

Data for Action Guiding Values

The National Survivor Study (NSS), launched by Polaris in 2020 and completed in 2022, is a Participatory Action Research project designed to shed light on how trafficking really works — not just how we think it works — so effective strategies can be designed to fight it. The NSS represents a shift from the conventional model of research done *on an affected community* to a research agenda *led by the community to affect change*.

While data collection is now concluded, our work with survivors and allies is not. Our vision is that the NSS data will maintain its participatory element through data analysis and sharing. This will ensure a fuller, more nuanced understanding of trafficking and the needs of survivors and allow us to build stronger evidenced-based policies and practices for lasting change. It also ensures that the research process continues to be equitable, scientifically rigorous, survivor-centered, and focused on action.

To realize this vision, we are acting on the following interconnected values:



Rigor: The NSS emphasizes scientific rigor for accuracy (representation of the truth of the trafficking and survivor experience in the US from the perspective of the diverse affected communities), validity (the insurance that both the research model and findings are accepted and affirmed by the survivors and vulnerable communities), and relevance (the degree to which study findings can be used to create pathways to action for the anti-trafficking movement). We will take steps to ensure that the data presented is scientifically sound and a credible source for data on trafficking in the United States.



Survivor-Centeredness: Survivor leadership is one thing that makes the NSS unique. From start to finish, including the data analysis and sharing phases, survivors will lead. In the data analysis phase, we will look to survivors to provide context to the data and ensure accurate data interpretation, bringing to life the needs and experiences behind the numbers. In a variety of ways, survivors will help shape how the data is shared and the actions it presents.



Creating Pathways to Action: Data presented by the NSS will stay true to the original intent of the study: to offer survivor-informed and developed recommendations for action, whether it be policy, advocacy, or service provision. The data presented will also encourage the leverage of other existing programs or opportunities that align with the survivor agenda.

Our aim is that, by taking these steps, we will achieve several things.

1. Inform Polaris's programs and policy priorities.
2. Find areas of alignment between Polaris and other allies or survivor organizations and lend support for achieving mutual goals.
3. Make the findings accessible to allies and partners for advocacy, programming, etc. within their communities.