ESTIMATING CHANGES IN SEX TRAFFICKING PREVALENCE, PERCEPTIONS AND POLICIES IN GOLD MINING COMMUNITIES IN KÉDOUGOU, SENEGAL SINCE 2021

AN ENDLINE RESEARCH STUDY

Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA School of Social Work

POPULATION COUNCIL
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MAY 2025

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ACRONYMS

AEMO	Action Educative en Milieu Ouvert (Open Environment Educational Action)
ANCS	Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé
APRIES	African Programming & Research Initiative to End Slavery
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interview
CDPE	Departmental Child Protection Committee
CNERS	Comité National d'Ethique pour la Recherche en Santé (National Ethics Committee for Health Research)
CNLTP	Cellule Nationale de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes (National Unit to Combat Trafficking in Persons)
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CVC	Comité de Vigilance Communautaire (Community Vigilance Committee)
DoS	U.S. Department of State
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FDS	Defense and Security Forces
FTS	Free the Slaves
GFEMS	Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
IDI	In-depth Interview
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRB	Institutional Review Board
JOP	Joint Operational Partnership
KII	Key Informant Interview
LTS	Link-Tracing Sampling
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OLR	Overseas Labor Recruitment
RDS	Respondent Driven Sampling
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WECS	Women Engaged in Commercial Sex

KEY TERMS

COERCION
"(a) Threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; (b) Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or (c) The abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process." (As referenced in the Department of State [DoS] Terms and Definitions, pg. 22: Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), Section 103, Amended as 22 U.S.C. 7102.)

COMMERCIAL SEX ACT
"Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person." (As referenced in the DoS Terms and Definitions, pg. 22: TVPA, Section 103, Amended as 22 U.S.C. 7102.)

DEBT BONDAGE
"The status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined." (TVPA, Section 103, Amended as 22 U.S.C. 7102.)

FORCED LABOR
"Labor obtained by any of the following methods: Recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery." (DoS Terms and Definitions, pg. 21.) Note: The "force, fraud, or coercion" requirement does not have to be met for persons under the age of 18 for the activity to be defined as trafficking.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
"The act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Under the TVPA and consistent with the UN (United Nations) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol), individuals may be trafficking victims regardless of whether they once consented, participated in a crime as a direct result of being trafficked, were transported into the exploitative situation, or were simply born into a state of servitude. Despite a term that seems to connote movement, at the heart of the phenomenon of trafficking in persons are the many forms of enslavement, not the activities involved in international transportation." (DoS Award Stipulations, pp 8-9).

SEX TRAFFICKING
"Sex trafficking encompasses the range of activities involved when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel another person to engage in a commercial sex act or causes a child to engage in a commercial sex act. The crime of sex trafficking is also understood through the 'acts', 'means', and 'purpose' framework. All three elements are required to establish a sex trafficking crime (except in the case of child sex trafficking where the means are irrelevant). The 'acts' element of sex trafficking is met when a trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, obtains, patronizes, or solicits another person to engage in commercial sex. The 'means' element of sex trafficking occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion. Coercion in the case of sex trafficking includes the broad array of means included in the forced labor definition. These can include threats of serious harm, psychological harm, reputational harm, threats to others, and debt manipulation. The 'purpose' element is a commercial sex act. Sex trafficking can take place in private homes, massage parlors, hotels, or brothels, among other locations, as well as on the internet." (DoS, 2025; also see DoS Award Stipulations, pp 8-9)

CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING
"In cases where an individual engages in any of the specified "acts" with a child (under the age of 18), the means element is irrelevant regardless of whether evidence of force, fraud, or coercion exists. The use of children in commercial sex is prohibited by law in the United States and most countries around the world." (DoS, 2025; also see DoS Award Stipulations, pp 8-9)

SURVIVOR OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
An individual who has previously experienced human trafficking, as defined in this document, but is not currently a trafficking victim.

VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
An individual who is currently experiencing human trafficking, as defined in this document.

WOMEN ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL SEX
An adult woman engaged in a commercial sex act. This term is broad and captures women engaging in commercial sex who are registered with health services as well as women engaging in commercial sex who are not registered with health services. Women who are registered are must submit to monthly health checks at a health facility (which includes HIV testing) and agree not to solicit on the street to maintain their status. Women who are engaged in commercial sex without a registration card or may be soliciting on the street are not legally engaged in commercial sex but may not be experiencing trafficking. Importantly, minors are not included in this category, as they are unable to consent and therefore minors are victims of sex trafficking if they are engaged in commercial sex. See definition of child sex trafficking for more information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the endline report from a multi-year study that aimed to estimate prevalence of sex trafficking among women engaged in commercial sex (WECS) and implement supportive services for survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal's Kédougou region, Kédougou and Saraya Departments. CenHTRO conducted a baseline study in 2021 which found that approximately 20% of WECS (aged 18–30 years) were victims of sex trafficking (Okech et al., 2022). The study identified economic hardship, lack of social support, ineffective law enforcement, and corruption in transit countries as key factors driving vulnerability to trafficking. Following the 2021 study, CenHTRO coordinated with Senegalese and Nigerian stakeholders and NGOs to provide protection, prevention and prosecution services for survivors of sex trafficking and to strengthen sex trafficking response policies within Senegal.

The present study aims to assess changes in sex trafficking prevalence, perceptions, and policies since 2021. Specific objectives include measuring the current prevalence among WECS in the Kédougou and Saraya departments, comparing changes in sex trafficking prevalence since the baseline study, evaluating shifts in community perceptions and policies, and assessing the impact of the shifts in community perceptions and policies on survivors. This endline study utilized a mixed methods design, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with women in commercial sex, sex trafficking survivors, key government stakeholders, and CenHTRO program implementers. Ethical approval was sought and obtained from Senegalese, Nigerian and United States University-based IRBs.

KEY FINDINGS

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Prevalence of sex trafficking

A total of 842 WECS were interviewed for the endline survey, compared to 561 WECS surveyed at baseline. The endline study revealed that 51% of WECS were identified as victims of sex trafficking, a notable rise from 20% at baseline. Several factors may explain this increase in prevalence measurement. First, WECS in Senegal may have developed a better understanding of trafficking-related questions, such as the meanings of "being forced" or "coercion", likely due to their contact with project activities and interventions. Increased awareness that there was a program with funding available for people experiencing sex trafficking to get services, shelter and be repatriated may have also increased the incentive for recognizing and reporting about sex trafficking experiences. Additionally, those who participated in the endline survey may have felt less stigma about providing truthful responses, possibly because of the increased trust fostered by CenHTRO researchers over the two and a half years since the baseline survey. Furthermore, the Link-tracing Sampling (LTS) methodology may have more effectively reached victims of sex trafficking at endline than the respondent-driven sampling (RDS) at baseline. Lastly, there is a possibility that the actual prevalence of sex trafficking has increased since the baseline. This finding confirms the results of the baseline research study that indicated that sex trafficking is growing given the increase in poverty and accompanying vulnerability in this region.

Demographics and risk factors

Among survivors of sex trafficking who participated in the survey, 52% were aged 18–24 and 48% were 25–30. Most sex trafficking cases come from Nigeria (82%) and Senegal (10%). Adverse childhood experiences significantly heighten risk for experiencing sex trafficking in adulthood. When asked about childhood experiences, 60% reported facing physical abuse, 15% experienced sexual violence, and 26% were exposed to alcohol. Additionally, poor living conditions prior to experiencing sex trafficking, such as lack of food (28%) and overcrowded housing (21%), were identified as drivers for women seeking risky income opportunities, increasing potential for manipulation by traffickers.

Recruitment and coercion into sex trafficking

The study found that deceptive recruitment practices and coercion were widespread among victims of sex trafficking.

Deceptive recruitment
66% of victims reported being misled about their job, with false promises regarding work, conditions, and pay. Deception about living conditions (53%) and job contracts (47%) was common, especially among victims aged 25–30 in Saraya (70% reported deception, compared to 60% in Kédougou).

Coercive recruitment
49% of victims were forced into commercial sex, and 18% were abducted or held captive while seeking employment. Coercion was more common in Saraya, indicating a need for focused interventions.

Debt bondage
More than 56% of victims were exploited through debt bondage, where they had to repay transportation fees or other debts by engaging in commercial sex, trapping them in a cycle of exploitation.

Forms of exploitation to control victims

The endline study highlights the widespread use of deceptive recruitment, coercion, exploitative employment practices, poor living conditions, and financial control by traffickers to entrap and exploit victims of sex trafficking.

Employment practices
The study revealed exploitative employment practices that traffickers used to control victims and prevent them from leaving. Among sex trafficking victims, 29% reported that their wages were withheld to prevent them from leaving, and 31% stated that their personal belongings were also taken. Victims faced further financial exploitation through excessive interest on loans (25%), inflated prices for goods and services (23%), and high fees for basic necessities (17%). Additionally, 13% of victims experienced a reduction in the value of goods or services they produced, deepening their exploitation.

Living conditions and freedom of movement
Living conditions were often controlled by traffickers, with 21% of victims forced to live in employer-provided housing, much of which was in poor condition (12%).

Financial exploitation and debt
Financial exploitation was widespread, with nearly one-third of victims forced to perform sex acts to pay off debts; 57% of sex trafficking victims in Saraya and Kédougou reported this form of exploitation. Only 40% of victims had control over their earnings, compared to 52% of nonvictims, highlighting traffickers' financial control over the victims.

Violence and threats
Violence and threats were frequently used to control victims. Among sex trafficking victims, 12% were threatened with isolation from their family, while 11% faced threats of exclusion from future employment opportunities. These threats were more prevalent in Saraya than in Kédougou. Victims also reported being subjected to physical violence by intimate partners, with 30% of sex trafficking victims reporting such violence, compared to 20% of nonvictims.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The qualitative findings are based on interviews with women who are survivors of sex trafficking (n=26) and key informants (N=24). Survivors who were interviewed for this endline study had experienced sex trafficking in Senegal, participated in a Senegal-based shelter program and were repatriated to Nigeria where they were interviewed. Interviews with staff and administrators of shelter program and repatriation programs in Senegal (N=11) and Nigeria (N=4) were also conducted. Additionally, 13 key informant sex trafficking prevention and response stakeholders were interviewed at the national, regional and local levels in Senegal.

Changes in perceptions about sex trafficking

Increased Visibility and Awareness
Key informants reported that there was increased visibility of and awareness about sex trafficking since 2021. As evidence of the increased visibility, respondents described an increase in women coming forward to report victimization and increased attention and knowledge about anti-trafficking laws by justice stakeholders, community leaders and community advocates.

Changes in Conceptualizations of Sex Trafficking
Despite some continued differences of opinion about what constitutes sex trafficking (especially when it relates to potentially exploitative experiences of adult woman) there were signs that communities were more willing to engage in intervention such as acknowledging that some women may be experiencing sex trafficking [through force, fraud or coercion] and offering to support exiting through repatriation.

Mixed Perceptions about Prevalence
Perspectives varied about whether prevalence had declined or increased since 2021, with some indicating that trafficking has increased while others believing that there has been a decrease. Some stakeholders suggested that sex trafficking remains a persistent issue.

Mixed Perceptions About the Safety of WECS
When asked about safety many respondents reported that WECS have support from peers as well as from law enforcement and the Tombouloumans (local and traditional police), when necessary. Generally, there was a perception that WECS who are not victims of sex trafficking may be less vulnerable and may not experience harassment by authorities since they are following regulations. However, some stakeholders suggested that the situation may be a bit more complex in that WECS may be hesitant to reach out to police or may experience harassment when encountering police.

Bias as Barrier to Safety.
Some respondents described how biased perceptions of WECS and also of women and girls who have experienced sex trafficking may impact safety for women and girls and also discourage them from reaching out when they experience harassment, violence, exploitation or trafficking. Much of the bias directed at WECS appears to be also related to negative perceptions about women engaged in commercial sex, in particular Nigerian women, who may be seen as outsiders by community members.

Survivors' experiences about shelter services and the repatriation process.
Survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal reported mixed experiences with the shelter services provided by local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies. While many received essential medical care, psychological support, and assistance with basic needs, others reported the services were inadequate or difficult to access. Many survivors successfully returned to their home countries, primarily Nigeria, through collaborative efforts involving Senegalese and Nigerian authorities and NGOs. However, this process faced significant challenges, including bureaucratic delays, inadequate communication between agencies, and insufficient support upon their return. Survivors received support through training and resources to start businesses, however many felt these efforts were inadequate for rebuilding their lives. Survivors emphasized the need for more substantial, long-term support, including job placements, educational opportunities, and ongoing financial assistance.

Response challenges and potential solutions

Primary obstacles to responding to sex trafficking noted by respondents included: difficulties during the identification and referral process, cultural and language barriers, challenges for survivors in feeling comfortable and safe to report and testify against traffickers, fear of reprisals, and fear of arrest. Generally, respondents reported that in addition to language and cultural barriers, fears of reprisals and arrest were two major barriers for victims and survivors to exit an exploitative situation and to access justice. The isolation of women engaged in commercial sex and girls who are experiencing sex trafficking, especially those who are migrants, was described as compounding challenges to response and making it easier for traffickers to operate with impunity.

Although the challenges to reporting and getting access to services identified by respondents are significant, respondents offered several solutions.

1. Increased efforts to educate stakeholders[1] about human rights and the legal right to criminal impunity for human trafficking victims.

There is community support for recognizing and respecting consent, denouncing practices of sexual exploitation and upholding human rights of the WECS and women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking. Respondents suggested that if there is an increase in awareness-raising activities, health support for WECS and increased attention to human rights and gender-based violence then survivors of sex trafficking may be more empowered to come forward when they experience or become aware of a trafficking case.

2. Strengthened safety protocols and processes for reporting by victims of sex trafficking (including minors) and women engaged in commercial sex.

Respondents suggested that increased government buy-in and support is viewed as important to advocacy and prevention of reprisal attacks. Specifically, respondents described the importance of strengthening processes and procedures to mitigate reporting barriers faced, such as identification, language barriers, and fear of reprisal or arrest.

3. Increased financial support and sustainment resources for survivors of sex trafficking

Respondents shared that increased services and resources for follow-up support after reintegration and repatriation were vital. In addition, some respondents expressed that it is important to ask the survivor what they would like to do and then put resources in place to support them to achieve their goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded in implications from our overall study and recommendations directly from stakeholders, in this section we present policy- and practice-specific recommendations for consideration.

Policy Recommendations

Improve regional coordination and response
Bolster existing efforts to improve regional coordination and response among ECOWAS counties, such as through implementing MOUs for extradition and data sharing about sex trafficking cases, developing and implementing standardized procedures for processing sex trafficking cases, and committing increased financial resources for survivor legal aid from across ECOWAS states.

Strengthen data sharing and case coordination
TIP-DMS has been developed in Senegal but needs to be implemented and then scaled up for cross-ministry adoption. This will enable integration of sex trafficking case data collection and sharing among all relevant ministries at the local and regional levels, significantly improving the potential effectiveness of response and also ensuring sustainable monitoring of sex trafficking cases.

Coordinate Senegalese national sex trafficking response policy
Senegalese policymakers have a unique opportunity to determine the most appropriate and effective path forward for more focused National sex trafficking response policies, either through adoption of a new national anti-sex trafficking law and/or through embedding anti-sex trafficking policies into the existing justice codes (e.g. , as was done with the Ministry of Mines). Supporting existing collaborative work towards identifying the policy pathway is recommended as a target area for Senegal anti-trafficking policy stakeholders, as coordinated by the Comité National de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes (CNLTP) (National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons).

Improve training for policy implementation
Stakeholders noted an increase in awareness and knowledge about sex trafficking response laws and policies but suggested continued need to enhance training (e.g., mock trials) and coordination between justice stakeholders to more effectively implement existing laws. Training needs

[1]*"Stakeholders" includes justice actors in Senegal and Nigeria, front-line service providers in Senegal and Nigeria, women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking, women engaged in commercial sex, and community members.*

included basic knowledge about what constitutes sex trafficking, especially for adult women, and education about human rights and the right to legal impunity for sex trafficking victims. Recommend that initiatives to train justice stakeholders in implementation of sex trafficking laws and to support knowledge building about human rights and right to impunity for survivors is paramount to improve actionability of policy.

Practice Recommendations

Strengthen community-based reporting processes
This study revealed several barriers that appeared to impact reporting of sex trafficking cases, such as a hesitancy to address sex trafficking of adult women, and negative perceptions about WECS and Nigerian migrant women. Therefore, improving knowledge about the components of sex trafficking for adult women, countering negative perceptions of WECS and Nigerian migrant women, and improving safety for reporting sex trafficking cases, especially among WECS, should be prioritized. Front-line health workers (such as Bajenu Gox and other community health workers who regularly work with WECS) and justice stakeholders are positioned well to implement initiatives targeted to addressing these reporting barriers. These groups should be trained and coordinated to implement a trauma-informed process for screening, identifying and referring people who may be experiencing sex trafficking.

Bolster training and response procedures for existing programs and services to enhance effectiveness in working with and addressing needs of trafficking survivors
Progress has been made in increasing access to shelter programs for survivors, but there remain a lack of resources and governmentally funded programs for sex trafficking survivors. Recommend embedding more sex trafficking response services directly into existing programs and services, such as health services for WECS, and training community workers and community leaders in trauma-informed approaches to working with sex trafficking survivors. Develop and train community stakeholders on referral processes and procedures, to facilitate coordinated response.

Substantially increase access to services which improve sustainability for survivors
Our study identified a lack of sustainability services as continuing to put survivors at risk of experiencing sex trafficking and increasing barriers to preventing sex trafficking. Recommend substantial increase in the financial commitment to investing in survivors' sustainability, through governmental and community-based support of livelihood support, income generation and asset building for survivors of sex trafficking.

Standardize enhanced legal aid support for survivors
Survivors should have access to comprehensive legal aid services, which enables them to have a successful justice experience. The legal aid support should also extend education about existing impunity protections and human rights for trafficking survivors and support for repatriation and reintegration. Existing legal aid resources should be bolstered by increased funding for services and increased training for justice stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: GLOBAL CONTEXT

Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights, with significant implications for public health and global development. The 2022 International Labour Organization (ILO) report estimated that approximately 28 million individuals are trafficked globally, with 17.3 million people experiencing forced labor in private sector industries and 6.3 million experiencing forced commercial sexual exploitation (ILO 2022). The trade of humans for forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation remains a significant concern worldwide (Kaur and Vageshjith 2022). Violence is often a hallmark of human trafficking, with victims experiencing physical and psychological trauma (Stöckl et al. 2021).

Human trafficking manifests in various forms, including: 1) sex trafficking, which is the exploitation of individuals, primarily women and children, for commercial sex; 2) forced labor, where victims are coerced into working under threat, often in industries such as agriculture, construction, and domestic work; 3) organ trafficking, which involves the illegal trade of organs, where victims are forced or deceived into giving up their organs; 4) child trafficking, which includes the exploitation of children for labor, sex, and even armed conflict; and 5) debt bondage, where individuals are forced to work to repay debts under terms that are impossible to meet, effectively trapping them in a cycle of exploitation (UNODC 2022).

Human trafficking is driven by several causal factors. Economic disparities, such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities, make individuals more vulnerable to traffickers' false promises of better prospects. Political instability, including conflict and weak governance, creates environments where trafficking can thrive due to inadequate law enforcement and the chaos caused by displacement. Social inequity, particularly gender discrimination and lack of education, makes women and children especially vulnerable as societal norms devalue their status and limit their opportunities. An abusive home life, often resulting from the death of a caretaker or domestic violence, increases the risk of individuals being trafficked as they seek to escape their situations (UNODC 2019).

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa faces severe challenges related to human trafficking, with high rates of trafficking for forced labor and sexual exploitation. Traffickers exploit the region's economic hardships, conflict, and social inequities to prey on vulnerable populations. According to the 2022 ILO report, approximately 7 million people in Africa were living under conditions of human trafficking and modern slavery, with 3.8 million subjected to forced labor and 3.2 million in forced marriages (UNODC 2022). Vulnerable populations are routinely exploited for various purposes, including forced labor and sexual exploitation. A 2020 report indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa, about 20% of detected trafficking victims experienced sexual exploitation, while 77% experienced forced labor (UNODC 2020). These figures highlight the dual nature of human trafficking in the region, where both economic exploitation and sexual abuse are prevalent.

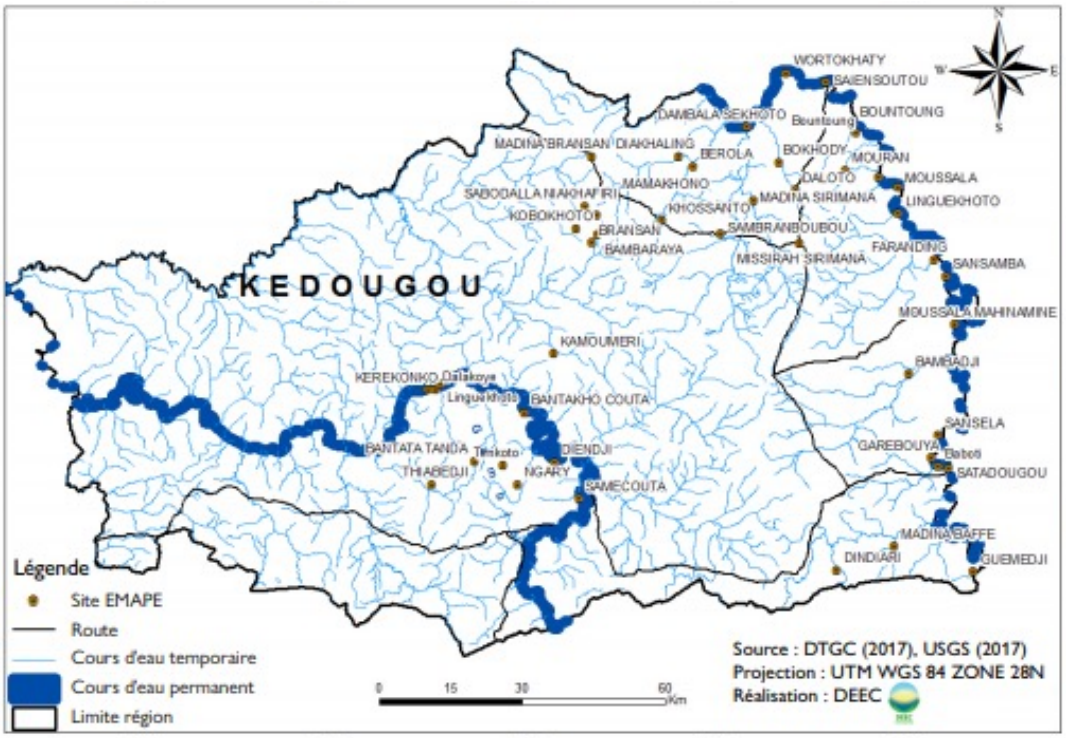
Gender disparities are significant among trafficking victims in sub-Saharan Africa. The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 estimates that in 2020, 66% of individuals trafficked for sexual exploitation in sub-Saharan Africa were women, while 34% were children (UNODC 2022). This statistic highlights the vulnerability of young girls in the region, who are disproportionately affected by trafficking. The intersection of poverty, gender discrimination, and lack of education makes them prime targets for traffickers who exploit their marginalized status (Dam 2006).

Efforts to combat human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa face numerous challenges. The clandestine nature of trafficking operations and the socioeconomic conditions prevalent in the region complicate detection and intervention. Many cases of trafficking remain invisible, further exacerbating the problem (IOM 2011). Effective strategies require comprehensive approaches that address the root causes, including poverty alleviation, gender equality, and robust legal frameworks to protect vulnerable populations and prosecute offenders (UNODC 2022).

SEX TRAFFICKING IN SENEGAL

Sex trafficking in Senegal is a serious and pervasive issue, particularly affecting women and children (Okech et al. 2022). Traffickers exploit children and women in sex trafficking and forced labor within the country's domestic servitude and gold mining sectors. This exploitation is driven by socioeconomic conditions and the demand for cheap labor and sexual services (DoS 2023). Gold mining regions, especially Kédougou, have become hotspots for sex trafficking (Figure 1). The gold rush in these areas has attracted a large influx of miners and associated workers, creating a lucrative environment for traffickers (Tagziria and de Lugo 2023). According to a 2019 study by the Artisanal Gold Council there are 97 artisanal gold mine sites in the Kédougou region, most of which are in the Saraya department, with the remaining located in the Kédougou department. An estimated 25,119 people work to produce approximately three tons of gold per year in these mining sites (AGC 2019).

Figure 1: Map of artisanal and small-scale mining sites in Kédougou region



Engagement in commercial sex in Senegal is legal for adults over 21 years old who have registered with the health ministry (Ito, Lépine, and Treibich 2018; Szawlowski et al. 2023). The registration program WECS within Senegal was developed to reduce rates of HIV among the general population. One key feature of the program is that women who are registered with a health card attend a monthly visit to a health post. However, some research indicates that there may be WECS who are not registered with the health department so may have less contact with health workers or other authorities and may also experience discrimination (Szawlowski et al. 2023).

