

# **HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SILICON VALLEY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## *Understanding the Nature of Exploitation in Silicon Valley*

### **CALL TO ACTION**

This \$32 billion global slave trade (Belser, 2005) is driven by systemic economic, cultural and political vulnerabilities. The persistence of corruption that undermines the rule of law and the paucity of cross-sector actions allows this criminal activity to proliferate.

As one of the largest philanthropic community foundations in the world with a history of supporting and funding initiatives that help those struggling to build a buffer against exploitation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation partnered with Not For Sale in 2011. Together, they have hosted programs to engage local communities to action by developing cross-sector solutions to combat human trafficking.

Juniper Networks' Community Engagement vision centers on the company's bold aspiration to use the power of the new network to take on the toughest challenges facing communities, and to connect and empower people everywhere. Juniper partnered with Not For Sale in 2011, and together they have implemented innovative approaches that leverage technology and the network to build awareness and empower solutions that rescue, rehabilitate, and empower victims and at-risk communities.

Since 2011, Silicon Valley Community Foundation and Juniper Networks (hereafter referred to as "the funders"), together with Not For Sale, have supported over 4,500 individuals affected by trafficking in over fifty countries worldwide, through services for recovery and restoration.

In 2013, Silicon Valley Community Foundation commissioned Not For Sale to better understand the nature of human trafficking and factors contributing to vulnerability in Silicon Valley counties of Santa Clara and San Mateo (hereafter referred to as "Silicon Valley"), and the barriers survivors of human trafficking face in overcoming past exploitation.

This report is a critical first step in understanding the nature of human trafficking in Silicon Valley. A benchmark investigation in this context for the issue of human trafficking in Silicon Valley, it highlights those most likely to be affected, leading risk factors, and the challenges to addressing and meeting the needs of survivors and organizations serving this population. The purpose of this study is to identify common trends and potential risk factors of victims of trafficking served in Silicon Valley, to present current challenges to addressing survivors' needs, and to make recommendations for advancing the

recovery and long-term empowerment of survivors served in the local community.

This report serves a number of important purposes. Firstly, it is intended as a resource for the community of direct service providers, policymakers, foundations and philanthropists serving victims in Silicon Valley. Secondly, by presenting more detailed information about the nature of trafficking within the community, the report will add to and complement the growing body of empirical data on victims and individuals at-risk to trafficking. Finally, through its findings and recommendations, this report can inform and guide enhanced collaboration of community stakeholders in developing solutions for advancing the recovery and long-term empowerment of survivors in Silicon Valley.

### **Research Objectives:**

- 1. Identify common trends and potential risk factors of victims served in Silicon Valley.**
- 2. Present ongoing challenges to addressing survivors' needs.**
- 3. Make recommendations for advancing the recovery and long-term empowerment of survivors served in Silicon Valley.**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report was made possible by the generous financial support of Silicon Valley Community Foundation and Juniper Networks Foundation Fund, and was compiled with the collaboration and support of community-based organizations serving victims of trafficking in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Not For Sale is grateful for the support of [Holy Names University in Oakland](#) and the faculty and students of the School of Social Sciences for their contributions to the report methodology, and the collecting and sorting of survey and interview data.

Finally, Not For Sale is grateful for the support of the Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good, located within the University of San Francisco for its review of the report.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The crime of human trafficking and exploitation in labor has been demonstrated to exist in virtually every country around the world (UNODC Human Trafficking Report, 2008; United Nation's Global Report on Human Trafficking, 2012). In recent years, there has been a sharp and steady increase in the general awareness and understanding of modern-day slavery in the United States, and in efforts to combat it.

In the last five years, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) Hotline has reported a greater than 300% rise in the annual number of calls received, from 5,800 calls in 2008 to nearly 21,000 in 2012. In 2012, more of reports of trafficking came from California than from any other state (Harris, 2012), and in the same year, Nancy O'Malley, the District Attorney for Alameda County, reported that 43% of California's human trafficking incidents occur in the nine counties of the Bay Area.

San Francisco has been identified as one of the state's highest intensity areas of trafficking, particularly as relates to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CCWC, 2013; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013). In the past, estimates on the number of sex and labor trafficking incidents in San Francisco have ranged from 38 to 800 cases annually (Frey, 2010).

