



The Centre

Canadian Centre to
End Human Trafficking.

Human Trafficking Trends in Canada

2019-2020



The Centre

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End Human Trafficking.**

The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (“The Centre”) is a national charity dedicated to ending all types of human trafficking in Canada.

The Centre focuses on four priority areas:

- public education and awareness
- research and data collection
- convening and knowledge transfer
- policy development and advocacy

The Centre works with stakeholders and organizations to advance best practices, eliminate duplicate efforts, and enable coordination across sectors by providing access to networks and specialized skills.

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01.

Introduction

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A Letter from the Executive Director

In 2013, the *National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada* launched an investigation into the nature of human trafficking in our country. The Task Force engaged survivors and experts in an 18-month review that culminated in a call to action:



“It [will take] sustained and strategic government leadership to bring about the system changes, supports for women and girls, and public awareness efforts to end sex trafficking in Canada,” the report’s authors concluded. **“It also requires all of us to do our part.”¹**

In the years since the release of the Task Force Report, *“NO MORE” Ending Sex-Trafficking in Canada*, important steps have been taken to address this terrible crime. However, limited information about how trafficking operates in Canada – coupled with a persistent lack of coordination among governments, service providers, law enforcement, and others – continues to constrain our collective ability to develop evidence-informed solutions.

The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (“The Centre”) was established in 2016 to facilitate innovative policy development and knowledge-sharing to eliminate trafficking in our country. The Centre launched the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019 to provide localized, trauma-informed support and referrals to those impacted by this crime. Anonymous data, collected between 2019-20 from these hotline interactions, form the basis of this report.

Among the report's many findings, we identified that sex and labour trafficking are the most common forms of human trafficking in Canada. We determined that sex trafficking disproportionately impacts cis women and girls, transgender men and women, and gender non-conforming individuals. The data also shows that family and friends play a critical role in supporting victims/survivors. This finding is important since few studies have assessed the impact that close personal networks – particularly parents – have on supporting victims/survivors. Finally, the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on social services, and these issues continue to persist to the present day.

This report is one of many initiatives The Centre is launching to shed light on human trafficking in Canada. We will also be enhancing public awareness, informing legislation, advocating for trauma-informed policies and services, and improving information-sharing across sectors.

On behalf of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, I would like to thank Public Safety Canada and the Pathy Family Foundation for supporting our organization and the Hotline. Without their support the Hotline would not exist and the Centre would be unable to do its important work.

I also want to thank the 900+ service providers and law enforcement agencies across Canada that we partner with to support those impacted by human trafficking.

A special thanks to Drs. Shelagh Roxburgh and Candice Shaw for writing the foreword to this report. Their contribution provides important insight into how human trafficking impacts Canada's Indigenous communities, a topic The Centre will examine in detail in future reports.

Finally, I would like to thank my entire team and our Board of Directors. The passion, dedication, and brilliance they bring to this work each day is inspiring. They are making a difference in our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia Drydyk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia Drydyk
Executive Director

Foreword:

Human Trafficking Needs to be Addressed through a Decolonial Lens

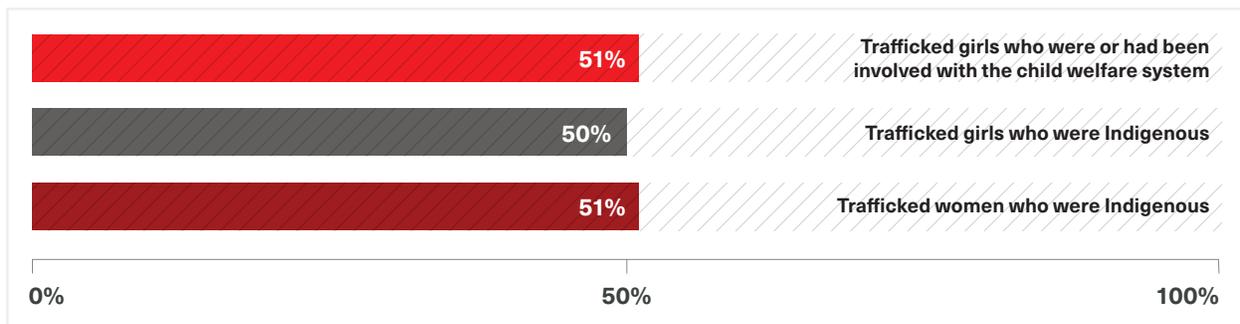
Dr. Shelagh Roxburgh and Dr. Candice Shaw

The story of trafficking in Indigenous peoples is long and complex. It is also well hidden in Canada, where the reality of settler colonialism is obscured so that dominant myths about Indigenous peoples can be perpetuated, and settler privileges can be protected. Breaking through the dominant, colonial narratives about violence in our society is a challenge – but progress is being made. Increasingly, anti-trafficking advocates and allies are contesting dominant frameworks that erase Indigenous peoples, include them as minorities, or portray the exploitation of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse through the lens of criminalization.²

Dominant anti-trafficking narratives have worked to increase awareness of trafficking through simple messages that rely on a strong dichotomy between victims and perpetrators.³ In these stories, young girls are preyed upon by men who kidnap them, hold them hostage, and exploit them for money. These representations of human trafficking inform people's understanding of who is a victim and who is a criminal and allows them to apply these categories in the identification of trafficking.⁴ Unfortunately, these stories overlook important historical and contemporary complexities, such as colonialism, racism, and the role of the state as a 'complicit criminal.'⁵

Anti-trafficking initiatives have long held the state as a source of protection and as a provider of rights, rescuing victims from violence and punishing offenders through criminal and legal processes. Rarely is the state considered as a potential source of violence or, more specifically, as a colonial system that creates benefits for the settler population explicitly at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Yet, colonialism is at the core of human trafficking in Canada. Colonialism underlies the inability of the Canadian justice system to recognize Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples as victims and

Percentage of Indigenous women and girls identified as being victims of human trafficking.



“prevents them from receiving the assistance and care that would accompany that recognition.”⁶ Coming to terms with the full scope of human trafficking also means acknowledging the long history of this crime as well as the broader social context of exploitation in Canada, where the victimization of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples is normalized and endemic.⁷

^ **Figure 1** shows data from the 2014 National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada.

