

Unprotected Workers

Workplace Conditions and Experiences of Labor Trafficking Survivors¹

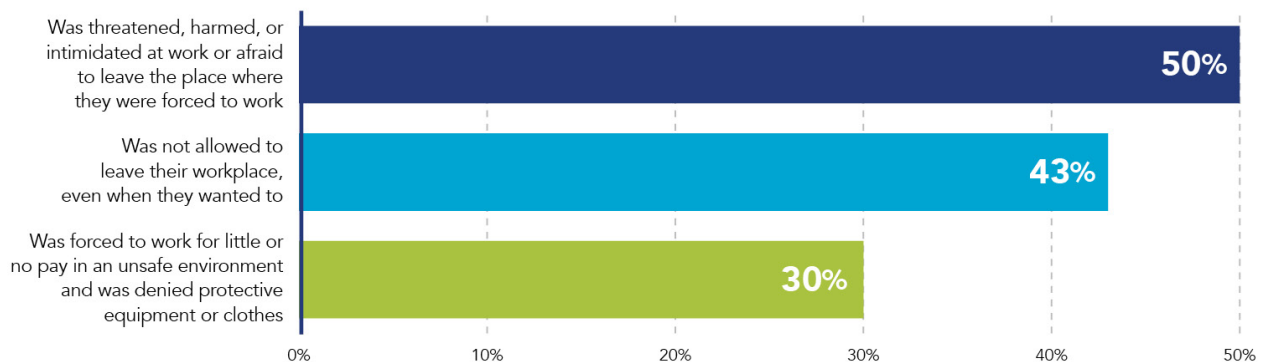


The National Survivor Study (NSS)², a recent research study from Polaris, surveyed 457 sex and labor trafficking survivors in the United States on their experiences before and after trafficking. In the study, 245 respondents reported experiencing a labor trafficking situation. **The study found that labor trafficking survivors experienced a variety of abuses and did not seem to know who to report an issue to or how to receive assistance without their employer knowing.** Policymakers and anti-trafficking organizations can use this data to enact policies and programs to better supervise and inspect workplaces especially those vulnerable to trafficking like agriculture, construction, domestic work, and others.

Of those survivor respondents that experienced labor trafficking,

- 50 percent reported being threatened, harmed, or intimidated at work and being afraid to leave their workplace.
- 43 percent were not allowed to leave their workplace even if they wanted to. Additionally about a third were forced to work in unsafe working conditions where protective equipment was not provided.

Workplace Condition Issues During Labor Trafficking (N=235)



1 This research brief may be cited as "Polaris (2023). Protecting Workers: Workplace Conditions and Experiences of Labor Trafficking Survivors".

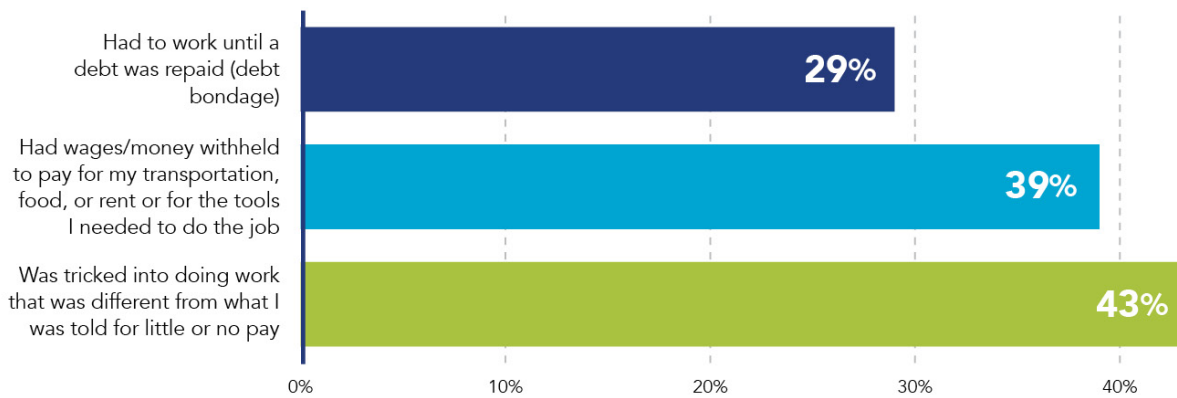
2 Polaris (2023). In harm's way: How systems fail human trafficking survivors. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/In-Harms-Way-How-Systems-Fail-Human-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris.pdf>.



“La verdad, uno como inmigrantes a veces no conoce sus derechos y lo humillan y lo convierten en víctima.” [The truth is that one as an immigrant sometimes does not know his rights, and they humiliate him and make him a victim.]

- Almost half (43%) of respondents were tricked into working for little or no pay.
- 39 percent had their wages withheld and 29 percent had to work to pay off a debt they owed.

Contractual Issues During Labor Trafficking (N=235)



- Many survivor respondents reported not knowing how to make a complaint either not knowing who to contact, how to contact someone other than a supervisor, or to do so anonymously.

Grievance Mechanisms Available to Labor Trafficking Survivors	%	N
Knew who to contact to make a complaint about working conditions	20%	184
Knew someone other than your supervisor to go to for work-related issue	17%	174
Had a way to complain without employer knowing it was you	11%	176
An inspector or government outreach worker came to workplace at least once	11%	172



“Nos pagaban y nos descontaban todos los servicios que nos daban y nos hacían trabajar muchas horas.” [They paid us and deducted all the services they gave us and made us work long hours.]