In Alameda County, 367 incidents of sex trafficking among minors were reported between January 2011 and December 2013 (H.E.A.T Watch, 2013). H.E.A.T Watch is a comprehensive data-driven anti-trafficking strategy led by the District Attorney's office. H.E.A.T Watch has developed data collection practices to record cases of trafficking reported, and to track risk factors of prevalent forms of trafficking within the community, namely the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

The scope and nature of trafficking in Silicon Valley is less clear. Since 2005, the San Jose Police Department Human Trafficking Task Force (SJPD) and the South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking (SBCEHT) have identified more than 300 potential victims of trafficking in Santa Clara alone (Santa Clara Office of Public Affairs). Of those victims, most cases originate in the U.S. and Mexico and the majority pertain to sex trafficking (SJPD). A recent statement published by the Santa Clara Office of Public Affairs, however, expressed that a great many more incidents occurring in the county are believed to relate to labor trafficking, although very little data to support this claim is known to exist (Santa Clara Office of Public Affairs). Even less information is available about incidents of trafficking in San Mateo county. District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe recently reported that in 2013, six victims of trafficking were identified across the county (Bay City News, 2014). From what is known about these victims, all were young women and residents of California.

There is currently a clear a lack of aggregated knowledge about the nature of the local problem of human trafficking in Silicon Valley, and specific and actionable research pointing to steps that should be taken to combat trafficking at the community level. One reason for this is the difficulty of accessing and collating information across the community of organizations serving trafficking victims in Santa Clara and San Mateo. Attempts to share information have reportedly been challenged by local confidentiality laws and protocols, as well as a general lack of resources and capacity for collecting and aggregating data. By

default, the majority of case data is believed to remain in the hands of individual agencies, churches, schools, and medical centers where victims are most often encountered and identified.

In addition to the important role that research plays for potential donors seeking to advance and build community capacity, more in-depth data will help community organizations, local leaders and policymakers to better understand, represent, and meet the community's needs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study, conducted over a six-month period from mid to late 2013, drew upon both quantitative and qualitative data collected in partnership with community service providers located throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Quantitative data, relating to demographics and histories of 232 survivors served by these organizations between 2011 - 2013, was gathered using an online survey that was distributed to case managers of community service providers. The survey focused on gathering general demographic and background information about the victim and the nature of exploitation endured. Pearson's chi-squared test was used to determine the statistical significance of patterns occurring with the populations, as the data were entirely categorical in nature and the primary purpose of the analysis was to compare different categories of applicants against theoretically expected patterns.

In addition to the survey, quantitative data about the services and populations served by 31 community organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara was collected and analyzed. Researchers identified the organizations serving victims of trafficking through a range of targeted internet searches, industry references and contacts, local reports and government websites.

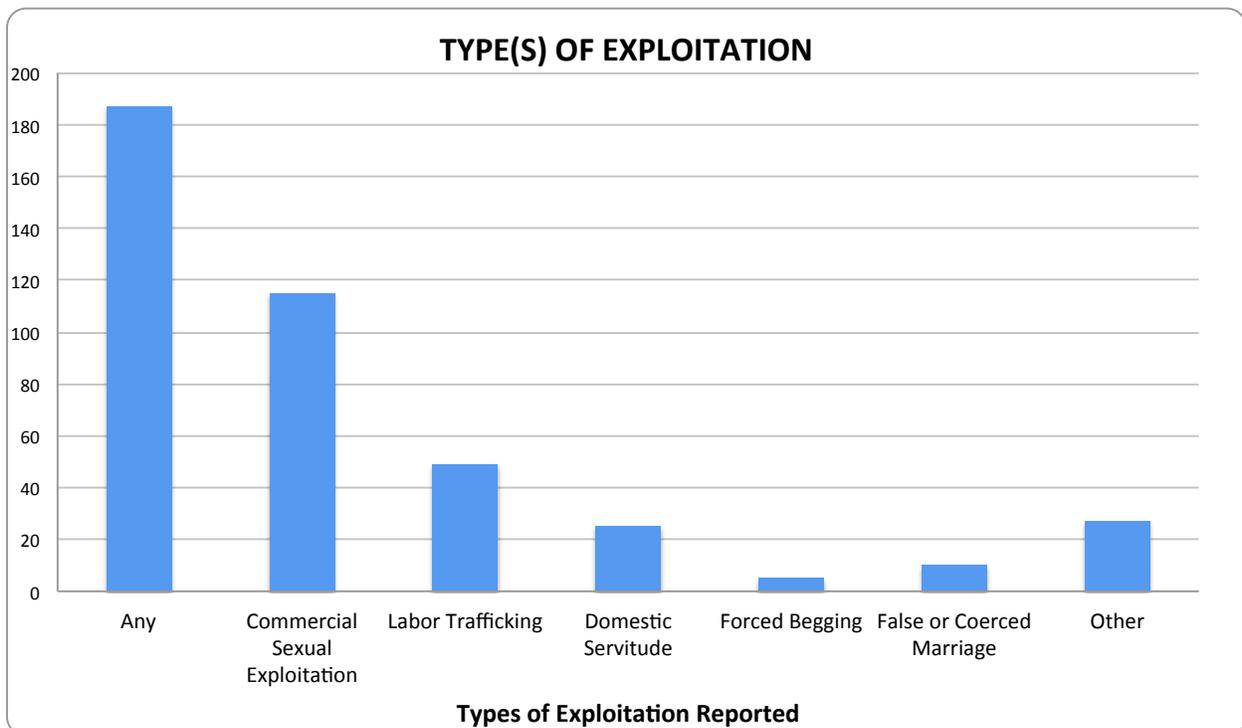
Finally, 13 in-depth structured interviews were conducted with 21 lead staff and case managers from 11 community service providers serving victims of trafficking. Interview participants were recruited from the pool of organizations that participated in the survey. Twenty-two interview questions were then asked. These questions focused on gathering information about seven main themes, ranging from the volume and needs of trafficking victims served annually, to common barriers to success faced by survivors served. Interview responses were transcribed and coded by applying a method of thematic content analysis.

