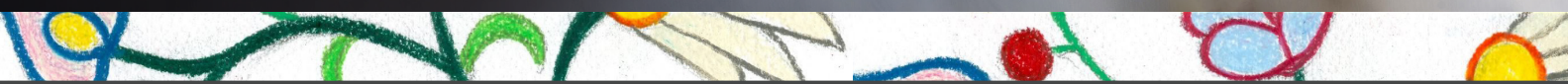


Native+ Students Involved in Trading Sex: Data from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey



Information about Native+ youth involvement in trading sex is lacking, representing a critical gap and hindering work in the field. Trading sex presents many harms to young people, and pre-existing social and historical inequalities further place Native+ youth at risk for harm. This brief shares prevalence estimates about trading sex among Native+ high school students based on the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) and reports on the process, findings and disruption strategies identified by a team of Native+ youth researchers.

Have you ever traded sex or sexual activity to receive money, food, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, or anything else?

NO YES

1.3% of all students answered "yes"

4.3% of Native+ students answered "yes"

What is Native+? Our advisory team defines Native+ as those students who self-identify as only American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN), AIAN plus an additional race (+), only Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI), and NHPI +. This definition honors the sovereignty of Indigenous nations to determine community membership and reflects the racial diversity in community and the shared experiences of Indigenous peoples with colonialism, which has been linked to sexual exploitation.^{1,2,3}

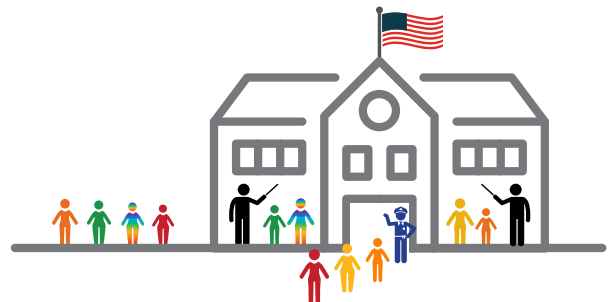


Students with diverse races and ethnicities reported different rates of trading sex.

Percentage of youth who answered "yes" within each category.

Native+	4.3%
Asian/Asian American	0.5%
Black, African, or African American	1.2%
Hispanic/Latinx	1.2%
White	1.1%
North African/Middle Eastern	2.5%
Multiple Races	1.8%

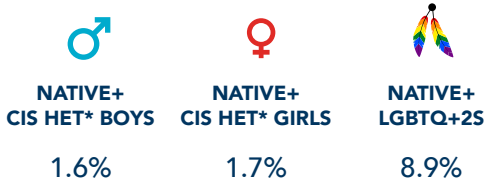
These rates are likely underestimates of the actual numbers of Native+ youth who trade sex. The MSS is completed in schools and does not include youth who were absent from school on the day of the survey or youth who do not attend school. Some Native+ youth do not regularly attend school, with absences related to disproportionate expulsion and suspension rates, experiences such as racism, historical trauma, bullying, and a lack of resources. Also, students may be reluctant to answer "yes" to the question about trading sex for reasons like shame or fear.



¹ Smith, A. (2015). *Conquest: sexual violence and American Indian genocide*. Duke University Press.
² Deer, S. (2015). *The beginning and end of rape: Confronting sexual violence in Native America*. U of Minnesota Press.
³ Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark, C., & Hudon, E. (2011). *Garden of truth: The prostitution and trafficking of Native women in Minnesota*. Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition.

Prevalence by Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation

Native+ students of many gender identities and sexual orientations reported trading sex, but LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer and Questioning+) and/or 2-Spirit (2S)-identified Native+ youth reported rates far exceeding the rates of other youth.



*Cis = Cisgender is a term for those whose gender aligns with their birth assigned sex. Het = heterosexual (straight).

We use the term **“trading sex”** to be consistent with the wording of the MSS survey question. This can include many different experiences, such as exchanging sex for basic needs like food or shelter. It can also include experiences of trafficking.

“Two-Spirit” or **“2-Spirit”** refers to a person of a culturally and spiritually distinct gender exclusively recognized by Native American Nations.⁴ Before colonization, diverse sexual orientation and gender identities were common in many tribes. Two-Spirit people held important roles, which were targeted under colonization. Today, young people use many terms to describe themselves.

MENTAL HEALTH

Increased mental health concerns are reported by Native+ youth who trade sex.

76% of Native+ youth who have traded sex have seriously considered attempting suicide

81% of Native+ youth who have traded sex and identify as LGBTQ+2S have seriously considered attempting suicide

MINNESOTA YOUTH SEX TRADING (MYST) YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR) PROJECT

Despite being ~1% of the population, 8% of the women and girls murdered in Minnesota were Native American.⁵ Over half of cisgender Native women and 27.5% of cisgender Native men reported sexual assault in their lifetime.⁶ Two-Spirit men are up to six times more likely to experience sexual violence.⁷ The vast majority of perpetrators are non-Native, and many victims report racialized experiences of violence.⁸ We established a Native+ YPAR team to help us to better understand issues of sexual violence, exploitation, and sex trading and identify the root causes of vulnerability, which are summarized below.

Roots of Vulnerability



Lack of Basic Resources



Symbiotic Exploitation of Native Land and Bodies



Pervasive Stereotypes



Colonial and Historical Trauma



Misplaced Help



Unresponsive Legal Systems

Strategies for Disruption

Using a 7th generation analysis, we identified strategies with the potential to disrupt these roots of vulnerability. We present these socially transformative strategies as interconnected modes of prevention and intervention.

Decolonize & Revitalize

Efforts to revitalize language, lifeways and knowledge, particularly those related to the roles of women and Two-Spirit community members

Indigenized Civic Action

Promote civic education, engagement, leadership and movement building by, for and with Indigenous youth

Critical Education

Create outlets for youth with historically-accurate, culturally-responsive education to support identity and healthy relations

Basic Resources

Support health care, housing, food security and public safety as human rights

Campaigns to Counter

Develop public campaigns that counter mainstream stereotypes

Righteous Anger, Healing & Mourning

Create opportunities to mourn, grieve, heal and to support thriving

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Youth, families and services providers can find culturally-specific assistance and resources at: Strong Hearts – strongheartshelpline.org; Tribal Resource Tool (online directory) – tribalresourcetool.org; MN Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition – miwsac.org.

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4 This definition was created on February 23, 2021 by Two-Spirit elders: Marlon Fixico, Beverly Little Thunder, Clyde Hall, Senator Red Dawn Foster, Monique Muffie Mousseau, and Felipa De Leon.

5 MartinRodgers, N. & Pendleton, V. (2020). Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3CGISbO>.

6 Rosay, A. B. (2016). Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. National Institute of Justice Research Report. NCJ 249736. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

7 Dame, J., Oliffe, J. L., Hill, N., Carrier, L., & Evans-Amalu, K. (2020). Sexual violence among men who have sex with men and two-spirit peoples: A scoping review. The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 29(2), 240-248.

8 Amnesty International (2007). Maze of Injustice.

Banner art created by K.S. Blue (Anishinaabe). www.ksavblu.com Thank you for allowing us to display it here.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The Minnesota Student Survey is coordinated by the Departments of Education, Health, Human Services, and Public Safety. In 2022, 70% of districts participated (51% and 41% of statewide enrollment for 9th and 11th grade students, respectively). 52,428 students answered the sex trading question; 2,045 of those were Native+ students. Smaller samples of students in alternative schools, area learning centers (ALCs), and juvenile correctional facilities are also available.

MYST PROJECT



Project funded by

