The Centre
Canadian Centre to
End Human Trafficking.

Human Trafficking Corridors in Canada

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Introduction

In 2005, Canada introduced legislation prohibiting human trafficking, yet traffickers continue to reap large profits by exploiting people for their own gain across Canada. Between 2009 and 2018, police services across Canada reported 1,708 incidents of human trafficking; however, these numbers only represent situations of trafficking which received police intervention.[1] Testimonies from individuals with lived experience and social service providers suggest that the actual number of victims and survivors is significantly higher.[2]

Human trafficking violates the human rights of victims and survivors, and one of the ways that traffickers operate is by controlling the movements of the person they are exploiting. This report focuses on the element of movement and transportation in human trafficking by investigating human trafficking corridors in Canada.

Anecdotal evidence from law enforcement, frontline service delivery agencies and the media have pointed to the existence of human trafficking corridors through which individuals are routinely moved for the purpose of exploitation. However, it is important to note that human trafficking does not necessarily involve the transportation and movement of persons. Many people in Canada continue to confuse human trafficking with international border smuggling. In reality, human smuggling and human trafficking are very different crimes, and a person may be forced or manipulated into an exploitative situation without ever leaving their home community.

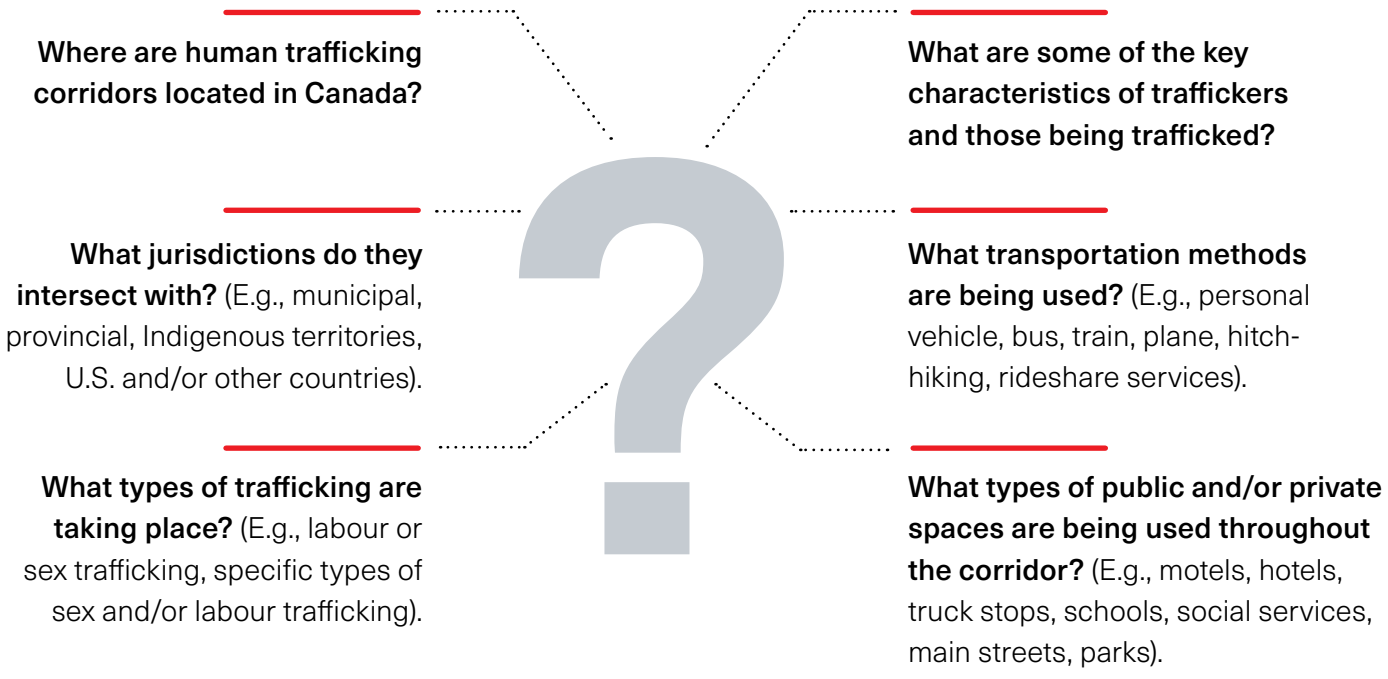
Movement along human trafficking corridors can be a significant aspect of the exploitation experienced by survivors. It may impact intervention opportunities from service providers, law enforcement and members of the public, and the needs and experiences of survivors when they escape or exit the trafficking situation. Although transportation can be a core aspect of survivors' exploitation, this is the first research in Canada that investigates how trafficking corridors operate.

Guiding Research Questions

Given that control of movement and transportation are core components of exploitation for many victims and survivors of human trafficking in Canada, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (The Centre) conducted this research project to investigate the role of corridors in human trafficking, and the distribution of corridors around the country.

For the purposes of this research, we defined *human trafficking corridors* as strips of land or transportation routes that include two or more major cities, that are used by traffickers to move individuals between sites of commercial exploitation. In the context of sex trafficking, victims are transported between commercial sex markets.[3] In addition to connecting multiple population centres, human trafficking corridors may extend across large geographic areas.

Given the lack of pre-existing evidence on this topic, the scope of the research was exploratory in nature and aimed to establish a baseline of knowledge on human trafficking corridors, as well as opportunities for future research and advocacy. The primary questions that guided this research were:



The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

The Centre
Canadian Centre to
End Human Trafficking.

The Centre is a national charity dedicated to ending all types of human trafficking in Canada. Our organization focuses on four priority areas: public education and awareness, research and data collection, convening and knowledge transfer, and policy development and advocacy. We work with like-minded stakeholders and organizations, including non-profits, corporations, governments and survivors/victims of human trafficking, to advance best practices, eliminate duplicate efforts across Canada, and enable cross-sectoral coordination by providing access to networks and specialized skills.

We operate the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, a 24/7, multilingual access to a safe and confidential space to ask for help, connect to services, and report tips to law enforcement. While The Hotline provides localized and immediate supports to victims and survivors, it also enables the compiling of data to help disrupt trafficking networks.

Over time, The Hotline's data will provide an evidence base of human trafficking incidents, geographical locations and types of trafficking across Canada. This data will be critical in the fight to end trafficking. At the time of writing this report, The Hotline had not collected enough data to be able to present findings on human trafficking corridors.

Terms and Definitions

Throughout this report, when referring to individuals who have experienced human trafficking, we use the terms “victim” and “survivor.” The term *victim* is used when the act of trafficking in persons is ongoing, whereas *survivor* describes a person who has escaped or exited the trafficking situation, and may have started a healing process.[4] We recognize that victimization and survivorship are not mutually exclusive terms or experiences, and that individuals who have experienced exploitation may prefer one term over another in order to describe their experiences.