Due to the inherent and endemic challenges of identifying and collecting data and information victims of human trafficking, who often go unreported or are defined differently by different organizations, achieving a representative sample size was not within the scope of this report.

The resulting challenge of drawing meaningful conclusions about a diverse and difficult to reach population from a small sample is reflective of a systemic reality researchers in the field of human trafficking face, and is a fundamental barrier to the understanding of this problem. As a result, the data collected in this study presents a snapshot of trafficking and vulnerability, rather than a statistically representative picture of all individuals affected by trafficking in Silicon Valley. Accounting for the inherent barriers to collecting sizeable information about these populations, the data collected through this research is a community benchmark of a vastly understudied demographic.

## FINDINGS

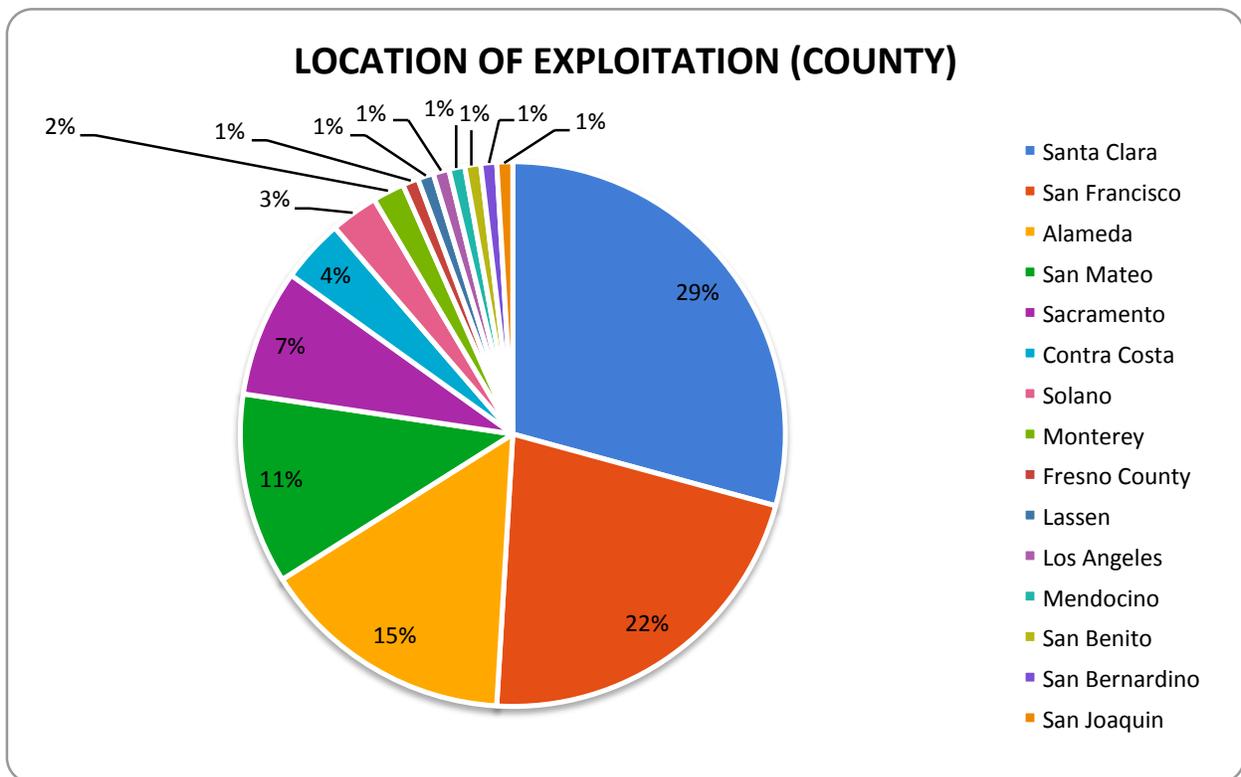
Based on research findings, the most common form of trafficking endured by victims of trafficking served in Silicon Valley is commercial sexual exploitation (61%,  $N=187$ ) occurring both within Silicon Valley (29% were exploited in Santa Clara,  $N=106$ ) and in the surrounding Bay Area (22% were exploited in San Francisco county). The most commonly reported age of entry into exploitation is 17 years old. Victims are largely represented by U.S. citizens (53%,  $N=222$ ), and individuals of Hispanic or Asian ethnicity (37%,  $N=168$ ), who become vulnerable due to economic desperation (86%,  $N=72$ ) and low levels of education (45% of individuals over the age of 12 completing only a primary education,  $N=67$ ).



