

Left Out

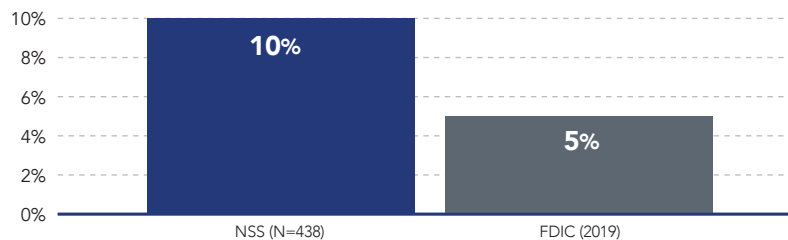
How Human Trafficking Survivors are Excluded from Financial Systems¹



The National Survivor Study (NSS)², a recent research study from Polaris, surveyed 457 sex and labor trafficking survivors in the United States on their experiences before and after trafficking. **Survivors reported, at a much higher rate than the US population, not having bank accounts, utilizing exploitative non-banking financial avenues like payday loans and check cashing places, and overdrawing and bouncing checks.**

- In comparison to the general US population³, more survivor respondents stated that they do not have bank accounts.
- The most common reasons respondents reported not opening a bank account were that they didn't have the money to meet minimum balance requirements (48%) and that they can't open a bank account due to personal ID, credit or former bank account problems (43%).

Respondents Currently Without Bank Account vs. General US Population (N=438)



- Many survivor respondents reported utilizing more predatory and risky financial avenues such as cashing checks at places other than banks or credit unions (27%) and taking out payday loans (22%).
- Respondents also reported overdrawing, having checks bounce, or transactions being declined (62%). All of these financial experiences occurred more commonly for survivors than the general US population.⁴

1 This research brief may be cited as "Polaris (2023). Left Out: How Human Trafficking Survivors are Excluded from Financial Systems".

2 Polaris (2023). In harm's way: How systems fail human trafficking survivors. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/In-Harms-Way-How-Systems-Fail-Human-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris.pdf>.

3 Source of General U.S. Population Data: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). *How Americans Bank: Household Use of Banking and Financial Services 2019 FDIC Survey*. <https://www.fdic.gov/analysis/household-survey/2019report.pdf>

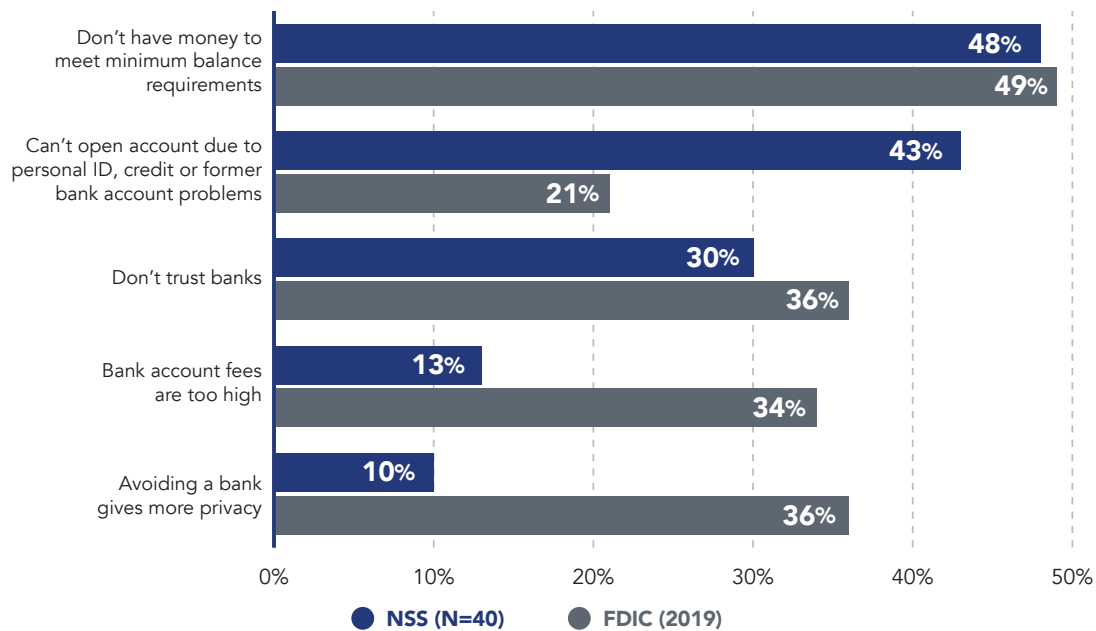
4 *Direct comparison data was not available for some statistics.

Source of Check Cashing and Payday Loan Data for General U.S. Population: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). *How Americans Bank: Household Use of Banking and Financial Services 2019 FDIC Survey*. <https://www.fdic.gov/analysis/household-survey/2019report.pdf>

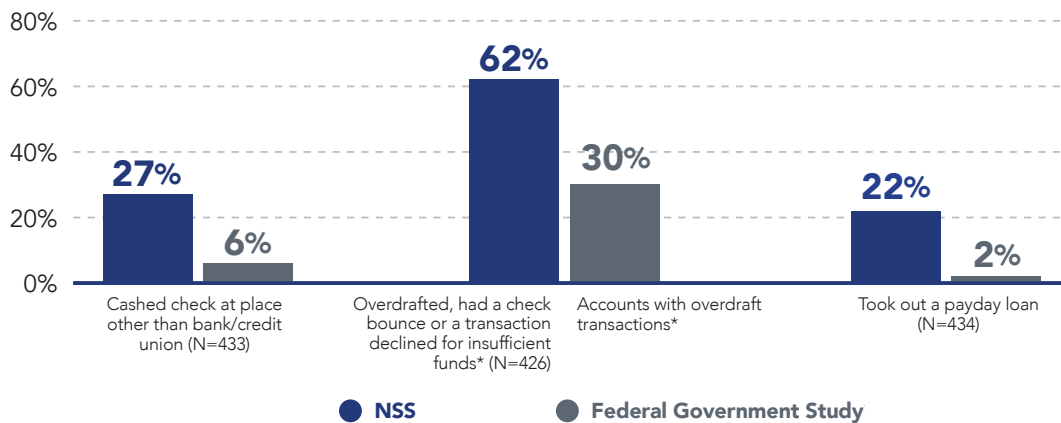
Source of Overdraft Transaction Data for General U.S. Population: Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). *Data Point: Checking account overdraft*. 2014. https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201407_cfpb_report_data-point_overdrafts.pdf



Common Reasons Provided for Not Having a Bank Account — Unbanked Respondents v. Unbanked US Population (N=40)



Financial Experiences in the Last 12 Months — Respondents v. General US Population



Lack of access to traditional finance after trafficking is a predictable outcome of exploitation experiences. A majority of survivors also reported that traffickers had access to their financial accounts (61%), utilized their accounts to pay for expenses related to the trafficking (53%), and misused the survivors identity (53%). Policymakers, banks, and financial institutions can use this data to improve how they work with trafficking survivors.

“I had a lot of fraud committed on my bank accounts, and for a while I was blacklisted from having my own bank account. When I got out of exploitation, my grandmother had to vouch for me at her bank and be a joint owner for years...”