CenHTRO ANTI-SEX TRAFFICKING RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING

CenHTRO conducted a baseline study in 2021 in the Kédougou region and found that approximately 20% of WECS (aged 18–30 years) were victims of sex trafficking (Okech, et al. 2022). The baseline was aimed at identifying service and policy gaps for victims of sex trafficking as well establishing prevalence rates. The study identified economic hardship, lack of social support, ineffective law enforcement, and corruption in transit countries as key factors driving vulnerability to trafficking. Survivors primarily relied on themselves to escape, with limited emotional support. Sex trafficking in Kédougou is believed to be both internal and transnational, with victims coming from within Senegal as well as from the neighboring countries of Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso (Okech 2022; DoS, 2023). The baseline study highlighted the need for increased awareness among government officials, stronger law enforcement, improved border control, and greater NGO involvement in anti-trafficking efforts.

Informed by the baseline study findings, CenHTRO partnered with UNODC and Free the Slaves (FTS) in Senegal and Emmanual Foundation in Nigeria to implement a multilevel intervention program in the Kédougou region. Active from October 2021 to June 2024, program

implementation focused on protection and prevention of sex trafficking through provision of shelter services to sex trafficking survivors, reintegration services and repatriation support primarily to Nigeria. Capacity building among judicial and governmental stakeholders was also a priority, especially in the areas of coordination and knowledge building about sex trafficking. Programs were externally evaluated at the mid-line and end-line.

Program Results from Final Evaluation

This section highlights some of the major program results and challenges as identified through the final independent program evaluation (Zewdneh et al., 2024).

1. Strengthened Prosecution

Strengthened legal and policy frameworks
The program strengthened legal and policy frameworks related to trafficking in persons (TIP) and increased judicial awareness, which in turn resulted in a notable rise in trafficking-related convictions.

- Legislative and technical assistance sessions resulted in the drafting of legal provisions aimed at revising existing laws to better address TIP in the mining sector.

- During the programming period there was an increase in TIP-related prosecutions (20) and convictions (15) which exceeded program targets.

Capacity-building to combat human trafficking
Training workshops were conducted with judicial actors, law enforcement officers and other stakeholders to increase capacity for a coordinated justice response to trafficking.

- Trainings focused on critical areas such as the identification of trafficking victims, investigation techniques, and the prosecution of trafficking cases. Participants reported a better understanding of international and national legal frameworks, as well as the importance of adopting a victim-centered approach in their work.

- Implementors noted that the workshops provided a platform for participants to discuss challenges and share best practices, fostering a collaborative environment that further strengthened the overall response to TIP in the mining regions.

2. Enhanced Protection of Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Identification and removal of women and girls who had experienced sex trafficking
202 survivors of sex trafficking were identified and removed from the exploitative situations.

- Through the CenHTRO program local community vigilance committees (CVCs), composed of local leaders and community members, were developed. The CVCs were trained to identify and refer people who might be experiencing sex trafficking. The CVCs worked closely with law enforcement and service providers and played a crucial role in identifying and referring sex trafficking victims.

Comprehensive shelter services
Survivors of sex trafficking were provided with comprehensive shelter services, including trauma-informed care, legal assistance, and health care.

- Shelters ensured that survivors received not only the necessary medical care but also psychological support to address the trauma they had endured.

- Despite the considerable achievements, some areas for improvement were identified during the evaluation. Some shelters

were noted to have inadequate living conditions, including issues with hygiene, overcrowding, and food quality. Survivors, particularly those from other regions, mentioned feeling disconnected due to language barriers, and there were calls for more diverse and culturally appropriate services.

Support for sustainable livelihoods for survivors repatriated to Nigeria
As part of the program's focus on sustainable approaches to survivor well-being, trainings and resources were provided to survivors to start businesses, aiding their reintegration into society.

- The evaluation highlighted a need for continued support and follow-up to ensure the long-term success of these reintegration efforts.

3. Bolstered Prevention Efforts

CVCs
Nineteen CVCs were established and empowered to monitor and raise awareness of trafficking. These committees, made up of local leaders, were trained to identify trafficking indicators and refer potential victims to authorities, creating a grassroots monitoring network.

Community-based training and awareness
Training and awareness programs were implemented, particularly in mining regions where young women and girls were most vulnerable. These efforts significantly increased trafficking awareness and commitment to prevention, with outreach extended to schools, religious institutions, and local markets.

Capacity-building on TIP prevention
Training for local government officials, law enforcement, and civil society organizations (CSOs) was crucial in improving trafficking prevention efforts.

Introduction of Trafficking In Persons Data Management System
The Trafficking in Persons Data Management System (TIP-DMS) was introduced to enhance data collection and sharing among stakeholders, improving decision-making and resource allocation. However, integration into local government operations faced technical and logistical challenges.

Support for at-risk girls in Senegal
As part of efforts to prevent human trafficking in the gold mining sites of Kédougou, support was provided to at-risk Senegalese girls from vulnerable families within the communities targeted by the project. This support included the donation of school supplies such as bags, books, pencils, and notebooks to girls in secondary schools. Some beneficiaries also received bicycles or motorcycles to ease their commute to school. Additionally, equipment for income-generating activities was provided, including freezers, farming tools, restaurant equipment, clothing, shoes, and motorcycles. Computers were also donated to a local school.

Media engagement
Thirty-four journalists were trained on responsible reporting of trafficking cases, leading to the publication of several news items and dissemination of anti-trafficking messages through television, radio, and social media. More consistent engagement with media outlets was recommended to increase impact.

Overall, the final evaluation found that CenHTRO's program was successful in increasing awareness about and visibility of sex trafficking in Senegal (Zewdneh et al., 2024). The multi-pronged, community-centered approach of the intervention program was key to this success. Future efforts could build on these successes and consider working towards key sustainability targets to strengthen sex trafficking response and prevention in Senegal and the surrounding region.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The overarching objective of this endline prevalence study is to evaluate changes in sex trafficking prevalence, perceptions, and policy since the implementation of interventions, and to develop evidence-driven recommendations for enhanced prevention and response efforts.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Estimate the endline prevalence of sex trafficking among young women engaged in commercial sex (aged 18–30 years) in the artisanal gold mining areas of Kédougou and Saraya departments.

2. Document changes in the prevalence rate between the baseline study in 2021–22 and the endline prevalence study in 2024.

3. Identify perceived changes in perceptions about sex trafficking prevalence and perceived impact on women engaged in commercial sex as well as the community.

4. Identify policy changes and initiatives in sex trafficking prevention and response launched since the baseline study in 2021–22.

5. Identify perceived impacts of (3) and (4) on survivors.

6. Develop stakeholder-driven and survivor-centered recommendations for policy, practice, and community initiatives to continue to strengthen prevention and response efforts.

METHODOLOGY

Study design overview

The endline prevalence research employed a mixed methods design. A quantitative survey and qualitative interviews were conducted with women engaged in commercial sex (WECS). Additionally, qualitative interviews were carried out with sex trafficking survivors, key government stakeholders (at local, regional, and national levels), and implementers of the CenHTRO program.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY METHODS

Study population

The endline survey was conducted to estimate the prevalence of sex trafficking among the base population of young women aged 18–30 years engaged in commercial sex. The endline survey also captured demographics and assessed key psychosocial characteristics that provided important insights into victimization, such as poverty, disability, suicidality, family structure, intimate partner violence, self-efficacy, individual resilience, and community resilience, using validated psychometric scales.

The base population in this survey is defined as adult females aged 18–30 years who were involved in commercial sex and were living either in the Kédougou or Saraya departments at the time of data collection.

Inclusion criteria

- Women aged 18–30 years.

• Engaging in any sex act in exchange for money, shelter, food, or clothes in the past 12 months.

• Proficient in French, English, or the local language

• Current resident in target artisanal gold mining areas in Kédougou and Saraya departments.

Exclusion criteria

Does not have a referral coupon to participate (unless respondent is a seed participant).

Sampling method and justification

People who are experiencing sex trafficking are a hard-to-reach population. They often face high levels of disenfranchisement, abuse, and control. Since trafficking in persons is a crime, victims are often either unwilling to come forward due to stigma or fear of reprisal or are unaware that they have been victimized (UNODC 2020). Additionally, the population of sex trafficking victims may be clustered (i.e., not randomly distributed) in the general population. Consequently, sex trafficking victims are difficult to study using standard probability-based sampling methods (Schroeder et. al. 2022).

To obtain representative samples of the networks of hard-to-reach populations, researchers have developed network-based sampling approaches, most notably respondent-driven sampling (RDS). RDS is a probability-based peer recruitment sampling method that combines a snowball approach with mathematical modeling. The sampling approach begins with the selection of "seed" individuals who then recruit a predetermined number of peers from their personal social networks. The mathematical approach occurs during the analysis stage, where the data is weighted based on network sizes and recruitment patterns (Heckathorn 1997).

RDS provides more useful and accurate estimates than convenience or snowball sampling recruitment methods, especially for highly stigmatized and discriminated-against groups. It has been shown to produce broadly representative data for these hard-to-reach populations, although the level of precision achieved has varied across previous studies (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004). The CenHTRO project utilized the RDS method for the baseline survey of this project (Okech et al. 2022).

Link-Tracing Sampling (LTS)
For this endline research, we have utilized an RDS-like method, the Link-Tracing Sampling (Vincent and Thompson 2017), which starts with a larger number of randomly selected seed participants and fewer waves of referral chain recruitment compared to RDS. Therefore, LTS shortens the amount of time required to achieve the target sample size as compared to RDS. It is deemed more feasible for this endline prevalence study due to budget and time capacities. In addition to the survey interview, an LTS Coupon Management Form was designed to monitor the sample recruitment process.

Functional and analytical assumptions for LTS
The following assumptions need to be met for LTS to be implemented successfully (Johnston 2013):

Functional assumptions

• Respondents know one another as members of the survey population.

• Respondents are linked by a network composed of a single component. This condition implies that there should be cross-referral between the two departments.

• Sampling occurs with replacement. (In practice, however, respondents will only be allowed to participate once in order to avoid a small number of respondents overwhelming the sample).

Analytical assumptions

• Respondents can accurately report their personal network size, defined as the number of relatives, friends, and acquaintances who fall within the survey population.

• Peer recruitment is a random selection from the recruiter's network.

• Each respondent recruits a single peer. (In practice, however, to avoid the recruitment dying out, we start by allowing respondents to recruit multiple new respondents. Research has shown that multiple recruits result in an approximation of the Markov model assumptions, which underpin the LTS approach.)

We used the RDS package in R software to perform weighting on the LTS samples using the Volz-Heckathorn approach (Heckathorn 1997; Heckathorn et al. 2002). Subsequently, R and Stata software were used to estimate the prevalence of sex trafficking among WECS, as well as other key variables of interest in the quantitative survey.

Definition of sex trafficking and operational indicators

The survey questionnaire was used to assess if a respondent experienced sex trafficking within the past 12 months. A respondent was categorized as a victim if they reported that they experienced at least one of the sex trafficking indicators among the four cateogories of exploitation in the past 12 months. The four exploitation categories included:

1. Exploitative Recruitment
2. Employment Practices and Debt
3. Coercion and Control over personal life
4. Loss of Freedom of Movement

See Table 1, below, for examples of indicator questions used to classify experiences of sex trafficking for each exploitation category. More details about criteria used to classify a respondent as a victim of sex trafficking are described in the baseline report (Okech et al. 2022).

Table 1: Survey used to measure the prevalence of sex trafficking currently, i.e., happened in the past 12 months.

Definition of Sex Trafficking	Survey Items used to Classify Sex Trafficking by Indicator Category	Example indicator questions
The 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) Definition: (A) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.	Any item from **"Recruitment into Sex Trafficking"** section F, questions 1-20.	Survey Question, Section F, #4: *"Sometimes people are forced or coerced into commercial sex against their will. Have you ever felt coerced or forced to have sex for commercial purposes?"*
	Any item from the **"Employment Practices and Debt"** section G, questions 1-10.	Survey Question, Section G, #1: *"Has this person [person who benefitted from respondents exploitation] withheld your payment to prevent you from leaving?"*
	Any item from the **"Coercion and Control"** section H, questions 1-17.	Survey Question, Section H, #2: *"Has anyone ever succeeded in transferring control of you or any part of your personal life to someone else? (For example, telling you what to do, when and how without your permission or will)"*
	Any item from the **"Freedom of Movement"** section I, questions 1-15.	Survey Question, Section I, #3: *"Sometimes people are not allowed to keep their own identity or travel documents. Has your employer/anyone who benefits economically from your work ever taken/confiscated your identity papers (e.g. passport, work permit)?*

Sample size and level of precision

The proposed target sample size to be achieved was 850 completed interviews from Kédougou and Saraya departments for the endline prevalence study. This number was based on considerations of the total population size of young women in the gold mining communities of Kédougou district, using census-based population projections that show that there are about 17,000 young women aged 18–30 in the region, a desirable level of precision, as well as a pragmatic approach of what is deemed achievable given the hard-to-reach nature of the population.

Based on the general formula for calculating sample size (*n*) for the endline study, as below, for a prevalence estimate of 20% referenced from baseline (which is the proportion of trafficked WECS among all WECS in the study region), design effect of 2, and the assumptions outlined below, the formula yields an estimate of 425 respondents per department. This target sample size allows for separate analysis of the two departments, if it turns out there are significant differences between the two, with an acceptable level of precision at 5.4%. Note that the level of precision would be lower if the prevalence estimate of sex trafficking turned out to be closer to 50 percent than what is assumed.

$$n = D\frac{Z_{1-\alpha}^{2}\,P(1-P)}{d^{2}}$$

Where n = required sample size, D = design effect (assumed to be 2), $Z1\text{-}\alpha$ = the z score for the desired confidence level, which is assumed to be 1.96 for 95% confidence. P = expected proportion which is assumed to be 20% for the prevalence estimate of sex trafficking among women engaged in commercial sex, and d = precision, which is assumed to be 5.4%.

LTS assumes that respondents are connected through a single network. Given that the study covers two different departments in the Kédougou region (Saraya and Kédougou departments), we took measures to encourage cross-referral among respondents across the two departments to meet the assumption of the single network. For example, participants were encouraged to refer friends from the other department and were given the phone number of the field manager to coordinate attendance at the data collection site in the other department.

Recruitment of respondents for the LTS survey

All the respondents for the LTS study met the eligibility criteria specified above. Seeds were individuals who marked the beginning of each referral chain. A seed was "recruited" not by peers but by the research team.

Recruitment of initial seeds

LTS relies on the recruitment of a relatively large number of initial seeds (by rule of thumb, greater than 30) who refer other individuals within the target group (i.e., WECS) to the interview team. Each of the seeds were interviewed and then asked to refer other potentially eligible persons in their network to participate in the study. We strategically distributed seed recruitment coupons to various sources, such as the qualitative interview respondents (WECS). We also asked community organizations working with WECS to distribute the seed coupons. We selected seeds with diverse demographic characteristics, taking factors such as age, gender, geographic location, and types of commercial sex (e.g., street-based, brothel-based, etc.) into account.

Adding respondents to the sample through referrals

The respondents were provided with a set of referral cards or "coupons" to give to their close contacts so that they could participate in the survey. The individuals with the coupons then come to the study site to meet the research team. Potential participants were encouraged to call the field manager to make an appointment for the study visit. Each participant was given three referral coupons to send to their eligible friends. To encourage participation and referrals in LTS, we provided a small incentive of 5,000 CFA (~8.15 USD) for respondents who completed the interview and an additional 5,000 CFA for each successful referral. Participants had to return for a second visit to receive reimbursement for any successful recruitment.

We recruited 51 seeds in Kédougou and 49 in Saraya. The health care providers responsible for the medical follow-up of WECS at the Kédougou and Saraya health centers and the Siguil Jiguen network coordinator who was responsible for community mobilization of

the WECS target group (official and clandestine) on behalf of Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé (ANCS) in the two departments, helped a great deal with seed recruitment. Their facilitation also enabled the research team to reach the very underground network of Senegalese WECS.

Data collection

We treated the two departments in the Kédougou region as a single integrated network with crossover between the two samples. Data from each sample were also analyzed separately to estimate prevalence of sex trafficking within each department. Analysis of department-level LTS data included sample weighting adjustments using Volz-Heckathrom scheme based on self-reported social network size, which was generated by the RDS package in R. For the aggregated data analysis, composite weights derived from the population size of the two departments were applied. Diagnostics such as recruitment trees and convergence plots were conducted using RDS package. The subsequent statistical analyses were performed in Stata using weighted data generated by R.
Interviews were conducted by Senegalese interviewers who have experience working with vulnerable and hidden populations. Interviewers received a five-day classroom-based training focusing on the purpose of the study, the questions the study aims to answer, the objectives of the quantitative component, and the interview items. Interviews were conducted in English, French, or local languages, as appropriate. To ensure fidelity to the study protocols and data quality standards, interviewers were closely monitored by trained supervisors through accompaniments and review of the data. The interview took approximately 45-60 minutes.

Achieved sample

The achieve sample comprises 425 respondents in each of the departments. Recruitment was slower than expected in Saraya. The study team worked with the local community to follow up on unreturned coupons to accelerate data collection. The final sample was based on 51 seeds in Kédougou and 49 in Saraya, and the target sample size was reached within 25 days.

Data analysis

The analysis treated the two departments in the Kédougou region as a single integrated network for sampling. Samples were combined at the analysis stage and assigned population weights, followed by composite weights derived from network and population sizes for final analysis. Data from each sample were also analyzed separately to estimate prevalence of sex trafficking within each department. Analysis of LTS data included adjustments for social network size and recruitment efforts within networks. Advanced statistical analyses were performed in Stata using Volz-Heckathorn sampling weights generated by the RDS package in R. Aggregated data were further analyzed in Stata using a composite weight based on the population size of the two departments.

The endline prevalence estimate for sex trafficking in Kédougou was determined as the ratio of identified sex trafficking victims at the time of the endline survey to the base population (i.e., women aged 18–30 years who were engaged in commercial sex). Subgroup analyses based on age, department, and migration status were explored within feasible sample sizes. In addition to prevalence estimates, our analysis examined predictors of sex trafficking, with input and refinement from the CenHTRO team before data collection began.

The CenHTRO team developed study instruments based on insights from baseline research and midline evaluation activities, with the quantitative survey used in both baseline and endline assessments.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

Study population

Respondents for the qualitative study included key stakeholders, survivors of sex trafficking, and WECS. Data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews, which aimed to explore respondents' understandings of policy changes related to trafficking prevention and response in Senegal, as well as the perspectives and experiences of those who had experienced sex trafficking and who were involved in prevention activities. Qualitative data analyzed for this report included a subset of 21 interviews with women who are survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal who had been repatriated to Nigeria and 24 interviews with key informants (including program implementors and stakeholders in Senegal and Nigeria). Due to ethical concerns regarding lapses in adherence to data collection

procedures and resulting data quality issues, a number of interviews were excluded from analysis in this report including: interviews with women engaged in commercial sex in Senegal (N=32), interviews with survivors of sex trafficking who were residing in Senegal shelters (N=9), and interviews with survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal who had been repatriated to Nigeria N=5). See the limitations section of this report for more details about these exclusions.

Key implementers and stakeholders

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 25 implementors (FTS and UNODC), community vigilance committees (CVCs), and other community members/leaders or NGOs who play a vital role in the implementation of the CenHTRO program. Ten interviews[2] were with implementers in Senegal and four interviews with implementers in Nigeria. Additionally, there were 13 KIIs with key stakeholders at national, regional, and local levels (governors, prefects, community health workers, medical officers, law enforcement, Action Educative en Milieu Ouvert (AEMO), Departmental Child Protection Committee (CDPE)), and media. Interviewers focused on how perspectives on sex trafficking and initiatives to prevent and respond to it evolved since the baseline report in 2021. Interviews with stakeholders took place in their offices. Confidentiality was ensured by choosing quiet, enclosed locations where discussions could take place without major constraints. Each interviewee received 8,000 CFA (~13.50 USD) to compensate them for their time, with the exception of respondents who worked with Defense and Security Forces (FDS), FTS, and UNODC.

Survivors of sex trafficking

In-depth interviews (IDIs) involved qualitative interviews with survivors of sex trafficking who received services from an implementation partner (i.e., FTS). The aim of this data collection activity was to gain in-depth knowledge about survivors' experiences with and perceptions about services received through implementation partners and how those experiences affected their well-being. An emphasis was placed on recommendations that survivors make to strengthen programs and enhance experiences of survivors receiving services, frequency, and depth of engagement in anti-slavery programs.

Twenty-one young women aged 18 years or older who experienced sex trafficking and who received services in Senegal and repatriated to Nigeria—and who have been beneficiaries of the CenHTRO program—participated in qualitative in-depth interviews. Respondents were recruited with the help of the local implementing partners. The IDIs were conducted after informed consent was obtained in person or by phone.

Qualitative interview process

Interviews with survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal who had been repatriated to Nigeria were conducted in person by female qualitative interviewers who had experience working with vulnerable and hidden populations and received trauma-informed training for interviewing women who have experienced human trafficking. Interviews were conducted in English or local languages, as appropriate, and audio-recorded for transcription, after respondent permission was granted. At the time of the interview, the interviewers initiated the informed consent process, and the interview was conducted with participants who voluntarily agreed.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in safe and secure locations where survivors' network meetings were also held. To enable privacy and confidentiality, partners, staff, or other residents were not present during interviews. The interview took approximately 45-60 minutes. Survivors who had experienced sex trafficking in Senegal and were interviewed in Nigeria after repatriation were compensated 15,000 Naira (~10 USD) for their time and for personal resources used to participate in the interview.

Interviewers in Nigeria were closely monitored by trained supervisors through accompaniment and review of audio recordings to ensure fidelity to the study protocols and data quality standards. Steps to minimize harm and prioritize the safety and well-being of the interviewees were prioritized. A data collection supervisor remained in the field for at least the first week of fieldwork to provide quality-assurance oversight and observe each interviewer's performance.

[2] *Ten interviews were conducted in total in Senegal; one interview was with two people.*

Qualitative data analysis

Interviews were recorded using digital voice recorders (with interviewees' consent), then transcribed into Microsoft Word. Research assistants transcribed the interviews. After transcription, the field research team carried out a quality control evaluation of the transcriptions (by listening to the recordings again and reading the transcriptions). The transcriptions complied with confidentiality criteria: first and last names of interviewees were masked and replaced by initials or pseudonyms. In addition, a labeling system was used to facilitate data management and processing. The interview transcripts were then coded by the field research team and combined with the interview notes.

Interviews were coded in NVivo according to deductive codes (drawn from the interview debriefing templates and the major themes targeted for the different transcripts). Once coding had been completed, a thematic analysis was performed on the data, structured by key study topics, such as "prevention recommendations" (Averill, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Excerpts from the transcripts are used in the report to illustrate the results.

All digital files and data were securely transferred to password-protected computers, ensuring the files were safeguarded with additional security features. Access to data was strictly designated by the study PI to research team members as needed. Paper files, including notes, informed consents, and participant lists, were stored in a locked cabinet at the Population Council's Dakar office under the supervision of senior research staff.

Data management

All digital files and data were securely transferred to password-protected computers owned by the Population Council, ensuring the files were safeguarded with additional security features. They were also stored on Microsoft 365 SharePoint, which offered restricted access and advanced features for collaboration and file management within and outside of the Population Council. SharePoint, fully integrated with the Microsoft 365 suite, operated as a cloud-based document storage system under the enterprise subscription. Access to data was strictly designated by the study PI to research team members as needed.

Paper files, including notes, informed consents, and participant lists, were stored in a locked cabinet at the Population Council's Dakar office under the supervision of senior research staff.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to the research. They are listed as follows:

Limitations of the LTS Survey

All respondent data is self-reported
Results from this study are based on personal interviews and are therefore vulnerable to response biases, including social desirability bias. The study team made efforts to minimize the risk of this through interviewer training on bias, as well as assuring participants of confidentiality in the informed consent process.

Lack of control or comparison group in the research design
Given the fluid and evolving characteristics of the target populations as both migrants and women who engage in commercial sex, as well as the unique socioeconomic environments where they operate, recruitment of a comparison group was not possible. This will make changes in characteristics from baseline to endline difficult to attribute exclusively to CenHTRO intervention effects.

Weighting approach
The weights were derived using RDS-II, drawing on the Volz-Heckathorn weighting scheme. Weights are based on the self-reported network size, which may be prone to recall bias and varying interpretations among respondents. This means individual weights may be either under- or overestimated. The lack of population-level data of the number of individuals engaged in commercial sex at the

department level meant the sample is not adjusted for the relative size of Kédougou and Saraya departments.

Limited cross-over referral recruitment and/or insufficient sample size
Like RDS, the LTS method rests on the assumption of a single network in the two sampling departments. However, there was only one cross-over referral in the resulting sample. Although there is no theoretical guidance on the minimum number of linkages among samples or the measurement of the connectiveness of the subsamples, in practice, observing multiple linkages between the two samples would be preferable to account for error reporting and random error.

Limited cross-referral recruitment implied that there was no interconnectedness between two departments or the interconnectedness of the two sample networks was weak. In such a case, treating them as separate samples would be a reasonable choice. This led to the resultant 425 samples of each department merely meeting convergence and equilibrium criteria of the LTS method, making them barely satisfactory for the disaggregated analysis. Considering these factors, we present the aggregated findings in the report.