Hints of this reality are visible in evidence provided by civil society efforts to reveal the true scale of trafficking in Canada. As mentioned above, in 2014 the National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada released their report, *“NO MORE” Ending Sex-Trafficking in Canada*. The Task Force conducted a survey of 534 agencies across Canada and heard from 46 service providers who attended a roundtable on trafficking. The Task Force found that when asked “details about the trafficked and sexually exploited women and girls they served, the organizations estimated:

- **51% of trafficked girls were or had been involved with the child welfare system.**
- **50% of trafficked girls and 51% of trafficked women were Indigenous.”⁸**

It is important to note that these two categories are not mutually exclusive; Indigenous children are grossly overrepresented in child welfare systems, comprising more than half of children in care across the country.⁹

Though it is estimated that Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected, this over-representation is not reflected in national conversations about human trafficking or in many anti-trafficking initiatives. In a study of anti-trafficking efforts in Canada, Dr. Julie Kaye from the University of Saskatchewan traces the invisibility of Indigenous experiences today to early anti-trafficking discourse that emerged “alongside concerns over white slavery.”¹⁰ This twentieth century discourse focused heavily on the narrative of innocent girls who were coerced and exploited, drawing on the colonial imagination of ‘innocence’ as “largely synonymous with whiteness and purity.”¹¹ This

construction of the ideal victim draws on and reinforces the “enduring colonial racist and sexist stereotype of dirty, promiscuous, and deviant Indigenous femininity,” and facilitates the erasure of Indigenous victims, normalizing and naturalizing their experiences of violence.¹²

The erasure of Indigenous experiences is extended to anti-trafficking responses that rely on colonial state structures; victims are provided support and protection through the same violent systems that oppress Indigenous peoples.¹³ The disconnect between dominant anti-trafficking responses and the colonial context in Canada is exemplified in anti-trafficking laws and definitions that echo colonial processes of dispossession, forced relocation, the abduction of children, and coercive exploitation.¹⁴ The consequences are numerous. Of particular importance: Indigenous victims are alienated by anti-trafficking discourses that not only fail to acknowledge their experiences, but which also reinforce the processes by which they are victimized.

The erasure of Indigenous experiences is extended to anti-trafficking responses that rely on colonial state structures; victims are provided support and protection through the same violent systems that oppress Indigenous peoples.

This in turn means that Indigenous victims may be less likely to seek support because their experiences will not be understood, or they will be directed to the colonial state by anti-trafficking responses. Because their experiences of trafficking are further normalized by anti-trafficking discourses, Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples may also be less able to identify their own experiences as trafficking. In Canada, these biases have created a two-tier advocacy environment, where large anti-trafficking advocates operate separately from Indigenous community-based organizations, in part, because many anti-trafficking advocates are unable to confront colonial violence within “mainstream Canadian systems.”¹⁵

It is difficult for many to confront and accept that Indigenous peoples are presently, and have been colonized and oppressed, and are subjected to casual violence across Canada. Indigenous peoples are often made to feel that their lives are not valued, in fact, there is an implicit systemic expectation that they will be victimized and are not worth helping.¹⁶ For Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, it is common that service providers expect exploitation to occur, creating a climate of “professional indifference” where Indigenous girls are “treated differently by police and service providers.”¹⁷ It is also common that Indigenous victims are blamed for the violence they are subjected to or are criminalized as opposed to being helped. These responses reflect deep colonial biases, and a willingness to ignore colonial violence and assume that Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples can protect themselves from an unsafe environment.¹⁸

The trafficking of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples has been normalized in Canada through historical processes that have been transformed over time, but which persist as ubiquitous expressions of colonial violence. Before Canada existed, the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls began with the introduction of slavery by French and British colonists, who bought and sold Indigenous slaves until the practice was abolished in 1834.¹⁹ Shortly after the abolition of slavery, the 'reserve,' or reservation system was introduced, in which entire nations were forcibly relocated onto parcels of land that they could not leave without permission from Indian agents. In this system, Indigenous peoples were separated from their lands and livelihoods, and in many cases, the extermination of their hunting rights and food sources, such as the eradication of the buffalo, served the intended purpose of coercing Indigenous peoples to comply with government demands.

Indigenous peoples were forced into poverty and dependence by the colonial state, and then their lands and people were exploited under duress, their children were abducted and committed into Residential Schools. Meanwhile, Indigenous women and girls were victimized by Indian agents, the North-West Mounted Police, and settlers in exchange for access to essential goods.²⁰ The forced relocation of entire Indigenous communities continued well into the late 1960s, and the abduction of Indigenous children continued in the form of the Sixties Scoop, and arguably persists in today's Millennial Scoop.²¹ For Inuit communities, intensive colonization, forced relocations, the slaughter of sled dogs to prevent movement and to limit livelihoods, and the exploitation of women and girls have occurred within one lifetime, fundamentally altering Inuit lives and devastating communities.²²

Throughout these complex episodes, violence, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking have dominated colonial policies to eradicate and suppress Indigenous peoples and have been forcibly integrated into Indigenous peoples lived realities and daily survival. Adding to this complexity is the ongoing pressure of poverty which exposes Indigenous women and girls to predators and facilitates their criminalization.²³ Rather than offering protection, the criminal justice system often targets Indigenous women and girls through the biased application of the law and through violence perpetrated by police officers.²⁴ Contrary to the dominant anti-trafficking response that relies on state protection and the support of social services, the National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada found that 71% of trafficking survivors "reported being forced to have sex with doctors, 60% with judges, 80% with police, and 40% with social workers."²⁵

It is understandable that Indigenous women and girls who are being exploited and trafficked may have difficulty identifying their experiences as trafficking, may be reluctant to reach out to police and mainstream social services, or may be unwilling to identify themselves as Indigenous when seeking help. Because of

these factors, Indigenous women and girls are less likely to be captured by police data, social service organizations, and dominant anti-trafficking initiatives.

These complexities also highlight the need to expand trafficking discourse to include challenging conversations that fall outside the typical storyline. Some trafficking stories do involve criminal predators who appear suddenly in someone's life; others involve trafficking by family or friends for intermittent periods of time.

It is also imperative to broach the subject of state and society complicity. Police violence must be addressed. While politicians and news media may celebrate stories of economic development, such as mining or oil, Indigenous communities have long known that these same projects increase exploitation and trafficking.²⁶ Correlations between development projects and violence against Indigenous people, particularly women, girls, and gender-diverse-peoples, are a well-documented phenomenon.

Anti-trafficking narratives must begin to grapple with the complex issue of colonialism and the systemic grooming and mass victimization of Indigenous peoples. It is essential that the boundaries that separate the two spheres of anti-trafficking discourse and Indigenous experience are broken down.

The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking has begun this important work and is opening dialogue with Indigenous organizations across Canada. The inclusion of this section in this report is a testament to this work, and their ongoing work with Indigenous advocates and organizations point to a willingness to bring colonialism into focus and to expand anti-trafficking discourse to include Indigenous experiences. Working together, Indigenous and anti-trafficking advocates can challenge the normalization of violence against Indigenous peoples and begin to address and unsettle the very foundations of violence in our society. ■

Executive Summary

Human trafficking is often invisible to those not directly impacted by it. The hidden nature of this crime has meant that most Canadians are completely unaware that it occurs in this country. Those who are familiar with trafficking struggle to appreciate the scope and scale of the issue. This is due, in part, to the absence of data. Without credible statistics, decision-makers are unable to understand how human trafficking operates in Canada, making it difficult to develop evidence-informed solutions that can effectively end it.

On May 29, 2019, The Centre launched the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (“Hotline”) to offer localized and immediate support to anyone impacted by trafficking.

The Criminal Code of Canada defines human trafficking as recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, to facilitate their exploitation.²⁷

The Hotline provides two essential functions:



- 1. A confidential, multilingual service, operating 24/7 to connect Canadians with over 900 social and legal service providers nation-wide.** Hotline staff, known as Hotline Response Advocates (HRAs), use a trauma-informed approach that seeks to understand, affirm and respond to the unique experience and needs of each victim/survivor.



- 2. The Hotline enables The Centre to collect and store data securely on identified human trafficking cases.** During the Hotline's first full year of operations (May 29, 2019 to May 28, 2020), HRAs identified 415 cases of human trafficking and 593 victims/survivors who were associated with these cases. These cases provide unique details into how trafficking impacts victims/survivors, family, friends and social service providers.