**Figure 1 - Forms of Exploitation Experienced By Victims of Trafficking**

Victims are commonly individuals with past histories of familial abuse, neglect or homelessness (77%,  $N=44$ ), and those who have dropped out of school at a young age, likely as a result of escaping an abusive home (Salvation Army, 2006; Moxley-Goldsmith, 2005). Having broken ties with family or primary caregivers, and lacking in resources and support, they fall prey to the manipulation of a pimp or trafficker (Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reports, 2006).

Overall, the largest number of victims served in Silicon Valley are trafficked and exploited in San Jose (24%,  $N=102$ ) and the surrounding Santa Clara county, but San Francisco (23%) and Oakland (14%) are also identified as hubs of commercial sex trafficking. This is most likely due to the higher demand for prostitution in these industrialized areas (CCWC, 2013). In some cases, victims are exploited in more than one location across the Bay Area. This indicates that traffickers move victims from place to place, in order to reduce the likelihood that they would be recognized by law enforcement, and so run the risk of being picked up (CCWC, 2013).

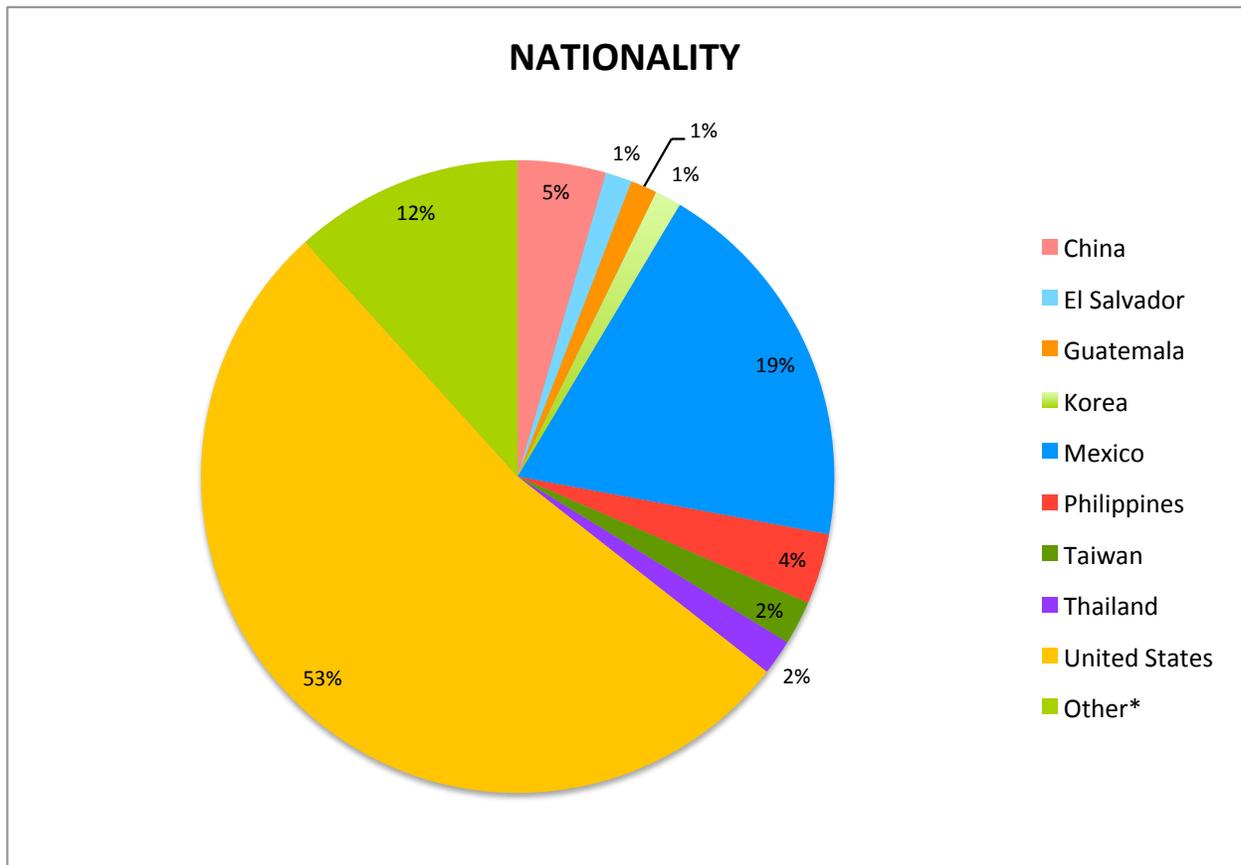


**Figure 2 - Local of Victim Exploitation by County**

On the surface, labor trafficking, by comparison, appears to be much less common in Silicon Valley (25%,  $N=187$ ). Victims of labor trafficking are still more likely to be female than male, although the majority of