Limitations of the Qualitative Study Arm

Data exclusions due to lapses in implementing approved interview protocols in the conduct of qualitative interviews with WECS and Survivors of Sex Trafficking
As mentioned in the methods section above, all the qualitative interviews with WECS (N=32) and survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal (N=9) as well as some interviews with Survivors of sex trafficking in trafficking in Nigeria (N=5) were excluded from analysis for this report. Breeches in ethics and lack of quality stemming from lapses in adherence to the approved research protocol were identified during a review of transcripts. Ethical concerns were related to deviations from the study protocol, such as mistakenly interviewing young women under the age of 18 and asking probing and insensitive questions that were not approved to be part of the interviews. These deviations from the protocol were documented and reported to the ethics committee. The ethics committee approved the mitigating measures taken by the research team, such as contacting intervention partners to follow up with interviewees about their interview experiences and excluding the interviews from the analysis for this end-of-study report. Therefore, the findings presented in this report related to sex trafficking survivors' experiences of prevention and protection services are drawn from interviews conducted in Nigeria with women who were survivors of sex trafficking in Senegal (N=26). These interviews were conducted in accordance with the protocol and therefore met criteria for inclusion.

Unavailability of some stakeholders for qualitative interviews
During the study, researchers experienced challenges in scheduling and finding the time with selected stakeholders to conduct interviews. This was due to the stakeholders being away on regional postings and/or work travel, or the lack of ability to efficiently schedule interviews due to factors related to the political situation in Senegal.

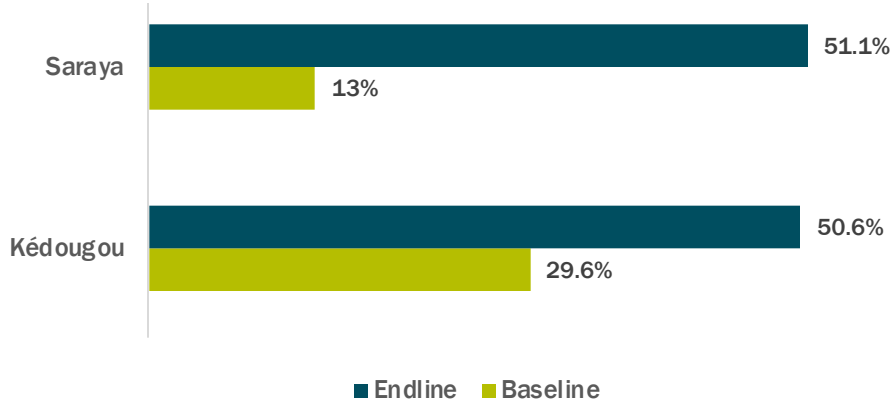
Ethical considerations
Ethical approvals were obtained from the Comité National d'Ethique pour la Recherche en Santé (CNERS) in Dakar, Senegal; the Ondo State Health Research Ethics Committee in Nigeria; and the Population Council (New York) Institutional Review Board, with the University of Georgia having a waiver from their IRB as nonengaged researchers. All participants in this study were actively engaged voluntarily, without any coercion or compulsion, ensuring their participation was entirely based on their own choice and consent. To ensure participants' confidentiality, several measures were implemented. Personal identifiers were not written on transcripts. Recordings and transcripts were securely stored in Population Council's Dakar office, accessible only to study coordinators, research assistants, and investigators. Electronic data were stored on password-protected computers and anonymized. Participant names and identifying information were not reported in any publication, report, or presentation, and all research personnel involved in the study received training in research ethics according to internationally recognized standards, with interviewers also signing confidentiality agreements.

KEY QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

PREVALENCE OF SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking was defined in this analysis as a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act had not attained 18 years of age. We estimate[3] that 51% of WECS in both departments of Kédougou and Saraya have experienced sex trafficking in 2023 (Figure 1). This was found to be approximately the same level in both Saraya (51%) and Kédougou (51%).

Figure 1: Prevalence of sex trafficking by department, Baseline vs. Endline (%)



The achieved sample sizes are n=425 each for Saraya and Kédougou, totaling to N=850. Of these, N=842 participants were verified to have valid coupons and established referral contacts with upstream and downstream participants, and their data were used to estimate the prevalence of sex trafficking using LTS method. The proportion of women engaged in commercial sex who were victims of sex trafficking is similar across the two departments.

The prevalence estimation rate of 51% is higher than the 2021 estimates of 30% (Kédougou) and 13% (Saraya). The study team confirmed that identical prevalence indicators were used in both surveys. Possible explanations for the large increase in prevalence measurement include the following:

- WECS in Senegal now may have a better understanding of the questions the interviewers asked about trafficking. For example, they may understand better what "being forced" or "coercion" means—which could be due to contact with the project activities/interventions.
- Stakeholders noted that since 2021, there was greater awareness of programs and services to support sex trafficking survivors as well as increased visibility of sex trafficking as an issue of concern. This increased visibility could have resulted in more people recognizing sex trafficking situations and thus coming forward to share their experiences.
- WECS who engaged in this endline survey may have felt less stigma in providing truthful responses in the survey, possibly due to increased trust in anti-trafficking activities over the two and a half years since 2021.
- The LTS sampling methodology (seeding and network referrals) used for this endline study may have more effectively reached victims of sex trafficking, compared to the RDS methodology used for the baseline study.
- The baseline study from 2021 underestimated the prevalence rate.
- There is a possibility that prevalence of sex trafficking has increased since baseline.

[3] *All data analysis presented in the report was based on weighted data as described in the appendix. The prevalence estimates for sex trafficking were the ratio of identified sex trafficking victims/survivors and the total sample (i.e., WECS in the age of 18-30) in the past 12 months relative to the time when the endline survey was conducted (i.e., June 2024).*

Although there are many possible explanations, it is likely that there was a combination of factors that led to estimating a higher rate at endline than at baseline. Overall, the prevalence estimation reflects increased visibility of sex trafficking as an issue of concern, which aligns with stakeholders' perspectives about the impacts from anti-trafficking initiatives since 2021.

PROFILE OF QUANTITATIVE RESPONDENTS

The endline quantitative survey targeted any women aged 18 to 30 years engaged in commercial sex in the surveyed communities. A total of 842 women were interviewed for the endline survey who were verified to have valid coupons and met the inclusion criteria, compared to 561 women surveyed at baseline. Among the 842 endline survey participants, 450 self-reported as meeting the criteria for classification as a victim of sex trafficking, compared to 392 who did not meet this criteria (nonvictims).

Age

The ages of participants ranged from 18 years (youngest) to 30 years (oldest). The endline survey reached more younger women than the baseline survey, with 48.1% age 18–24 years at endline compared to 43.8% at baseline, though this difference was not statistically significant (Table 2, p=0.130).

Nationality, religion, and marital status

As in the baseline survey, the majority of participants were originally from Nigeria (83.6% endline vs. 73.5% baseline, p≤0.001). Just over 10% of participants in the endline survey were from Senegal, as compared to 8% in the baseline. In comparison to the baseline survey, the endline survey involved fewer women from Mali (0.2% endline vs. 13.3% baseline, p<0.001) and Burkina Faso (0.2% endline vs. 2.3% baseline, p=0.001). At endline 5.6% of women reported being from other locations. The majority of respondents (81.9%) were Christian, while the percentage of Muslim respondents (18.1%) was higher than measured in the baseline survey (11.0%, p≤0.001). A majority of women were single (78.1%) and about two-thirds reported having at least one child (66.1%).

TABLE 2: Profile of women engaged in commercial sex at endline and baseline surveys

		Baseline		Endline		*p*-value
		n	Weighted % (95% CI)	n	Weighted % (95% CI)	
Age (years)	18–24	246	43.9 (40.1, 48)	411	48.1 (44.5, 52.0)	0.130
	25–30	315	56.1 (51.7, 60.4)	431	51.9 (48.1, 55.5)	0.149
Place of origin	Senegal	45	8 (5.9, 10.3)	104	10.3(8.4, 12.5)	0.133
	Nigeria	412	73.5 (69.9, 77.4)	683	83,6 (80.9, 86,1)	<0.001
	Mali	75	13.3 (10.5, 16)	2	0.2 (0.06, 1.0)	<0.001
	Burkina Faso	13	2.3 (1.1, 3.6)	3	0.2 (0.06, 0.8)	0.001
	Other place	16	2.8 (1.6, 4.3)	50	5.6 (4.2, 7.6)	0.011
Education	Below secondary	240	42.7 (38.3, 46.9)	347	41.4 (37.8, 45.0)	0.649
	Secondary and above	321	57.3 (52.9, 61.1)	493	58.6 (54.9, 62.2)	0.642
Schooling status	Currently enrolled	—	—	20	1.6 (1.0, 2.6)	—

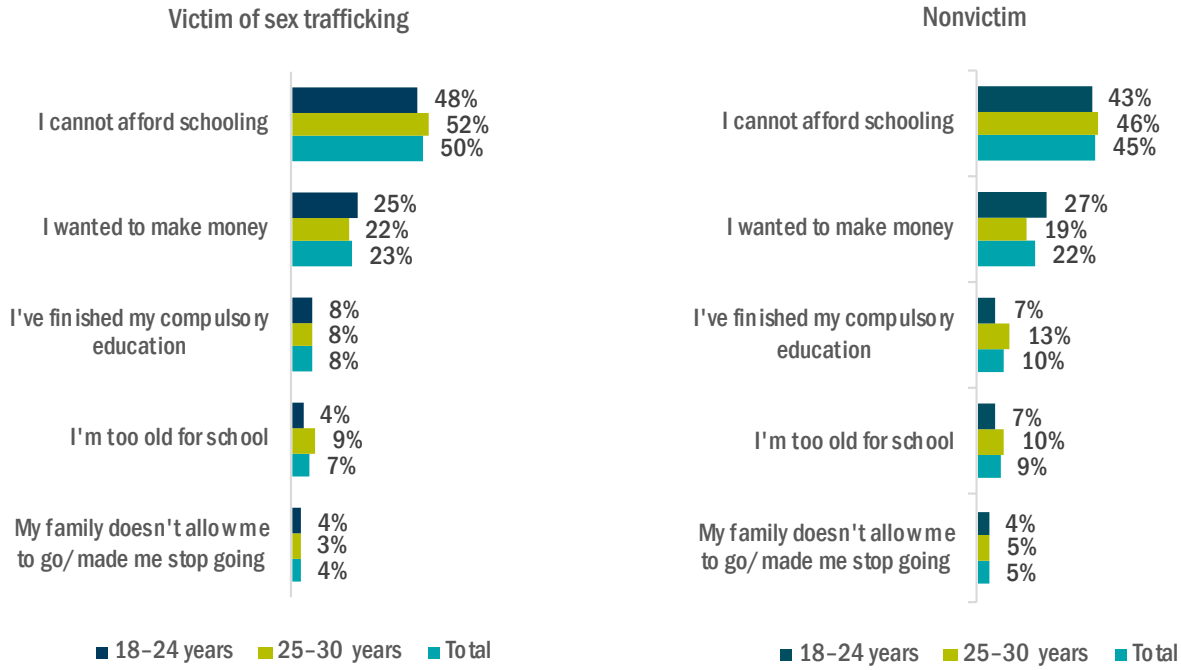
		Baseline		Endline		*p*-value
		n	Weighted % (95% CI)	n	Weighted % (95% CI)	
Religion	Islam	62	11 (8.2, 13.6)	169	18.1 (15.5, 21.1)	<0.001
	Christian (Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, etc.)	499	88.9 (86.1, 91.4)	670	81.9 (78.9, 84.5)	<0.001
Ethnicity	Igbo	167	29.9 (26.2, 33.5)	341	40.5 (37.0, 44,2)	<0.001
	Yoruba	138	24.5 (20.9, 27.8)	84	10.3 (8.2, 12.8)	<0.001
	Edo	95	16.9 (13.9, 20.1)	55	6.9 (5.2, 9.1)	<0.001
	Ogbia	50	8.9 (6.6, 11.2)	0	0	<0.001
	Efik	43	7.7 (5.5, 10)	1	0.04 (0.0, 0.2)	<0.001
	Other	68	12.2 (9.5, 15)	361	42.2 (38.6, 45.9)	<0.001

Primary language	English	415	74.1 (70.2, 77.7)	562	67.8 (64.2, 71.1)	0.015
	French	65	11.7 (9.1, 14.4)	13	1.6 (0.8, 2.9)	<0.001
	Igbo	18	3.2 (1.8, 4.8)	76	9.4 (7.5, 11.9)	<0.001
	Yoruba	17	2.9 (1.6, 4.5)	21	2.8 (1.8, 4.4)	0.919
	Other	45	8.1 (6.1, 10.3)	170	18.4 (15.8, 21.3)	<0.001
Marital status	Single	488	87.1 (84.1, 90)	654	78.1 (74.9, 81.0)	<0.001
	Divorced—not remarried	32	5.7 (3.9, 7.8)	95	11.7 (9.6, 14.4)	<0.001
	Married	18	3.3 (1.8, 4.8)	27	2.9 (1.9, 4.3)	0.683
	Widowed—not remarried	12	2.1 (1.1, 3.6)	23	2.7 (1.7, 4.2)	0.505
	Separated	7	1.2 (0.4, 2.1)	24	2.4 (1.6, 3.7)	0.081
	Cohabiting or living with a partner	3	0.5 (0, 1.1)	19	2.1 (1.3, 3.5)	0.010
Have children	Have at least one child	404	71.9 (68.1, 75.8)	553	66.1 (62.5, 69.5)	0.028
Literacy	Basic literacy	350	62.4 (58.3, 66.3)	661	77.3 (74.0, 80.2)	<0.001
Lived with when growing up	Both biological parents	357	63.8 (59.7, 67.7)	518	62.3 (58.6, 65.8)	0.584
	One biological parent	134	23.7 (20.1, 27.3)	217	25.0 (21.9, 28.3)	0.596
	Other family members	63	11.2 (8.9, 13.9)	100	11.9 (9.8, 14.6)	0.692
	As a domestic worker	5	0.9 (0.2, 1.6)	0	0	—
Foster home/ institutional care	Being placed in foster home/institutional care during childhood	23	4 (2.5, 5.8)	4	0.4 (0.2, 1.3)	<0.001

Education

The majority of WECS respondents reported completing secondary school or above at endline (58.6%), which did not differ significantly from the baseline sample (57.3%, p=0.642). At endline, 77.3% reported having basic literacy, which was higher than the reported 62.4% literacy at baseline ($p \leq 0.001$). Only a small percentage of endline respondents (1.6%) were currently enrolled in school, although a majority of respondents had either completed secondary school or were older than standard schooling age. The most cited reason for not enrolling in school was affordability (45.7% to 49.0% across age groups, Figure 2). A higher percentage of respondents at endline reported wanting to generate income as a reason for non-enrollment in school (20.2% to 25.7% across age groups) than at baseline (9%). Reasons given by both victims of sex trafficking and nonvictims were similar.

Figure 2: Top five reasons for not being enrolled at school, by victim status and age group



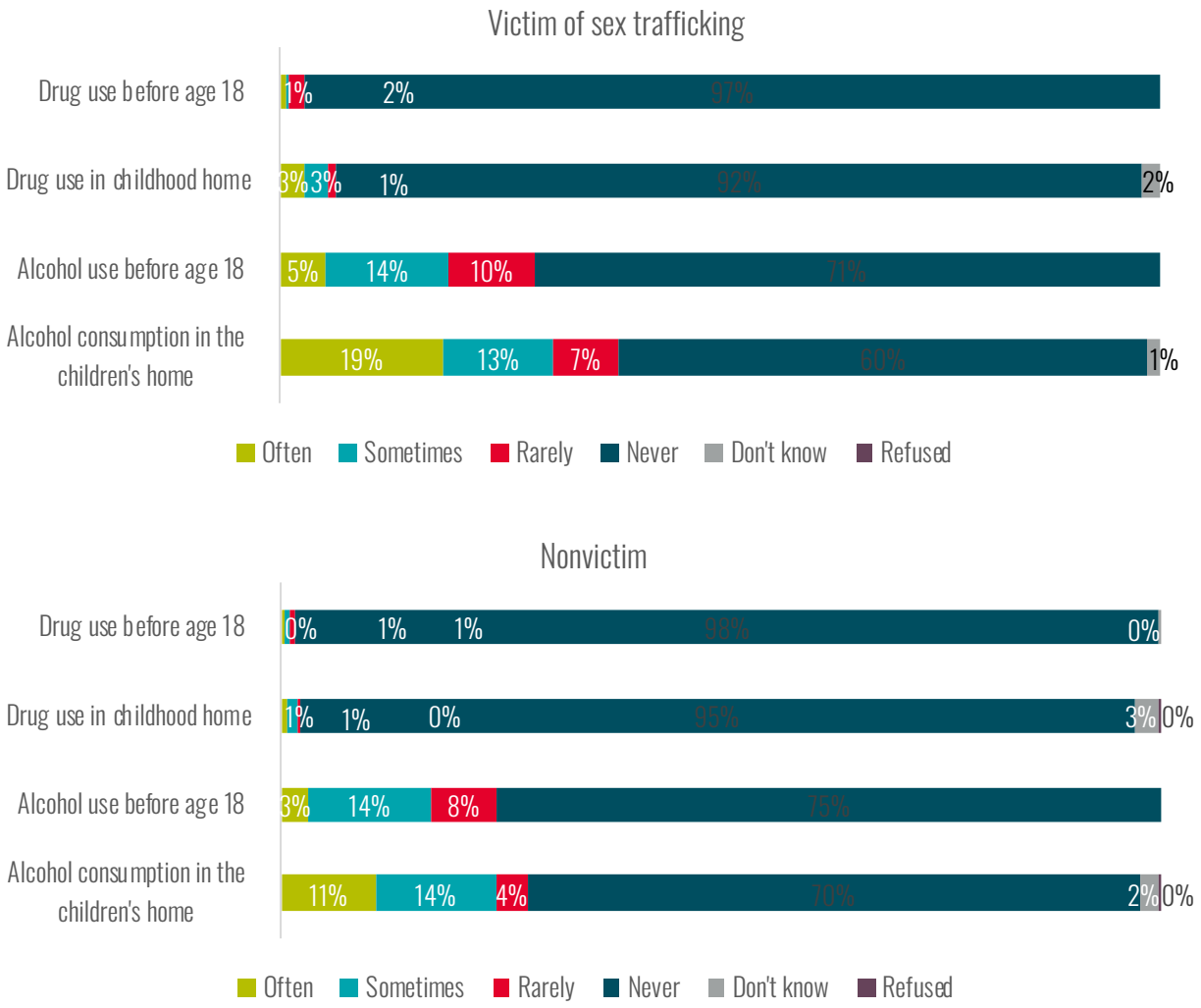
Childhood living conditions

WECS respondents reported primarily growing up with both biological parents (62.3%) or with one biological parent (25.0%). The remainder generally grew-up with other family members (11.9%). Very few women reported having been placed in a foster home or institutional care at some point in their childhood (0.4%), which was significantly lower than baseline (4.0%, $p<0.001$, Table 2).

Many of the WECS (38.7%) reported going hungry at least some of the time when growing up, with 23.5% overall reporting going hungry "often" or "very often." A majority of respondents (84.2%) reported that their living conditions were the same or better than other households in the neighborhood.

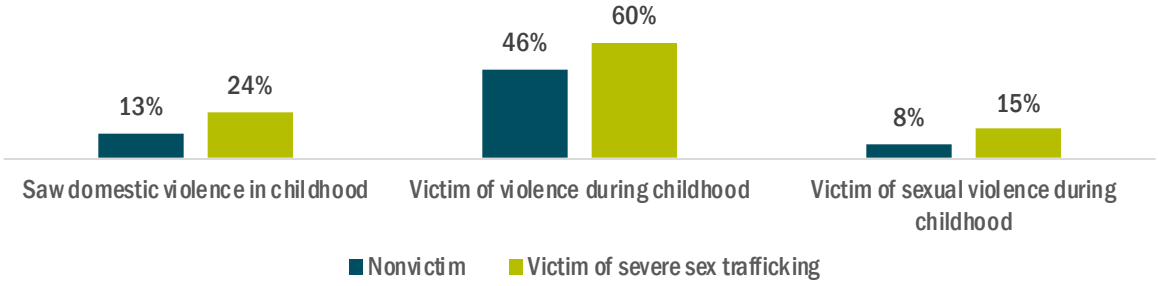
Very few endline respondents reported being exposed to drug consumption (2%) or using drugs themselves (2%) in their childhood home before age 18. However, 26% reported that alcohol was often or sometimes consumed in their childhood home, and 17% reported sometimes or often using alcohol. Reported exposure and use of both drugs and alcohol before age 18 years was similar when comparing both victims of sex trafficking and nonvictims (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Reported exposure and use of both drugs and alcohol before age 18 years, by victim status



Respondents were asked if they had ever been exposed to or victimized by violence during their childhood (Figure 4). Among endline participants, victims of sex trafficking were significantly more likely to report being a victim of physical abuse during childhood (60%) than nonvictims (46%, $p=0.000$), as well as more likely to be a victim of sexual violence during childhood (15% victims vs. 8% nonvictims, $p=0.000$). Exposure to domestic violence during their childhood was also higher among victims (24%) than nonvictims (13%, $p=0.000$).

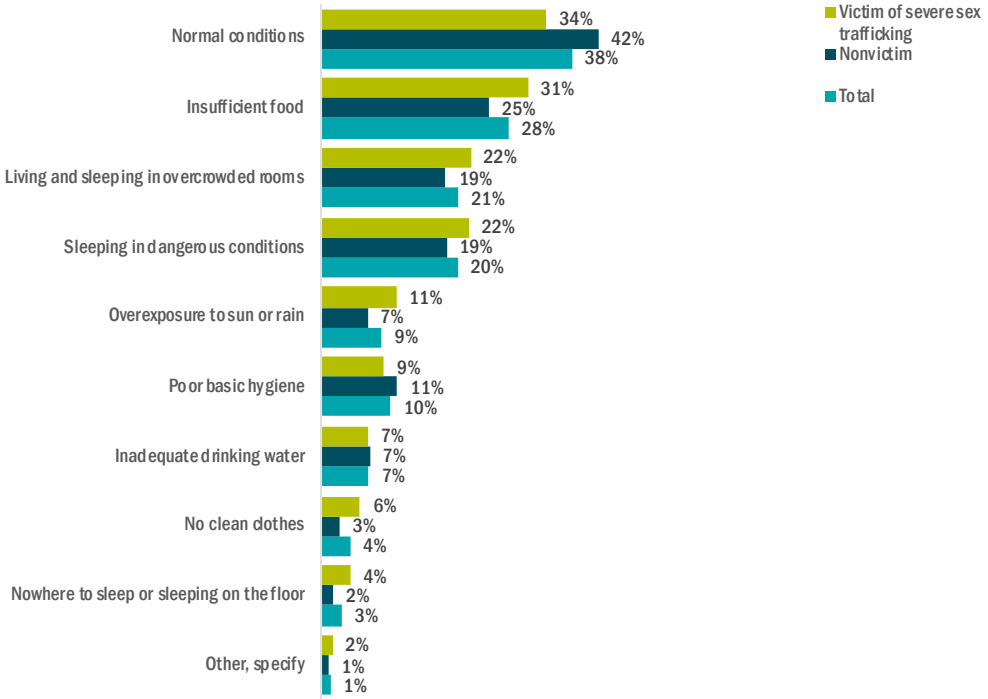
Figure 4: Exposure to violence during childhood, by victim status



Living conditions prior to engaging in commercial sex

The endline survey asked WECS if they experienced any detrimental living conditions before engaging in commercial sex. About 62% of respondents reported having experienced one or more detrimental living conditions, which was higher among victims of sex trafficking (66%) than nonvictims (58%, *p*=0.000). The most common experiences reported were having insufficient food (28%), living and sleeping in overcrowded rooms (21%), and sleeping in dangerous conditions (20%) (Figure 5). Three percent reported having nowhere to sleep or sleeping on the floor.

Figure 5: Living conditions before engaging in commercial sex (%, multiple response)



PROFILE OF VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING

As presented in Table 3, victims were roughly equally distributed across the two age groups at endline (51.7% age 18 to 24 years, 48.3% age 25 to 30 years), while nonvictims were slightly older (55% age 25 to 30 years, 44.5% age 18 to 24 years, *p*=0.000). The places of origin among women who engage in commercial sex also was similar between victims of sex trafficking and nonvictims, with slightly more nonvictims coming from Nigeria (85.7%) than nonvictims (81.7%, *p*=0.038). About 10% of both victims and nonvictims were from Senegal. The endline survey included very few women from Mali at endline (0.5% victims, 0 nonvictims), which was significantly lower than in the baseline survey, where over 10% of the surveyed women in each group were of Mali origin.

Victims of sex trafficking were more likely to report being single (80.5%) at endline than were nonvictims (75.7%, *p*=0.026), while nonvictims were more likely than victims to be divorced (15.7% vs. 8.0%). Few respondents in both groups reported being currently married (3.5% victims, 2.2% nonvictims). Women in both groups were similar in reporting having at least one child (65.5% victims, 66.7% nonvictims).

