States: Considerations and Complexities: Proceedings of a workshop*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Oram, S., Abas, M., Bick, D., Boyle, A., French, R., Jakobowitz, S., Khondoker, M., Stanley, N., Trevillion, K., Howard, L., & Zimmerman, C. (2016). Human trafficking and health: A survey of male and female survivors in England. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*(6), 1073-1078.

Pocock, N. S., Kiss, L., Oram, S., & Zimmerman, C. (2016). Labour trafficking among men and boys in the greater Mekong subregion: Exploitation, violence, occupational health risks and injuries. *PLoS ONE, 11*(12), 1-21.





Preble, K., Nichols, A., & Cox, A. (2023). Labor trafficking in Missouri: Revelations from a statewide needs assessment. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 9*(1), 15-32.

Ravi, A., Shuman, S., Shroff, N., London-Orozco, C., & Walcott, K. (2022). Physical, mental, and socioeconomic health issues of sex and labor trafficking survivors engaged in primary care services. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication.

Recknor, F. H., Gemeinhardt, G., & Selwyn, B. J. (2018). Health-care provider challenges to the identification of human trafficking in health-care settings: A qualitative study. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 4*(3), 213-230.

Rose, A. L., Howard, L. M., Zimmerman, C., & Oram, S. (2021). A cross-sectional comparison of the mental health of people trafficked to the UK for domestic servitude, for sexual exploitation, and for labor exploitation. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(3), 258-267.

Stanford, K., Cappetta, A., Ahn, R., & Macias-Konstantopoulos, W. (2021). Sex and labor trafficking in Paraguay: Risk factors, needs assessment, and the role of the health care system. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(9-10), 4806-4831.

Wright, E. R., LaBoy, A., Tsukerman, K., Forge, N., Ruel, E., Shelby, R., Higbee, M., Webb, Z., Turner-Harper, M., Darkwa, A., & Wallace, C. (2021). The prevalence and correlates of labor and sex trafficking in a community sample of youth experiencing homelessness in Metro-Atlanta. *Social Science, 10*(32), 1-12.

Zhang, S. X. (2012). *Looking for a hidden population: Trafficking of migrant laborers in San Diego county*. United States Department of Justice.


## Studies Included in the Literature Review


1. Azis, A. & Wahyudi, R. (2020). Imperfect victims and an imperfect protocol: Reflecting on the trafficking experiences of Indonesian migrant fisherman. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 6*(2), 156-167.
2. Bales, K., Fletcher, L., & Stover, E. (2004). *Hidden slaves: Forced labor in the United States*. UC Berkeley Reports.
3. Barrick, K., Lattimore, P. K., Pitts, W., & Zhang, S. X. (2013). *Indicators of labor trafficking among North Carolina Migrant Farmworkers* (Report No. 244204). National Institute of Justice.
4. Belanger, D. (2017). Labor migration and trafficking among Vietnamese migrants in Asia. *The Annals of the American Academy, 653*, 87-106.
5. Bhukuth, A. (2005). Child labour and debt bondage: A case study of brick kiln workers in Southeast India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 40*(4), 287-302.
6. Bhukuth, A. (2006). Debt bondage in the brokerage system: A case study of sugarcane migrants in Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of Developmental Issues, 5*(1), 65-84.
7. Boerman, T. & Golob, A. (2021). Gangs and modern-day slavery in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala: A non-traditional model of human trafficking. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(3), 241-257.
8. Bracy, K., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). A four-year analysis of labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics and labor trafficking patterns. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(1), 35-52.
9. Brennan, D. (2014). Trafficking, scandal, and abuse of migrant workers in Argentina and the United States. *The Annals of the American Academy, 653*, 107-123.
10. Burns, C. J., Chen, K., & Stoklosa, H. (2021). Pushing for the same thing on the same set of tracks: A qualitative study exploring the anti-trafficking response in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. *BioMed Central Public Health, 21*, 1-10