male trafficking victims are exploited in labor. Labor trafficking victims are older than CSE victims, and are more likely to be foreign nationals, particularly from Mexico and China. Incidentally, Mexicans and Chinese represent the two largest populations of non-U.S. citizens living in the Bay Area (U.S. Census Bureau).

A significant number of international victims (45%,  $N=42$ ) were living in the U.S. as undocumented immigrants at the time they were trafficked and exploited. These victims largely represent unskilled workers from impoverished countries, who sought to come to the U.S. on the grounds of better economic opportunities but could not do so legally, due to U.S. immigration regulations that exclude low-skilled workers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007; Newman, 2006; Mika, 2000). In some instances, individuals may have been manipulated to accept an offer of work from a trafficker in their own country (Human Trafficking Organization, 2006). In other cases, they may have journeyed to the Bay Area of their own accord, enticed by the perceived wealth of opportunity in the region (Florida University Center for Advancement of Human Rights, 2003). Confronted with the combined challenge of attaining viable employment that can cover the high cost of living in the Bay Area, however, they ended up accepting an exploitative job offer, for example as an unpaid domestic worker (Mika, 2000).



### **Figure 3 – Nationality of Trafficking Victims**

*\* Other includes the following nationalities, which were represented by one or two cases: Brazil, Cambodia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Portugal, Puerto Rica, Syria, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay and Vietnam.*