Key Findings

This report contains observations and insights that have been derived from our first year of data collection and analysis. It also includes supplementary research that provides additional details and context, where necessary.

1. Sex and labour trafficking are the two dominant forms of human trafficking in Canada.



The most common type of trafficking identified by The Centre in 2019-20 was sex trafficking (71%), followed by labour trafficking (7%). The Centre believes that labour trafficking is currently underreported in the dataset.



Approximately 23% of cases were identified as “not specified” or “other.”

2. Sex trafficking is primarily a gender-based crime.



90% of victims/survivors were women or girls.



2% of victims/survivors were transgender women and men, and gender non-conforming individuals, a rate that significantly exceeds their relative share of the population (0.24%).²⁸

3. The Hotline is directly supporting victims/survivors.



1 in 3 trafficking signals received came from a victim/survivor. This group represented the largest users of the Hotline.



44% of victims/survivors accessed the Hotline while they were being trafficked.



39% of victims/survivors accessed the Hotline after they had exited trafficking.

4. Accessing support for human trafficking is a complex process.



Qualitative evidence suggests that victims/survivors often find it difficult to navigate government and social service processes.

5. Family and friends play a vital role in supporting victims/survivors but they need help spotting and documenting the signs of trafficking.



26% of trafficking signals to the Hotline were from family members and friends, who were cited by HRAs as crucial to helping the victim/survivor find care.

6. COVID-19 had a negative impact on available social services, especially access to shelter supports.



A large proportion of service providers had to modify their programs, including moving services online, limiting space for social distancing, and reducing hours.



Despite their best efforts, social service providers are still struggling to serve victims/survivors due to COVID restrictions, underfunding and burnout.

* “Not specified” indicates situations where someone contacts the Hotline without specifying the nature of the trafficking situation. “Other” includes cases that were classified as both sex and labour, and trafficking situations that involved forced begging, fraud, and other crimes.

There is more to be done.

The establishment of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline has enabled the collection of trafficking statistics that previously went unreported. It is also the first national dataset on human trafficking in Canada that does not rely on police-reported cases. These are significant achievements; however, it is important to remember the dataset is still in an early stage of development.

The Centre is actively working to build additional data points and improve collection processes where information gaps persist. For example, more data is needed to shed light on how human trafficking impacts historically marginalized groups, including Indigenous, Black and 2SLGBTQI+ communities, migrant workers, and those with precarious immigration status. More data is also needed to identify where trafficking is occurring across the country.

The Centre is working with partners to address these knowledge gaps so that we can enhance future reporting. In the interim, this report incorporates the following resources to supplement the Hotline's preliminary human trafficking data:

- **Interviews with Hotline Response Advocates:** A series of interviews were conducted with HRAs to add greater context to the quantitative data that was captured by the Hotline;
- **Service provider survey:** In April 2020, The Centre distributed a survey to members of its National Referral Directory to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted social services during the early stages of the outbreak; and,
- **Literature review:** Existing research was compiled to shed light on how trafficking impacts some of our country's most vulnerable demographic groups.

In releasing this report, it is the Centre's hope that this information may serve as a resource to improve our understanding of human trafficking and how Canadians may collectively end it.



"I remember one situation in which the victim called us when she only had a few minutes before the trafficker was returning with a John and said 'I can't do this anymore. I have to get out of here.' We were able to help her get to a safe space. That was one case that really stands out because it was like being in the situation myself."

— Hotline Response Advocate



02. Human Trafficking Trends in Canada

Human Trafficking Trends in Canada

The Hotline's 2019-2020 data helped uncover **six broad trends** that explain how human trafficking impacts Canadians.

Before examining the trends in depth, it's important to make a few clarifications. First, not all signals received by the Hotline are related to human trafficking. Individuals may reach out to the Hotline in situations where crimes or warning signs are similar (e.g., domestic violence) but trafficking is not occurring. Whenever the Hotline receives a signal it is connected to a "case," which refers to a unique situation, event, or series of events. One person or multiple people may contact the Hotline several times about a particular case.

Second, of the trafficking cases identified by the Hotline, 7% were reported to law enforcement. The low percentage of reported cases reflects the Hotline's policy of only reporting cases to law enforcement if one or more of the following factors have been met:

- the victim/survivor provides consent;
- a minor is involved; or,
- the victim/survivor is in immediate danger.

Finally, since The Centre has only one year of Hotline data, this section includes supplementary research – interviews with Hotline Response Advocates and survey data from social service providers. This information adds context to the following trends and conclusions that are beginning to emerge.

"Signal" refers to any method an individual uses to communicate with the Hotline, including by phone, webchat, email, and webform.



7% of the trafficking cases identified to the Hotline were reported to law enforcement.

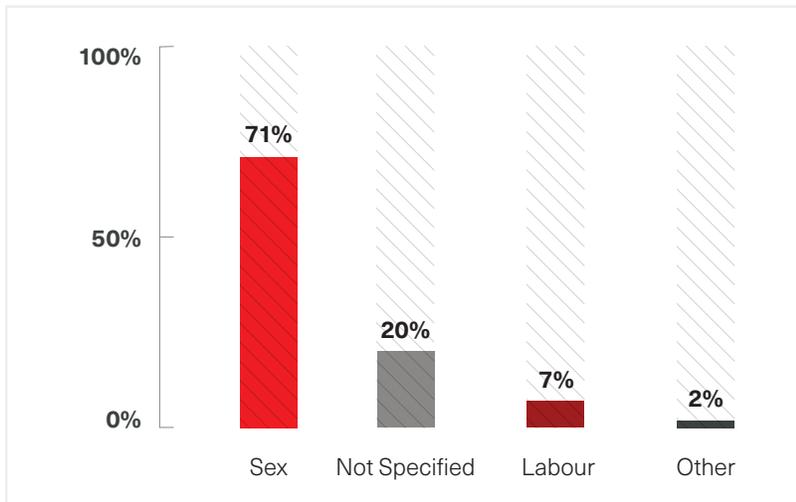


1. Sex and labour trafficking are the two dominant forms of human trafficking in Canada.

In 2019-20, the most common type of trafficking identified by the Hotline was sex trafficking (71%), followed by labour trafficking (7%). Approximately 20% of cases were identified as “not specified,” which indicates situations where someone contacts the Hotline without specifying the nature of the trafficking situation.

A small proportion (2%) of human trafficking cases were classified as “Other.” This category includes cases that were identified as both sex and labour, and/or where the situation involved other crimes such as forced begging, fraud, and other crimes.