11. Childress, C., Farrell, A., Bhimani, S., & Maass, K. L. (2023). Disrupting labor trafficking in the agricultural sector: Looking at opportunities beyond law enforcement interventions. *Victims & Offenders, 18*(3), 473-511.
12. Chisolm-Straker, M., Stinger, E., Strong, D., Loo, G. T., Rothman, E. F., Clesca, C., d'Etienne, J., Alanis, N., & Richardson, L. D. (2021). Validation of a screening tool for labor and sex trafficking among emergency department patients. *Journal of the American College of Emergency Physicians, 2*(5), e12558.
13. Cockbain, E. & Bowers, K. (2019). Human trafficking for sex, labour, and domestic servitude: How do key trafficking types compare and what are their predictors? *Crime, Law and Social Change, 72*, 9-34.
14. Cockbain, E. & Brayley-Morris, H. (2017). Human trafficking and labour exploitation in the casual construction industry: An analysis of three major investigations in the UK involving Irish traveler offending groups. *Policing, 12*(2), 129-149.
15. de Vries, I., & Farrell, A. (2018). Labor trafficking victimizations: Repeat victimization and polyvictimization. *Psychology of Violence, 8*(5), 630-638.
16. Dewan, S. E. (2014). Patterns of service utilization among pre-certified victims of human trafficking. *International Social Work, 57*(1), 64-74.
17. Doyle, D. M., Murphy, C., Murphy, M., Coppari, P. R., & Wechsler, R. J. (2019). 'I felt like she owns me': Exploitation and uncertainty in the lives of labour trafficking victims in Ireland. *British Journal of Criminology, 59*, 231-251.
18. Farrell, A., & Pfeffer, R. (2014). Policing human trafficking: Cultural blinders and organizational barriers. *The Annals of the American Academy, 653*, 46-64.
19. Farrell, A., Bright, K., de Vries, I., Pfeffer, R., & Dank, M. (2020). Policing labor trafficking in the United States. *Trends in Organized Crime, 23*, 36-56.
20. Farrell, A., McDevitt, J., & Fahy, S. (2008). *Understanding and improving law enforcement responses to human trafficking: Final Report*. (Report No. 222752). U.S. Department of Justice.
21. Fernandes, A., Goncalves, M., & Matos, M. (2021). Labor trafficking in Portugal: Victims perceptions of formal support, post-victimization and impact. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice, 21*(5), 438-467.
22. Galemba, R. B. (2021). "They steal our work": Wage theft and criminalization of immigrant day laborers in Colorado, USA. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 27*, 91-112.
23. Gearon, A. (2019). Child trafficking: Young people experience's of front-line services in England. *British Journal of Criminology, 59*, 481-500.
24. George, E., Tsourtos, G., & McNaughton, D. (2018). 'It's just about the crime, not the victim': Critical insights from Australian service providers working with people who have been trafficked. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice, 30*(1), 1-18.
25. Gibbs, D. A., Aboul-Hosn, S., & Kluckman, M. N. (2019). Child labor trafficking within the U.S.: A first look at allegations investigated by Florida's child welfare agency. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 6*(4), 435-449.
26. Gilbert, L., Reza, A., Mercy, J., Lea, V., Lee, J., Xu, L., Marcelin, L.H., Hast, M., Vertefeuille, J., & Domercant, J. W. (2018). The experience of violence against children in domestic servitude in Haiti: Results from the Violence Against Children Survey, Haiti 2012. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 76*, 184-193.
27. Hogan, K. A. & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2023). Providing services to victims of human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic: A social service agency state-wide survey. *Journal of Social Service Research, 49*(3), 357-376.
28. Hopper, E. K., & Gonzalez, L. D. (2018). A comparison of psychological symptoms in survivors of sex and labor trafficking. *Behavioral Medicine, 44*(3), 177-188.