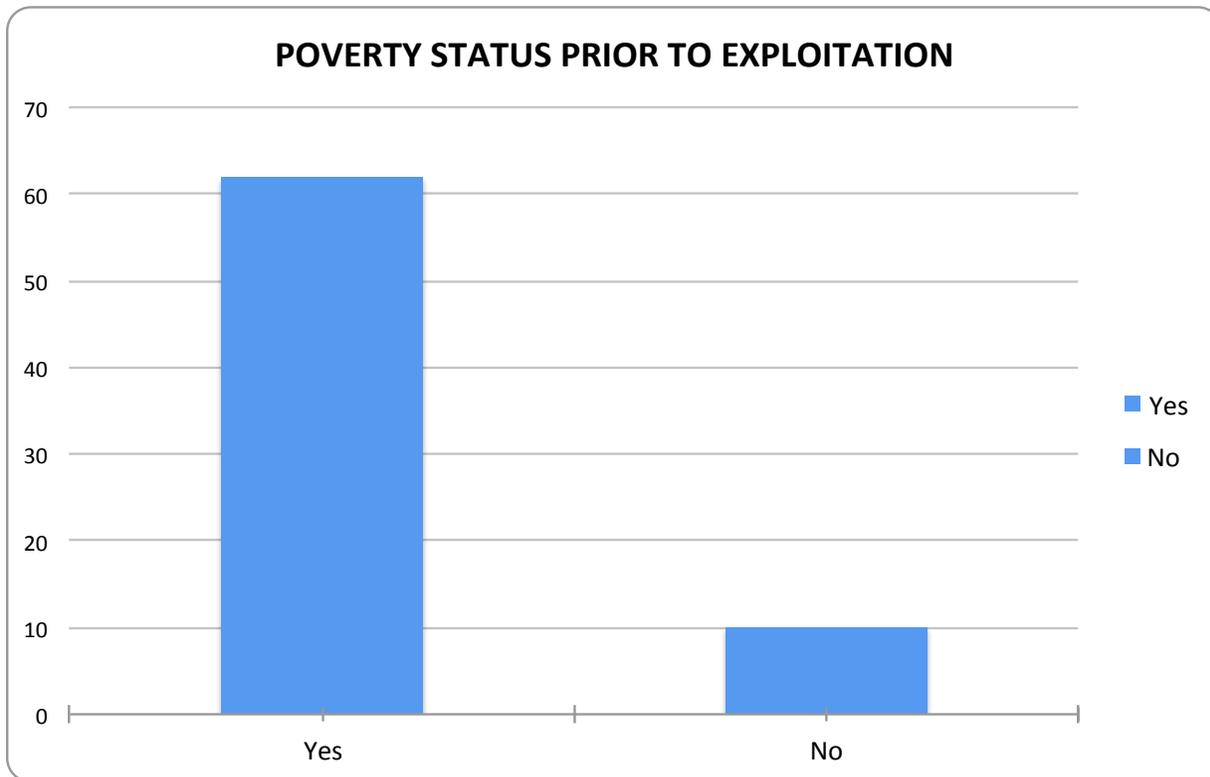
Taking account of the findings, it is understood that sex trafficking victims are more easily identified, and so more commonly reported in Silicon Valley. This is evidenced by the fact that the most common population offered services by the 31 survivor-serving organizations in Silicon Valley are transitional-aged youth (ages 16 - 24), known to be at greatest risk to sex trafficking. In comparison, labor trafficking victims are typically represented by males and internationals, who are much less likely to seek out services, due to a lack of knowledge about where to seek help and fear of shame, deportation or reprisals (Richards and Lyneham, 2014). It is concluded that labor trafficking victims make up the smallest portion of beneficiaries offered services in San Mateo and Santa Clara, and, moreover, that international victims are among the most challenging population to support due to their resistance to receiving help (SBCEHT, Richards and Lyneham, 2014).

In addition, the primary populations served by community organizations supporting trafficking victims are women, victims of domestic abuse and underserved youth, and so these organizations are most equipped to identify and provide services that meet the needs of females and victims of sexual exploitation. By comparison, and due to limited funding and the difficulties identifying victims, male and international victims are much less likely to access support services. As a result, many of these cases likely go unreported and underserved (Harris, 2012).

Overall, the greatest common denominator among victims of trafficking is poverty, regardless of the form of exploitation endured. Income, rather than employment, was the core predictor of vulnerability to trafficking (Salvation Army, 2006). Testimonies from service provider staff were consistent with this finding, suggesting that survivors of trafficking are most often individuals who lack the resources for self-sufficiency and economic independence (Caliber Associates, 2007; Human Trafficking Organization, 2006). This is evidenced by the fact that survivors of trafficking seeking services almost always arrive with nothing, and so are in need of the even most basic resources, including accommodation, clothing and toiletries.