Types of Trafficking



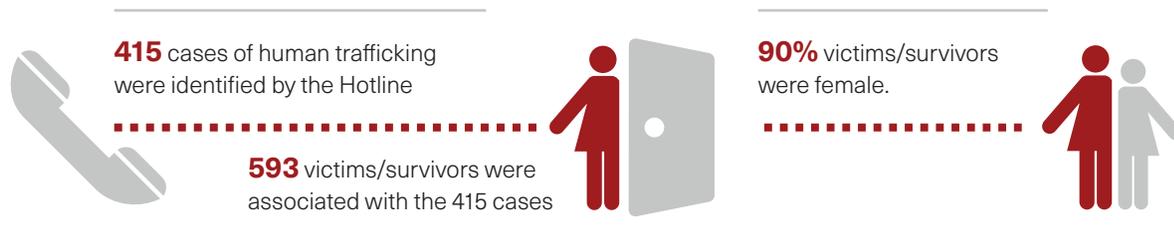
< **Figure 2** offers preliminary insight into how trafficking takes place in Canada. It is important to note that many sex and labour trafficking cases continue to go unreported. Therefore, these numbers only reflect situations that were identified by Hotline staff during 2019-20.



2. Sex trafficking is a gender-based crime.

As mentioned above, between 2019-2020, the Hotline identified 415 cases of human trafficking, and 593 victims/survivors who were associated with these cases.* Importantly, a staggering 90% victims/survivors were female.† This finding may be intuitive to some Canadians, particularly social service providers who work with victims and survivors every day. What makes this statistic helpful is that it provides additional evidence that human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, needs to be understood and addressed as gender-based violence.

Yet, it is not just women and girls who are disproportionately targeted by traffickers. The data shows that transgender men, women and gender non-conforming individuals have higher rates of



“At the beginning of being trafficked, [some victims] don’t even know there’s such thing as human trafficking. They may be thinking, ‘Oh, there’s this guy who’s pursuing me who wants a romantic relationship.’ So, I always explain to them that at the beginning, trafficking mostly looks like a relationship. It looks like someone who wants to get to know you. Someone who cares about you. They’re asking you all of these questions because they want to get to know you. But, in reality, they’re just trying to find a way to control you.”

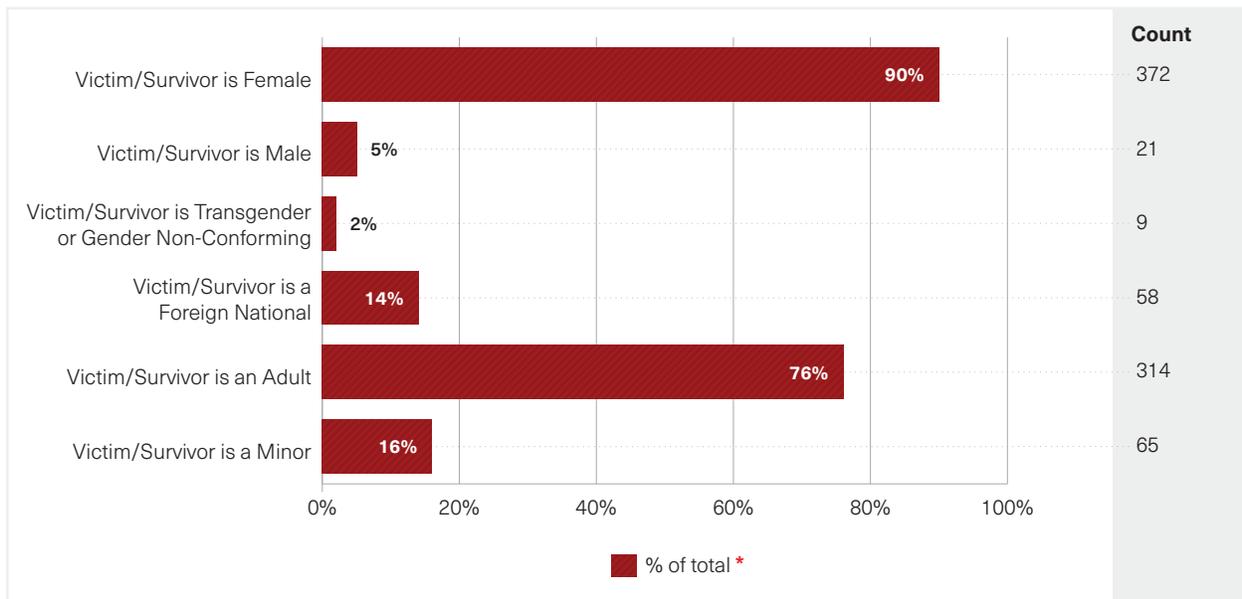
— **Hotline Response Advocate**

* When a signaller says that they are a trafficking victim/survivor, the case is classified as trafficking even if the signaller doesn’t share the action, relationship and purpose elements of the Criminal Code definition. The Hotline recognizes that victims/survivors are experts of their own experience, and depending on their needs, may not share their full story. Response Advocates, for example, can provide referrals knowing only basic information about a victim/survivor.

† It is possible that male victims are underreported in the data. Nevertheless, the data is clear that human trafficking disproportionately impacts women and girls.

victimization relative to their population size. This group represents 2% of all victims/survivors calling into the Hotline despite comprising only 0.24% of the Canadian population.²⁹ Although the Hotline's data is limited, this preliminary finding aligns with other studies that have shown that transgender and gender non-conforming people experience disproportionately higher rates of violence than other demographic groups.³⁰

Demographic characteristics of the 593 victims/survivors identified by the Hotline.



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 * **Figure 3:** Please note that for some characteristics, such as gender, the percentages do not sum to one hundred percent or 593 victims/survivors because categories are not mutually exclusive. A case may involve more than one victim/survivor, and may identify a female victim/survivor and a transgender victim/survivor, for example. Additionally, the Hotline only records demographic information that is clearly communicated to HRAs. The data reflects the age of a victim/survivor at the time of contact with the Hotline.



“A lot of the time it’s a friend talking to us about a bad boyfriend or a new boyfriend that’s coming into the victim’s life. They don’t fully understand what trafficking is, or what the full extent of the relationship is but they have a feeling that their friend is in trouble. Young people typically do not want to turn to parents or teachers, actions that could get their friend in trouble.”

— Hotline Response Advocate



3. The Hotline is directly supporting victims/survivors.

The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline was established to help victims/survivors exit their trafficking situation and gain access to supports that best meet their needs. Data from the first full year of operations indicates that the Hotline has made important progress towards this objective. Of all signallers that reached out to the Hotline about a trafficking situation, the largest proportion (representing approximately 1 in 3) were victims/survivors.

“Signaller” refers to a person who uses any of the available methods to communicate with the Hotline (e.g., by phone, webchat, email, and webform).