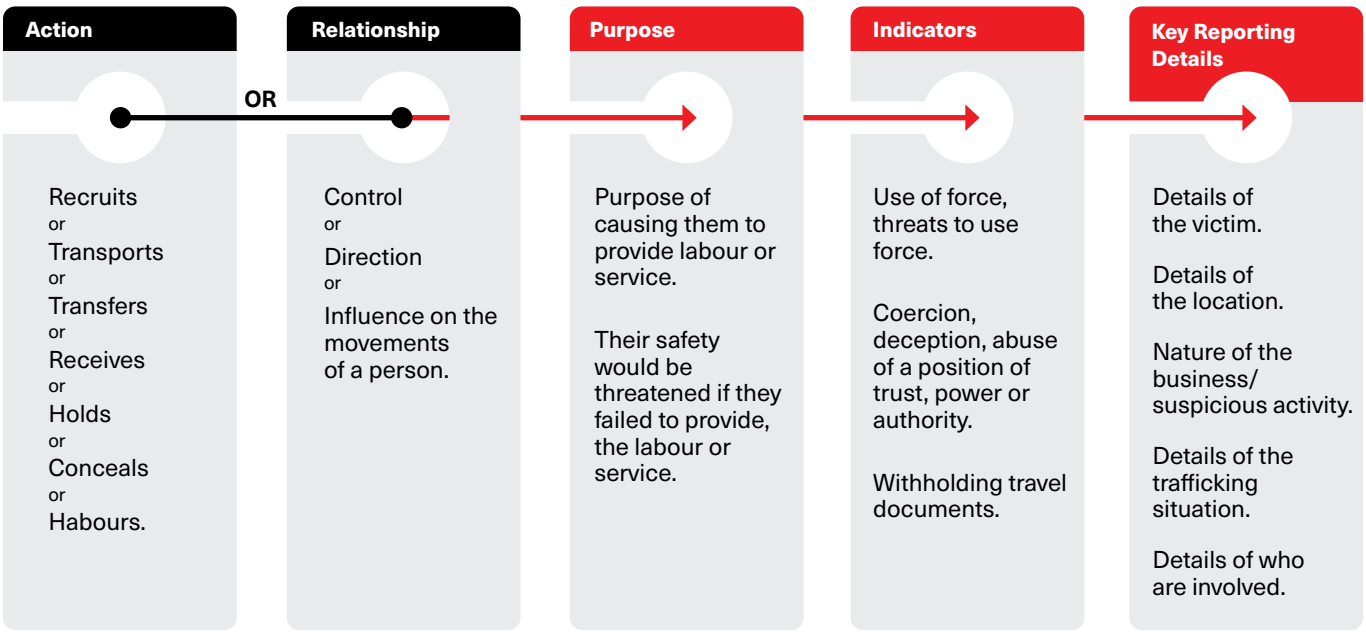
Use of a common definition of human trafficking is critical to increasing our knowledge of how this crime occurs in Canada. To promote consistent data gathering and analysis, both in this report and in our other initiatives, we rely on the *Canadian Criminal Code* which defines *human trafficking* as 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.[5]

For the purposes of this legislation, a person exploits another person if they cause them to provide, or offer to provide, a labour or service by engaging in conduct that could be expected to cause the other person to believe that their safety, or the safety of a person known to them, would be threatened if they failed to provide the labour or service.[6]

When determining whether exploitation is taking place, Canadian courts consider whether the accused used or threatened to use force or another form of coercion, used deception, abused a position of trust, power or authority, or concealed or withheld travel or identity documents in order to exploit another person.

The *Canadian Criminal Code* definition of human trafficking is sometimes referred to as the Action-Relationship-Purpose (ARP) Model. This model breaks human trafficking down into three main components, including action components such as recruiting or concealing a victim of trafficking, relational components such as exercising control over a victim, and a purpose of exploitation, which refers to compelling a person to provide a labour or service. These three components work together to define the crime of human trafficking in Canada.

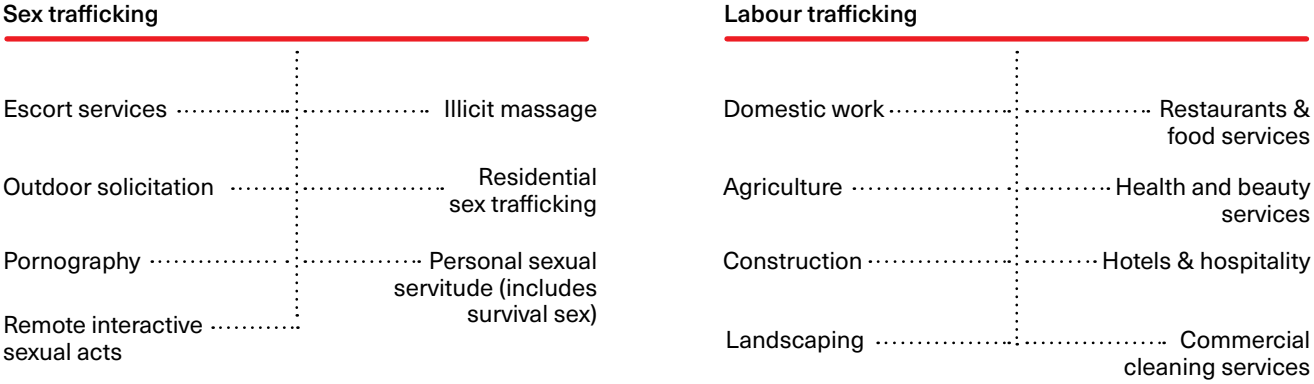
Action-Relationship-Purpose (ARP) Model of Human Trafficking



Types of Human Trafficking in Canada

Research conducted to date reveals two overarching types of human trafficking in Canada: sex trafficking and labour trafficking.[7] Drawing on research conducted in Canada and the United States,[8] the various sectors, business models, tactics, methods and characteristics involved for each type can be broken down as follows:

Human trafficking typology



Summarized Methodology

In undertaking this research, we conducted three lines of inquiry to better understand how human trafficking corridors operate in Canada: a literature review, a media review, and qualitative research (interviews with service providers and law enforcement).

See **Appendix B** for full methodology.

We reviewed more than 85 articles and reports from academic institutions, government, and community-based agencies to explore themes related to human trafficking in Canada and North America. We then conducted a systematic scan of human trafficking media coverage in Canada, analyzing more than 1,800 search results, including 267 unique news articles, to better understand the following:

- To what extent are human trafficking corridors understood and reported on in the mainstream media?
- Where have human trafficking corridors been identified already?

While research on human trafficking in Canada is increasing, the literature review and media scan did not produce enough meaningful data to come to any firm conclusions in response to our research questions. To develop a robust understanding of how and where human trafficking corridors operate, we held 69 semi-structured key informant telephone interviews with frontline service delivery staff and law enforcement officers, from nine provinces, with direct experience working with victims and/or survivors of human trafficking.

We ensured that a consistent definition of human trafficking was used throughout the interviews (see *Terms and Definitions*), and in the case of sex trafficking, interview respondents were able to differentiate between human trafficking and legal sex work.