TABLE 3. Demographics of the victims of sex trafficking and nonvictims

		Baseline		Endline		
		Victims of sex trafficking (n=104) %(n)	Nonvictims (n=457) %(n)	Victims of sex trafficking (n=450) %(n) (95% CI)	Nonvictims (n=392) %(n) (95% CI)	*p*-value Victims vs. nonvictims
Age (%)	18–24 years	40 (41)	45 (204)	51.7 (234) (48.0, 55.2)	44.5 (177) (40.9, 48.2)	0.005
	25–30 years	60 (62)	55 (253)	48.3 (216) (44.7, 51.8)	55.5 (215) (51.8, 59.1)	0.005
Place of origin (%)	Senegal	13 (13)	7 (32)	10.1 (55) (8.1, 12.4)	10.4 (49) (8.4, 12.8)	0.848
	Nigeria	68 (70)	75 (342)	81.7 (357) (78.8, 84.4)	85.7 (326) (83.0, 88.1)	0.038
	Mali	12 (13)	14 (62)	0.5 (2) (0.2, 1.3)	0 (0)	--
	Burkina Faso	1 (1)	3 (12)	0.1 (1) (0.0, 0.6)	0.4 (2) (0.1, 1.1)	0.313
	Other place	7 (7)	2 (9)	7.6 (55) (5.9, 9.7)	3.6 (15) (2.4, 5.2)	0.000
Marital status (%)	Single	85 (88)	87 (400)	80.5 (357) (77.4, 83.1)	75.7 (297) (72.4, 78.7)	0.026
	Divorced—not remarried	9 (9)	5 (23)	8.0 (37) (6.2, 10.0)	15.7 (58) (13.2, 18.5)	0.000
	Married	1 (1)	4 (17)	3.5 (17) (2.4, 5.0)	2.2 (10) (1.3, 3.5)	0.134
	Widowed—not remarried	2 (2)	2 (10)	3.0 (14) (1.9, 4.4)	2.5 (9) (1.5, 3.8)	0.563
	Separated	3 (3)	1 (4)	2.4 (13) (1.5, 3.7)	2.4 (11) (1.4, 3.7)	1.000
	Cohabiting or living with a partner	0 (0)	1 (3)	2.6 (12) (1.7, 4.0)	1.6 (7) (0.8, 2.6)	0.179
Have children (%)	Have at least one child	68 (70)	73 (333)	65.5 (297) (62.0, 68.8)	66,7 (256) (63.3, 70.1)	0.624

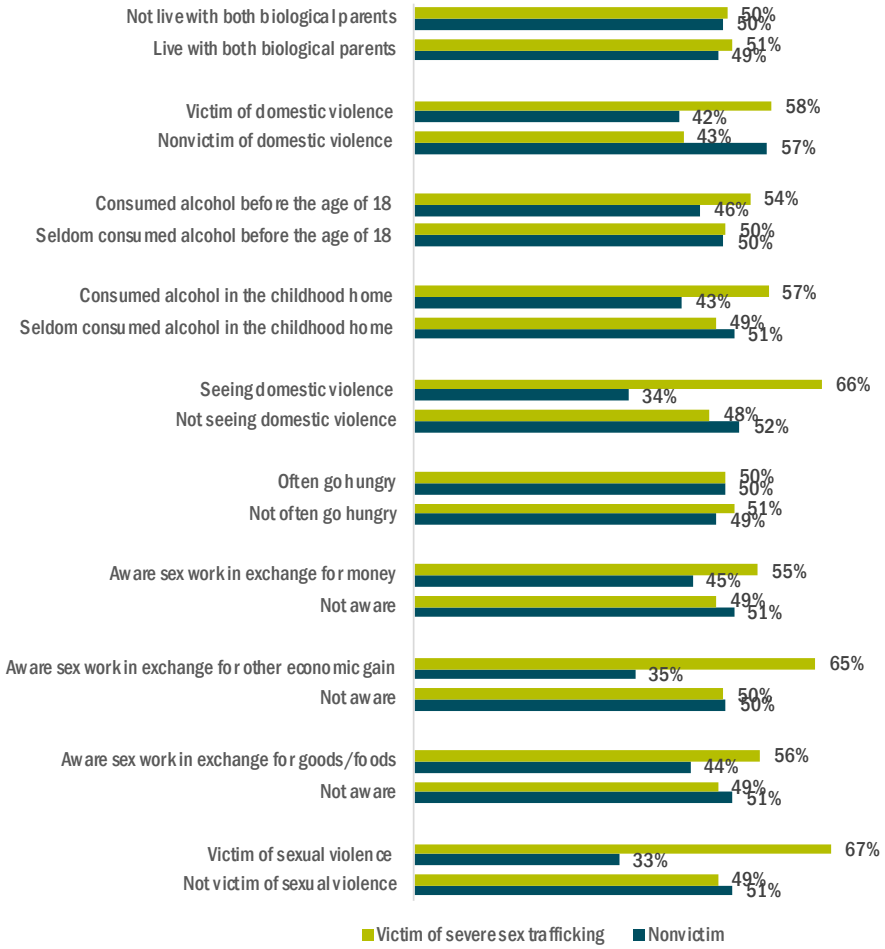
Risk factors associated with being a victim of sex trafficking

Individuals who are victims of sex trafficking are more likely to experience three or more risk factors (55%) compared to nonvictims (45%, *p*=0.000) (Figure 6). Conversely, 53% of nonvictims experience two risk factors, whereas only 47% of victims of sex trafficking face two risk factors (*p*=0.130). There were fewer victims of sex trafficking who had no risk factors (43%) than there were nonvictims with no risk factors (57%, *p*=0.009) (Figure 8). As described above, victims of sex trafficking were more likely to have been exposed to or used alcohol during childhood, as well as exposed to or victimized by physical or sexual violence.

Figure 6: sex trafficking by number of risk factors in childhood (% who are victims)

Victims were also more likely to be aware of commercial sex as an income-generation strategy (55%) than nonvictims (45%, *p*=0.002), as well as more aware of commercial sex as a way to achieve other economic gains (65% victims vs. 35% nonvictims, *p*=0.000) (Figure 7).

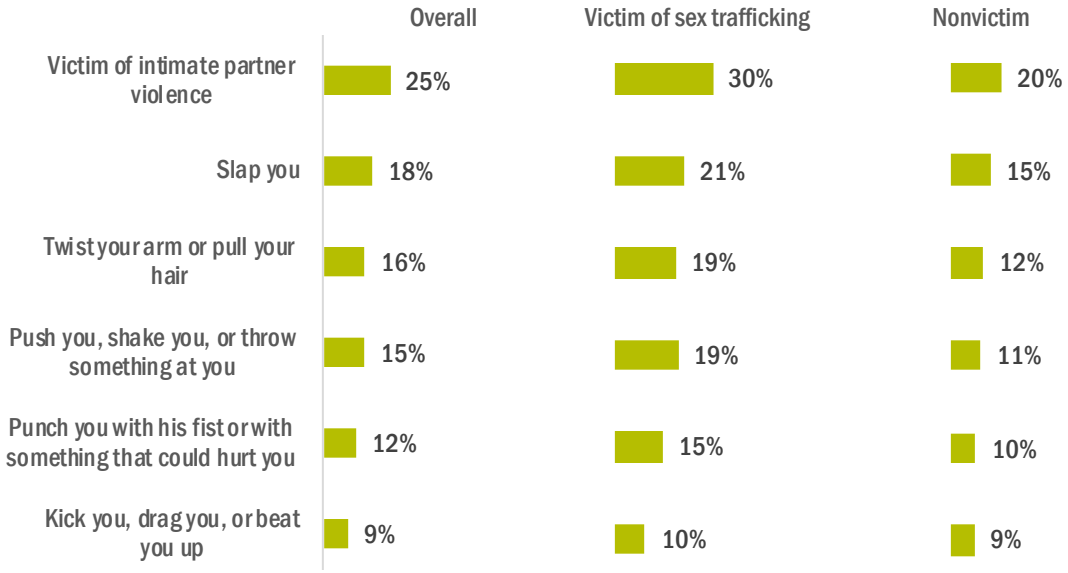
Figure 7: Proportion of individuals engaged in commercial sex who are victims of sex trafficking by risk factor (%)



Violence and threats of violence by intimate partners

As presented in Figure 8, WECS who were married, cohabiting, or divorced were asked if they had experienced any form of physical violence by past or present intimate partners. Overall, 25% reported being victims of intimate partner violence, with the most common forms being slapping (18%) and twisting arms or pulling hair (16%). Among sex trafficking victims, 30% reported experiencing intimate partner violence, followed by slapping (21%).

Figure 8: Intimate partner violence, by victim status (%, multiple response)



FORCE, FRAUD AND COERCION: INDICATORS OF SEX TRAFFICKING

This section reports on experiences of force, fraud and coercion which are indicators of sex trafficking. As described in the methods section and in Table 1, a respondent was classified as someone who experienced sex trafficking if they reported at least one of the sex trafficking indicators among the four cateogories of exploitation in the past 12 months. The four exploitation categories included (1) Exploitative Recruitment, (2) Employment Practices and Debt, (3) Coercion and Control over personal life and (4) Loss of Freedom of Movement.

Exploitative Recruitment

Deceptive recruitment

Most individuals who were victims of sex trafficking reported that their job was completely different from what they had been led to believe (51%; Figure 9). Among victims, those aged 25–30 years were equally likely to experience job deception (52%) as those aged 18–24 years (50%, *p*=0.579). Job deception was more prevalent in the Saraya region (57%) compared to Kédougou (43%, *p*=0.000).

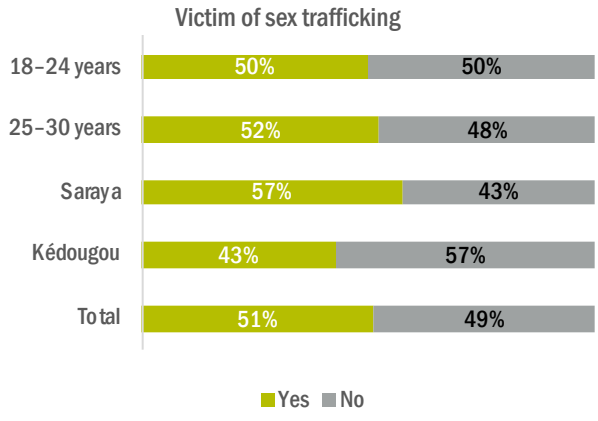
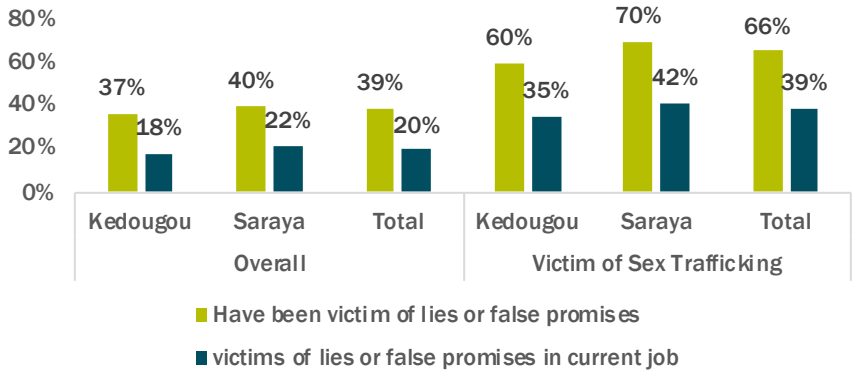


Figure 9: Job turned out to be completely different from what the woman was led to believe, by age group and department (% Victims)

Overall, 39% of participants felt they had been victims of lies or false promises, while 20% reported being deceived or given false promises in their current job (Figure 10). The prevalence of lies or false promises in their current job was slightly higher in Saraya (22%) than in Kédougou (18%, *p*=0.044). Experiencing lies or false promises related to commercial sex was more common among individuals in the Saraya department compared to those in the Kédougou department (40% vs. 37%, *p*=0.268). Similarly, the prevalence of lies or false promises in their current job was slightly higher in Saraya (22%) than in Kédougou (18%, *p*=0.044).

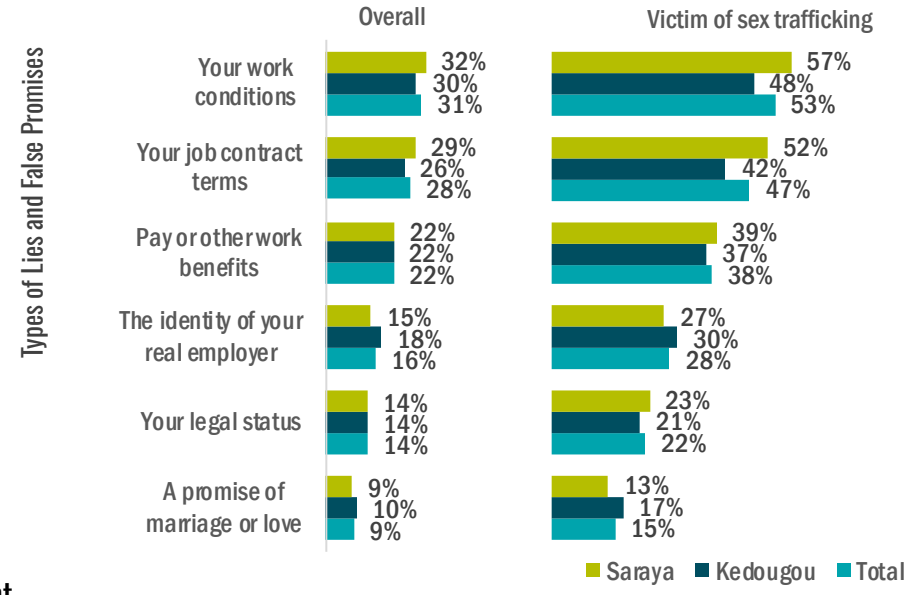
Sex trafficking victims were more likely to have been deceived by lies or false promises in the current job (39%) compared to the jobs held in the past (27%, $p<0.001$) (Figure 10). Among sex trafficking victims, lies or false promises were more frequently reported in Saraya (70%) than in Kédougou (60%, $p=0.005$).

Figure 10: Victim of lies or false promises, by department; victim of sex trafficking, by department (%)



Overall, sex trafficking victims were frequently lied to or given false promises about a number of aspects of their work, including work conditions, job contracts, pay rates, and identity of their real employer. For example, 53% of sex trafficking victims were misled about their living conditions and job contract terms or benefits. These patterns were generally more prevalent in Saraya department than Kédougou department (Figure 11).

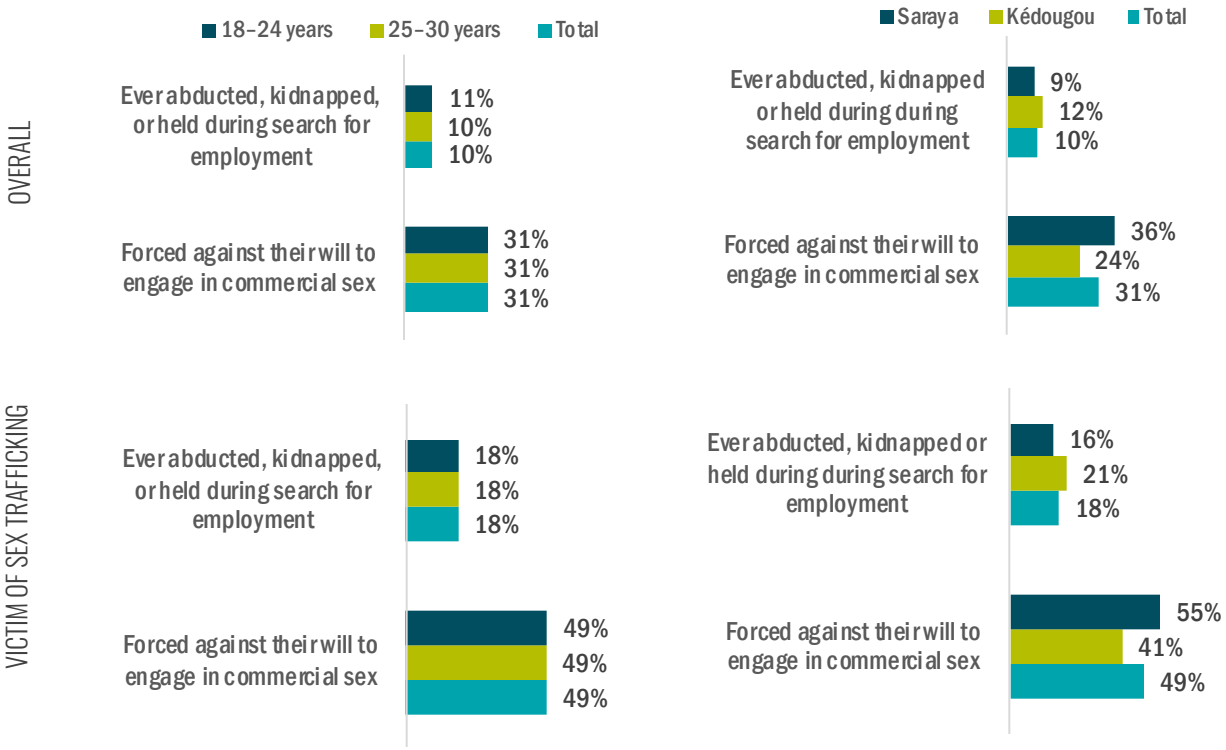
Figure 11: Types of lies and false promises made to individuals engaged in commercial sex who have ever been victims of lies, by department (%)



Coercive recruitment

As shown in Figure 12, 31% of all participants reported feeling forced against their will to engage in commercial sex, while 10% had ever been abducted, kidnapped, or held captive while searching for employment. No differences were observed by age in terms of being subjected to such abuse. By department, a higher percentage of women were forced against their will to engage in commercial sex in Saraya (36%) compared to Kédougou (24%, $p=0.000$). Many women who were victims of sex trafficking reported being forced against their will to engage in commercial sex (49%). Similarly, a high proportion of women who were victims of sex trafficking (18%) were abducted, kidnapped, or held captive during their search for employment (Figure 12).

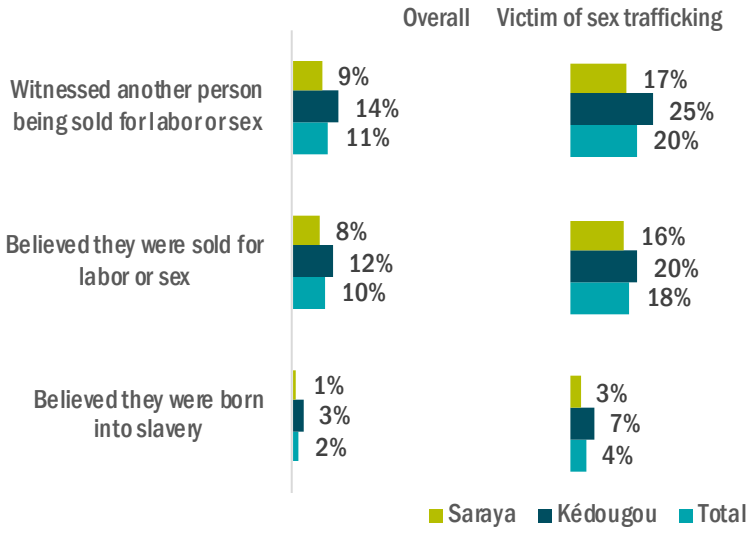
Figure 12: Coercive recruitment into commercial sex by age and department, victims of sex trafficking (%)



Slavery Experience

Among all WECS, 11% witnessed another person being sold for labor or sex, while 10% believed they themselves were sold for labor or sex (Figure 13). Additionally, two percent felt they were born into slavery (Figure 13). Among victims of sex trafficking, 20% reported witnessing another person being sold for labor or sex. Furthermore, 18% of sex trafficking victims believed they were sold, and four percent believed they were born into slavery. These proportions were slightly higher in Kédougou than in Saraya in most cases (Figure 13).

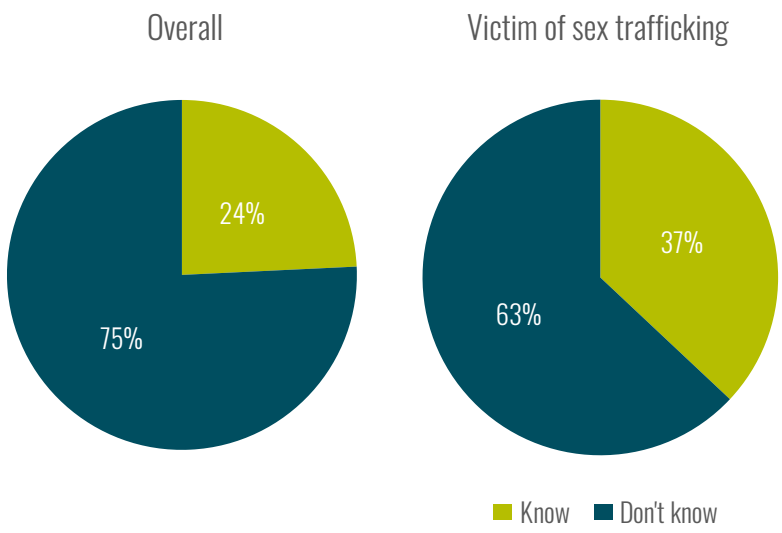
Figure 13: Slavery experience by department, by victim status (%)



Coercive Transportation

Overall, 75% of WECS were unaware that they would be transported to a different location for the purpose of commercial sex (Figure 14). Among sex trafficking victims who had been transported to a different location, 63% did not know they would be transported elsewhere.

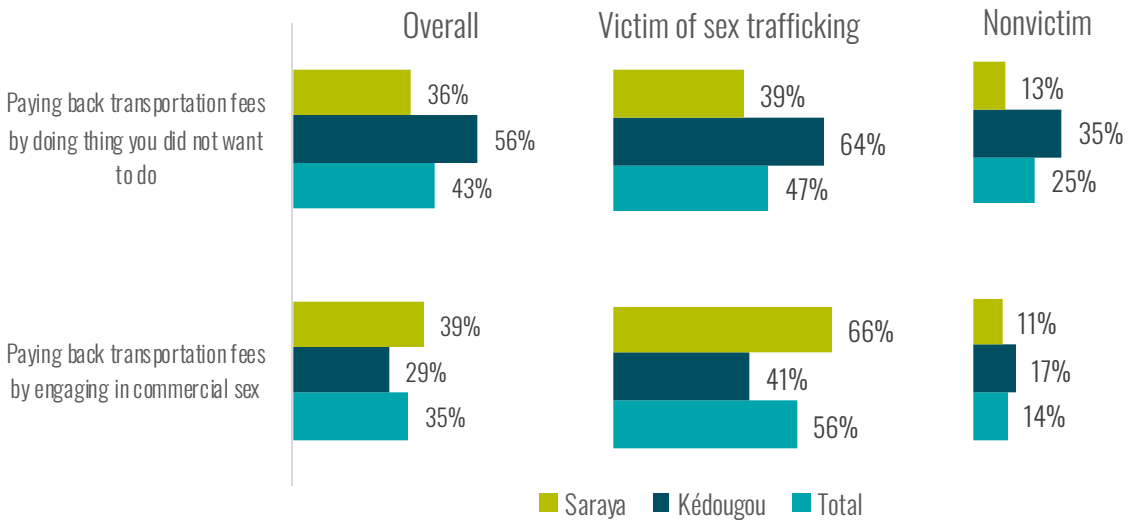
Figure 14: Awareness of transportation to different locations for commercial sex, by victim status (%)



Recruitment debt

As shown in Figure 15, more than one-third of participants reported paying back transportation fees by engaging in commercial sex for the person who provided them with transportation (or gave them money to pay for transportation). Victims of sex trafficking of Saraya were more likely to pay back transportation fees by engaging in commercial sex (66%) compared to victims of Kedougou (41%, *p*=0.000).