Type of Signaller – Human Trafficking Cases

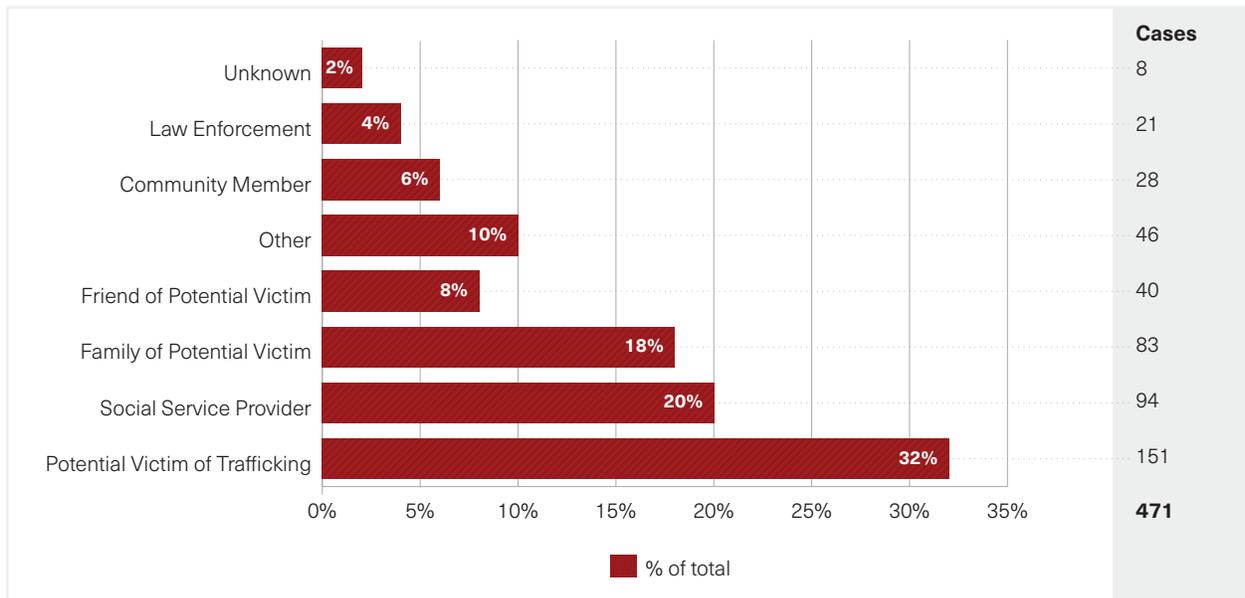
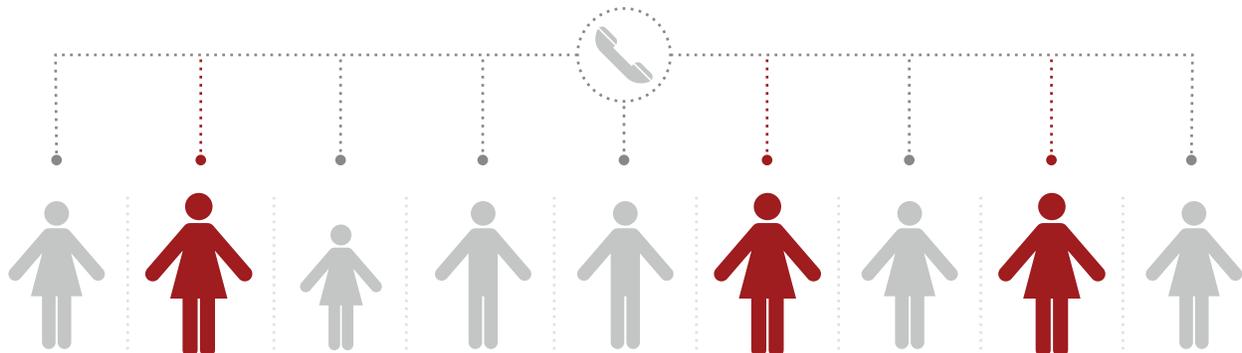


Figure 4



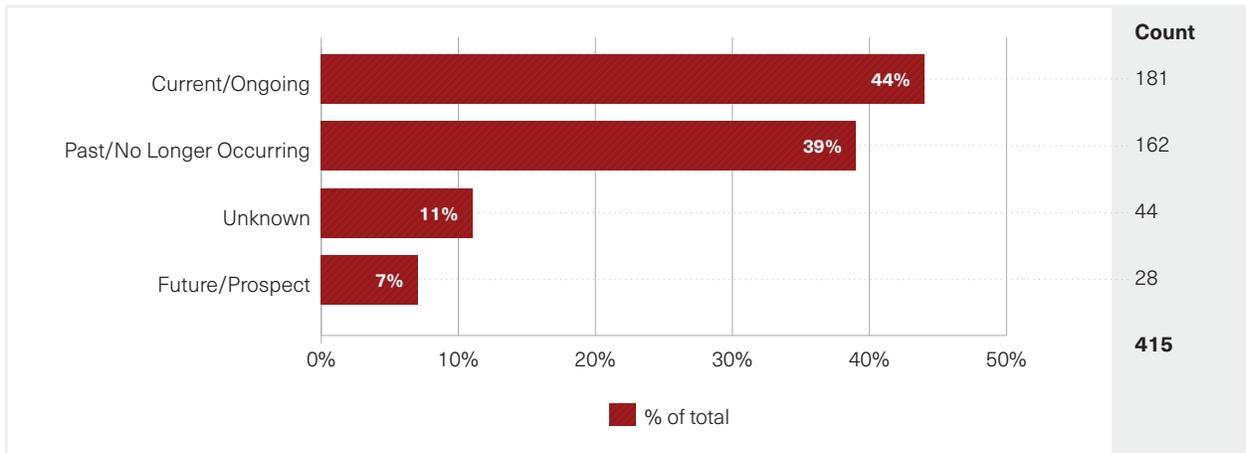
1 in 3 signallers reaching out to the Hotline were victims/survivors

Furthermore, the data indicates that victims/survivors need support before, during, and after the trafficking situation has ended. Figure 5 shows that victims/survivors accessed the Hotline while they were being trafficked and after they had exited in almost equal amounts (44% and 39%, respectfully). The fact that so many people contact the Hotline after the situation has ended underlines the long-term effects that trafficking has on victims/survivors.

The Hotline's ability to connect directly with victims/survivors provides a unique advantage for understanding how human trafficking operates in Canada.

The Hotline's ability to connect directly with victims/survivors is an important finding. First, this group can be psychologically, physically, sexually, and financially harmed by traffickers. Therefore, victim/survivors stand to benefit the most from services that the Hotline provides. Second, due to their lived experience, victims/survivors are able to share details on the nature of human trafficking that other signallers cannot. This data, collected by HRAs, therefore provides a another window into understanding how human trafficking operates in Canada.

Period of Trafficking



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Figure 5



4. Accessing support for human trafficking is a complex process.

The Hotline's data on referrals provides insight into the types of support that the victims/survivors of human trafficking require. During the first year of operations, the Hotline Response Advocates provided 329 referrals in relation to trafficking case. The most common referral was for shelter or housing assistance (26%), of which 69% were for an emergency or short-term shelter, and 31% were for a transitional or long-term shelter. Other social services in higher demand include supportive counselling (22%), and case management (19%).*

Access to expert human trafficking counselling services is essential to the recovery and well-being of victims/survivors. In this regard, the Hotline can be an effective resource for those who seek specialized help.

Anecdotal evidence from Hotline Response Advocate interviews found significant barriers in Canada's complex web of government and social programs. For example, different eligibility requirements and reporting conditions across jurisdictions are difficult to navigate, can be difficult to follow, particularly for individuals who are in desperate situations. What's more, the shortage of shelter spaces - a service that became more complicated to administer during the COVID-19 pandemic - impairs victims/survivors' ability to flee dangerous circumstances.

The data also found that victims/survivors of human trafficking also need access to safe and affordable housing. The need for housing represents a systemic challenge for victims/survivors who wish to exit their situation and have no where else to turn. Until housing needs are met, victims/survivors may remain trapped in violence or unable to move forward with their recovery.

