

## Homelessness & Victimizations

On a single night in Minnesota, specifically January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 8,393 people were experiencing homelessness. November is National Homeless Awareness Month. There is a large connection between homelessness and victimizations such as domestic violence and human trafficking. Domestic and sexual violence is a leading cause of homelessness in women and children. “Between 22% and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. Additionally, 38% of all victims of domestic violence become homeless at some point in their lives.”

Oftentimes an abuser will use housing as a reason to control their victim. The victim may not leave an abusive relationship due to the fear of being homeless or having nowhere to go. The victim may feel they cannot afford to live on their own. It is also possible that due to financial abuse, the victim has no money to put down or no way to afford rent.

Just because someone is in a domestic violence relationship it does not mean that they will be homeless, but being a victim does increase the chances of becoming homeless. “Over 90% of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives, and 63% have been victims of intimate partner violence as adults.”

From October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022- September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 WRAP provided emergency safe housing for 80 individuals. The breakdown of these individuals was 52 adult females, 2 adult males, and 26 children. WRAP’s safe houses were used 29 times and hotel/motel vouchers were used 71 times. WRAP provided a total of 1572 nights of safety. This is equal to 4 years, 3 months, and 19 days of safety. WRAP also provided relocation assistance 1944 times during this same period.

Being homeless can also increase the chance of being a victim, especially of human trafficking. Traffickers will offer a safe place to sleep, sometimes this can be in exchange for something such as escort services, residence-based commercial sex, illicit activities, begging and peddling, and outdoor solicitation. Traffickers may also offer a place to stay and force the person into these activities.

In July 2018 the Polaris Project released a report on human trafficking and housing. “In Polaris’s survivor survey, 64% reported being homeless or experiencing unstable housing at the time they were recruited into their trafficking situation. Traffickers are able to exploit potential victims’ fear of sleeping on the street by offering them safe shelter to recruit them into trafficking. LGBTQ+ populations are at an increased risk as well as runaway/homeless youth and some may choose to engage in survival sex to get access to shelter.”

Those who are homeless may take part in survival sex. “Survival sex is when an individual engages in sexual activity in exchange for basic living necessities such as food and housing. This arrangement could be voluntary (with adults 18+), exploitative, or rise to the level of sex trafficking, depending on the conditions.” In the 2017, *Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth* by Laura T. Murphy 641 runaway and homeless youth were interviewed. These youth were being served by Covenant House in the United States and Canada. 1 in 5 of the youth interviewed had been a victim of human trafficking. “In the Murphy study, of the youth who reported being trafficked for sex, engaging in survival sex, or generally trading sex for money, 68 percent reported doing so while they were homeless and 19 percent of all youth interviewed reported engaging in survival sex.”

## Homelessness & Victimization

Homelessness affects a variety of people for a variety of reasons. It is important to understand that there is a connection between victimizations such as domestic and sexual violence or human trafficking and homelessness.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or human trafficking, please seek help! WRAP provides free & confidential services to victims of domestic violence and/or human trafficking in Lincoln, Lyon, Redwood, & Yellow Medicine counties. As well as services to victims of sexual assault in Yellow Medicine county. WRAP can be reached at 1-800-639-2350 (after business hours calls are forwarded to Safe Avenues in Willmar). If you would like to learn more information about WRAP please visit [www.letswrap.com](http://www.letswrap.com) or check out our Facebook or Instagram pages.

<https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking-and-housing-homelessness/#:~:text=The%20fear%20of%20homelessness%20is,residential%20facilities%20like%20nursing%20homes>.

[THousing Handout Domestic-violence-housing-and-homelessness.pdf \(nnev.org\)](#)

<https://www.hmismn.org/news/2023-point-in-time-count-results>