Past research has shown that sex trafficking and commercial sex are interconnected;[9] however, the proportion of human trafficking within Canada's commercial sex markets is unknown. We took precautions throughout this research not to conflate all aspects of the commercial sex market with sex trafficking by using clear definitions distinguishing between trafficking and legal activity within the sex industry in which the person providing sexual services is free from coercion and fear.

We conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview guide that was developed using best practices in similar research projects identified through the literature review. We provided interviewees with an overview of the research project, and each participant provided consent at the beginning of the interview. We continued to conduct interviews until we reached a level of saturation, meaning that additional interviews no longer yielded new information. We conducted a thematic analysis of the data to identify trends among interview responses.

Law enforcement respondents

We interviewed 20 law enforcement respondents spanning 20 jurisdictions. The vast majority (70%) of law enforcement interviewees were from municipal services followed by RCMP (25%) and provincial agencies (5%).

Officers interviewed came from a range of units responsible for human trafficking files including Vice, Guns and Gangs, Special Victims and Counter-exploitation:

- 30% of respondents worked specifically in human trafficking units
- 70% of units were responsible for investigation of crimes not specific to human trafficking
- 95% of respondents confirmed that they had worked directly with at least one victim/survivor of human trafficking
- Law enforcement respondents tended to work with fewer victims/survivors of human trafficking than those at frontline agencies. This is likely due to two factors:
  - Victims/survivors may fear or distrust law enforcement
  - Identification and assessment of victims may vary between law enforcement and frontline service providers.

Service provider respondents

We interviewed 49 service providers spanning 38 jurisdictions. The vast majority (88%) of service provider participants were from frontline agencies that work directly with victims/survivors of human trafficking (82%). The majority (61%) were program managers or coordinators who reviewed case files, oversaw frontline staff or worked directly with survivors of human trafficking as part of their roles. Other respondents included Executive Directors (35%) and Caseworkers (4%).

Of the agencies interviewed, 43% provide human trafficking-specific programs or services. The remainder of interviewees were either government department representatives (7%) tasked with overseeing human trafficking strategies, or umbrella organizations/associations (6%) that did not provide direct services to clients. While these organizations were limited in their ability to speak to the individual needs and circumstances of human trafficking victims and survivors, they were credible sources of information on trends and broader issues faced by victims and survivors and frontline delivery agencies.

Research Limitations

The Centre's work encompasses both sex and labour trafficking. However, this report focuses on the types of sex trafficking that apply to human trafficking corridors because our research was not able to conclude that the corridors are being systematically used to propagate labour trafficking in Canada. The Centre looks forward to undertaking future research that will shed light on experiences and trends in labour trafficking, as well as other typologies of human trafficking.

By its very nature, human trafficking is a covert activity. Because sex trafficking is often hidden, difficult to detect, and frequently stigmatized, many victims and survivors may never disclose their experiences to a frontline service provider or law enforcement. As a result, the insights and perspectives shared by frontline service providers in this research may not reflect all forms of human trafficking occurring along corridors.

In the future, as data collection on human trafficking grows across Canada, it may be possible to more accurately identify the frequency with which exploited individuals are transported along specific corridors. Since such data does not currently exist, we have relied on the insights and perspectives provided by interviewees to understand how human trafficking corridors operate within Canada.

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How Human Trafficking Corridors Operate

Human trafficking corridors are a distinctive component of how human trafficking operates in Canada; however, they are only one piece of the puzzle. Not everyone who has experienced human trafficking has been moved through these corridors and, for those who have, it may only be one part of their experience.

Traffickers use corridors for three main reasons:

1. To obtain as much profit as possible
2. To lower risks since movement across municipal and provincial jurisdictions makes it harder for law enforcement to detect, investigate and pursue human trafficking cases
3. To maintain control over the individuals they are exploiting by reinforcing their social and physical isolation and keeping them confused and dependent.

The corridors identified in this report do not exist for the sole purpose of human trafficking. In fact, these primary transportation routes across Canada are used for many purposes including transporting people and goods to various markets. Along these corridors, traffickers often use smaller circuits: regular tours around an assigned district or territory.[10] They move victims along these circuits to access markets where they can maximize profits according to market demand; saturation (i.e., the number of "sellers" relative to "buyers); and the overhead costs of operation for each population centre (e.g., hotel, motel or short term stay, travel costs).

The Economics of Human Trafficking Corridors

A key component of human trafficking in Canada, and specifically along transportation routes, is the economic drive that underpins human trafficking. While many social and economic factors enable the existence of sex trafficking in Canada, the primary driver is money. Unlike other forms of sexual, physical and psychological abuse, human trafficking operates under a clear business model. It functions within an economic market where the primary motivation of traffickers is to generate as much profit as possible. Our research indicates that traffickers utilize human trafficking corridors to strategically maximize profits and mitigate the risks associated with operations.

Maximizing Profit within a Competitive Commerical Sex Market

On an economic level, human traffickers operate under the same logic as any other for-profit business in Canada. Their goal is to generate as much revenue as possible while keeping their operational costs low so as to maximize profit margins. Human trafficking is fundamentally about profit seeking but, in contrast to legal businesses, it circumvents the law and robs individuals of their human rights. Traffickers are known to hold and control the money received through victims' interactions with the commercial sex industry. They force and coerce individuals into the sex industry and keep all of the revenue, which is the key driver of their profit.

Revenue
($ received through the sale of goods/services)

— *(Minus)*

Operational costs
($ spent on enabling the commercial transaction)

= **Profit**

Persons trafficked along human trafficking corridors are largely advertised through online escort ads, notably Leolist.cc. While determining the average cost of commercial sex services was outside the scope of this research, a preliminary scan of Leolist.cc shows that traffickers can reasonably obtain $200-$400/hour from each commercial sex exchange.

> **The one hour price for "full service" will go from $160-180 per hour in Montreal, but in Edmonton, they can get $200-$300 for the same service. Traffickers picked up on this, and are sending them out for a week or so.**
>
> – Law enforcement respondent on human trafficking corridors

Quotas are often imposed on sex trafficking victims, and anecdotal evidence suggests that they range between $500 and $1,000 per day. While overhead expenses such as food, accommodation, clothing/makeup and travel do factor into a trafficker's expenses, they are easily absorbed due to high net profit margins resulting from the withholding of all revenues from the individual(s) they are exploiting.

Interview respondents explained that traffickers stay in a given city as long as it is profitable (anywhere from one night to several weeks) and they are not detected by law enforcement. Entry into online commercial sex markets is relatively cheap and easy. Traffickers often post ads on behalf of the individuals they are exploiting and manage every aspect of the exchange including location, what sexual services will be provided and for what price, and the number of buyers a victim must see.

Minimizing Risks

Human trafficking, like other businesses, requires mitigating risks to ensure stable and continuous operations. Because human trafficking is an illegal activity, the risks associated with business operations are significant. In Canada, anyone who is found guilty of human trafficking is liable to "a) imprisonment for life and to a minimum punishment of imprisonment for a term of five years if they kidnap, commit an aggravated assault or aggravated sexual assault against, or cause death to, the victim during the commission of the offence; or b) imprisonment for a term of not more than 14 years and to a minimum punishment of imprisonment for a term of four years in any other case."[11]

To avoid being caught and potentially imprisoned, traffickers have adopted ways of operating that reduce risk by circumventing and evading the law altogether. Consistently moving from place to place — between hotels, houses, cities or provinces — helps avoid detection from law enforcement and compliance with laws that would ultimately lower their profit and/or jeopardize their 'business' altogether.