26% of referrals were for shelter or housing assistance



31% of all **shelter** referrals were for transitional or long-term shelter



19% of referrals were for case management



69% of all shelter referrals were for an emergency or short-term shelter

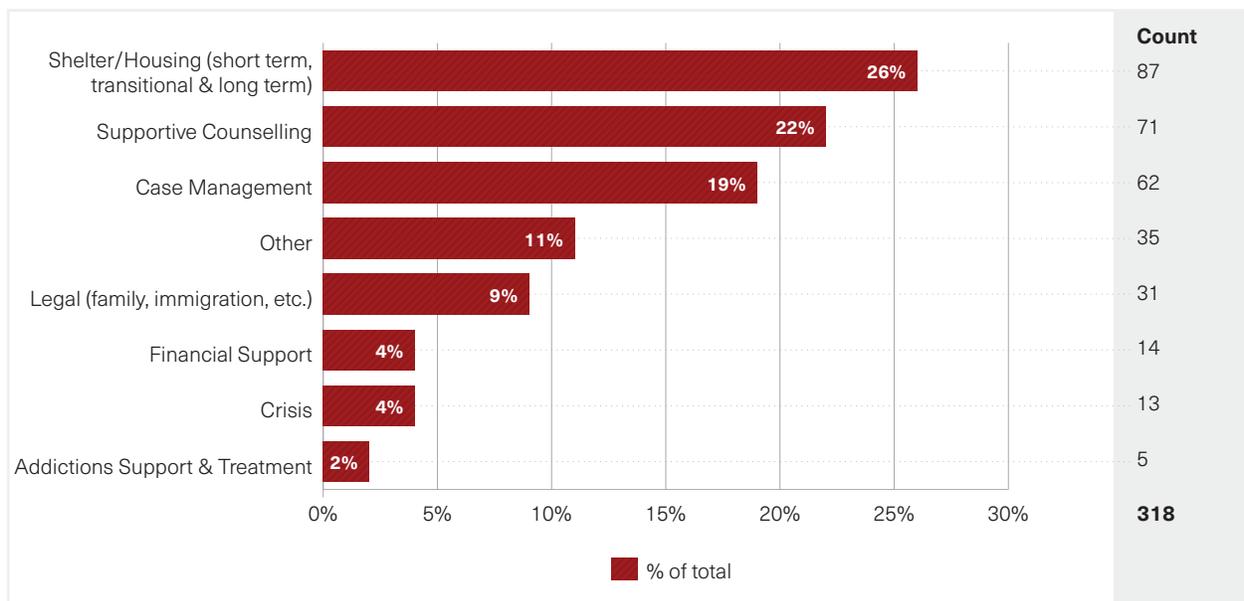


22% of referrals were for supportive counselling

* Case management is a process whereby a professional helps a victim/survivor assess their needs, and plan and coordinate how to address those needs through different services. Case managers often provide "system navigation" to help victims/survivors understand the different options available to them, how to qualify for different programs, and who to contact.

Finally, the Hotline data underlined the importance of counselling services. The exploitation that is inherent in human trafficking can create a traumatic experience that is unique from other forms of abuse. Access to expert human trafficking counselling services is essential to the recovery and well-being of victims/survivors. In this regard, the Hotline can be an effective resource for those who seek specialized help.

Types of Referrals - Trafficking Cases



^
Figure 6



“The social service system can be overwhelming to someone who is new to it or in a desperate place. There can be red tape, and government departments are siloed. It’s a full-time job to figure out what services are available and how to access them. We’ve seen family members step up and advocate for their loved one and to help the individual navigate the social services processes.”

— Hotline Response Advocate



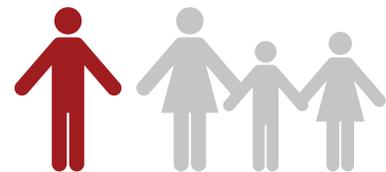
5. Family and friends play a vital role in supporting victims/survivors, but they need help spotting and documenting the signs of trafficking.

The 2019-20 Hotline data shows that family members and friends play a crucial role in supporting loved ones who are impacted by trafficking. Together, family members and friends comprised 26% of trafficking signals in 2019-2020, the second highest signaller group to the Hotline (see the table on page 20). Family and friends usually contact the Hotline about a trafficking situation that is ongoing, or one that is in the early stages of luring and grooming.

Qualitative evidence indicates that family and friends are critical in supporting victims/survivors. In fact, HRAs said that friends play a pivotal role as victims/survivors are more likely to share their experiences with a friend than a family member. This is especially true of minors.

The HRAs also indicated that many family members need communication strategies to engage. Importantly, loved ones are often unable to provide crucial details that help determine whether trafficking is taking place. Family members can help those impacted by trafficking by simply keeping the lines of communication open, so that their loved one always knows that help is available. However, family and friends often need information and emotional support themselves to navigate this difficult situation.

Moreover, few Canadians are educated on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking or how to talk to a victim/survivor about the situation. This finding underlines the need for consistent and regular information campaigns that educate loved ones of victims/survivors. Such campaigns should focus on giving parents, siblings, friends, and others the tools and information they need to spot the signs of trafficking earlier and support loved ones who are victims/survivors.



26% of all trafficking signals in 2019-2020 were from family members and friends



“By calling us, the family gets more involved, and they avoid certain mistakes that might make the victim withdraw or stop talking to them. We try to explain the situation to loved ones, including the ambivalent feelings that the victim often has with their trafficker. That can be something that is valuable for families because they, of course, don’t necessarily understand the manipulation that has been happening.”

— Hotline Response Advocate



6. COVID-19 had a negative impact on available social services, especially access to shelter supports.

At the onset of the pandemic (April-May 2020), The Centre distributed a survey to service providers across Canada to understand how COVID-19 had impacted social services. The vast majority of the 298 survey respondents indicated that they were still accepting referrals, but with significant modifications such as reduced hours, remote communication, and prioritization of crisis over “non-urgent” needs. Shelter services, in particular, reported changes to accommodate health and safety policies, leading to stricter housing rules, reduced capacity, and temporary hotel placements.

HRAs reported that the loss of in-person services, particularly counselling, has negatively impacted victims/survivors. Individuals who have lived through trafficking situations can experience intense trauma, and often prefer in-person help. Online services also require a computer, reliable internet, and privacy, which may not be readily accessible to every victim/survivor. In addition, victim/survivors may find it even harder to escape their trafficker if they do not have in person locations to go to ask for help.

Finally, some HRAs said they have seen anecdotal evidence that the pandemic has increased human trafficking as youth spend more time online. Additional screen time is one factor that may increase incidences of luring and grooming. HRAs said that demand for online sexual services, such as webcam videos and pornography, appear to have increased during the pandemic. This is a developing but important insight that The Centre will continue to monitor and report on.

It is important to note that the survey only captured information from service providers between April-May 2020. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence from HRA interviews indicates that the challenges faced at the beginning of the pandemic continue to be felt due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, burnout and chronic underfunding.



The majority of respondents indicated they had to modify services to operate in the first few months of the pandemic.

03.

Literature Review:

**The Impact
of Human
Trafficking on
Vulnerable
Communities**

Literature Review:

The Impact of Human Trafficking on Vulnerable Communities

Certain populations in Canada are disproportionately overrepresented as victims/survivors of human trafficking. A review of the existing literature reveals the vulnerability of those who have been marginalized by society. This section provides further insight into the lived experiences of specific communities – Black, 2SLGBTQI+ and Temporary Foreign Workers. In future reports, The Centre’s Hotline data will be able to add further insight into how human trafficking impacts these and other demographic groups.