Poverty is particularly likely to be a risk factor among populations with less access to civil rights, such as undocumented citizens (Tuller, 2005; ILO, 2005), and also heightens the chances that an individual would be exploited at a younger age (Estes and Weiner, 2001). It is therefore unsurprising that across all forms of exploitation, Hispanics, who represent the largest portion of the undocumented immigrant

population in Silicon Valley, the largest minority group affected by poverty and lowest levels of academic achievement, were disproportionately affected (CAWT, National Center for Law and Economic Justice, National Center for Education Statistics).



**Figure 4 - Poverty Status of Victim Prior to Exploitation**

Although trafficking victims are estimated to make up less than 2% the total number of individuals reportedly served by the 11 Silicon Valley organizations who participated in the research, the number of victims identified and seeking support services in recent years is reported to have grown.

Survivors of trafficking exhibit wide ranging and complex needs, and make up a more challenging, time intensive and costly population to serve compared with other victim populations, yet in some cases have access to fewer resources for recovery and long-term support. Potentially “underserved” populations of trafficking victims in Silicon Valley include males, internationals, and (at-risk) victim family members.

Economic barriers continue to represent one of the greatest challenges to long-term success faced by survivors of trafficking served in Silicon Valley. This was evidenced by the two major areas of programming need, as reported by service providers, comprised of accommodation and employment services. Survivors struggle to overcome these hurdles due to a number of reasons, namely, challenges in

accessing benefits, obtaining affordable housing and accessing viable options for employment.

In some circumstances, beneficiaries may miss out on benefits due to a lack of service provider awareness of the specific benefits that trafficking survivors may be entitled to seek. In other cases, survivors may have difficulty in navigating complex systems and processes for obtaining benefits and as a result, they go without.

Identifying and securing affordable housing is another huge challenge to long-term independence for survivors. It appears that there is, quite simply, a lack of affordable housing options available in Silicon Valley, particularly within Santa Clara County. The effect of the absence of options is compounded by the further challenge survivors face finding avenues for sustainable income that will allow them to reach a place of financial independence.

Survivors often fail to meet even the most basic criteria of entry for employment. For example, large portions of survivors are non-English speakers, and many have criminal records. In addition, survivors commonly lack the qualifications and professional skills necessary to attain employment. This is largely due to the fact that so many of these individuals were exploited during their formative high school years, and so were denied the opportunity to prepare for their own futures (CCWH, 2013; MISSSEY). As a result, they often lack even the most basic economic skillsets, such as how to identify or apply for a job (MISSSEY). On top of these challenges, survivors are likely to be very limited in terms of the options for employment that they can seek, due to a lack of legitimate work experience (Caliber, 2007).

Unfortunately, current programming is limited in its ability to successfully support survivors in bridging the gap to financial independence and long-term self-sufficiency. One reason for this is the sheer lack of services focused on assisting survivors to access and attain employment, made apparent by the fact that employment services are the smallest percentage of resources (8%) available to survivors of trafficking across the Silicon Valley counties. A considerable portion (22.5%) of resources are allocated to providing education and job skills training. However, service providers often reported that these services are not focused, specific, or extensive enough to fully equip survivors for, and to direct survivors to, viable employment options in which they will be successful. The result is that survivors are not offered the right tools and assets for long-term career-building, such as connections to employers in the community, skills that meet the demands of the local job market, and placement into professional traineeships or internships that can build professional experience.

On top of these challenges, there is a genuine lack of employment options available to survivors in Silicon Valley due to competition in the local market and a vacuum of businesses willing or able to offer jobs. As

a result, survivors are limited in the options of employment they can viably attain, and often end up obliged to accept low paying jobs that leave them dependent on benefits and support from community service providers. Challenges in attaining employment are also likely to have a knock-on effect on the quality of living and housing options available to these individuals. One potential result of these circumstances is that survivors are unable to move beyond the stage of “surviving” to a stage of “thriving”, and so are likely to remain highly vulnerable to exploitation in future.

In summary, there is need for more quality resources that can address the unique, complex, diverse and extensive needs of trafficking survivors, and, in particular, solutions that can enable survivors to overcome barriers that has led to deeply-rooted vulnerability and pose a threat of potential re-exploitation. At present, however, many service providers in Silicon Valley lack the resources and capacity necessary to meet these needs, particularly in the areas of affordable accommodation, relevant professional training, and assistance identifying and obtaining viable employment options.