To reduce the risk that victims and survivors will leave them or report them to law enforcement, traffickers consistently move between cities and provinces in an effort to maintain psychological control. Travel can keep people confused, isolated and dependent on their traffickers. Several interview respondents provided accounts of victims and survivors who were unable to tell what cities they had been trafficked in because their traffickers withheld information and intentionally kept them confused about their geographic locations.

Moreover, traffickers maintain strong psychological control over the individuals they are exploiting, which can also reduce the need to use physical violence, which in turn helps maintain high revenues and larger profit margins. "High-end" commercial sex generates far higher revenue and rates than other forms of commercial sex work, such as street-based sex work. Buyers are willing to pay more because the "seller" passes as being there willingly and conforms to mainstream ideas of beauty and sexual attractiveness. Avoiding physical injury or abuse is a central strategy used by traffickers to maintain their business and obtain the highest possible revenue per service.

The shorter amount of time spent in each city, the more beneficial it is for the traffickers. It takes time for police to set up an investigation. If they are only in town for a couple of days, it's harder to track.

– Law enforcement respondent on human trafficking corridors

Types of Sex Trafficking

We asked interview respondents about types of trafficking, including incidents of sex and labour trafficking, of which they had received first-hand accounts from victims and survivors. Interviewees mentioned the following types of known sex trafficking:[12]

- **Escort services:** These commercial sex acts primarily occur at temporary indoor locations, such as hotels/motels, and are often arranged through internet ads. Escort services were by far the most frequently mentioned type of sex trafficking by interviewees.
- **Illicit massage:** The primary business of sex trafficking and commercial sex exchange is concealed under the façade of legitimate spa services.
- **Outdoor solicitation:** Individuals are forced to find commercial sex customers in outdoor locations.
- **Residential sex trafficking:** Individuals are forced or coerced into commercial sex acts at a non-commercial residential location, such as a private/family home, or a drug distribution home (e.g., a "trap house").
- **Pornography:** Individuals are forced or coerced to participate in pre-recorded sexually explicit videos and images.
- **Personal sexual servitude:** Individuals are forced or coerced into providing sexual acts/services in exchange for something of value. In these cases, the trafficker and the "buyer" are usually the same person. Examples include survival sex, the permanent selling of a victim through a single transaction, or within a forced marriage.
- **Remote interactive sexual acts:** Individuals are forced or coerced to participate in live streamed, interactive simulated sex acts or "shows", such as webcams, text-based chats or phone chat lines.

When interviewees were asked about the sectors or types of trafficking engaged with specifically along human trafficking corridors, over half of service providers and 90% of law enforcement officers interviewed reported the widespread use of escort services. Although other trafficking typologies emerged from the interviews, they were not identified as using human trafficking corridors. This is likely because other forms of sex trafficking, such as illicit massage, pornography and personal sexual servitude, may rely on the trafficker having a stable location for exploitation to occur.

Types of sex trafficking identified by service provider and law enforment interview respondents

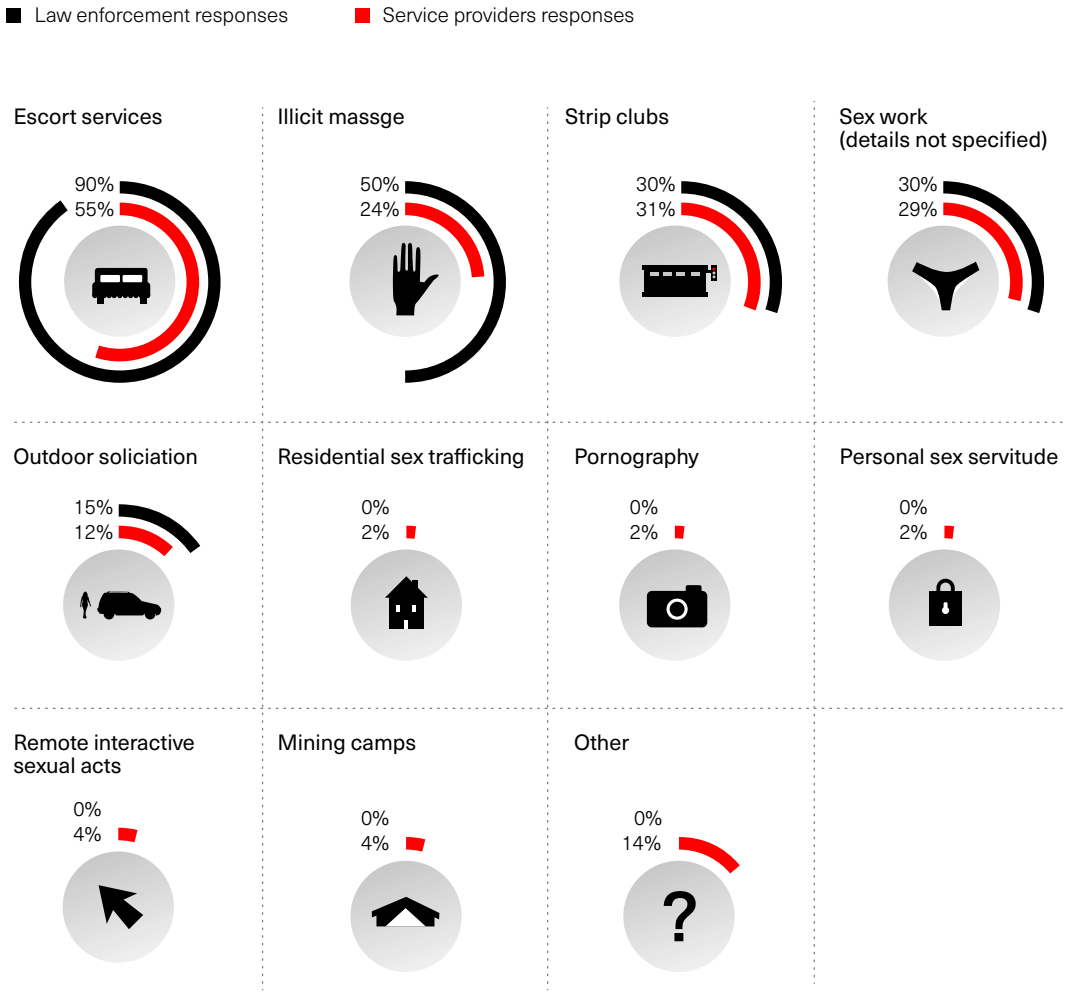


Figure 1: Interview responses to the following question: *"What specific sectors are the survivors/ victims working in? Prompt for exotic dancers, sex workers, body rubbers, etc. or in the case of labour trafficking, hospitality, cleaning, domestic work etc."* Responses do not add up to 100% because they are not mutually exclusive.

