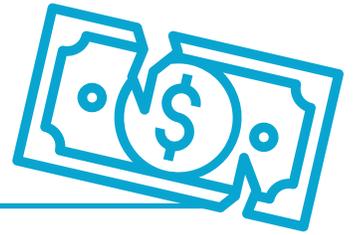


Poverty After Human Trafficking

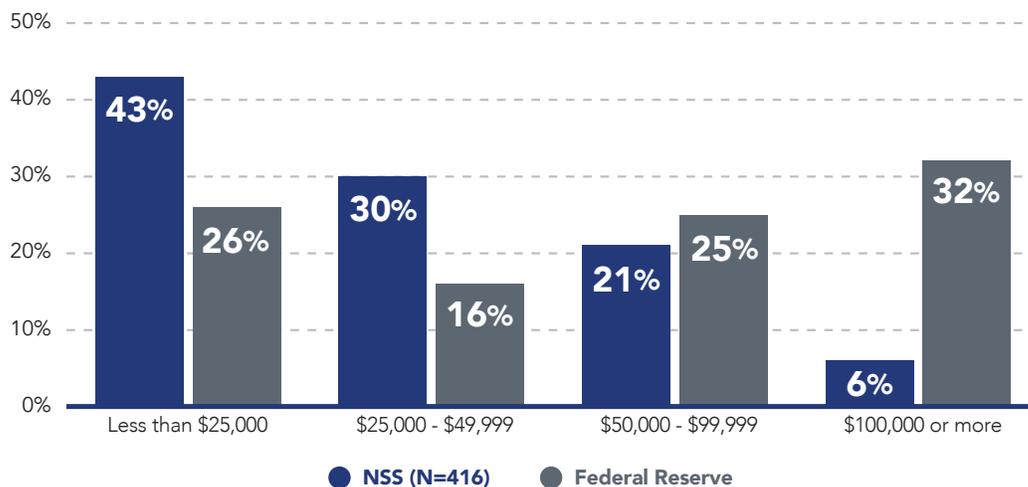
Survivor Income and Employment¹



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. The study found that **many survivors lack a stable income after their exploitation ends**. While survivors are working, including some working multiple jobs, many are not making enough to save, plan ahead, or to meet even their basic needs. Policymakers and employers can use this data to improve employment and income and programs for trafficking survivors.

- **43 percent of survivor respondents reported that their households make less than \$25,000 a year.** This means that many survivors are living under the poverty line. Compared to the general US population³, survivors make substantially less per year, on average, than non-survivors.

Annual Household Income – Survivors v. General US Population



“This year (10 years out) is the first year I am making thriving wages and can not only support my family but pay off debt and start saving.”

1 This brief can be cited as follows “Polaris (2023). Poverty After Human Trafficking: Survivor Income and Employment”.

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 United States Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (2022). Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2021-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202205.pdf>

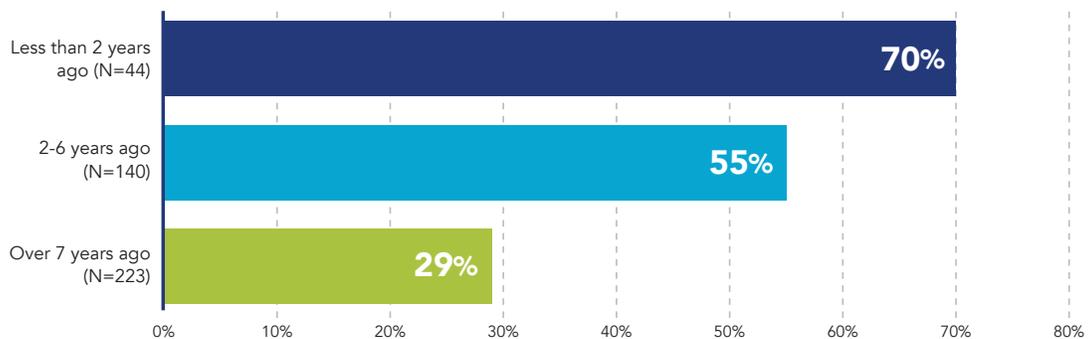


- Level of income did not correlate with employment status for survivors. Only 17 percent of survivors respondents reported not working at all and 30 percent of respondents who have both regular and temporary (such as seasonal or gig) work, reported less than \$25,000 household income.
- In fact, while levels of poverty does improve over time, 30 percent of respondents that exited their trafficking situation more than 7 years ago still reported household incomes of less than \$25,000.

Current Employment Status (N=437)



Respondents Who Make Less than \$25K a Year by Time Out of Exploitation



These findings show that even though they are working in some cases multiple jobs, and years after exiting their trafficking situation many survivor households are still barely getting by and many are vulnerable to crises that may happen and cannot build savings, retirement, or wealth such as home ownership.

“I currently have a good job, but am so behind that even the best job can’t undo the hole I am in. It feels helpless.”