29. Jimenez, E., Brotherton, V., Gardner, A., Wright, N., Browne, H., Esiovwa, N., Dang, M., Wyman, E., Bravo-Balsa, L., Lucas, B., Gul, M., Such, E., & Trodd, Z. (2022). The unequal impact of Covid-19 on the lives and rights of the children of modern slavery survivors, children in exploitation and children at risk of entering exploitation. *Children & Society, 37*, 216-234.
30. Kiss, L., Pocock, N. S., Naisanguansri, V., Suos, S., Dickson, B. Thuy, D., Koehler, J., Sirisup, K., Pongrungsee, N., Nguyen, V. A., Borland, R., Dhavan, P. & Zimmerman, C. (2015). Health of men, women, and children in post-trafficking services in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam,: An observational cross-sectional study. *The Lancet, 3*(3), E154-E161.
31. Koegler, E., Mohl, A., Preble, K., & Teti, M. (2019). Reports and victims of sex and labor trafficking in a major midwest metropolitan area, 2008-2017. *Public Health Reports, 134*(4), 432-440.
32. Kranrattanasuit, N. & Sumarlan, Y. (2022). Failed mimicry: The Thai government's attempts to combat labor trafficking using perpetrators' means. *Social Sciences, 11*, 1-14.
33. Latonero, M., Wex, B., Dank, M., & Poucki, S. (2015). *Technology and labor trafficking in a network society: General overview, emerging innovations, and Philippines case study*. University of Southern California.
34. Lee, W. Y. P. & Peterson, C. J. (2006). *Forced labour and debt bondage in Hong Kong: A study of Indonesian and Filipina migrant domestic workers*. Centre for Comparative and Public Law. The University of Hong Kong.
35. Letsie, N. C., Lul, B., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2021). An eight-year analysis of child labor trafficking cases in the United States: Exploring characteristics, and patterns of child labor trafficking. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 121*, 1-10.
36. Li, A. K. (2022). Beyond precarity: Forced labor in China's ride-hailing industry. *New Media & Society*, 1-17.
37. Lightowlers, C., Broad, R., & Gadd, D. (2020). Victims and suspects of modern slavery: Identifying subgroups using latent class analysis. *Policing, 15*(2), 1384-1398.
38. Lightowlers, C., Broad, R., & Gadd, D. (2022). Temporal measures of modern slavery victimisation. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. Advance online publication.
39. Mishra, L. (2023). Curbing seasonal migration and debt-bondage post covid-19 pandemic in Western Odisha, India. In S. K. Mahapatra & V. Sarin (Eds), *Changing world economic order in the post-pandemic period* (pp. 107-123). IGI Global.
40. Moton, L., Dank, M., Liu, Y., & Hughes, A. (2023). An exploration into the lived experiences of young people forced to beg and sell goods in Kampala, Uganda. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication
41. Muhammad, N., Shah, M., Alam, I., & Askar, A. (2010). Debt bondage: A sociological study of brick kiln workers in Badhaber, Peshawar, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences, 8*(1), 19-23.
42. Murphy, L. T. (2016). *Labor and sex trafficking among homeless youth*. Modern Slavery Research Project.
43. Nguyen, P. T., Lamkin, J., Coverdale, J. H., Scott, S., Li, K. & Gordon, M. R. (2018). Identifying human trafficking victims on a psychiatry inpatient service: A case series. *Psychiatric Quarterly, 89*, 341-348.
44. Norwood, J. S. (2020). Labor exploitation of migrant farmworkers: Risks for human trafficking. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 6*(2), 209-220.
45. Oram, S., Abas, M., Bick, D., Boyle, A., French, R., Jakobowitz, S., Khondoker, M., Stanley, N., Trevillion, K., Howard, L., & Zimmerman, C. (2016). Human trafficking and health: A survey of male and female survivors in England. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*(6), 1073-1078.

