



# Cast

COALITION TO ABOLISH  
SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

## Research and Evaluation Snapshot, 2024

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The research team at Cast engages in survivor-centered, anti-oppression scholarship. Our work addresses anti-trafficking [practice](#), including but not limited to the provision of direct services to survivors; training and technical assistance for attorneys and social services practitioners; and [policy](#) at the local (LA), state, (CA), and federal (USA) levels. We empower survivors to take an active role in producing scholarship and educational materials on human trafficking. We are committed to continuously learning from survivors and providing leadership opportunities at all stages of our work. We envision a future in which all anti-trafficking policy is survivor-centered and grounded in empirical research, and all services are routinely evaluated with input from survivors.

In 2024, our work focused on health needs & outcomes, criminalization, and ethical storytelling.

### Survivor Health Needs and Outcomes

Shortly after launching the Research and Evaluation program in 2022, we asked Cast staff for their input regarding urgent questions in the anti-trafficking field and potential priorities for our work. The most common request was that we explore survivors' health needs and the impact of services on addressing those needs.

In 2023, we began by exploring [PTSD among clients in Community Case Management](#), including rates before and after services. We also developed a strategy for [assessing the impact of long-term services](#). This year, in partnership with David Smith of the Mercy Lab Foundation, we expanded on this work with an academic paper: "Measuring the Impact of Services for Human Trafficking Survivors: Tracking Clinically Significant Improvement Across Outcomes," which has been published in the [Journal of Applied Social Science](#).

We have also begun collaborating with researchers at [HEAL Trafficking](#) to explore patterns in health-related referrals among survivors of labor and sex trafficking. This work focuses on referrals for general medical care, mental health care, vision care, and dental care and draws on data from a decade of service provision.



## Criminalization of Trafficking Survivors

Criminalization is an urgent issue in the anti-trafficking field. Cast has served many survivors who had criminal records when they began services. Some had experienced [forced criminality](#), in that their traffickers made them engage in illegal activities such as theft, fraud, and illegal forms of sex work. These survivors were often misidentified as offenders within the criminal legal system. We have also worked with survivors who became vulnerable to trafficking as a result of criminalization. Traffickers routinely target individuals with criminal records, exploiting the barriers they face in obtaining stable housing and employment.

Through our direct services work, as well as our experiences affecting systemic change through policy advocacy, we have identified four key issues that contribute to the criminalization of human trafficking survivors: policies regarding immigration, homelessness, the sex trades, and drugs.

In 2024, the Cast Research and Evaluation program published an [interactive dashboard](#) and [practitioner guide](#) on documenting forced criminality.

We also began a three-year research project, funded by the [National Institute of Justice](#) (NIJ), on identifying forced criminality among criminal defendants. NIJ funding allowed us to hire two part-time research fellows. Cast is a lead partner in this work, along with researchers at New York University, Northeastern University, and RTI International.

Finally, Cast launched the [Provider Perspectives Study](#), a survey and interview based project to explore antiviolence practitioners' insights on a range of issues that affect survivors, including experiences of criminalization. This project is a collaboration with researchers at Stockton University.

## Ethical Storytelling

In partnership with Chris Ash, former Survivor Leadership Program Manager at Cast, and researchers at the University of North Carolina, we developed and distributed a survey on human trafficking survivors' experiences with publicly sharing their stories. We have published [preliminary findings](#) and are in the process of developing academic papers for publication, including one focused on recommendations for journalists.

### SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCES OF SHARING THEIR TRAFFICKING STORIES PUBLICLY

Preliminary findings from a survey of 85 survivors

## Thanks to Our Community Partners and Supporters!

We are immensely grateful to the community partners who collaborated with us this year, as well as those who have supported the Research and Evaluation Program through grants and technical assistance.



## Contact the Research & Evaluation Team:

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