

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
**SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
AND SEX TRAFFICKING IN CANADA**

FREEDOM SHOULD INCLUDE EVERYBODY

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WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It is a violation of a person's most basic human rights, and is often described as modern-day slavery. It is one of the fastest growing crimes nationally and globally, generating billions of dollars annually around the world, second to illegal arms trafficking and the drug trade.

Human trafficking generally takes three forms: sexual exploitation or sex trafficking, forced labour trafficking, and trafficking of human organs. The most common type of human trafficking is commercial sexual exploitation.

While the sale of sex in Canada is not illegal, the purchase of sexual services is a crime. The sex trafficking market is driven by supply and demand. As long as there remains a demand for a commercial sex industry, this will generate a market niche for those who want to profit from the exploitation and trafficking of children, youth and adults to provide a steady supply to meet the demand.

Sex trafficking is a high-profit, low-risk business for the exploiter who sells human bodies as a commodity repeatedly, unlike drugs or weapons, where the product can only be sold once.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
IS ONE OF THE
FASTEST GROWING CRIMES
IN CANADA.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING INVOLVES:

THE ACT

(WHAT IS DONE)

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.

THE MEANS

(HOW IT IS DONE)

Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.

THE PURPOSE

(WHY IT IS DONE)

For the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices or the removal of organs.

(United Nations)

THE CURRENT STATE IN CANADA

The national and global extent of human trafficking is difficult to assess due to the hidden nature of these offenses, the reluctance of victims and witnesses to come forward to law enforcement, and the difficulty of identifying victims in practice. Moreover, these cases often go unnoticed and unreported due to manipulation, fear, threats from traffickers, shame, language barriers, or mistrust of authority.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEX TRAFFICKING

26% of trafficked persons in Canada are under the age of 18.

72% of trafficked persons in Canada are under the age of 25.

Victims in Canada can be trafficked as young as
13-14 YEARS OLD.

Child Sexual Exploitation is the act of coercing, luring or engaging a child, under the age of 18, into a sexual act and involvement in the sex trade or pornography, with or without the child's consent, in exchange for money, drugs, shelter, food, protection, affection, perceived love/belonging or other necessities. Children and youth can be commercially exploited in all aspects of the sex industry, including pornography, the street and online sex trade, strip clubs, and venues such as hotels, condos, private residences, parties and various social events.

Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation occurs when there is clear abuse of power by a third party: recruited, controlled, coerced to provide sex services against one's will.



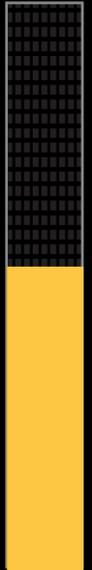
\$280,800

is the annual profit per female trafficked in Canada.



50%

of Canada's trafficking victims are Indigenous, despite making up only 4% of the country's population.



75%

of people working in the Canadian sex trade were exploited as children.



of trafficking victims are female, but young men are targeted as well.

WHO IS AT RISK

FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION & TRAFFICKING?

While there is not a typical profile of a sexual exploitation and trafficking victim, certain populations are more vulnerable than others.

MAJOR RISK FACTORS FOR YOUTH INCLUDE:

- History of child abuse
- Poverty
- Mental health and body image concerns
- Runaways or experiencing trouble at home
- Living in foster care and group home settings
- Involvement in the juvenile justice system
- Social and cultural isolation
- Persons living with disabilities and developmental disorders

The majority of children and youth who are victimized by sexual exploitation are female, however there is growing awareness of sexual exploitation of boys and LGBTQ2+ youth.

Youth from populations of new immigrants and Indigenous communities are over-represented among victims.

Although these populations are more vulnerable, sexual exploitation can happen to any child or youth regardless of social, cultural or economic background.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE VICTIMS?

According to the US National Coalition to Prevent Child Abuse and Exploitation, sex trafficking of minors is a severe form of child abuse with lasting effects on the health and well-being of individuals, families and society. The commercial aspect of sexual exploitation is critical to separating the crime of exploitation from sexual assault or molestation. The impact of trauma on children and youth creates enormous vulnerability on child development that can have lasting effects on both the victims' physical and mental health.

The early years matter because early experiences, both good and bad, literally shape the architecture of the developing brain and the quality of that architecture establishes the foundation for all of the development and behaviour that follows.

"When I was first trafficked I was in a room with a bunch of girls and we had to take our clothes off and they decided how much we were worth. I thought I was going to be a model. I was then taken to Calgary and forced and watched." - anonymous survivor

Long-term exposure to traumatic experiences like abuse, neglect, and exploitation has been shown to increase the likelihood of developing many types of chronic diseases such as addiction, anxiety, depression and heart disease, sometimes many decades in the future.



UNDERSTANDING THE MINDSET OF A VICTIM

Children and youth often hide their victimization and are reluctant to come forward and tell a parent or trusted person.

FREQUENTLY VICTIMS:

- **Do not see themselves as “victims”.**
- May **feel shame, self-blame** and harbour feelings of unworthiness of a better life.
- May be **coached and threatened to lie to caregivers and professionals** and often give fabricated histories with scripted stories.
- Are generally fearful and **distrust law enforcement and government** services.
- May have formed a trauma bond with their exploiters, leading to **deep loyalties and positive feelings towards their abuser** as they view them as saviours of some kind. This is often referred to as Stockholm Syndrome, when abuse victims bond with their captors or abusers.
- **Fear for their own safety and the safety of their family and friends** due to threats of violence.