Figure 15: Paid back [transportation] fee by department, by victim status (%)



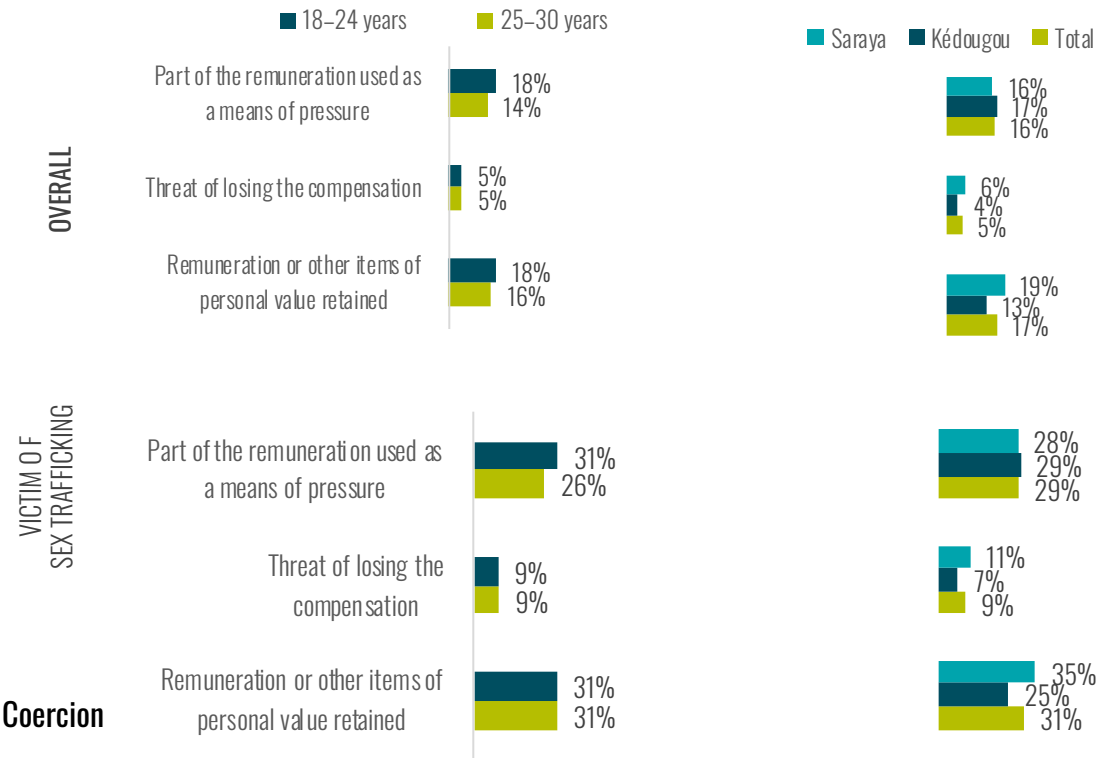
Employment Practices and Debt

Withholding Pay

Figure 16 presents the various methods employers used to pressure women engaged in commercial sex, aiming to prevent them from leaving. Among all WECS, 16% reported that part of their remuneration was withheld as a guarantee to prevent them from leaving. Additionally, five percent of participants mentioned being threatened with losing their compensation, while 17% indicated that their employer had withheld their remuneration or other personal items of value to stop them from leaving. The prevalence of these pressure methods shows little variation by age or department.

Among sex trafficking victims, 29% reported that their employer had retained part of their remuneration. The 29% who reported at endline was higher than the 11% of victims who reported this at baseline. Similarly, 31% of sex trafficking victims indicated that their employer had retained their remuneration or other personal items of value. These factors did not show much variation by department or age among sex trafficking victims.

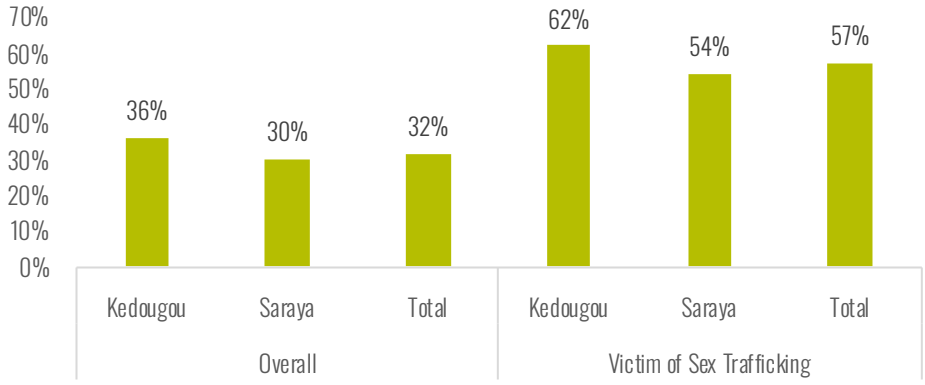
Figure 16: Withheld pay, promised compensation, and benefits to prevent leaving, by age and department and by victim status (%)



Financial Coercion

Nearly one-third of individuals engaged in commercial sex had been made to perform sex acts to pay off outstanding debt (Figure 17). This practice was similar in both Kédougou (36%) and Saraya (30%, **p**=0.010). The prevalence of paying off debt through sexual activity was high among victims of sex trafficking (57%).

Figure 17: Paid off debt through sexual activity by department, by victim status (%)

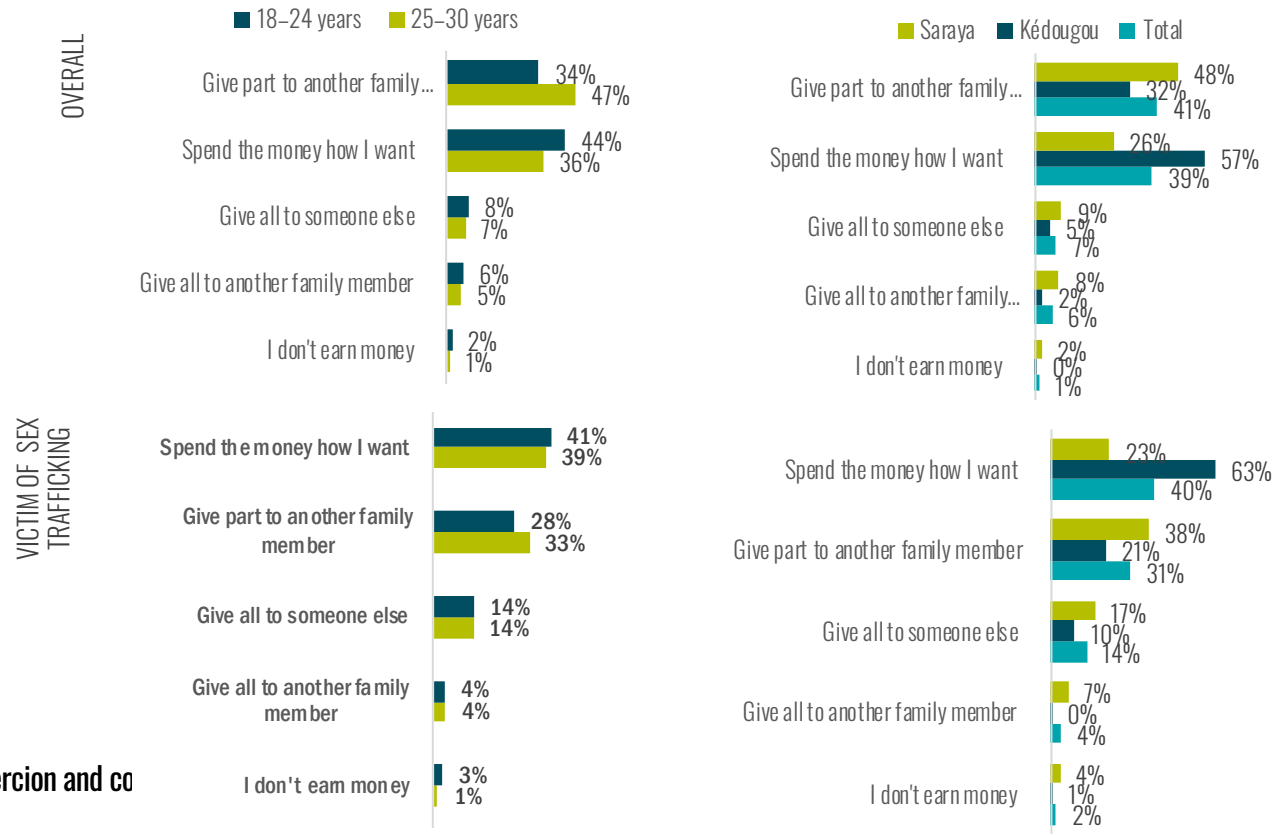


Freedom to Spend Earn

Among all individuals engaged in commercial sex, 41% reported giving some of their earned money to a family member, while 39% indicated they spent their money as they wished (Figure 18). Additionally, seven percent stated that they gave all their earned money to someone else. The findings show a mixed pattern of spending by department and on age. For instance, a higher proportion in Saraya (48%) reported giving some of their earned money to a family member, compared to 32% in Kédougou (*p*=0.000). In contrast, 26% in Saraya and 57% in Kédougou reported spending their money how they wanted.

Among victims, 41% of those aged 18–24 reported spending their money as they wanted, while 39% of those aged 25–30 did the same. Victims aged 25–30 (33%) were equally likely as those aged 18–24 (28%, *p*=0.145) to give part of their money to a family member.

Figure 18: Spending of earned money by age and department, by victim status (%)

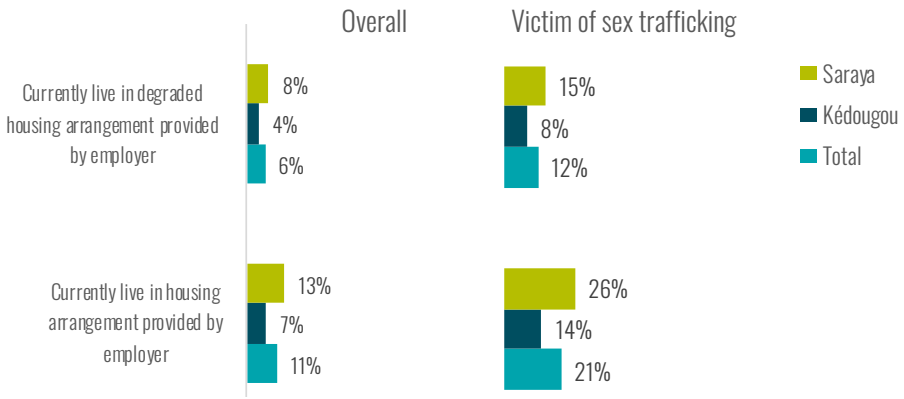


Coercion and co

Living Conditions

Survey results show that 11% of respondents lived in housing provided by their employer with no option to live elsewhere, while six percent reported living in degraded housing provided by the employer. Among sex trafficking victims, 21% were living in housing provided by their employer, and 12% lived in degraded housing. The percentage of victims living in degraded housing was higher in Saraya (15%) compared to Kédougou (8%, *p*=0.002) (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Living conditions by department, by victim status (%)

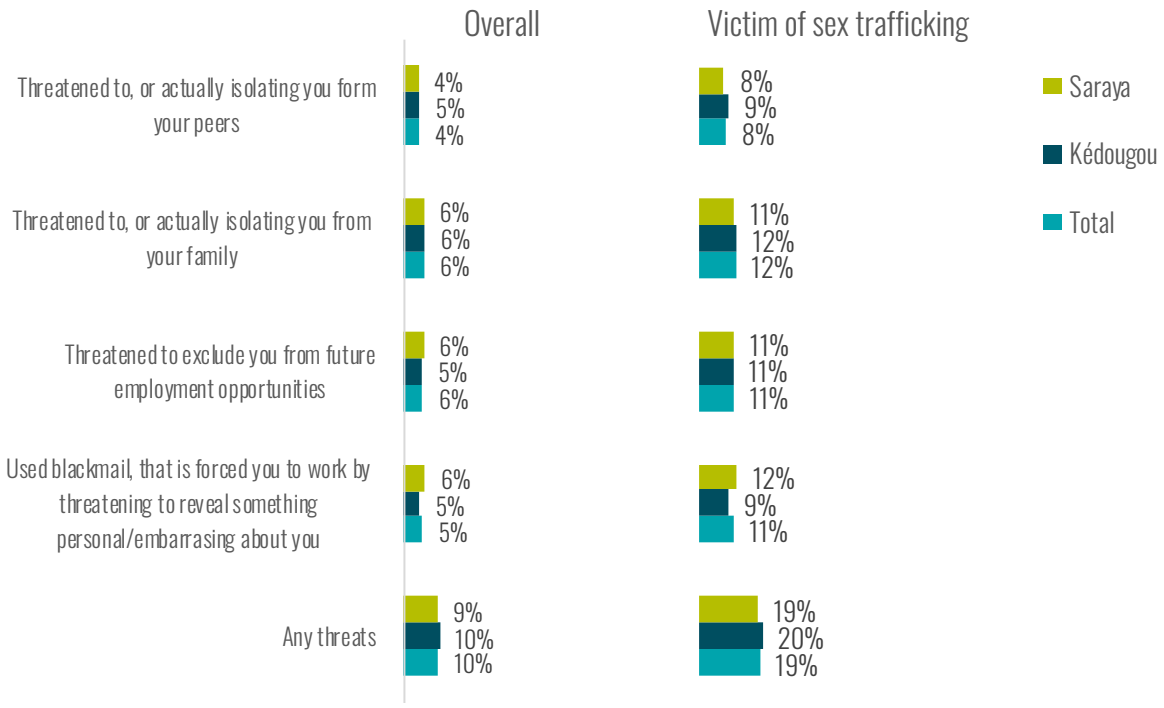


Using Isolation and Exclusion

As indicated in Figure 20, the two most frequently reported threats were isolation from family (6%) and exclusion from future work opportunities (6%).

Among sex trafficking victims, 12% reported they were threatened with isolation from their family, 11% felt the threat of exclusion from future work opportunities, and another 11% reported being blackmailed as a form of threat. Broadly speaking, there is not much difference between Saraya and Kédougou departments in terms of the types of threats faced.

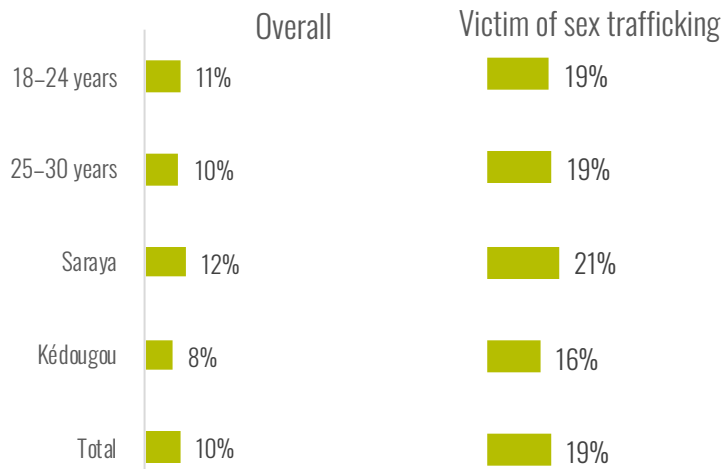
Figure 20: Threats and actions from the employer by department, by victim status (%)



Transfer of control over the personal life of individuals engaged in commercial sex

Among individuals engaged in commercial sex, 10% indicated that someone had taken control over some aspect of their personal life (Figure 21). In comparison, 19% of sex trafficking victims reported having their personal life controlled by someone else. Among sex trafficking victims, control over personal life varied only slightly by age or department, with an overall prevalence of around 19%.

Figure 21: Loss of control over personal life, victims of sex trafficking (%)

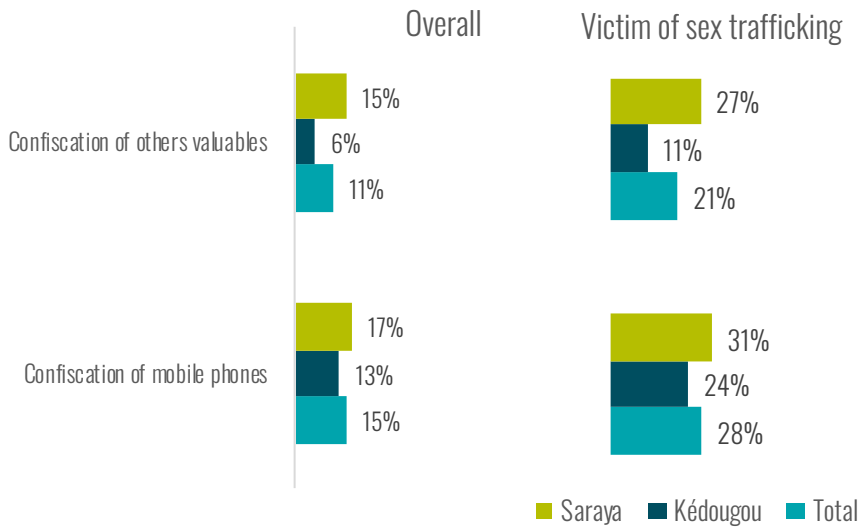


Confiscation of personal items and identity documents

Individuals engaged in commercial sex reported that their employer had confiscated their mobile phones (15%), while 11% reported having other valuable items confiscated (Figure 22). This practice was more prevalent in the Saraya department compared to the Kédougou department, with 17% versus 13% for mobile phones and 15% versus 6% for other valuable items, respectively.

The prevalence of mobile phone confiscation among victims of sex trafficking was quite high (28%). A larger proportion of sex trafficking victims had their mobile phones confiscated in Saraya compared to Kédougou (31% vs. 24%, p=0.032). Similarly, a larger proportion of sex trafficking victims had their other valuables confiscated.

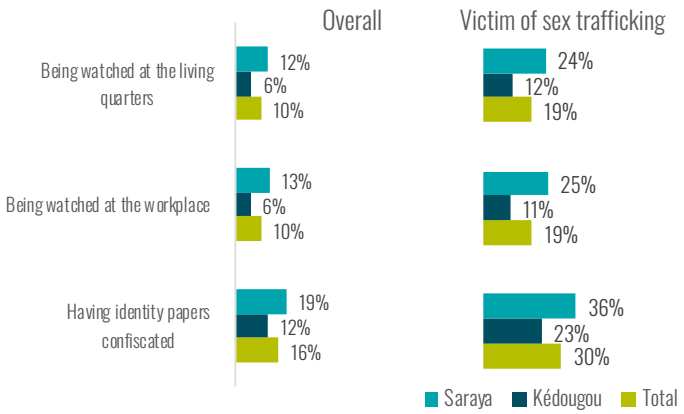
Figure 22: Employer confiscating valuables by department, victims of sex trafficking



As presented in Figure 23, WECS were asked about their experiences of surveillance and loss of freedom of movement. Overall, 16% reported having their identity papers, such as passports or work permits, confiscated. Additionally, 10% reported being constantly watched either at the places where they engaged in commercial sex or at their living quarters. A larger proportion of individuals reported the confiscation of identity papers in Saraya (19%) compared to Kédougou (12%). Additionally, 12% of individuals in Saraya reported being watched at their living quarters, compared to 6% in Kédougou. Similarly, 13% of individuals in Saraya were surveyed at their workplace, compared to six percent in Kédougou.

Among victims of sex trafficking, 30% had experienced confiscation of their identity papers. In terms of surveillance, 19% reported being constantly watched at their workplace or living quarters. By department, a higher proportion of sex trafficking victims in Saraya experienced both surveillance and confiscation of identity papers compared to those in Kédougou. Specifically, 36% of victims in Saraya reported having their identity papers confiscated, compared to 23% in Kédougou. Additionally, 24% of victims in Saraya reported being surveilled at their living quarters, compared to 12% in Kédougou. Similarly, 25% reported being surveilled at their workplace in Saraya, compared to 11% in Kédougou.

Figure 23: Experienced employer confiscating identification papers and employer surveillance by department, by victim status (%)

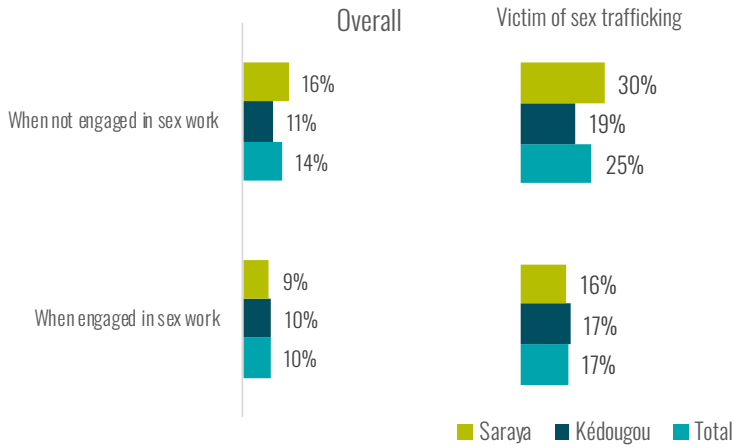


Loss of Freedom of Movement

Overall, 10% of WECS reported experiencing no freedom of movement or being locked up while engaging in commercial sex (Figure 24). Additionally, 14% reported restricted freedom of movement when they were not engaged in commercial sex work (p=0.001).

The proportion of individuals experiencing restricted freedom of movement was high among victims of sex trafficking (42%). Specifically, 17% reported being locked up while engaging in commercial sex, and 25% said they were locked up when not engaged in commercial sex. More victims of sex trafficking experienced restricted freedom of movement when not engaged in commercial sex in Saraya (30%) compared to Kédougou (19%). More victims of sex trafficking experienced restricted freedom of movement when not engaged in sex work in Saraya (30%) compared to Kédougou (19%).

Figure 24: No freedom of movement (being locked up) during commercial sex acts and at other times by department, victims of sex trafficking (%)



RESILIENCE

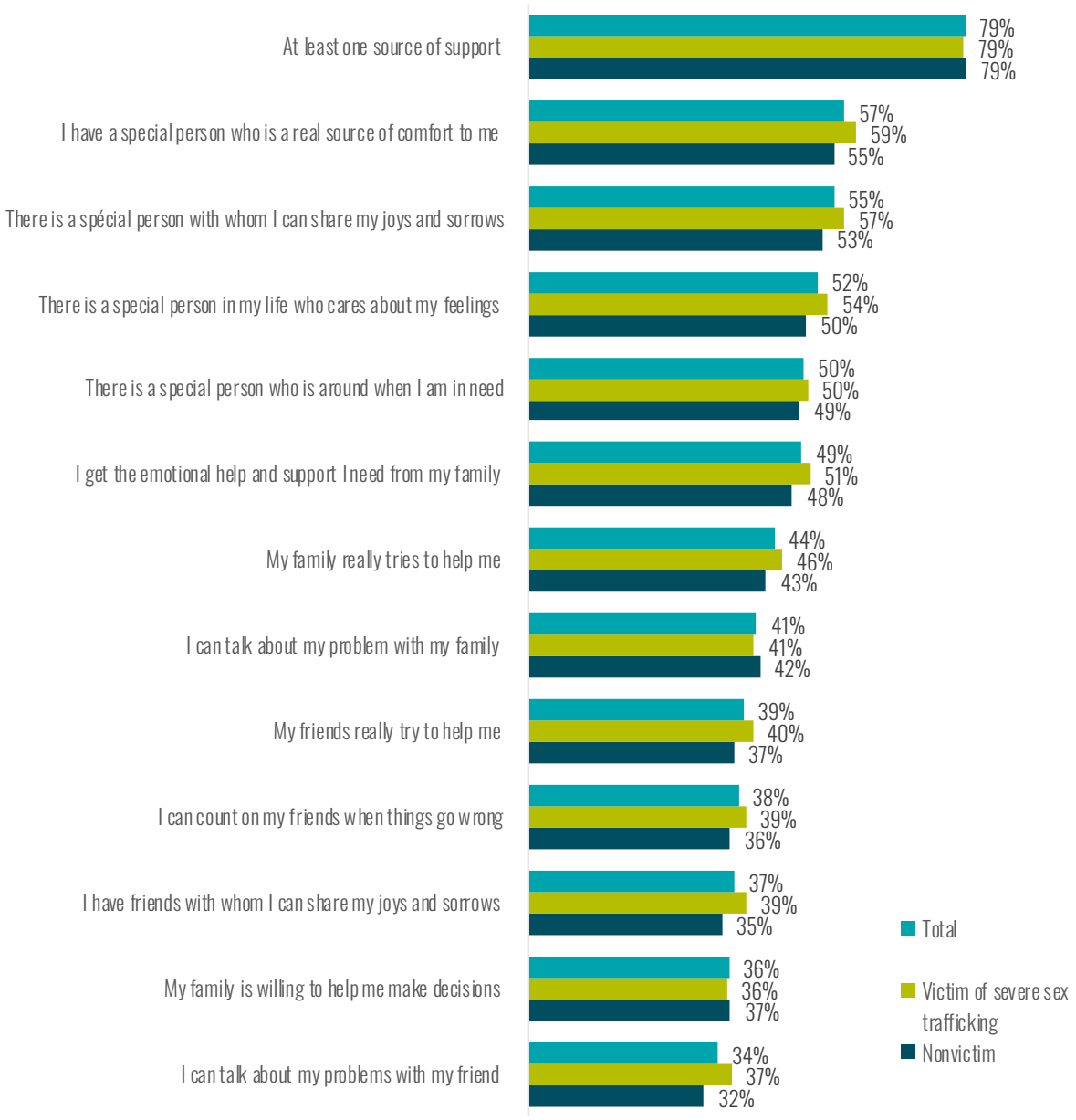
Resilience factors were collected through the LTS survey with WECS respondents. Respondents were asked about their support networks, such whether they have friends and family members who they trust or can rely on. WECS were also asked to respond to a series of statements about their capacity to cope with unexpected events and difficulties in life, as a measure of self-efficacy. In addition, respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of community resilience to provide an indication of community support for survivors of sex trafficking or WECS who may be at risk of experiencing trafficking.

Support networks

WECS who participated in the survey were asked about their support networks (Figure 25). Overall, 79% of WECS reported having at least one type of support. The most common form of support was having a special person who provided comfort (57%). Additionally, 49% reported that they can get emotional support from their family, while 36% said they had family members who can help them make decisions.

Among both sex trafficking victims and nonvictims, 79% reported having at least one type of support. For sex trafficking victims, the most common form of support was emotional help from their family.