Characteristics of Victims and Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Women and girls of Canadian nationality make up the vast majority of sex trafficking victims and survivors identified by frontline service agencies and law enforcement. Only a small proportion of law enforcement (10%) and service provider respondents (16%) reported having previously worked with male or trans-identified survivors.

Other socio-demographic characteristics are diverse among victims and survivors. Interview respondents said that most of the victims and survivors that they had worked with were under the age of 35, but the overall age range was between 12 and 50. Victims and survivors aged 18-24 were the most common age group reported by interviewees. Approximately half of interviewees indicated that they had worked with a victim or survivor under the age of 18.

Demographic characteristics of human trafficking caseloads among interview respondents

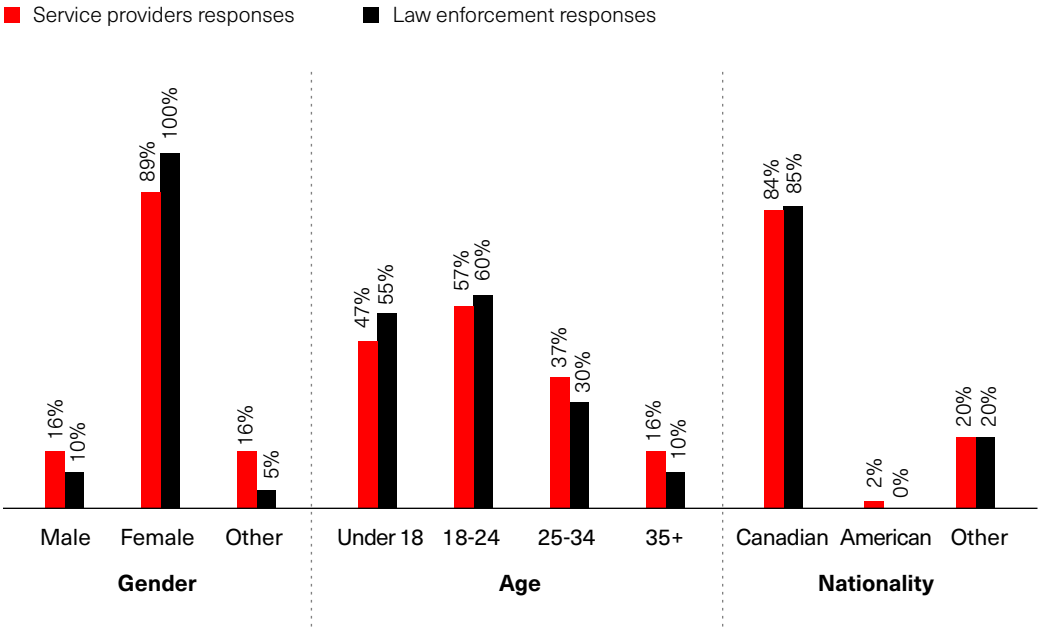


Figure 2: Interview responses to the following question: *"Can you tell me about some of the demographic characteristics of people being trafficked?"* Prompts included for gender, age and country of origin. Responses do not add up to 100 because responses were not mutually exclusive.

Interviewees who had worked with non-Canadian victims and survivors identified the following regions of origin: Asia (China, Korea); Russia; Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Congo); South Asia; Central America (Colombia); Philippines; Middle East; and Europe (Hungary).

Respondents identified the following key characteristics of survivors:

- prior or current involvement with the child welfare system
- living in, or prior experience living in poverty
- experiencing homelessness and/or precarious housing
- history of substance abuse/addictions issues
- history of trauma, abuse and/or domestic or sexual violence.

Individuals who are exploited within commercial sex markets, and who are trafficked along transportation routes, originate from communities across the country. About a quarter of respondents (25% of law enforcement, 27% of service providers) indicated that they had worked with survivors who were local to the community in which they were exploited. In contrast, 40% of law enforcement and 45% of service provider respondents worked with survivors from another city within the same province.

The vast majority of individuals trafficked in the commercial sex industry are Canadian women and girls

Where are victims/survivors coming from?
Migration patterns of victims and survivors of human trafficking

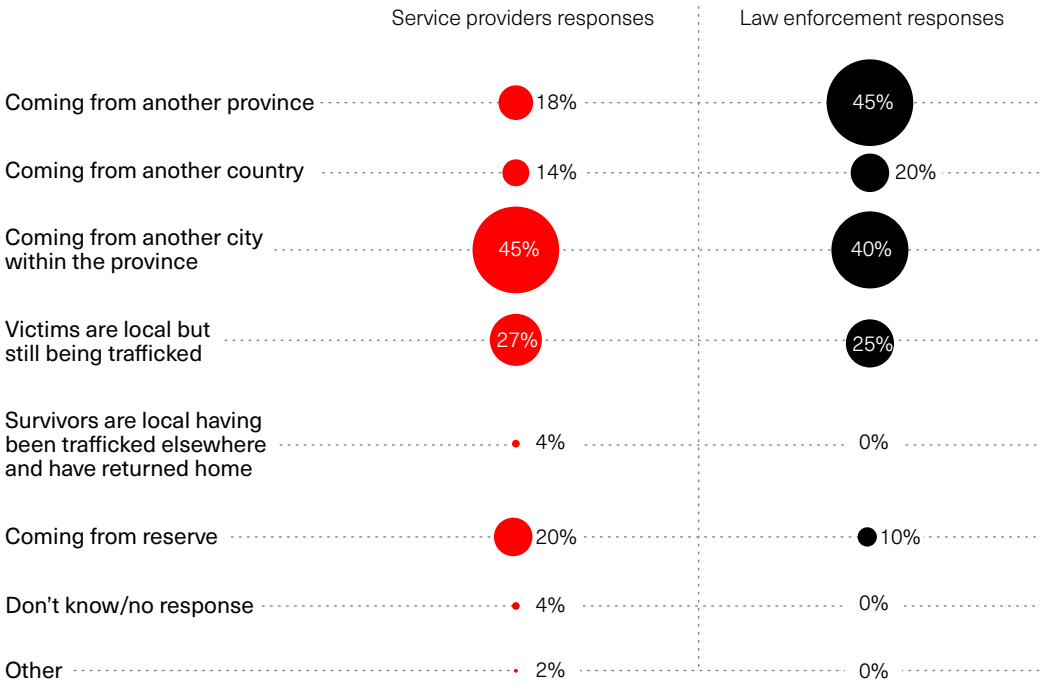


Figure 3: Interview responses to the following question: *"Have you noticed any trends in terms of where victims are coming from?"* Prompt for whether they are from the area, from another city, province or country." Responses do not add up to 100% because responses were not mutually exclusive.

Among respondents, 45% of law enforcement and 21% of service providers reported working with survivors who originated from another province. Ontario and Quebec were the most commonly reported provinces of origin.