### **Summary of Findings**

- 65% victims were exploited in the commercial sex industry.
- 86% of victims were female.
- Over half of victims were U.S. Nationals.
- 62% of victims were Hispanic/Latino or Asian.
- The most commonly reported age of entry into exploitation was 17 years old.
- Incidents of exploitation were most likely to occur in Santa Clara (29%) or San Francisco (22%), and often occurred in multiple locations across the Bay Area.
- 45% of non-U.S. victims, who were living in the U.S. prior to being exploited, were undocumented immigrants.
- 86% of victims were living in poverty immediately prior to being trafficked.
- A possible total of 501 victims of trafficking are served annually by the 11 responding organizations, including both adults and minors. Numbers of trafficking victims seeking support services may have grown in recent years, particularly among minors.
- Victims of trafficking present a greater complexity of needs than other client populations, and as a result often require more staff time and program resources.
- Potentially “underserved” populations of trafficking victims include males, internationals, and (at-risk) victim family members.
- Limitations in survivor care relate to a lack of provider expertise around the survivor population or may be more fundamental challenges within, for example, the legal system.
- Among the highest barriers that survivors face in reaching long-term success, is adaptation to the high cost of living in Silicon Valley, which is reflected in the challenges that survivors face

identifying affordable housing. This barrier is worsened by the lack of attainable employment available to survivors and the challenges in seeking services and benefits due to gaps in, for example, social welfare.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

The below recommendations are based on the knowledge about human trafficking and current response in Silicon Valley that has been developed through the research, and are directed towards researchers, service providers, philanthropists, employers and policy makers across Silicon Valley.

### **General**

- Implement tools to measure, evaluate and communicate organizational impact to help enhance understanding, transparency and trust between funders and service providers.
- Enhance public-private collaboration and partnership to increase the quality of services, such as vocational and job training, that can support survivors into employment and to reduce the gap between victimhood and long-term independence, and to prevent future exploitation.

### **Researchers**

- Investigate the availability of resources for identifying, reporting and serving both sex and labor trafficking victims, to determine whether the lower percentage of labor trafficking cases is truly reflective of its prevalence in Silicon Valley or due to underreporting or underserving of this population.
- Examine whether males may in fact represent a higher proportion of victims in the local community and the factors that may cause challenges for reporting and serving male victims.
- Conduct deeper analysis to determine whether Hispanics in fact represent a higher proportion of victims in the local community, or whether this finding is more likely to be related to other reasons, such as immigration status, the processes for identifying these victims, or help-seeking behavior among this population.

### **Service Providers**

- Leverage the knowledge and expertise of community partners to develop best-practice strategies for collecting and sharing data about trafficking victims and risk factors within the community.
- Explore the development of cross-sector partnerships (for example, with local businesses) that leverage existing knowledge and resources to increase the effectiveness of aftercare programs, and empower more survivors to long-term self-sufficiency (for example, through professional

development and employment access).

### **Philanthropists**

- Facilitate opportunities for private-public partnerships that leverage service provider strengths, integrate knowledge and expertise, and advance the capacity of community organizations for the benefit of survivors and those at-risk to trafficking.
- Explore opportunities for project-related investment (for example, social enterprise).
- Identify opportunities for long-term investment in projects that demonstrate detailed and measurable outcomes for empowering survivors and tackling root causes of trafficking across the community.

### **Employers**

- Identify jobs within the company that survivors of trafficking in the local community may qualify for, and communicate job requirements and descriptions to service providers in order to make these positions accessible to survivors of trafficking seeking employment.
- Collaborate with service providers to improve understanding about best practices for protecting survivors of trafficking hired into the company.
- Offer additional professional development opportunities for survivors of trafficking offered employment.
- Support the well-being and empowerment of lower-skilled workers in the company, and those most likely to be vulnerable, by providing a living wage to all company employees and offering services that enhance the well-being of workers and their families (for example, English courses and financial services for foreign workers, and comprehensive health insurance for all workers).

### **Policy Makers**

- Look for more effective ways to understand and address local factors that drive demand for commercial sexual exploitation, particularly among minors, and exploitative forms of labor in Silicon Valley.
- Explore protocols for simplifying the process of expunging trafficking victims' records and exonerating victims.
- Investigate methods for incentivizing employers to hire victims of trafficking (and other victims of abuse), by, for example, offering tax incentives to employers.
- Prioritize programs that place emphasis on addressing root causes of trafficking among vulnerable populations across the community e.g. those affected by poverty, homelessness drug/substance/alcohol abuse, runaways, victims of physical/sexual abuse.