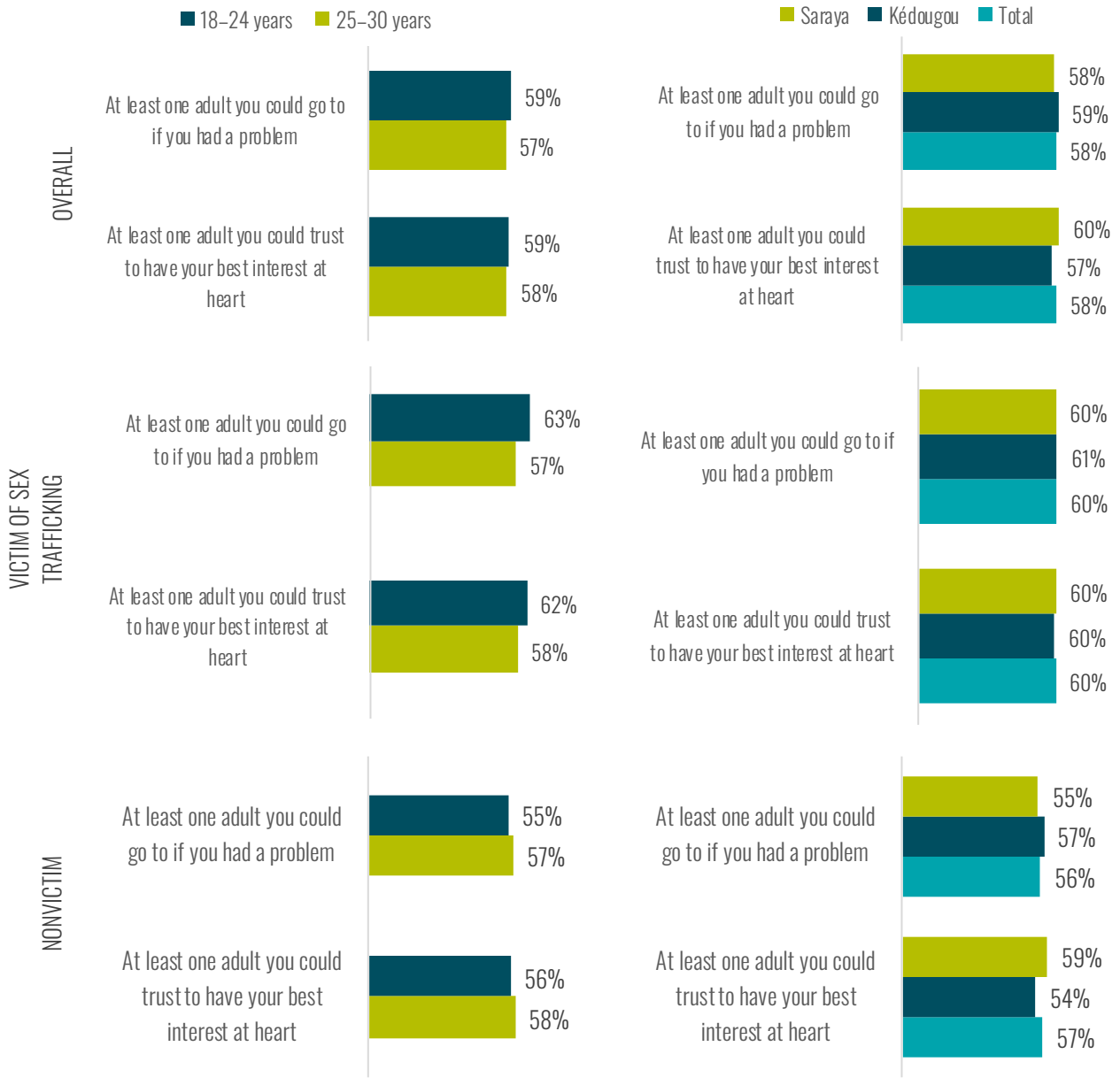
Figure 25: Presence of support network, by victim status (%)



More than half of WECS (58%) reported having at least one adult they could turn to if they had a problem, and the same proportion said they had at least one adult they could trust to have their best interests at heart. Overall, there was little variation in the availability of moral support between Saraya and Kédougou, as well as across different age groups (Figure 26).

Similarly, a comparable proportion of sex trafficking victims and nonvictims felt they had at least one adult they could trust to have their best interests at heart (60% vs. 57%, respectively). A similar pattern was observed regarding having at least one adult to go to for help with a problem (sex trafficking victims: 60% vs. nonvictims: 56%, p=0.140).

Figure 26: Moral support from an adult, by victim status (%)



Self-efficacy

WECS respondents were asked a series of statements about their capacity to cope with unexpected events and difficulties in life, as a measure of self-efficacy. As shown in Figure 27, the self-efficacy score is defined as the total number of affirmative responses divided by the number of self-efficacy-related questions, ranging from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating greater self-efficacy. The overall average score was 0.74. Self-efficacy was generally higher among the older age group (ages 25–30: 0.76 vs. ages 18–24: 0.72). Respondents in the Saraya department had a slightly higher average self-efficacy score (0.75) compared to those in Kédougou (0.73). The average self-efficacy score was also slightly higher among nonvictims (0.75) compared to victims of sex trafficking (0.74) (Figure 33).

Figure 27: Average self-efficacy score by victim status, (range 0-1)

Community Resilience

Figure 28 Community resilience, by victim status (%)

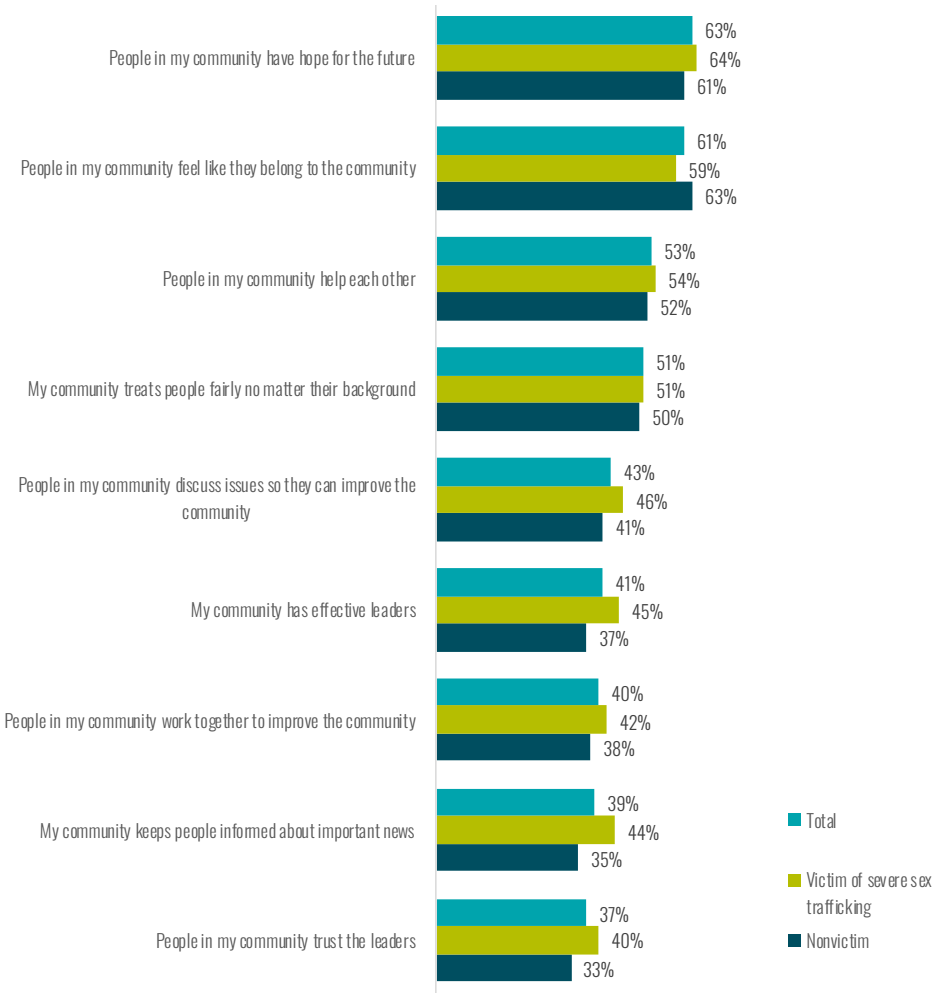


Figure 28 presents survey responses on community resilience among individuals engaged in commercial sex, based on various indicators. Overall, 63% of WECS felt that people in their community have hope for the future, reflecting a positive outlook despite the challenges they may face. Similarly, most WECS indicated that people in their community feel like they belong to the community (61%) and people help each other (53%). The least commonly reported indicator was that people in the community trust their leaders (37%).

Among sex trafficking victims, the top three community resilience indicators were: people in their community have hope for the future (64%), people feel like they belong to the community (59%), and people help each other (54%). For nonvictims, the top three community resilience indicators were the same as those for individuals engaged in commercial sex: people feel like they belong to the community (63%, p=0.113), people have hope for the future (61%, p=0.234), and people help each other (52%, p=0.460). Overall, a slightly higher proportion of sex trafficking victims agreed with these community resilience indicators compared to nonvictims.

KEY QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section reports on key findings from qualitative interviews with women who are survivors of sex trafficking (N=26) and key informants (N=27). The interviews were collected as part of the endline research study and a final program evaluation. The purpose of the interviews was to gather perspectives about changes in perceptions/experiences and responses to sex trafficking between the baseline study (in 2021) and the endline study (in 2024).

Findings in this section are organized around five primary topics:

1. *Changes in community perceptions about sex trafficking since 2021*
2. *Changes in the Anti-Sex Trafficking Policy Landscape since 2021*
3. *Perceptions about safety for WECS*
4. *Survivors' experiences with services and recommendations for improvements*
5. *Respondents' views on response challenges and potential solutions*

CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SEX TRAFFICKING SINCE 2021

Increased Visibility and Awareness

Key informants reported an increased visibility and awareness about sex trafficking since 2021. As evidence of the increased visibility, respondents described an increase in women coming forward to report victimization, and increased attention and knowledge about anti-trafficking laws by justice stakeholders, community leaders and community advocates. Some key informants, suggested that the increased visibility was related to recent anti-trafficking activities and programs, such as governmental initiatives and the NGO programs in Senegal:

> *"...before I knew about the [anti-trafficking project], I'd never had a case of a victim coming to the gendarmerie to tell us that he or she was a victim of human trafficking. Because [survivors] were afraid of reprisals from the people who bring them here...But when they found out that there was a project there to help them by taking care of the victims, protecting them, housing them and arranging for them to return to their country in peace. That's how the girls started to speak out, and we began to record cases of girls coming forward directly...In my opinion, this is a vital aspect, and it shows that things are improving."*
>
> *KII #10, Gendarmerie [military police] leadership, Kédougou*

There were also reports that due to recent anti-trafficking initiatives [such as anti-trafficking units embedded into law enforcement agencies], traffickers were more aware of anti-trafficking activities, especially in the Kédougou area, and had moved to other localities as a result.

> *"Human trafficking is one of the new forms of crime...in the locality like Kédougou, for example, [prior to 2021], we had a lot of files but now they go to [TOWN]...they flee, these traffickers if they are hustled here, are naturally sought to leave the area but they are always in Senegal. Kédougou has an anti-trafficking unit...so [traffickers] find out what's going on and they flee. That's what happened at...in Kédougou, we used to see them quarrelling in the street at the market, but since the unit was set up, most of the women bosses have fled to [TOWN]."*
>
> - *KII #7, Border police officer, Kédougou*

In an additional sign of increased awareness about the challenges faced by survivors of sex trafficking, some respondents shared that, although sex trafficking and topics related to sex and sexuality in general are not openly discussed and may be a painful subject for community members, there has been some signs that people may be opening up to "listening to" survivors' experiences.

"...people who are exposed to human trafficking...that's a reality in Kédougou, even if people don't want to see the truth in fact because it hurts us a bit, and questions of sex are very taboo in Senegalese society, especially here in Kédougou, So I think having people who are already listening to victims is already something extraordinary."

– KII #11, Government Leader, Kédougou

Generally, respondents reported that there appears to be a better understanding of sex trafficking, (within the past 5 years) and that more communities are involved in monitoring, detecting, and providing early warnings of any suspicions of exploitation. According to respondents, this is especially evident in areas where there has been increased anti-trafficking initiatives and activities, such where there has been development of Community Vigilance Committees (CVCs). Respondents report that community members have more awareness about sex trafficking in general but also have more confidence with ways to intervene:

"Yes, there really has been a change, because especially in the villages, people are becoming more and more aware of the CVC's work, but also of the phenomenon. And once they have a suspicion about a house, the inhabitants go to the CVC to tell them that there's a house where people frequent all the time and they ask if that's normal. This helps residents understand that there are people there to protect them. So as soon as they see something abnormal, they don't intervene but alert the CVC rather than the police. There are also people there who are trying to see how to eradicate the phenomenon and talk to the relevant authorities in the town of Kédougou. Sometime, too, it's also because people aren't in the habit of denouncing what's going on, even though they know it's not right. This is due to the fact that people don't have the culture of denunciation. On the other hand, they may call the CVC to tell them about suspicions they have about a particular house or company. So we're like a link between the population and the authorities, especially the police.

—KII #5, Community Vigilance Committee leadership, Kédougou

Conceptualizations of Sex Trafficking

Many respondents described a conceptualization of sex trafficking which aligned with Senegalese and International legal definitions, such as indicating that force, fraud or coercion for sexual exploitation as well as any sexual exploitation of a minor is considered sex trafficking. Some also indicated that these cases are very prevalent and indicated that sex trafficking especially impacts women and girls who are migrants, from Nigeria, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

"Yes, of course they're victims, but it's trafficking through sexual exploitation. From your country of origin, you're told that once you are in Senegal, you're going to work in a store or... a hairdressing salon, and once you're here, your documents are confiscated and you're told that you're going to work as a prostitute, your telephone is confiscated, and you can't contact your family. Their phones and travel documents are confiscated, and they're forced to engaged in prostitution. That's trafficking by sexual exploitation, and we see cases like that every day."

– KII #7, Border police officer, Kédougou

However, some respondents also shared perspectives that seemed to emphasize the seriousness of minor victims of sex trafficking while at the same time appear to minimize potential for victimization among adult women, especially those who engage in commercial sex.

"In the case of [WECS] they work as prostitutes, but for the other nationalities, these children come to work on the gold-mining sites or to do work, whereas at their age they should be at school or working alongside their parents, but they are exploited, they are victims"

– KII #5, Community Health Coordinator, Kédougou

This perspective was mirrored by some respondents who described adult women as being responsible, due to their age, and therefore implied that they are not as likely to experience victimization, even if they experience sexual assault or rape.

"If for example, I abuse a 17-year-old girl, it's not the same penalty as encoding a 19-year-old girl, because in the first situation, the girl is a minor and rape is considered a crime. On the other and for the 19-year-old, the girl is of age and responsible for her actions."

- KII #1, Social protection coordinator, Kédougou

Despite some continued differences of opinion about what constitutes sex trafficking (especially when it relates to potentially exploitative experiences of adult woman, as evidenced above) there were signs that communities were more readily willing to accept intervention such as acknowledging that some women may be experiencing sex trafficking [through force, fraud or coercion] and offering to support exiting through repatriation. In an interesting point, one stakeholder noted that migrant WECS had been engaged in supporting repatriation processes for each other, if someone was in an exploitative situation. But there is now more support from community to organize these response activities.

... in our locality if the woman says she doesn't want the job [commercial sex], we'll do what's necessary for her to go home. Less than four months ago, it was the "Keménani" [migrant WECS] who contributed to help the woman return home.

– KII #8, Community Vigilance Committee leader, Saraya

Mixed Perceptions about Prevalence

Stakeholders were asked about their perceptions about change in the prevalence of sex trafficking in Kédougou, Senegal. Their perspectives varied, with some indicating that trafficking has increased while others believing that there has been a decrease. Some stakeholders suggested that sex trafficking remains a persistent issue due to porous borders, continued migration for labor and economic reasons, continued demand for sex, persistence of criminals—all compounded by lack of resources to address trafficking.

"My view is that criminals are always, always there, sex demand is always there... workers in the mining sector are always traveling to go to work, so the need for women is there."

—Implementer #4, Prosecution project, Monitoring and Evaluation Staff, Dakar

On the other hand, some respondents believed that efforts to combat sex trafficking were also growing.

"[Sex trafficking rate has] gone down because a lot of ladies have been taken to prison for bringing these girls to work as prostitutes. As a result, many of them are afraid to bring girls here. But that doesn't stop some people continuing to traffic. And in terms of awareness, I think that even at their level they are starting to be aware and I'm talking of course about those on the inside."

Implementer #5, Community Vigilance Committee leader, Kédougou

Others felt that there has been a decrease particularly in areas with strong counter-trafficking efforts. Some respondents described the establishment of the Division for the Fight against the Smuggling of Migrants and Related Practices (DNLT) in 2023 that has led to traffickers fleeing to other regions, contributing to their perception of a local decline.

"...things have gone down a lot for us. And when you go to the bars, you won't see any new young girls being victimized. At the moment it's only the old ones who are there, and it's also possible that the new girls are in other "Dioura." I can't control that, it's the people who are there who can. But I can say that the traffic has decreased a lot.

—Implementer #6, Community Vigilance Committee leader, Kédougou

A few respondents acknowledged that it is very difficult to know whether the prevalence of sex trafficking is changing, due to the challenges of getting such data.

"Local NGOs data collection is fundamental [for strategic prevention] and I have a feeling that sometimes in order to have the data...we need to empower [NGOs] to make them feel on the same level and...not just going and ask[ing], 'give me data on this and this' without saying why data is useful and what's the purpose of this? So for me, the big gap in the country and in general in the region is data capacities and understanding the importance of collecting data."

—Implementer #4, Prosecution project, Monitoring and Evaluation Staff, Dakar

CHANGES IN THE ANTI-SEX TRAFFICKING POLICY LANDSCAPE SINCE 2021

Regional Policy Response and Initiatives

Our review of the policy environment found that a regional network for anti-trafficking initiatives is taking form with coordination between West African countries: Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Guinea, Mauritania. For example, stakeholders reported that as part of the Joint Operational Partnership (JOP)[4], a Senegalese expert and a Swiss consultant working on behalf of CIVIPOL (the service and consulting company of the French Ministry of the Interior) have finalized an information system for data exchange between countries, hosted in Dakar. A memorandum of understanding between the countries was drafted, but Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso withdrew. The memorandum is to be submitted to the authorities of all partner countries for signature. Stakeholders perceived that such an initiative could improve the transnational response to the fight against sex trafficking in the event of synergy of action between the states concerned, as underlined by a legal expert interviewed for this study.

"Transnational response is only possible if all states agree on the same response strategy...the right solution would be to adopt regional strategies...to get all countries to agree on how to intervene and respond to these issues...this can be facilitated [through the existing] network [of National committees] on trafficking that brings together Mali, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, and Mauritania..."

– KII #12, Justice Stakeholder, Magistrate, Dakar

Stakeholders also shared that initiatives have been taken to strengthen police and judicial cooperation with other border countries where trafficking networks originate, by sharing information (e.g., border police in a neighboring country reporting the arrival of a potential network), conducting mixed trainings, and facilitating joint investigations. This is the case, for example, with border officials in Mali and Senegal as stated below.

"The only way to...detect victims at early stages...is to share information between the other countries involved in the trafficking networks... we did some peer-to-peer activities with Malian and Senegalese border officials...This [put] frontline actors working on the ground all together at the same table to share intelligence and operational information...[frontline actors] put together in the same room and they give each other a face and a name. Knowing that next time there's a case of trafficking crossing my border, I know [who] I can contact on the other side of the border."

Implementer #4, Prosecution project, Monitoring and Evaluation Staff, Dakar

Generally, respondents described the importance of developing international cooperation tools, notably for legal assistance and extradition, as an important step towards effectively responding to sex trafficking across borders. Stakeholders emphasized the critical importance of collaboration and having established and standardized processes for sharing and responding to sex trafficking cases. Many viewed developing a shared understanding of sex trafficking as well as developing a standardized process for preventing and responding to sex trafficking as critical for the region.

"The offence must be provided for on both sides of each country. So, if the Malian magistrate talks about sex trafficking [but] the Senegalese magistrate doesn't see sex trafficking, it won't succeed."

—Implementer #7, Prosecution Project, Program Officer, Kédougou

[4] *The Joint Operational Partnership (JOP) aims to contribute to the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking in Senegal.*

National Response and Initiatives

At the national level, stakeholders described the development of the CILEC (Comité Interministériel de Lutte contre l'Emigration Clandestine) and the Comité National de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes (CNLTP) (National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons) national action plan (2021-2023), which addressed the issue of sex trafficking. With the support of the IOM, which had made a consultant available to the CNLTP to support the process, "a small technical workshop was organized from December 15 to 16, 2020." The planning process for the national action plan had been supported by stakeholder ministries (justice, interior, women and child protection, labor), civil society players (CONAFE, PPDH, Unies vers Elles, RADDHO), technical and financial partners (UNODC, IOM, UNICEF, OHCHR, JOP). Respondents also described other related policy initiatives, such as the 10-year National Strategy to Combat Irregular Migration (SNLMI) adopted in 2023, which were seen to be relevant to sex trafficking prevention and response.

There has also been new and recent political and institutional recognition of the problem. Respondents shared that before 2021, the Ministry of Justice was responsible for human trafficking and smuggling cases. However, in 2023, due to the creation of the CILEC, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security now has the responsibility to oversee response to smuggling. This means that the Ministry of Justice has more of a direct focus on human trafficking.

Sex Trafficking Data Collection Systems

Stakeholders reported that since 2021 a great deal of progress has been made in collecting current data on sex trafficking, prosecutions, and convictions. For example, three major bodies regularly collect statistics about sex trafficking: the Joint Operational Partnership (JOP); the Criminal Affairs and Pardons Directorate; and the CNLTP. The SYSTRAIT (data collection systems) has been implemented to document prosecutions for trafficking offenses. In addition, The Trafficking in Persons Data Management System (TIP-DMS), was developed to facilitate data sharing and coordination between ministries and agencies as well as between local agencies and regional agencies.

Ministry specific initiatives to promote data collection about sex trafficking were also described by stakeholders. For example, it was reported that since 2021 the Ministry of Justice has developed a systematic and specific policy for collecting information on trafficking (called "Les états particuliers") which enables the courts to collect justice related data about human trafficking and sex trafficking cases. This data collection process was said to have provided stakeholders with a clearer picture of how the court responded to sex trafficking since 2021, such as through counting the number of people arrested and tried for sex trafficking. Similarly, respondents reported that trainings and technical assistance provided to the courts since 2021 have increased justice stakeholders' knowledge about sex trafficking laws and how to apply the laws to complex cases.

Policy Gaps and Challenges

It should be emphasized that Senegal has not yet officially adopted a national policy document or national strategy to combat human trafficking for sexual exploitation. On the other hand, according to respondents, due to the efforts to strengthen anti-trafficking initiatives over the past 5 years, it now has evidence, manuals, and institutions capable of bringing about the institutional changes needed for greater effectiveness in the fight against trafficking in persons or sex trafficking. In addition, a draft law already exists and was drawn up within the framework of this multi-phased study, and the next step would be to lobby for the law to be rapidly passed. However, not all stakeholders agree that a law dedicated to the fight against human trafficking should be implemented, and they strongly suggest that anti-trafficking provisions should be integrated into the penal code and the code of criminal procedures. There have been some steps taken in this direction. For example, an activity of this multi-phased study was to revise the mining code to take account of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Alongside these initiatives, there is a network of experts in the subregion, as well as an ECOWAS regional strategy on human trafficking.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SAFETY FOR WOMEN ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL SEX

When asked about safety for women engaged in commercial sex (WECS) many respondents reported that WECS have support from peers as well as from law enforcement and the Tomboulmas (local and traditional police), when necessary. For example, some respondents shared that WECS usually stay in a group and have bodyguards, as stated below.

"...[WECS] are so organized that they always have bodyguards at their side, so nobody dares to attack them. On top of that, they never go it alone, they're always in a group. For example, all the women who go to the same workplace hang out together all the time. They come at 6 p.m. to set up the premises before dark and they work until 4 a.m. when everyone goes home, and they do it in groups."

-Implementer #8, Community Vigilance Committee leader, Kédougou

Some stakeholders described law enforcement responding to experiences of violence faced by WECS:

"R: I don't want to characterize them because we look after everyone's safety. Sometimes they come here not because they've been victims or anything like that, but for their professions and they're entitled to protection from any harmful source. Sometimes they have problems with their clients and they come to the brigade and we sort it out.

I: Do they ever have problems accessing the brigade?

R: Not at all. As long as you are on national territory, whether you are Senegalese or not, you are under our protection."

— KII #10, Gendarmerie [military police] leadership, Kédougou

Generally, there was a perception that WECS who are not victims of sex trafficking may be less vulnerable and may not experience harassment by authorities since they are following regulations. However, some stakeholders suggested that the situation may be a bit more complex in that WECS may be hesitant to reach out to police or may experience harassment when encountering police. One community worker explained this.

"...even if [WECS] have a [health registration] card, it doesn't mean that when the police find them in bars or hotels they won't get into trouble. When they find you in a brothel, they'll take you away. But by God's will, those who are here don't have that kind of problem. The only thing we ask or require of them is that they have a consular card. Because when you're in another country, the least you can do is have a consular card. Because they have fake identity cards that they make in Mali. And to guarantee the security of the population, they need to have papers. On the other hand, there are raids, and when that happens anyone found in the street or in bars is rounded up."