Where are victims/survivors coming from?
Province of origin of victim and survivors of human trafficking

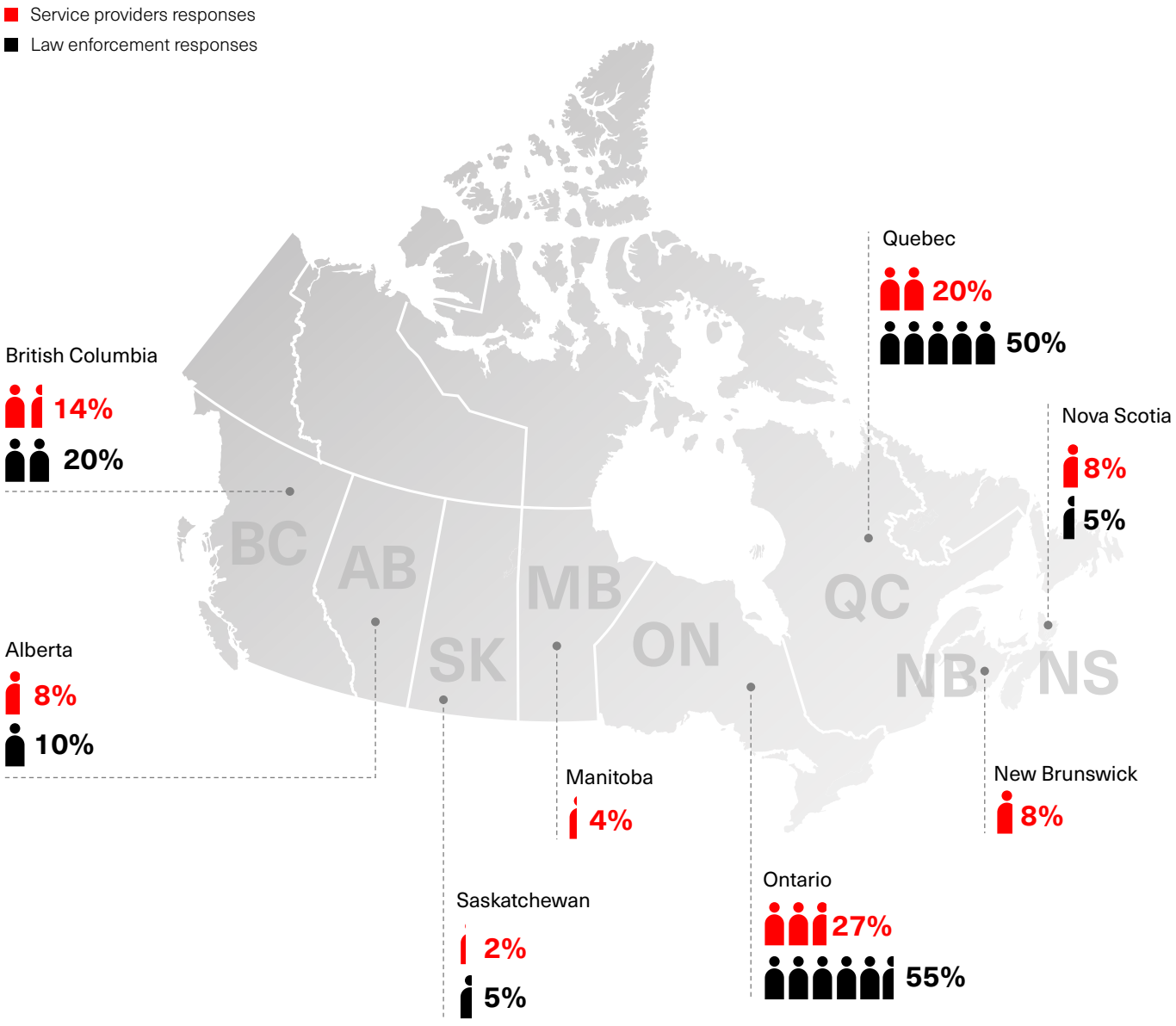


Figure 4: Interview responses to the following question: *"Have you noticed any trends in terms of where victims are coming from? Prompt for whether they are from the area, from another city, province or country."* Responses do not add up to 100% because responses were not mutually exclusive.

Although identifying human trafficking is challenging, law enforcement respondents mentioned several indicators used to assess whether someone may be a potential victim:

- a lack of identification since traffickers often withhold the victim's identification as a way to control them
- confusion, disorientation or a lack of knowledge about where they are
- signs of fear or intimidation by the potential trafficker, e.g., unwilling to make eye contact, not allowed to speak for themselves.

A Note on Indigenous Women and Girls

Previous research in Canada has indicated that Indigenous women and girls are more likely to experience commercial sexual exploitation compared to other demographic groups.[13,14] In the current research, 53% of service providers and 40% of law enforcement respondents indicated that they had worked with survivors identifying as Indigenous. When asked to provide estimated breakdowns of their overall caseloads, however, the vast majority stressed that Indigenous victims and survivors did not represent a significant proportion of their cases.

When we asked our participants about the experiences of Indigenous victims and survivors, we heard that they were not trafficked through escort services or transported through human trafficking corridors to the same extent as other demographic groups. Rather, Indigenous women and girls are more likely to experience trafficking after travelling to urban centres from rural communities for reasons unrelated to exploitation, such as for medical appointments, to begin school, or seek employment opportunities. Once in an unfamiliar urban area, Indigenous women and girls may be preyed upon by traffickers, or they may engage in survival sex to meet their basic needs, such as access to food and shelter.

Although our research did not corroborate previous findings that show a higher incidence of sex trafficking among Indigenous women and girls, we cannot conclude that this group is not over-represented among all human trafficking victims and survivors in Canada. Further research is required to understand how human trafficking impacts Indigenous women and girls.

Characteristics of Traffickers

Different types of traffickers operate within each type of trafficking in Canada. Trafficker types can be understood according to the methods they use to traffick people, and the business models under which they operate.

Respondents mentioned the following types of traffickers:

Types of traffickers identified

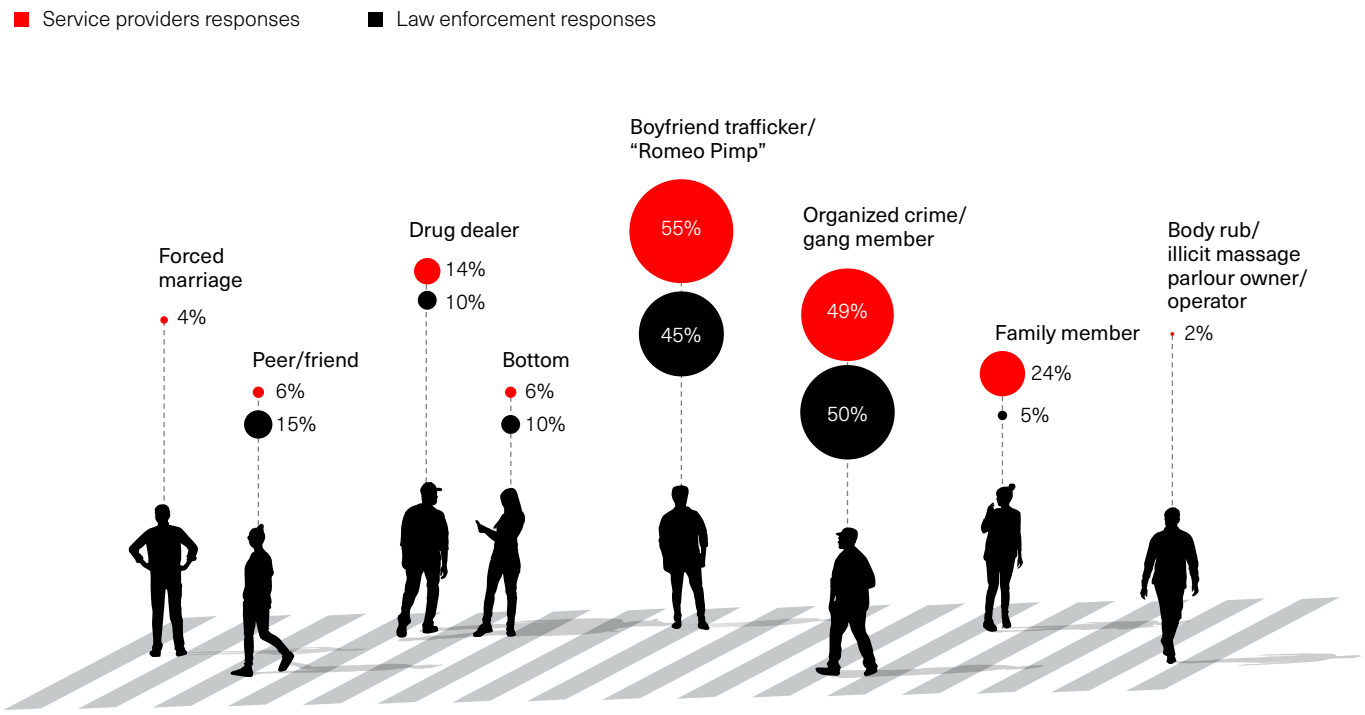


Figure 5: Interview responses to the following question: *"Can you tell me about some of the demographic characteristics of the traffickers? How are the victims/survivors being recruited?"* Prompts included for gender, age and gang or group affiliation. Responses do not add up to 100 because responses were not mutually exclusive.

Respondents most commonly associated movement along human trafficking corridors and circuits with boyfriend traffickers/Romeo pimps and gang-affiliated traffickers. Romeo pimps/boyfriend traffickers tend to introduce psychological and physical abuse over time, making the victim believe they are consenting to their own exploitation and abuse (see *How boyfriend traffickers control and coerce their victims*).[15] Romeo pimps position themselves as boyfriends and enter what look like consensual intimate partnerships with individuals before convincing or coercing them into the industry.

Respondents also identified a strong interplay between gang-related traffickers and Romeo-style pimps. Many found it difficult to determine whether gang members use Romeo pimp techniques to maintain a strong psychological hold on victims to traffick them as part of the gang's criminal activities, or if Romeo pimps are also actually gang-affiliated, but not necessarily trafficking on behalf of their gang.

Many respondents noted that while victims and survivors may mention gang affiliation as part of their experience, they rarely disclose details about which gangs are most affiliated with human trafficking.

Who are the Traffickers?

We asked interviewees to comment on any trends pertaining to the identities of the traffickers. While service providers may hear about traffickers' characteristics from survivors, they rarely engage with traffickers directly. Law enforcement respondents often gain a better understanding of who traffickers are through their investigations; however, they can struggle to earn the same level of trust and discretion that service providers can build with their clients.

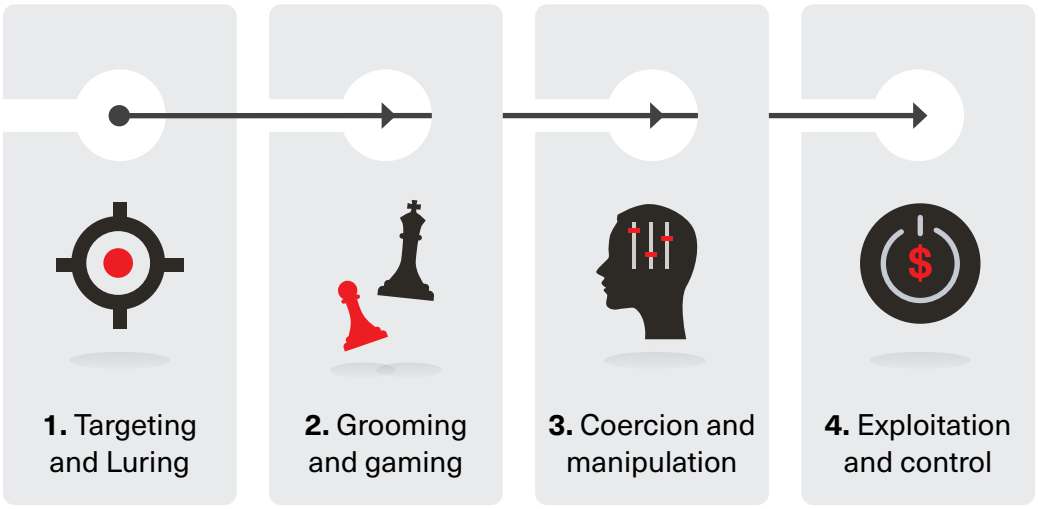
The vast majority of respondents described traffickers as male (84% of service providers, 90% of law enforcement). However, 40% of law enforcement and 39% of service provider respondents said they had worked with victims and survivors trafficked by other women.

No single age range or ethnic group is commonly associated with trafficking. Responses to this question varied greatly across interviews, and were broadly reflective of demographics in Canada and the geographic locations of respondents.

The most common characteristic of traffickers is that they are able to assess and manipulate vulnerability to their own benefit; that ability transcends class, ethnic and gender boundaries.

How Boyfriend Traffickers Control and Coerce Their Victims

Our research indicates that "boyfriend" traffickers often utilize transportation routes to profit from victims, as well as, keep them disoriented and dependent. Moving victims through human trafficking corridors and circuits, however, is just one tactic that boyfriend traffickers use to control and exploit individuals. These traffickers control their victims in four stages:



1

Targeting and luring

In this stage, traffickers seek and identify potential victims who are vulnerable to control and manipulation. They look for people with low self-esteem, who may have problems at home, be in the child welfare system, or have emotional, developmental or substance abuse issues.

Traffickers target individuals by surveilling social media for young people showing signs of low self-esteem, loneliness and lack of support, or spaces where vulnerable youth tend to frequent including homeless shelters, youth drop-in programs, malls, group homes and foster care homes.[16]

2

Grooming and gaming

Traffickers use deceit and fraudulent role play to create a sense of dependency, trust and intimacy with people.[17] They may romance someone by buying gifts and spending money, or by taking the time to ask them about their dreams, aspirations and goals.[18] Traffickers specifically target individuals who have never experienced this type of positive emotional affirmation before. This helps them gain trust while incrementally isolating individuals from family and friends. A trafficker will offer potential victims anything to make them feel loved, appreciated, safe and accepted, and then use that to put a wedge between them and their support network. Another tactic that traffickers may use during this stage is substance dependence, by encouraging substance use, or providing an ample supply of drugs and/or alcohol.