IT TAKES AN AVERAGE OF
**3 YEARS AND
7 ATTEMPTED INTERVENTIONS**
TO SUCCESSFULLY RESCUE A CHILD
FROM A LIFE OF EXPLOITATION.

Drugs and alcohol can play a key role in sexual exploitation and trafficking situations - sometimes as a way to cope or sometimes as a way for victims to support a drug habit. Traffickers often control victims with administration and/or provision of drugs which is commonly referred to as a chemical “leash”.

“I was ashamed. I used to think that the only group who would accept me was organized crime. I tried 10 times to exit, but didn’t get out until I was 29 years old.”

-anonymous survivor

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Vulnerable children and youth can be lured into forms of sexual exploitation using promises, psychological manipulation, provision of drugs and alcohol, and violence. The exploiter's main purpose is financial gain and they will make every effort to establish trust by wooing the individual into what feels like a loving and caring relationship. They apply the push-pull tactic of bringing their victim in, first by showering them with love and attention and then by slowly withdrawing from them. They will use physical and sexual violence to make the victim become trapped and powerless, sometimes using extortion and the threat of sharing explicit photos with others. A trafficker may also threaten to harm the child or youth's family or close friends as a way to maintain control.



RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Exploiters are master manipulators. They have excellent sales skills, and, like an actor, can present many different "faces", emotions and behaviours to lure, control, abuse and exploit persons. They can look like an ordinary person. They can be a stranger or a family member, a boyfriend or girlfriend or an older sibling. They sometimes work with a partner in trying to recruit their victims in ways such as pretending to be a mentor.

WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

616%
INCREASE
IN ONLINE SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION
SINCE 2014.

Children and youth can be recruited anytime and anywhere, including before, during and after school, online or in-person. Exploiters invest a lot of time and energy into finding and grooming the perfect victim. They have been known to frequent areas where youths like to hang out including: the mall, concerts, parks, bus stops outside of high schools, popular fast food restaurants, bars and coffee shops. Exploiters also "shop" for their victims online. They are mass consumers of popular social media and engage with potential victims on any of the popular social media platforms. With the ever-changing digital environment and the risk of hidden apps, it's almost impossible to understand the complexity of the various touchpoints the exploiters use to reach out and attract their victims.

WARNING SIGNS A YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

- **DRAMATIC PERSONALITY CHANGE, EVASIVE BEHAVIOUR ESPECIALLY AROUND A "NEW BOYFRIEND", TALK ABOUT BEING "TAKEN CARE OF", DISENGAGEMENT FROM SCHOOL, HOBBIES, COMMUNITY**
- **HAVING EXPENSIVE ITEMS WITH NO KNOWN SOURCE OF INCOME (ESPECIALLY HAIR, MANICURES, CELL PHONE, CLOTHES, EXCESS CASH)**
- **SIGNS OF BRANDING / MARKS OF OWNERSHIP (TATTOOS, BRANDS, JEWELRY)**
- **MULTIPLE CELL PHONES**
- **HOTEL ROOM KEYS**
- **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF A GIVEN COMMUNITY OR WHEREABOUTS**
- **LYING ABOUT AGE / FALSE ID / INCONSISTENCIES IN INFORMATION BEING REPORTED**
- **PROTECT THE PERSON WHO MAY BE HURTING THEM AND IS NOT ALLOWED OR ABLE TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**
- **ARE FEARFUL, ANXIOUS, DEPRESSED, SUBMISSIVE, NERVOUS, OR PARANOID**
- **SHOW SIGNS OF HAVING BEEN DENIED NOURISHMENT, SLEEP OR MEDICAL CARE**
- **CHRONIC TRUANT / RUNAWAY / HOMELESS YOUTH**



Not all signs listed above are present in every sexual exploitation and trafficking situation. The presence or absence of any of the signs is not necessarily proof of an exploitation and trafficking situation.

HOW CAN I HELP?



TAKE ACTION

If the victim is under 18, it is mandatory under provincial and federal law to report the suspected or known sexual exploitation of children.

NOTIFY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OR THE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE (ALBERTA: [1-800-387-5437](tel:1-800-387-5437))

IF IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 911

CANADA'S NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE AT [1-833-900-1010](tel:1-833-900-1010) IS AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

BE AN ALLY

Follow **@NIMCally** on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn for more information, updates and opportunities.

SPREAD THE WORD

Talk about the issue with the people in your close circle and community. Alert leaders and influencers to this issue, and encourage them to make it a priority.

LEARN MORE

Visit notinmycity.ca and learn more about the issue and how you can provide support.

WE HAVE A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFE.

DO NO HARM

When dealing with suspected cases of sexual exploitation and trafficking, the overriding principle is that you act with care and make every effort to avoid causing harm to yourself or to the possible victim. Sexual exploitation and trafficking is a crime and under no circumstances should the suspected victim or concerned individual be compromised.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

Any tip reported is welcome. Provide the information to allow professionals to decide if action can be taken.



BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

**BECOME AN ALLY AND HELP PREVENT
CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEX TRAFFICKING**

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