– KII #5, Community Health Coordinator, Kédougou

Respondents also reported that hesitancy to report violence or assault may also stem from experiences where law enforcement did not appear to take the report seriously, only asking the perpetrator to leave rather than holding them accountable for assault.

"If it's in Kédougou, they're safe, because there's not much violence here. But in "Khossanto," it's a different story. The other day, when I went there and I found a woman and her partner fighting. They were even throwing stones at each other. And when I asked them why they don't call the police in these kinds of situations, they told me they're fed up with it. Because every time they call the police or the gendarmerie, when they come they just settle the problem and then let them go. And so they come back every day. So I can say that there's a lot of violence in this area."

—KII #9, Community health worker, Kédougou

Bias as Barrier to Safety

Some respondents described how biased perceptions of WECS and also of women and girls who have experienced sex trafficking, may impact safety for women and girls and also discourage them from reaching out when they experience harassment, violence, exploitation or trafficking.

"...from a social point of view, people don't even want to talk about it, that's what we were saying earlier, these are lives that have been pushed aside, that we don't want to see, practically even socially these people [women engaged in commercial sex] aren't integrated. I think we have a very complicated relationship with everything having to do with sexuality, so when a person is considered a sex worker, it

becomes difficult to integrate them into society...I guess you could say that in the collective imagination, a lot of people think that people who comes from those countries, or Nigeria in any case, I didn't want to index them directly, but I think that people come just for that [commercial sex], some are forced to come, but others come to work..."

- KII #11, Government Official, Kédougou,

As indicated in the excerpt above, much of the bias directed at WECS appears to be also related to discriminatory perspectives about the nationality of the women involved, who may be seen as outsiders by community members. Some respondents described fears that Senegalese women would be negatively influenced by migrant women:

"...it is said that women who do it [commercial sex], do it because they don't have the means to survive...Once they're there [engaged in commercial sex], when they meet with foreign women who know they have the means to solve their problems, these women often push them into practice...What's serious is that they tend to infiltrate Senegalese women and push them into this [commercial sex]...They [foreign women] come to Kédougou and stay in the neighborhoods. Being with these young girls can push them into the mileu."

– KII 4, Community Development Administrator, Kédougou

"...a Senegalese girl...who sees a Nigerian girl...who's involved in prostitution, is comfortable with her dress and things like that, she can imitate naturally, and that can influence her education."

– KII #7, Border Police Officer, Kédougou

In relation to women's health safety and well-being, some respondents reported bias impacting WECS' access to health services and screenings:

"...I wanted to go back to [TOWN] to do screening and awareness-raising [health and safety for WECS]...but the person we found at the police station blocked us...I came up to [officer] and introduced myself and explained why I was here today. He told me I had to see his boss first...And I think that if the uniformed men are preventing us from doing our awareness-raising work, it's because there's a problem...and when I went to see the boss and told him about it, he said why did he hold you back? He even told me that health didn't have any borders, and that I could go do my job..."

– KII #9, Community Health Worker, Kédougou

Unfortunately, bias even followed women after death. For example, one public official shared experiences with being turned away from cemeteries when looking for a final resting place for WECS who have passed away:

"Sex workers have sometimes experienced difficulties when, for example there has been a death among these people...Christian cemeteries will say they don't want this person to be buried in their cemetery on the other hand Muslims will also say we don't want this person to be buried in our cemetery...at the moment what I'm imagining and considering is to see how a project to create a new cemetery might include a few square meters or a hybrid zone."

– KII # 6, Government Official, Kédougou

SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCES WITH SERVICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Survivors of sex trafficking repatriated to Nigeria reported their experiences with the shelter provided by local NGOs and government agencies. Many survivors successfully returned to their home countries, primarily Nigeria, through collaborative efforts involving Senegalese and Nigerian authorities and NGOs. While this process faced significant challenges, including bureaucratic delays, inadequate communication between agencies, and insufficient support upon their return, survivors reported receiving support through training and resources to start businesses, establish community, and reintegrate. Survivors discussed their experiences in the shelters, impacts on their wellbeing, and the repatriation process.

Livelihood and Sustainability Services

Many survivors highlighted the support offered at the shelter to encourage entrepreneurship skills and sustainability. These are especially helpful for long-term support as it provides more options for survivors once repatriated:

> *"They brought guests for entrepreneurship. They brought XXX to teach us about skills. They brought XXX to teach us about safety, type of skills, online business, addressing how to manage our money. They taught us many things in the shelter.*
>
> *-Survivor #4, Nigerian, Age 23*

Another survivor spoke to additional sustainability services that included efforts for increasing financial capability. They also highlighted the continuum of care after the survivors left the shelter:

> *"Yeah, they taught us about, when we were in that shelter they taught us money management, all of that stuff that if you want learn a trade...So when we were leaving the shelter, they told us that they would constantly be calling, checking up on us, coming to our places to [see] us."*
>
> *-Survivor # 26, Nigerian, Age 23*

The same survivor said that they felt encouraged to partake in these services offered by the shelter, and that the staff took personal measures to ensure they were getting the support they needed. This highlights the diversity in services offered as well as involving survivors in the process of deciding what they want to do and what resources they want to access:

> *"We were in that shelter for about five days, which we had in um, um, they were encouraging us saying what we would do, like what we like to be like, all these things that we'll do, all these things that those are learning fashion, those are doing pos, those are doing all other stuff. They were encouraging us...They were like imparting some knowledge. And also, [shelter administrator] came for personal counseling and other stuffs for each individual in [shelter], actually we spent five days with them in that shelter."*
>
> *-Survivor # 26, Nigerian, Age 23*

Further, some survivors highlighted how sustainability services helped them plan for the future. Respondents reported that the most important thing to them was acquiring a skill that could help them create a life that is self-sustainable and avoid relying on anyone, and not to prevent experiencing trafficking again. Survivor's emphasized the importance of services supporting survivor agency:

> *"[NGO] and others had helped, they rented a shop for me ever since December and I've been doing great but I really hope to make sure I have other things, to make sure it expands, to make sure I could be able to say I won't rely on anybody again, it's not like I'm relying on anyone now but you know due to my health, it's kind of hard for me sometimes"*
>
> *-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21*

Wellbeing and Health

Survivors also talked about how experiences with shelters affected their wellbeing and health, both physically and mentally. One of the reoccurring testaments was about how the shelter renewed a sense of hope for their future lives. This was possible through the support the shelter offered as well as an emphasis on humanity. One survivor discusses the contrast of how they felt after receiving services and how they were before:

> *"It helped me a lot. Now I was not able to live that life I used to live in Senegal. It was really helpful, I was like free. I was given food, a place to stay and all stuff treated like I was like, before I felt like I was a human being just walking like breeze but ah, I got there. So I feel that there still hope."*
>
> *-Survivor # 26, Nigerian, Age 23*

Another survivor talked about the positivity and hope that was instilled for changing how they live their life as well as the confidence that they can be sustainable and self-reliant. They also highlight their determination to avoid risks and conditions that may have led to vulnerable and exploitative situations:

> *"It was positive, because that was where I saw like the ray of light in my life. Like if I could be able to go back to Nigeria, if I could be able to turn back the hands of time, I won't engage myself in stuffs like this ever again...Yes, it gave me hope, because it was then I saw that I could be able to make something out of myself, I could be able to do something for myself to be able to leave the condition that made me want to go to Senegal in the first instance. They made me see that I should make sure I changed my ways of thinking"*
>
> *-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21*

Additionally, survivors praised how the shelters prioritized mental health in their services, including a support group and personal check-ins:

> *"We even have a group that we even share any experience... They even call us time by time to check up on us, our mental health, all those things."*
>
> *-Survivor # 26, Nigerian, Age 23*

Another survivor mentioned the diversity of mental health resources, naming different forms of services specific to mental health:

> *"They were holding activities, programs, they bring people to come and talk to you, they do some several services, they render you services like give you counseling, and they train you."*
>
> *- Survivor # 8, Nigerian, Age 25*

In addition to mental health services, the shelters also offered physical health assistance. One survivor talks about the lengths that the shelter went to get them medical care and support:

> *"[Shelter Administrator] always helped me a lot because once I fall sick, 100, 000, 150,000, 200,000 would not be enough to treat it because the medicine I take alone, the longevity drugs, the anti-cancer drugs is over 100,000 per month, so it's really pressing on me. I need to be supporting my business not drawing from it only, so [Shelter Administrator] has really helped me, they assist me the best way they can to buy medicine, to run test and other things."*
>
> *-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21*

Repatriation

In the process of repatriation from Senegal to Nigeria, survivors experienced a vast variety of positive and negative experiences. From expressing fears of the process to gratitude of the support from the shelters, the survivors talked about their repatriation experiences. Some of the survivors expressed challenges they were met with throughout the repatriation process. For example, some survivors described miscommunication errors in the shelter that delayed their departure back to Nigeria. Other survivors described fears and doubts experienced during the process of waiting for papers and logistics to leave for Nigeria.

> *"After about a month of living there, I felt hopeless, I doubted if these people were going to help us or they just wanted to showcase us in the television. But they updated us that the paper we were to use for our flight was not ready and that we should be patient. Fortunately, the paper was ready and they informed us that we were leaving the next day and I was happy."*
>
> *- Survivor # 11, Nigerian, Age 24*

However, most of the survivors reported positive experiences during repatriation. One survivor highlighted that when they arrived to Nigeria, there was no judgement or adjacent stigma that they were concerned about receiving:

> *"At first, I was scared because you know the stigma with those who travel out to do prostitution, "you are not clean, I don't want to associate with you, I don't want to talk", and sometimes they might stigmatize you for what you went to do, I was like scared at first, I even thought of running away from the shelter. But then when we were received at Lagos, it was like they didn't know we even went to do those type of stuff, they welcomed us well and my mind became settled...They helped us, they didn't make us look tattered, or like we were abandoned people."*
>
> *-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21*

Other survivors discussed how the preparation from the shelters that aided the repatriation process helped them get settled, whether it was materials, logistics, or other assistance including securing resources such as phones and support opening back accounts:

> *"They did everything for us. They bought luggage, clothes and other things for us. We were taken to a hotel the following day. From the hotel they took us to the airport at night. We got into the plane by three and arrived Lagos in the morning."*
>
> *- Survivor # 15, Nigerian, Age 21*
>
> *"Okay they check everybody they say, they take us to hospital, they check if we have a sickness, like okay, pregnancy, infection, something like that. So many have pregnancies, so people have HIV. So that is how they took me there, after that they we are going now keep us money for bags and other things."*
>
> *-Survivor #22, Nigerian, Age 20*

Recommendations from Women who are Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Cleanliness and Environment

Survivors discussed the need for improving cleanliness and water quality in a Kédougou shelter:

> *"All these bed sheets, they should change, they should change it in Kédougou. The bed sheets, the one we are using there. And the toilet too, it's not good. They should change the toilet because in Kédougou, all of us, when I go to Kédougou, I do not have any sickness, but when we go to Kédougou, everybody treats infection with, they treat infection with many, many injections, big syringes, drip, they treat it, so that toilet needs to be changed because there are many sets that use that toilet, so they should try to put new toilets for the sets that are coming"*
>
> *-Survivor #4, Nigerian, Age 23*

Reducing reliance on commercial sex

Another survivor comments that there should be more advice from shelters against engaging in sex work. Their primary concern is the risks that may put them in a vulnerable situation again:

> *"I really want to say that they should try to stop the girls that are in the shelter from going out to do prostitution again because it's very common, the lifestyle they wanted to stop before they got to the shelter, now they got to the shelter and they still continue in it. It has affected them and they don't see it as something that is not good. And even when they came back to Nigeria, some of them continued in their ways. So I really want to say they should advise them, try any possible means to hold them from going out to prostitute because we had everything we needed there in the shelter."*
>
> *-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21*

Increase Resources for Survivor Centered Services

Survivors also raised concerns about limited resources available at shelters, such as food and financial resources to support shelter services and activities. For example, some survivors described a lack of food and basic tableware. Survivors described the need for additional financial support for the entire system, acknowledging that funding may be an issue and everyone needs more:

> *"Like maybe like sponsorship... if they support them financially because, because sometimes, not me, but my peers, some of them maybe, maybe they need something after they've done it, they need, they still need more and you know, everything has budget. From their own pockets, some of the admins, some of the workers from their own pocket, they do more. Even for me and my baby."*
>
> *-Survivor #17, Nigerian, Age 30*

RESPONSE CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Respondents reported several challenges which were said to hinder response to sex trafficking, possibly put women and girls (especially migrant women) at increased risk for experiencing sex trafficking and may also increase risk that someone who is a survivor of sex trafficking may be at risk for experiencing exploitation and sex trafficking again (due to a lack of sustainable follow-up services). When asked about sex trafficking and challenges for prevention most respondents described challenges related to working to support migrant populations, especially women from Nigeria and other ECOWAS countries.

Primary obstacles to responding to sex trafficking noted by respondents included: difficulties during the identification and referral process, cultural and language barriers, challenges for survivors in feeling comfortable and safe to report and testify against traffickers, and barriers to survivor advocacy.

> *"There are...difficulties relating to the identification of the [sex trafficking] victims...these victims have false national identity cards...difficulties relating to language [do not speak French], they speak English and there's another dialect...So there are major language difficulties, difficulties linked to their identification and difficulties linked to the fact that the victims themselves don't denounce their bosses...Once here [in Senegal] they are made to observe a ritual...swearing [to the boss] that I'll never report you to the defense and security forces... she [victim] swears [to the boss] that if I denounce you, may God make me die...That's an obstacle because the victim doesn't denounce, an obstacle in terms of language, an obstacle in terms of identification."*
>
> *– KII #7, Border Police Officer, Kédougou*

Key informants described having challenges identifying people who might be experiencing sex trafficking, because falsification of documents (e.g., for age modifications or immigration status) is common. Also, many key informants described difficulties communicating with people who may be experiencing sex trafficking and sex trafficking survivors due to language barriers. Respondents described how women who migrate from Nigeria and end up experiencing sex trafficking in mining communities do not often speak French and, therefore, are unable to communicate their needs or ask for help. Front line workers [health workers and social service providers] and law enforcement officers expressed frustrations with not being able to communicate and being limited to using very limited English and non-verbal communication. Some respondents shared that language barriers and challenges with integration not only impacted potential victims from having access to a response but also further isolated migrant women so that they are self-segregated from the Senegalese population.

> *"...when they're [migrant WECS] not integrated. They find themselves among themselves and create a community. Now, native people, the Senegalese for example, may see this as communitarianism, when in fact it's not communitarianism at all, it's that they have no...it's a sort of 'no way out', there are no exits or escape routes, that's just it..."*
>
> *-KII #11, Government Official, Kédougou*

As indicated by the key informant in the excerpt above, self-segregation of migrant WECS has the potential to result in a situation where individuals who may be experiencing exploitation and trafficking within a migrant community may not feel able to or know how to report or exit the situation, because they do not know anyone outside of the migrant community and cannot communicate their concerns to support workers. In addition, stigmatization and lack of recognition of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, especially happening within the context of commercial sex, is said the exacerbate challenges faced to respond and prevent sex trafficking.

"Stigmatization is one. Community stigmatization and at times family stigmatization is one of the barriers. I also think that understanding trafficking is a challenge in some communities. They don't see it as a wrong thing, they see it as just a part of what they do, they call it hustle. They don't look at the negative implication of some of those things in the community. So, community orientation also is one of the barriers that I think might negate this policy on advocacy work."

—Implementer # 11, Social Worker, Nigeria

Fear of Reprisal

In addition to barriers specifically for migrant women in getting access to support services, many respondents reported that WECS who had experienced sex trafficking may also be hesitant to report exploitation or reach out to authorities due to fears of reprisals from traffickers. Fears of reprisals were reported to be based in threats and other coercive tactics described as being used by traffickers to form a manipulative bond with victims and dissuade them from coming forward. For example, traffickers were reported to use threats, such as that harm would come to the survivor or their family if they speak out, or rituals to control how a survivor may interact with authorities.

"It's true that sometimes it's difficult for the victims, and this can be linked to the psychological shock they've experienced and the fear of reprisals. Because...in Nigeria there's a lot of propaganda about mystical practices. They have what they call "dioudiouala," which is a practice that consists of telling people that if they denounce them a curse will fall on them and their family. As a result, victims sometimes don't want to talk too much or they hold back when giving their testimony. This can be an obstacle to the quality of the legal proceedings we carry out."

—KII #10, Gendarmerie Leadership, Kédougou

Experiences of coercive tactics related to fear of reprisals were also commonly reported by survivors who were interviewed for this study. For example, while discussing what challenges that might be faced by people seeking help while in an situation of sexual exploitation some survivors described threats to their safety:

"When [traffickers] see that you are advising their girls to do something else, they will hate you. If possible, if you're not strong and God is not by your side, they might use diabolic means to hurt you, so that's just it."

-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21

Relatedly, some survivors indicated that traffickers often threaten to harm them physically or threaten to tell the survivors' families about the survivors' engagement in commercial sex, with the intent to stop survivors and victims from reporting or speaking about their experiences of exploitation.

"Some of them are in Nigeria but their girls don't like talking about them because they are dangerous, they can do anything. While most of them are there on that side and their family doesn't know that this is actually what they're doing there. So, for anybody, any survivor to go and expose such a thing. To feel like they want to expose them to the world and to their family. They would try all means to shut the person up."

– *Survivor #2, Nigerian, Age 21*

Fear of Arrest

Respondents also described how fears of arrest and prosecution related to engaging in commercial sex [without registering or on the street] or due to tenuous immigration status also made it difficult for women and girls to report and ask for help when they need it. Traffickers were reported to exploit this fear among survivors by withholding identify documents and threatening survivors with reporting to immigration authorities, as tactics to maintain control and dissuade reporting.

> *"if a Burkinabé, Malian or Guinean comes to Sabodala in Kédougou, [and they] know 'I'm being exploited', [they] know that the person exploiting [them] is committing a criminal offense, and [they're] afraid to go to the police because [they're] in an irregular situation, [they might think], 'I'm afraid that if I go to the police they'll prosecute me maybe for prostitution and in the best case for illegal residence', you see, they're afraid, they don't know that if they denounce they can't be prosecuted for the offenses they've committed as a victim of trafficking."*
>
> *– KII #12, Justice Stakeholder, Magistrate, Dakar*

Some survivors indicated that they were hesitant to rely on law enforcement for help. For example, a survivor described her fear that police may enable traffickers and also are available for a sum.

> *"Lots of efforts, make sure government is standing by you so that when problem comes, you can escape it. Because most of the time, the police support these things; I'm not saying that police are bad but most of the time Nigerian police receive bribes a lot. So, when they report you to the police for disrupting their work, they might arrest you. So, the government has to stand by you and God as well."*
>
> – *Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21*

Generally, respondents reported that in addition to language and cultural barriers, fears of reprisals and arrest were two major barriers for victims and survivors to exit an exploitative situation and to access justice. The isolation of WECS and girls who are experiencing sex trafficking, especially those who are migrants, was described as compounding challenges to response and make it easier for traffickers to operate with impunity.

Potential Solutions

Although the challenges to reporting and getting access to services identified by respondents are significant, respondents offered ideas for several solutions that they believe would work towards addressing some of these challenges. Respondents suggested that there be:

1. *Increased efforts to educate stakeholders about human rights and the legal right to criminal impunity for human trafficking victims. Key stakeholders were said to include justice actors, front-line service providers, women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking, WECS, and community members).*

2. *Strengthened safety protocols and processes for reporting by victims of sex trafficking (including minors) and women engaged in commercial sex.*

3. *Increased financial support and sustainment resources for survivors of sex trafficking.*

Education about human rights and impunity

Some respondents indicated that there is community support for recognizing and respecting consent, denouncing practices of sexual exploitation and upholding human rights of the women engaged in commercial sex and women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking. Respondents suggested that if there is an increase in awareness-raising activities, health support for WECS and increased attention to human rights and gender-based violence then survivors of sex trafficking may be more empowered to come forward when they experience or become aware of a trafficking case.

"...if we do that [raise awareness about human rights and gender-based violence], it's the [survivors of sex trafficking] themselves who will go to the police, and they'll have the arguments to put forward. Because quite simply, the person knows his or her rights; on the other hand, if the person doesn't know his or her rights, all the more so because there are people who are afraid of the police. These people won't know how to defend themselves."

– KII #9, Community Health Worker, Kédougou

In another example, when asked if survivors of sex trafficking have better access to justice a respondent described how tenuous immigration status may be a barrier for women and girls seeking help, also they suggested that training about "criminal impunity" for victims of trafficking is critical to enable survivors to access justice:

"...in the training courses I give, I [emphasize] that victims of trafficking cannot be prosecuted for offenses or crimes committed while under the influence of trafficking, which is known as criminal impunity for victims of trafficking...[the challenges is how] to tell [the sex trafficking victims] that 'you have the right [to justice] without the risk of pressing charges'...it's one of the factors that makes access to justice [difficult], because if you don't know the law, you can't access justice..."

– KII #12, Justice Stakeholder, Magistrate, Dakar

Ensure Safety for Reporting Among WECS

Some respondents suggested that increased government buy-in and support is viewed as important to advocacy and prevention of reprisal attacks. Specifically, respondents described the importance of strengthening processes and procedures for reporting in order to mitigate challenges faced, such as identification, language barriers, and fear of reprisal or arrest.

"...a person who is a victim of trafficking may be with us in the community but may not say anything because they can't express it, or at least they're afraid to. So we need to create a safe space where the person can come and say I'm here, and people can tell them we've taken your testimony, we've taken your testimony, I don't want to go to the legal register to say your statement, but we've listened to you, we'll do something with the utmost discretion...we need to move towards that. I'm all for pedagogy, explanation, teaching, didactics."

-- KII #11, Government leader, Kédougou

Relatedly, some respondents suggested that strengthening policies and laws, especially to increase penalties for traffickers as well as accountability for corporations within in mining communities was critical to improving reporting and identification of people who might be experiencing sex trafficking.

"The other obstacle is that in the mining code, there is no obligation for the managers of mining companies to denounce...I mean companies, like [TOWN], where gold is mined...girls are exploited there, and the chiefs know that these girls are being exploited, so they have to denounce or risk being held responsible. It's things like that that we should have included in the law on the mining code to encourage mining companies to be more vigilant and to report cases of trafficking."

– KII #12, Justice Stakeholder, Magistrate, Dakar

Increase Financial Support and Sustainment Resources for Prevention and Response

Respondents described the importance of strengthened financial support and resources to sustain and prevent sex trafficking. For example, need for increased services and resources for follow-up support after reintegration and repatriation were deemed vital. In addition, some respondents expressed a perspective that it is important to ask the survivor what they would like to do and then put resources in place to support them to achieve their goals. For example, some survivors might prefer to settle in Senegal rather than access repatriation, the suggestion was in these cases there could be efforts make to support them in building their future in Senegal.

"When you help someone, it's not just to leave them like that, if there's no follow-up there's nothing, it's as if you've thrown them away... Return is a good thing, but if a person wants to stay [in Senegal], let's support them so they can regularize their situation, get Senegalese diplomas, and eventually make a life for themselves in Senegal if that's what they want."

– *KII #11, Government leader, Kédougou*

Generally, respondents shared that having more resources for services to support survivors and also people who might be at risk of sex trafficking may be critical to enabling prevention.

"If the [NGO] or the shelter at Senegal are not supported, we wouldn't be able to go this far, so it needs support. For example, I want to help someone with these kind of things; like I said, there are many in my community doing this type of thing. I need to have my own way so that when I bring them out, I would be able to take care of them, not when I've not been able to feed myself, I want to feed someone else."

-Survivor #1, Nigerian, Age 21

Survivors also identified the need for financial support to allow them to reach more people who might be at risk of or experiencing sex trafficking. They felt that having financial support would make the information shared during advocacy work with people who might be at risk or experiencing sex trafficking more convincing.

"As they are doing to us now, if they are still doing like that to them. If you just bring out yourself now, as you people are helping me now, if you decide to help another, they will listen to you seriously because they know that you have already seen their condition. They didn't have any way to support themselves, you just decide to help them. They will still call some people that need all these things to come to you, for you to do the same for them, so that is it."

—Survivor #21, Nigerian, Age 26

Overall, there was a marked increase in visibility of sex trafficking since 2021. Sex trafficking remains an issue of concern and continues to have a major impact on Kédougou communities. In this endline study, we have identified how sex trafficking impacts survivors and communities and also reported on stakeholders' perspectives about initiatives to address sex trafficking and potential opportunities for growth. The next section will discuss the overall results of this study and present several recommendations for bolstering prevention and response to sex trafficking.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted as an endline estimation of the prevalence of sex trafficking among WECS in Senegal. The baseline survey, conducted October to December 2021, served as a basis upon which to measure changes in trafficking prevalence and other factors that could be attributable to anti-trafficking activities and initiatives, including policy changes, NGO and CenHTRO protection intervention programs in Senegal. The endline survey data in this report were collected from July 2024 to August 2024 and provided an updated profile of the characteristics and needs of the WECS in the mining communities in Senegal.