Black Canadians

Black women and girls in Canada have been impacted by centuries of systemic racism and colonial violence.³¹ In 2017, the United Nations identified that many of Canada’s core institutions are impacted by structural racism, leading to higher levels of poverty, poor educational outcomes, health disparities, and increased criminal justice involvement among Black Canadians.³² These experiences increase the likelihood of exploitation and human trafficking.

Further, violence against Black women and girls is perpetuated by the slavery-era “Jezebel” stereotype.³³ This form of objectification downplays the impact of sexual victimization by portraying Black females as hypersexual.³⁴ Further, systemic anti-Black racism increases marginalization of Black women and girls which can deny them opportunities to safe work environments and social supports.

2SLGBTQI+

Members of sexual and gender minorities, including two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons (2SLGBTQI+) experience higher rates of sexual violence and economic disenfranchisement compared to the heterosexual and cisgender population.³⁵ Ongoing discrimination and marginalization make it easier for traffickers to target members of these communities.

Homeless youth are among the most vulnerable to trafficking and, tragically, 2SLGBTQI+ youth are more likely to experience homelessness.³⁶ In fact, as many as 25-40% of homeless youth in Canada identify as 2SLGBTQI+.³⁷ Homeless youth often experience poverty, unemployment, sexual violence, and mental health challenges, making it easier for a trafficker to target them.³⁸ Other forms of marginalization, such as homophobia and transphobia, also increase the likelihood of homelessness and becoming trafficked.³⁹

Youth understandably want to escape the violence and unpredictability of street life and can be lured by an opportunity that seems “too good to be true,” such as a safe place to stay free of charge.⁴⁰

Once in a trafficking situation, the reality of returning to life on the street may deter victims/survivors from attempting to leave, or from reaching out for help. In sex trafficking situations, homophobia, transphobia and the stigma of sex work can prevent victims/survivors from accessing help.⁴¹ Compounding these barriers, 2SLGBTQI+ have historically been criminalized. This leads to distrust of authorities which is a significant obstacle to escaping a trafficking situation or getting help.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Low wage migrant workers with temporary immigration status are exposed to heightened levels of workplace abuse and trafficking.⁴² Labour migration in Canada is governed by the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the International Mobility Program (IMP).⁴³ Although both programs contain streams for high-skilled and low-skilled occupations, the IMP predominantly enables migration to fill high skilled occupations, whereas the TFWP primarily facilitates migration to fill lower-skilled and low-wage occupations. The two programs are governed with separate rules and requirements.⁴⁴ Overall, workers employed in low skilled occupations in the TFWP - including the Caregiver Program, Seasonal Agricultural Worker

Program, and the Stream for Low-Wage Positions - are at increased risk for workplace abuse and labour trafficking.⁴⁵

At the same time, Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) face significant barriers to reporting abuse and exploitation because they lack legal protections that shield most Canadians from abuse.⁴⁶ Many TFWs are subject to permits that are tied to one specific employer while in Canada.⁴⁷ Workers are understandably afraid to report abuse because their employer can retaliate by letting the work permit expire. This means that if a person is being exploited, they can be led to believe that they must choose between returning to their home country or losing their legal status in Canada.⁴⁸ Many TFWs lack economic alternatives in their home countries and are compelled to remain in exploitative work conditions in Canada. Other barriers to getting help include social and geographic isolation, and language barriers that make it difficult to reach TFWs and inform them of their rights.⁴⁹

04.

It's Time for Action

It's Time for Action

Human trafficking remains invisible to most Canadians. In part, this is due to the absence of data that has made it difficult to understand the prevalence of this crime. This means that decision-makers and the general public cannot fully comprehend how traffickers operate in Canada, the impact on certain demographic groups, and the types of services survivors need most. **Traffickers exploit this lack of awareness to perpetuate their heinous crime.**

The launch of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019 has helped shed light on the nature of trafficking in Canada. Today, The Centre is compiling the only nation-wide, non-police reported data on human trafficking. And, as has been described above, the Hotline's ability to reach survivors allows The Centre to collect data from people who have directly experienced this terrible crime. The information derived from these lived experiences gives us critical intelligence into how human trafficking operates in Canada and provides insight into how to develop effective solutions.



Governments, businesses, academia, front line service providers, and advocates
need to work together on innovative solutions

Yet, more work is needed.

The Centre calls on all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive approach – one that is consistent, well-resourced, collaborative and evidence-based – to end human trafficking in Canada. More specifically, governments, businesses, academia, front line service providers and advocates need to work together on innovative solutions to prevent trafficking, support victims/survivors, increase awareness and detect and deter traffickers. Long running and well-funded national education campaigns, for example, will be essential to help loved ones recognize the warning signs earlier. Devoting resources towards program evaluation is also crucial for identifying and employing evidence-based solutions.

In addition, relationships need to be built with vulnerable groups to establish trust and deepen our collective understanding of how human trafficking touches each community. This relationship-building will be essential for tailoring services and devising solutions that meet each community's unique needs.

Finally, service providers must be at the table when developing and evaluating anti-trafficking solutions. Every day, their tremendous efforts make a difference in the lives of Canadians. The Centre has benefited from its partnership with the 900+ social service providers in our National Referral Directory. Their expertise and advice will be essential for achieving our shared vision of ending human trafficking in Canada.



Relationships need to be built with vulnerable groups to establish trust



Service providers must be involved in developing effective anti-trafficking strategies and solutions

05.

Appendix

Appendix 1:

Glossary of Terms

This report includes a number of expressions, abbreviations, and terms which are key to understanding all aspects of this report.

- **Action, Relationship, and Purpose (ARP) Model of Human Trafficking:** Based on the Criminal Code of Canada, the ARP model breaks human trafficking into three components:
 - Actions, such as recruiting or transporting a victim/survivor.
 - Coercive relationships, in which a trafficker exercises control/direction over a victim/survivor.
 - Purpose of exploitation, where a victim/survivor may be recruited and controlled for the purpose of commercial gain.
- **Hotline Response Advocate (HRA):** A staff member of The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking who works on the Hotline to provide direct service to those impacted by human trafficking. HRAs respond to all incoming signals to the Hotline.
- **Human Trafficking:** The Criminal Code of Canada defines human trafficking as recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing, or harbouring a person, or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, to facilitate their exploitation.⁵⁰
- **Labour trafficking:** A type of human trafficking that exploits an individual for their labour.⁵¹
- **National Referral Directory (NRD):** The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking maintains a directory that consists of social service providers and law enforcement contacts in all provinces and territories. The HRAs use the NRD to provide those who call the Hotline with the supports that best meet their unique needs.
- **Sex Trafficking:** A type of human trafficking that exploits an individual for the purposes of sexual exploitation.⁵²
- **Signal:** A signal refers to any method an individual uses to communicate with the Hotline, including by phone, webchat, email, and webform.
- **Temporary Foreign Worker:** The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) exists to help employers who are unable to find qualified Canadian workers. Employers must demonstrate that they cannot find Canadian workers to fill the job openings. The program allows eligible foreign workers to work in Canada for limited periods of time.⁵³
- **Victim/Survivor:** This term is used to refer to any person who is currently experiencing human trafficking, or who has experienced human trafficking in the past. Whereas the term “victim” typically refers to a person who has experienced a crime, “survivor” refers to a person who is recovering from an experience of victimization.⁵⁴ This hybridized term captures both experiences.