46. Owens, C., Dank, M., Breaux, J., Banuelos, I., Farrell, A., Pfeffer, R., Bright, K., Heitsmith, R., & McDevitt, J. (2014). *Understanding the organization, operation, and victimization process of labor trafficking in the United States*. Urban Institute.

47. Palacios, S. P. I., & Yamamoto, Y. (2017). Trafficking in US agriculture. *Antipode, 49*(5), 1306-1328.

48. Pocock, N. S., Kiss, L., Oram, S., & Zimmerman, C. (2016). Labour trafficking among men and boys in the greater Mekong subregion: Exploitation, violence, occupational health risks and injuries. *PLoS ONE, 11*(12), 1-21.

49. Preble, K., Nichols, A., & Cox, A. (2023). Labor trafficking in Missouri: Revelations from a statewide needs assessment. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 9*(1), 15-32.

50. Ramiz, A., Rock, P., & Strang, H. (2020). Detecting modern slavery on cannabis farms: The challenges of evidence. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence-Based Policing, 4*, 202-217.

51. Ravi, A., Shuman, S., Shroff, N., London-Orozco, C., & Walcott, K. (2022). Physical, mental, and socioeconomic health issues of sex and labor trafficking survivors engaged in primary care services. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication.

52. Recknor, F. H., Gemeinhardt, G., & Selwyn, B. J. (2018). Health-care provider challenges to the identification of human trafficking in health-care settings: A qualitative study. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 4*(3), 213-230.

53. Robichaux, K., Longtain, R., White, N., Nguyen, P., Coverdale, J., & Gordon, M. (2023). Reimagining labor trafficking: A case series on the intersection of forced labor and intimate partner violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma*. Advance online publication.

54. Rose, A. L., Howard, L. M., Zimmerman, C., & Oram, S. (2021). A cross-sectional comparison of the mental health of people trafficked to the UK for domestic servitude, for sexual exploitation, and for labor exploitation. *Journal of Human Trafficking, 7*(3), 258-267.

55. Schwarz, C. (2017). *Human trafficking in the Midwest: Service providers' perspectives on sex and labor trafficking*. Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Initiative. The University of Kansas.

56. Schwarz, C., Alvord, D., Daley, D., Ramaswamy, M., Rauscher, E., & Britton, H. (2019). The trafficking continuum: Service providers' perspectives on vulnerability, exploitation, and trafficking. *Journal of Women and Social Work, 34*(1), 116-132.

57. Shankley, W. (2023). Gender, modern slavery, and labour exploitation: Experiences of male Polish migrants in England. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 49*(5), 1274-1291.

58. Sokat, K. Y. (2022). Addressing forced labor in supply chains in California. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives, 16*, 1-14.

59. Soltani, L. J., Carlson, W. C., & Suleiman, J. (2023). 'Everything from that era was kind of a blur': Improving humanitarian immigration systems' resilience in the wake of the NTA memo. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Advance online publication

60. Stanford, K., Cappetta, A., Ahn, R., & Macias-Konstantopoulos, W. (2021). Sex and labor trafficking in Paraguay: Risk factors, needs assessment, and the role of the health care system. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(9-10), 4806-4831.

61. Uduji, J. I., Okolo-Obasi, E. N., & Asongu, S. A. (2019). Corporate social responsibility in Nigeria and multinational corporations in the fight against human trafficking in oil-producing communities. *Local Environment, 24*(12), 1097-1118.

62. Villacampa, C. (2022). Challenges in assisting labour trafficking and exploitation victims in Spain. *International Journal of Law, Crime, and Justice, 71*, 1-11.

63. Westwood, J., Howard, L. M., Stanley, N., Zimmerman, C., Gerada, C., & Oram, S. (2016). Access to, and experiences of, healthcare services by trafficked people: Findings from a mixed-methods study in England. *British Journal of General Practice*, e794-e801.

64. Wilson, J. M. & Dalton, E. (2008). Human trafficking in the heartland: Variation in law enforcement awareness and response. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 24*(3), 296-313.

65. Wright, E. R., LaBoy, A., Tsukerman, K., Forge, N., Ruel, E., Shelby, R., Higbee, M., Webb, Z., Turner-Harper, M., Darkwa, A., & Wallace, C. (2021). The prevalence and correlates of labor and sex trafficking in a community sample of youth experiencing homelessness in Metro-Atlanta. *Social Science, 10*(32), 1-12.

66. Zhang, S. X. (2012). *Looking for a hidden population: Trafficking of migrant laborers in San Diego county*. United States Department of Justice.

67. Zhang, S. X., Dank, M., Vincent, K., Narayanan, P., Bharadwaj, S., & Balasubramaniam, S. M. (2019). Victims without a voice: Measuring worst forms of child labor in the Indian state of Bihar. *Victims & Offenders, 14*(7), 832-858.

68. Zhang, S. X., Spiller, M. W., Finch, B. & Qin, Y. (2014). Estimating labor trafficking among unauthorized migrant workers in San Diego. *Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci, 653*, 65-86.

Dr. Teresa C. Kulig

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

University of Nebraska at Omaha

6001 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68182

tkulig@unomaha.edu

criminology.unomaha.edu