Sex Trafficking Prevalence

We estimated that 51% of WECS in both departments of Kédougou and Saraya have experienced sex trafficking in 2023. This rate is higher than from the estimates of 30% (Kédougou) and 13% (Saraya) in 2021. The study team confirmed that the prevalence indicator used was identical in both surveys. Possible explanations for the large increase in prevalence measurement include the following:

- WECS in Senegal may have a better understanding of the questions the interviewers asked about trafficking. For example, they may understand better what "being forced" or "coercion" means—which could be due to contact with the project activities/interventions.
- WECS who engaged in the endline survey may have felt less stigma in providing truthful responses in the survey, possibly due to increased trust in anti-trafficking activities over the two and a half years since the baseline survey.
- The LTS sampling methodology (seeding and network referrals) may have more effectively reached victims of sex trafficking at endline.
- There is a possibility that prevalence of sex trafficking increased since baseline.

Qualitative findings indicate that among stakeholders there were mixed perceptions about whether or not the prevalence of sex trafficking has changed since 2021, nonetheless, most respondents interviewed for this study reported that sex trafficking remains a persistent issue of concern. In addition, key informants perceived an increased visibility and awareness about sex trafficking since 2021, reporting an increase in reporting, and an increased knowledge about anti-trafficking laws.

Sex Trafficking Risk

Results from the quantitative survey revealed that WECS who experienced unsustainable economic conditions (lacking food, safe housing) or other adverse childhood experiences (childhood abuse and violence) were found to be at particular risk of experiencing sex trafficking. In addition, as with the baseline study, the majority of WECS experiencing sex trafficking in the Kédougou region of Senegal were migrants from Nigeria.

Force, Fraud and Coercion

Most sex trafficking survivors reported experiencing deceptive recruitment (66%) where they were lied to about the job conditions or pay and/or coercive recruitment (49%) where they were forced into commercial sex. Survey results indicated that traffickers regularly used force, fraud and coercion to maintain control over survivors: 57% of sex trafficking survivors reported experiencing financial exploitation where they were made to perform sex acts to pay off debts, 21% of survivors reported being forced to live employer-provided housing, and 30% of survivors reported experiencing intimate partner violence.

Barriers to Reporting

Although knowledge about laws related to responding to human trafficking were reportedly increasing and there were also indicators that more reports about sex trafficking were being made (since 2021), analysis from stakeholder interviews indicated that there may still be a hesitancy to report about sex trafficking as well as a lack of access to standard reporting tools. A primary barrier to reporting of sex trafficking stemmed

from perceptions that adult women were less likely (or even not vulnerable) to experience sex trafficking, compared to minors. The potential hesitancy to recognize sex trafficking as experienced by adult women may stifle response, especially for cases involving WECS. Relatedly, there was a general perception that WECS who are following regulations (e.g., have heath cards and are adults) were less likely to experience harassment and less vulnerable because they were following local protocols. However, some stakeholders reported that WECS may still feel themselves to be vulnerable and report hesitation in reporting to authorities, fearing that they will experience harassment from community members or authorities. In addition, stakeholders described how bias, especially negative views about WECS and girls experiencing sex trafficking, especially those from Nigeria may be a barrier to reporting. They further revealed that the isolation of Nigerian migrant WECS and Nigerian girls experiencing sex trafficking may increase risk for experiencing sex trafficking and also make it more challenging for survivors to access support for exiting a trafficking situation. Survivors reported mixed experiences with shelter services and the repatriation process and emphasized the need for more substantial, long-term support, including job placements, educational opportunities, and ongoing financial assistance.

Trends and Challenges in the Policy Landscape

Since 2021, stakeholders noted that there has been increasing regional coordination taking place to improve transnational partnerships between ECOWAS countries to more effectively respond to sex trafficking such as through development of a cross-border data exchange, coordinating multi-national trainings for justice stakeholders and enabling cross-border joint investigations for sex trafficking cases, such as between Mali and Senegal. However, there remain challenges with sustainment and there is a need to continue to develop and refine policy tools for regional coordination and coordination about sex trafficking response across borders. Tools described include regional MOUs and standardized procedures for extradition, processing, and sharing data about sex trafficking cases as well as increased resources devoted to survivor legal aid.

At the National Level, stakeholders reported progress towards a more effective response to sex trafficking, for example, with the development of the Trafficking in Persons Data Management System (TIP-DMS) agencies may now how have a tool which could enable data sharing and coordination between regional and local stakeholders at multiple ministries. However, the TIP-DMS has yet to be implemented at a large scale.

Senegal has not yet officially adopted a national policy document or national strategy specifically to address sex trafficking. After 2021, a draft law was in development, there is an opportunity to build on this draft and work towards adoption. Stakeholders reported that there may be more momentum for a more targeted strategy, which would focus on embedding sex trafficking response into the existing penal and criminal codes, rather than making a wholly new National policy specifically about sex trafficking. Stakeholders shared that this strategy was used to integrate sex trafficking response into revisions to the mining code.

Overall, since 2021 there has been an increase in visibility of sex trafficking, strengthened response to sex trafficking at the policy level and at the practice level, and also an updated toolbox to continue to build strong foundations for a coordinated, comprehensive and compassionate response to sex trafficking. However, there are several recommendations for strengthening these existing initiatives and working towards implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded in implications from our overall study and recommendations directly from stakeholders, in this section we present policy and practice specific recommendations for consideration.

Policy Recommendations

Improve ECOWAS Coordination and Response

Bolster existing efforts to improve regional coordination and response among ECOWAS counties, such as through implementing MOUs for extradition and data sharing about sex trafficking cases, developing and implementing standardized procedures for processing sex trafficking cases, and committing increased financial resources for survivor legal aid from across ECOWAS states.

Strengthen Data Sharing and Case Coordination

TIP-DMS has been developed in Senegal but needs to be implemented and then scaled up for cross-ministry adoption. This will enable integration

of sex trafficking case data collection and sharing among all relevant ministries at the local and regional levels, significantly improving the potential effectiveness of response and also ensuring sustainable monitoring of sex trafficking cases.

Clarify and Refine Path Towards National Sex Trafficking Response Policy

Senegalese policy makers have a unique opportunity to determine the most appropriate and effective path forward for more focused National sex trafficking response policies, either through adoption of a new national anti-sex trafficking law and/or through embedding anti-sex trafficking policies into the existing justice codes (e.g. as was done with the Ministry of Mines). Supporting existing collaborative work towards identifying the policy pathway is recommended as a target area for Senegal anti-trafficking policy stakeholders, as coordinated by the Comité National de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes (CNLTP) (National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons).

Training for Policy Implementation

Stakeholders noted an increase in awareness and knowledge about sex trafficking response laws and policies but suggested continued need to enhanced training (e.g. mock trials) and coordination between justice stakeholders to more effectively implement existing laws. Training needs included basic knowledge about what constitutes sex trafficking, especially for adult women, and education about human rights and the right to legal impunity for sex trafficking victims. Recommend that initiatives to train justice stakeholders in implementation of sex trafficking laws and to support knowledge building about human rights and right to impunity for survivors is paramount to improve actionability of policy.

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen community-based reporting processes

This study revealed several barriers which appeared to impact reporting of sex trafficking cases, such as a hesitancy to address sex trafficking of adult women, and negative perceptions about WECS and Nigerian migrant women. Therefore, improving knowledge about the components of sex trafficking for adult women, countering negative perceptions of WECS and Nigerian migrant women, and improving safety for reporting sex trafficking cases, especially among WECS, should be prioritized. Front-line health workers (such as Bajenu Gox and other community health workers who regularly work with WECS) and justice stakeholders are positioned well to implement initiatives targeted to addressing these reporting barriers. These groups should be trained and coordinated to implement a trauma-informed process for screening, identifying and referring people who may be experiencing sex trafficking.

Bolster training and response procedures for existing programs and services to enhance effectiveness in working with and address needs of trafficking survivors

Progress has been made in increasing access to shelter programs for survivors, but there remain a lack of resources and governmentally funded programs for sex trafficking survivors. Recommend embedding more sex trafficking response services directly into existing programs and services, such as health services for WECS, and training community workers and community leaders in trauma-informed approaches to working with sex trafficking survivors. Develop and train community stakeholders on referral processes and procedures, to facilitate coordinated response.

Substantially increase access to services which improve sustainability for survivors

Our study identified a lack of sustainability services as continuing to put survivors at risk of experiencing sex trafficking and increasing barriers to preventing sex trafficking. Recommend substantial increase in the financial commitment to investing in survivors' sustainability, through governmental and community-based support of livelihood support, income generation and asset building for survivors of sex trafficking.

Standardize Enhanced Legal Aid Support for Survivors

Survivors should have access to comprehensive legal aid services, which enables them to have a successful justice experience. The legal aid support should also extend education about existing impunity protections and human rights for trafficking survivors and support for repatriation and reintegration. Existing legal aid resources should be bolstered by increased funding for services and increased training for justice stakeholders.

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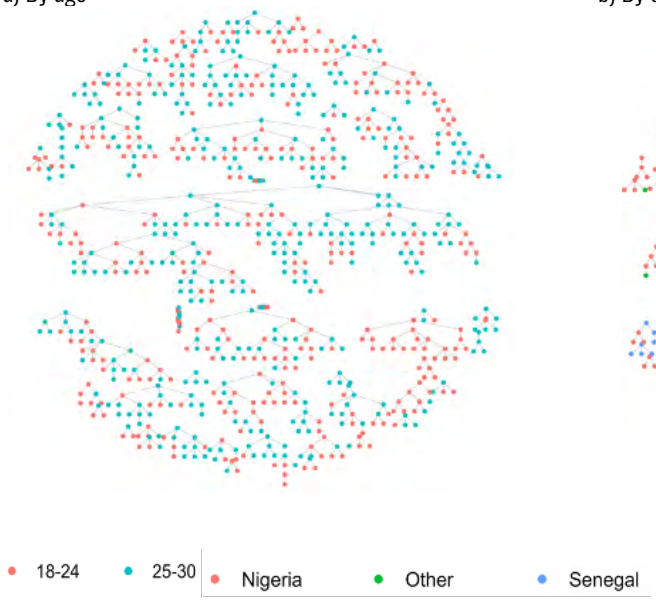
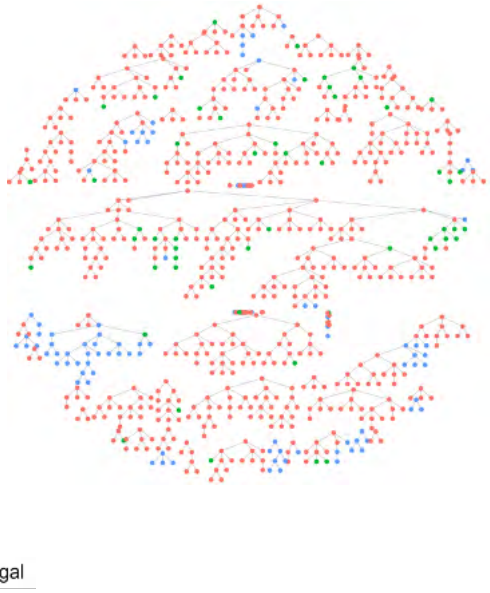
Appendix: Convergence Plots

Figure 1. Recruitment tree comprised of the initial seeds and linkages among the respondents in the achieved sample.

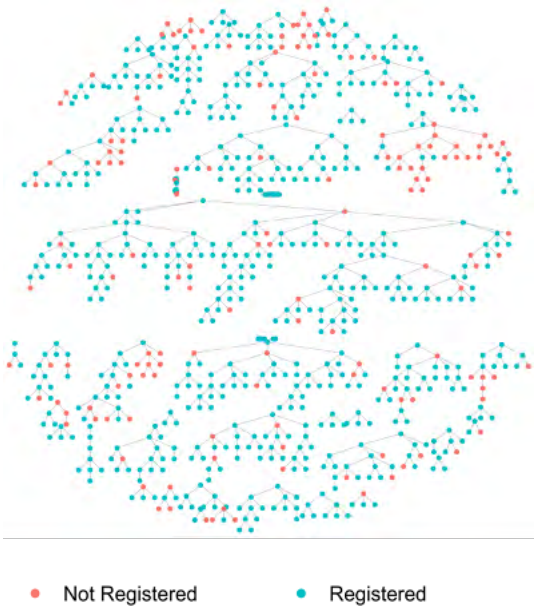
a) By age



b) By country of origin



c) By registration in social and health file status



d) By victimhood of sex trafficking

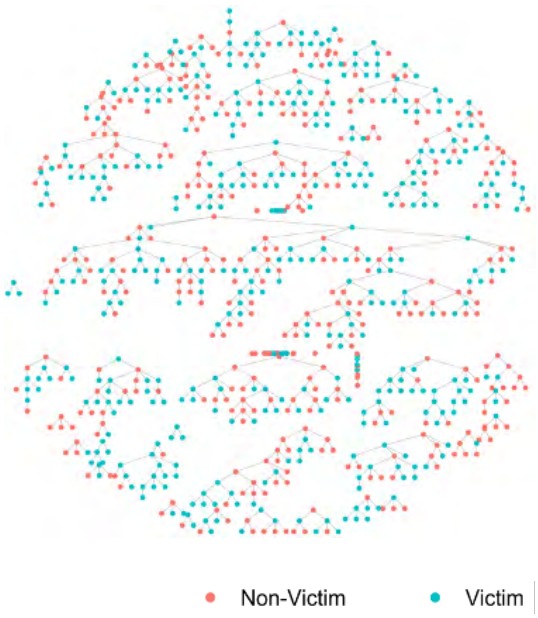
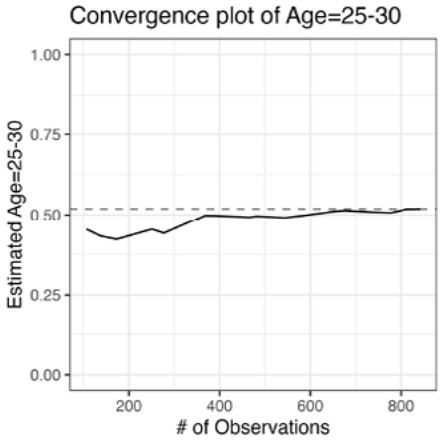
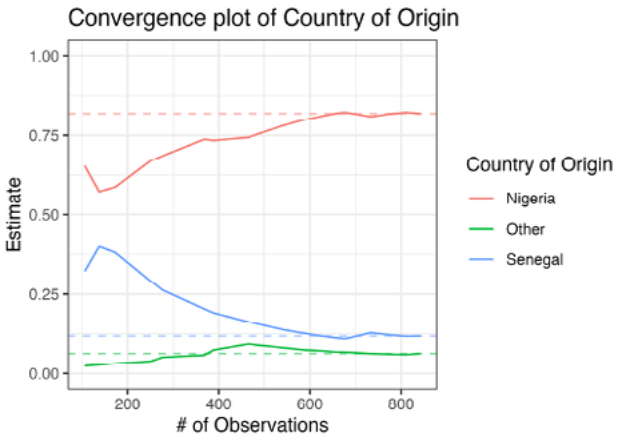


Figure 2. Convergence plots for selected demographics.

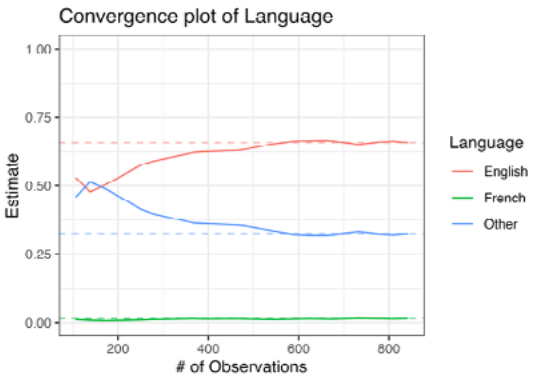
a) by age group



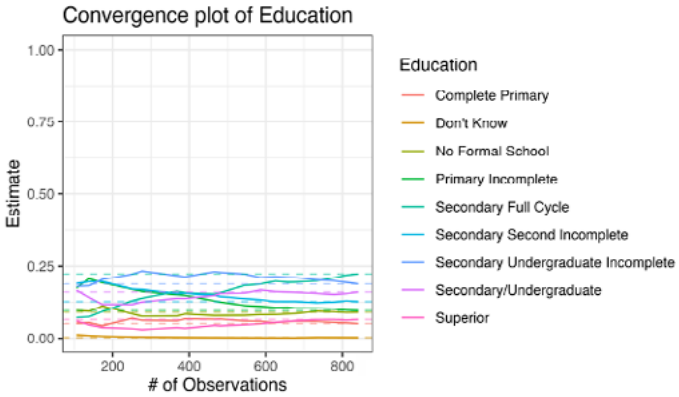
b) By country of origin



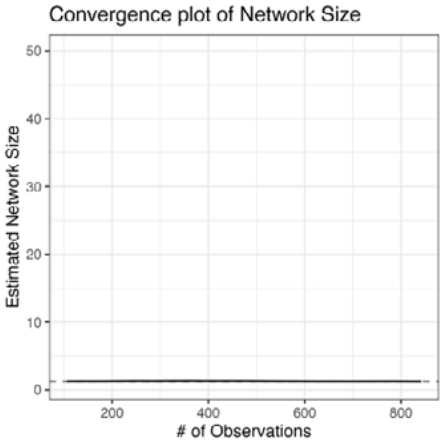
c) by language



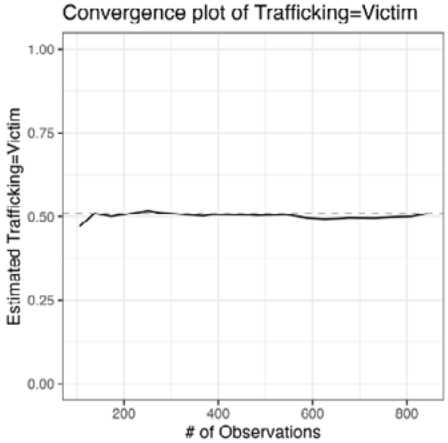
d) by educational attainment



e) By network size



f) By sex trafficking



In Figure 2, the order of the observations consisting of samples from the two departments represented in the horizontal axis was generated per date of recruitment. The vertical axis represents the estimated prevalence of selected values of the demographic variables being plotted. The estimates of the variables level off with increasing sample size, including age, country of origin, language, education attainment, personal network size, and prevalence of sex trafficking. Generally, there is a convergence after the sample size of the two departments reaches 800.

The plot tracking the estimates of the prevalence of age group showed that the estimate converged towards about 50%, meaning that age of the sample was evenly distributed in the age groups of 18-24 and 25-30, which was similar to that of the baseline sample. Country of origin had comparative compositions between endline and baseline samples. The personal network size of the endline sample appeared grossly lower than the baseline sample. In terms of the prevalence of sex trafficking, there was very little variation throughout the sample, unlike in the baseline study using the RDS method, where the initial sample yielded an estimate of nearly 60%, which gradually declined to around 20% as the sample size increased (Okech et al., 2022; Page 36). This may be due to the homogeneity of the RDS sample, which covered only a small portion of the population in the study area (*add citation).

Appendix: LTS Analysis

Seeds

In the endline study conducted using the LTS method, each department started with roughly 50 seeds, a significantly greater number than the baseline study (i.e., 6 and 9 seeds). Overall, seeds showed a wide diversity in terms of the demographic characteristics, which implied that the paticipants that the seeds recruited through relatively short referral chains (compared to the long chains in the RDS) had the potential to have a broad coverage of subpopulations. This indicates that the LTS method improved upon the representativeness of the study population as compared to the RDS method in the baseline, which suffered from homogeneity as a result of few initial seeds and long waves of referral recruitments. Therefore, it can be inferred that the LTS sample in the endline study could produce prevalence rates closer to the true prevalence rate of sex trafficking among women who were engaged in commercial sex than the RDS sample in the baseline study.

Convergence

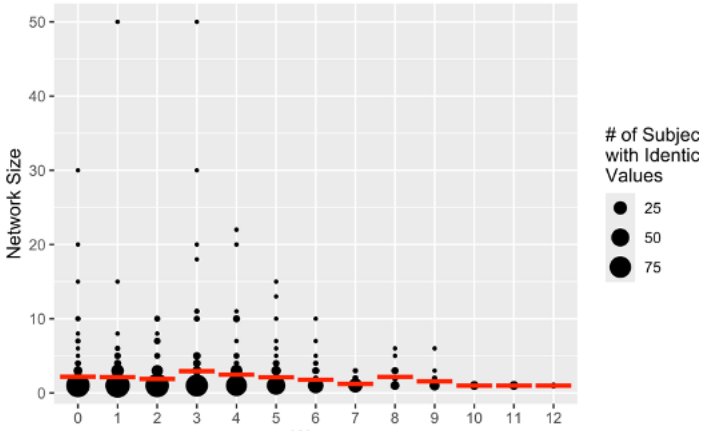
Due to the lack of theoretical framework for testing assumptions and checking quality of data collected from the LTS method, we adopted common practices of the analysis of LTS data following the fundamental principles of the RDS method (Vincent et al., 2021). An important step was the examination of data convergence criteria, which rests on the assumption that participants were continuously recruited via multiple waves of referral chains until the final sample was independent of the initial seeds in terms of the core assessment indices and characteristics (Gile et al., 2015). Therefore, the sample was assumed to be representative of the study population once the convergence criteria was met. The convergence plots for each department and for the full sample were made using the RDS package in R. These plots are displayed in the Appendix.

Network size and sample weighting

Similar to the RDS approach, network size was used to derive the Volz-Heckathorn (VH) weights for the LTS samples, i.e., weights were inversely proportional to the self-reported network sizes. The VH (RDS-II) approach assumes that the sampling process was a random walk through the network of the target population. We treated Kédougou and Saraya departments as separate networks and applied weights for the two departments separately. When combining the two samples, the weights reflecting the relative sample size for the two departments were applied. We did not weight the sample for the study population (i.e., women engaged in commercial sex in each department) due to the lack of such population size estimates.

Figure 2 shows the unweighted network size by recruitment wave. It can be seen that the network size of respondents' ranges between 1 and 50. Convergence occurred for network size early in the sample. Compared to the baseline result, the reported network size of the endline respondents were generally lower than the baseline respondents. To avoid overrepresentation of a few "outlier" samples reported with extraordinarily large network size, we excluded those with network size of 20 or more in the VH weighting procedure and further analysis. The weights were scaled so that the weighted sample size equated to the unweighted sample size.

Figure 2. Network size of respondents by wave (based on unweighted data)



The solid red lines through the network size dots are the mean network sizes for respondents of each wave. Respondents' network size was obtained from the question: "if we were to give you as many coupons as you want, how many of these people [i.e., girls and young women that you know and who know you, in the department, aged between 18 and 30, who have lived the department for at least one month, and that you have seen in the last month] do you think you could offer them a coupon by this time next week?" This question was asked for each department separately, with the sum of the respondent's network size from both departments being plotted here.

Figure 3. Histogram of network size (based on unweighted, aggregated data)

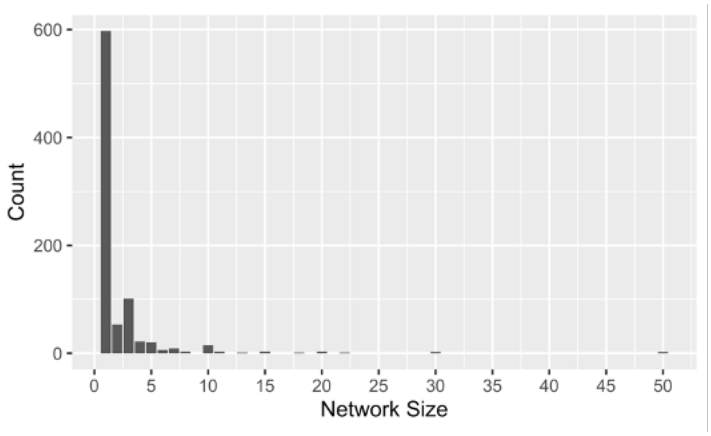
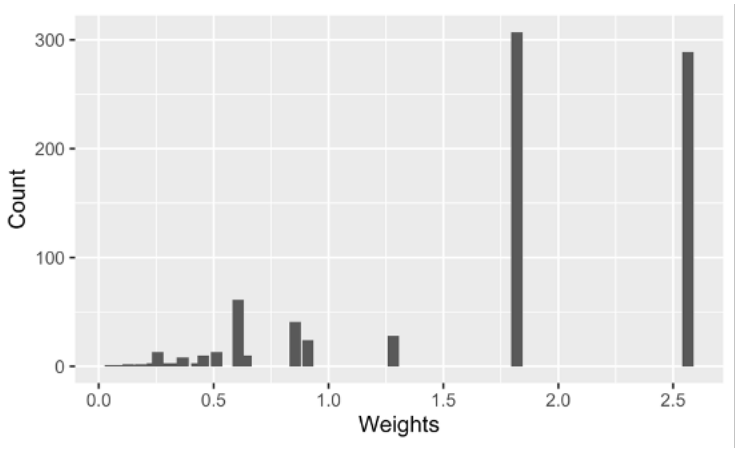


Figure 4. Histogram of sample weights (based on aggregated data)



The sample weights were calculated using the VH method. All the quantitative results are weighted estimates based on the VH approach thereafter.

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