Appendix 2:

About the Hotline

The Hotline's Approach to Service Delivery

In responding to victims/survivors of human trafficking, the foundation of the Hotline's service delivery model is taking a trauma-informed approach. This approach is based on an understanding of trauma, and emphasizes safety, the strengths of the individual, empowerment, choice and control.⁵⁵ A trauma-informed approach is critical because trafficking is a crime that uses trauma, in the forms of physical, sexual and emotional violence, to control and coerce individuals into providing a service or labour.⁵⁶ Many individuals who contact the Hotline have experienced multiple traumas as a result of their trafficking experience and may have experienced traumatic events prior to being trafficked, as well.

The Hotline ensures a trauma-informed approach to service delivery, through extensive training of front-line staff, and with response protocols based on best practices. During their training, frontline staff learn the causes and signs of trauma as well as how to respond appropriately to those who live with it. Hotline Response Advocates (HRAs) are trained to provide appropriate emotional support and crisis response to victims/survivors and other signallers. They also practice key communication skills such as using appropriate language, being transparent, and affirming the agency of the victim/survivor.

An important aspect of a trauma-informed approach is informing those who are seeking support of available support options and supporting individuals' right to choose the approach that works best for them.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the Hotline recognizes that exiting a trafficking situation is often a significant decision,

and it is the victim or survivor's choice when to pursue this course of action.⁵⁸ For some victims and survivors who have experienced repeated traumatic events in their lives, the trafficker may have been the first person to demonstrate love and care for them. A strong emotional connection, or "trauma bond," occurs between the victim/survivor and trafficker which may be difficult to break.⁵⁹ Since every case is different, the Hotline does not pressure individuals to leave a trafficking situation until they are ready.

When a victim/survivor is not ready to exit their situation, the Hotline seeks to create a customized approach that responds to the individual's needs. This could include safety planning, which identifies the steps that a person can take to increase their safety while in the trafficking situation, as well as preparing a person to cope with potential future violence.⁶⁰ The Hotline also provides emotional support to victims/survivors, and referrals to a wide range of services, including shelter, counselling, and addiction and harm reduction services.

Another aspect of the Hotline's trauma informed approach is creating a safe environment for victims/survivors, and other individuals who contact the Hotline.⁶¹ HRAs do not pass judgement or criticize how victims/ survivors have previously managed their trauma, which could include substance abuse, self-harm, or aggression.⁶²

Importantly, the Hotline takes steps to avoid retraumatizing victims/survivors.⁶³ HRAs ask victims/survivors only for information that will help assess their needs, and then provide the most appropriate form of support. If a signaller does not share full details of their situation, the Hotline will not probe for information that the signaller does

not feel comfortable sharing. Taking a trauma informed approach ensures that the HRAs can build trust with victims/survivors and other signallers, assess their needs accurately, and provide the most effective support possible.

Data from the Human Trafficking Hotline

The Hotline collects high-level, non-identifying data on the characteristics of individuals who contact the Hotline, as well as the situation that triggered the outreach.

The Hotline collects details on two broad categories:

1. **Individual-specific data**
2. **Situation-specific data**

Individual-specific data

For Individual-specific data, the HRAs collect details on:

- the primary reason that a person contacted the Hotline (e.g., to obtain a referral);
- the “type” of signaller (e.g., a trafficking victim/survivor, a friend or family member, a social service provider, etc.); and,
- the relationship between the signaller and the potential trafficking victim/survivor (e.g., direct contact with a victim/survivor, indirect contact with a victim/survivor, etc.).

Collecting this information helps the HRAs understand the motivations and needs of those who contact the Hotline. It also enables the HRAs to understand how familiar the signaller is with a potential trafficking situation, which helps the Hotline provide appropriate support.

Situation-specific data

Situation-specific data focuses on whether a case can be classified as trafficking. A case refers to a unique situation, event or series of events that triggered a call or other communication to the Hotline. For each case, the Hotline collects data on the form of trafficking (e.g., sex, labour), whether the trafficking is ongoing or occurred in the past, and the demographic characteristics of victims/survivors (e.g., gender, age, immigration status, etc.). Collecting data on the potential trafficking situation helps the HRAs provide effective case management and appropriate referrals. This situation-specific data helps us better understand the prevalence of different types of trafficking that can be used to inform human trafficking policy, programming, and public awareness initiatives.

In addition to individual and situation-specific data, the HRAs collect data on the type of referrals that are provided to signallers. This data is essential for understanding the service needs of victims/survivors of human trafficking.

Appendix 3:

Data Collection Methodology

The Hotline is staffed by trained HRAs who provide trauma informed assistance to victims and survivors of human trafficking, as well as other caller types, such as members of the community, and friends and family members of victims and survivors. The Hotline collects data from all incoming signals. A signal refers to an inbound call, email, web form, or web chat. HRAs are responsible for data collection and entry, which occurs in a cloud-based database.

During a signal to the Hotline, the HRA works with a signaller (i.e. a caller) to identify their needs, discuss options, and provide the most appropriate form of assistance. At the start of each signal, the HRA obtains consent to collect information on the content of the signal, such as the needs of the person, and the types of assistance required. Based on the information provided, HRAs enter data on standardized data fields in the Hotline's database.

Data for each Hotline case undergoes a review process to ensure accuracy. In the first stage of review, the Hotline Response Managers review each case and check to ensure correct and complete data entry. Subsequently, members of The Centre's Research and Data Team review each case in full. The review process ensures consistent, accurate and reliable data entry.

Individuals contacting the Hotline disclose information at their own discretion, and the amount of information and level of detail shared by the individual varies from signal to signal. Although at times a HRA will probe a caller by asking questions, the primary purpose of seeking further information from the signaller is to assess their needs and determine an appropriate response, not to collect data. As a result, data

entry for each Hotline case will have a different level of completeness based on the information shared by the signaller.

Because multiple incoming Hotline signals may be associated with a particular case, data recorded in the database may change over time as information is added to a case, or existing information is clarified.

Personally identifiable information

The collection and disclosure of personally identifiable information (personal information) in Canada is governed by The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). The Hotline does not engage in commercial activities that fall under PIPEDA; however, it considers the protection of personal information vitally important, and follows PIPEDA's Model Code Principles. For more information about how the Hotline adheres to the Model Code Principles, please view the Hotline's Privacy Policy online at <https://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/privacy/>

Within PIPEDA, personal information includes any information pertaining to an identifiable individual, such as an individual's name, location, age, and social demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, and income. To collect personal information, the HRA first obtains the signaller's consent. If consent is not obtained, then no personal information is recorded in the database.

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The Centre calls on all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive approach – one that is consistent, well-resourced, collaborative and evidence-based – to end human trafficking in Canada.



The Centre

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For more information regarding the information presented in the Human Trafficking Trends in Canada Report or The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, please contact: info@ccteht.ca

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