3

Coercion and manipulation

In this stage, traffickers start to send mixed messages to victims. They begin withholding things they previously gave to make them feel loved, appreciated and cared for, such as emotional intimacy, physical affection, alcohol or drugs, and money or gifts. They also use the information they have gained about the potential victim to manipulate them to act in a certain way.

Boyfriend traffickers often desensitize individuals to sexual acts they may otherwise be uncomfortable doing. They may tell victims that they owe the trafficker for everything given during the grooming and gaming stage. They may also say that commercial sex work is a viable, easy way for victims to make quick money to pay their debts.

Traffickers may also manipulate the goals and aspirations of the individual they are seeking to exploit, and mislead them into believing that commercial sex work is a short-term sacrifice needed to build a better life – that selling sex for a short time will be their ticket out.

This stage may also include normalizing or glamorizing the commercial sex industry. In some cases, traffickers may use peers to introduce victims to the industry. Individuals may initially consent to engaging in commercial sexual activities because they feel it is within their control and that they are doing so voluntarily. Traffickers may also start isolating a potential victim from family and friends, and use psychological or emotional manipulation to foster a distrust of authorities.

4 Exploitation and control

In the exploitation and control phase, a trafficker will likely have complete control over identity documents, cellphones, movements and money of the individual(s) they are exploiting. Individuals may be fully reliant on the trafficker to provide all of their basic needs, such as housing, food, clothing and drugs and alcohol. Withholding drugs and alcohol is a powerful tactic among victims who experience addiction or dependence on a substance.

During this stage, traffickers threaten individuals to perform commercial sexual acts on their behalf. The trafficker may extort victims by threatening to share intimate pictures, as a way to leverage and coerce them into the commercial sex industry. Victims and survivors are often afraid of speaking out against their trafficker because of the risk of violence to themselves or others, deportation or significant interpersonal risks.

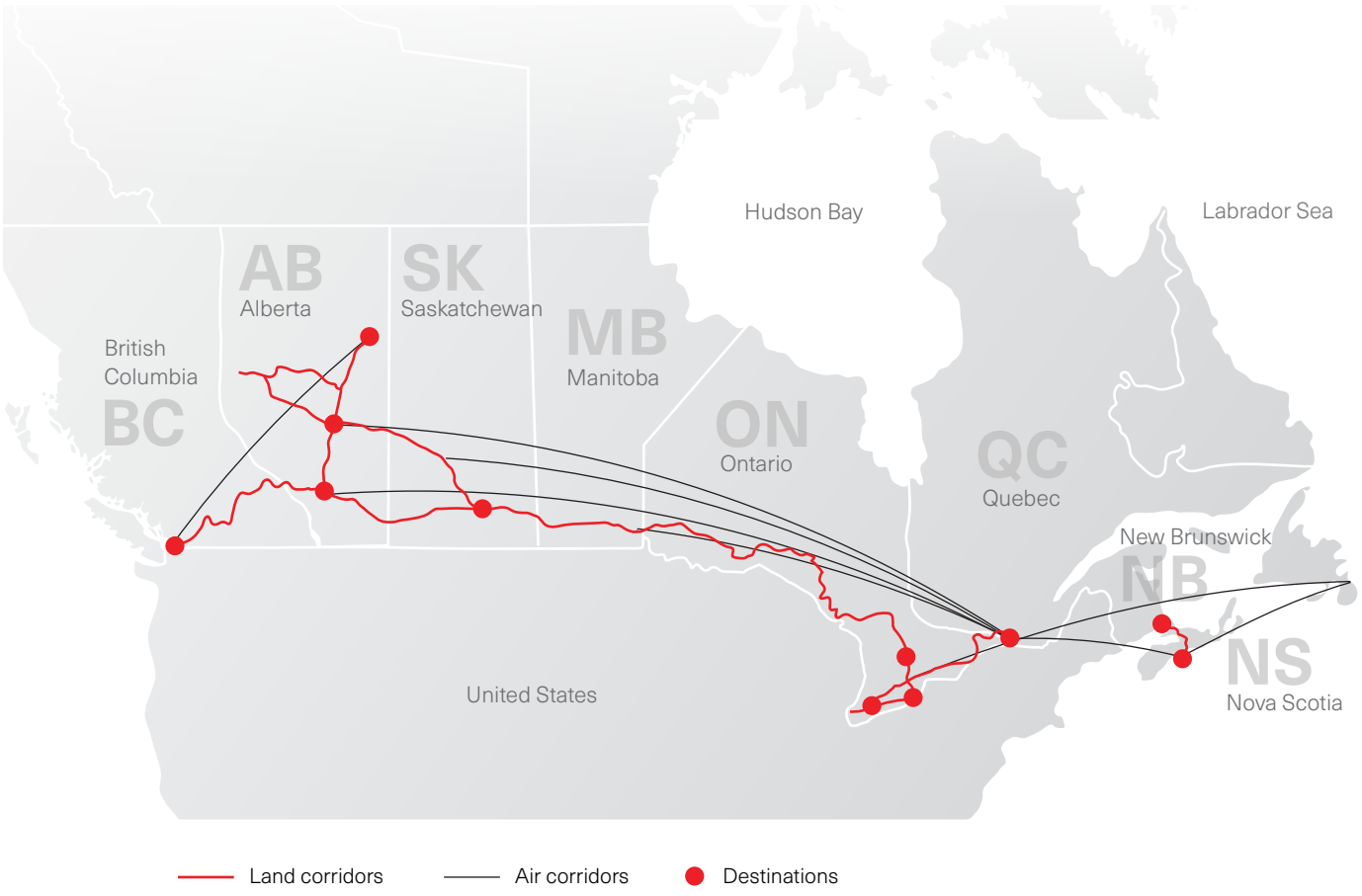
Once a trafficker enters the exploitation and control stage, victims may start to realize that they are not actually in a loving, supportive or safe relationship. By keeping victims isolated from friends, family and support networks, traffickers make them doubt themselves and prevent them from getting positive reinforcement and support. Traffickers may also use psychological tools such as *gaslighting* to make an individual feel they are the cause of their own unhappiness, or that they have no reasonable claim to be unhappy in the first place.[19]

* Gaslighting is a subtle and covert type of emotional and psychological abuse that involves a variety of manipulative techniques to make a target undermine their own sense of reality and mental stability.

The Geography of Human Trafficking Corridors and Circuits

Human trafficking corridors exist in nearly every province/territory in Canada, with the notable exception of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. While both human trafficking and demand for commercial sex services do exist in Northern regions, the limited transportation infrastructure means that traffickers cannot move victims quickly and efficiently between population centres and commercial sex markets. The conditions required to enable human trafficking corridors simply do not exist in these smaller markets with comparatively less demand but higher overhead costs associated with travel.

Human Trafficking Corridors in Canada



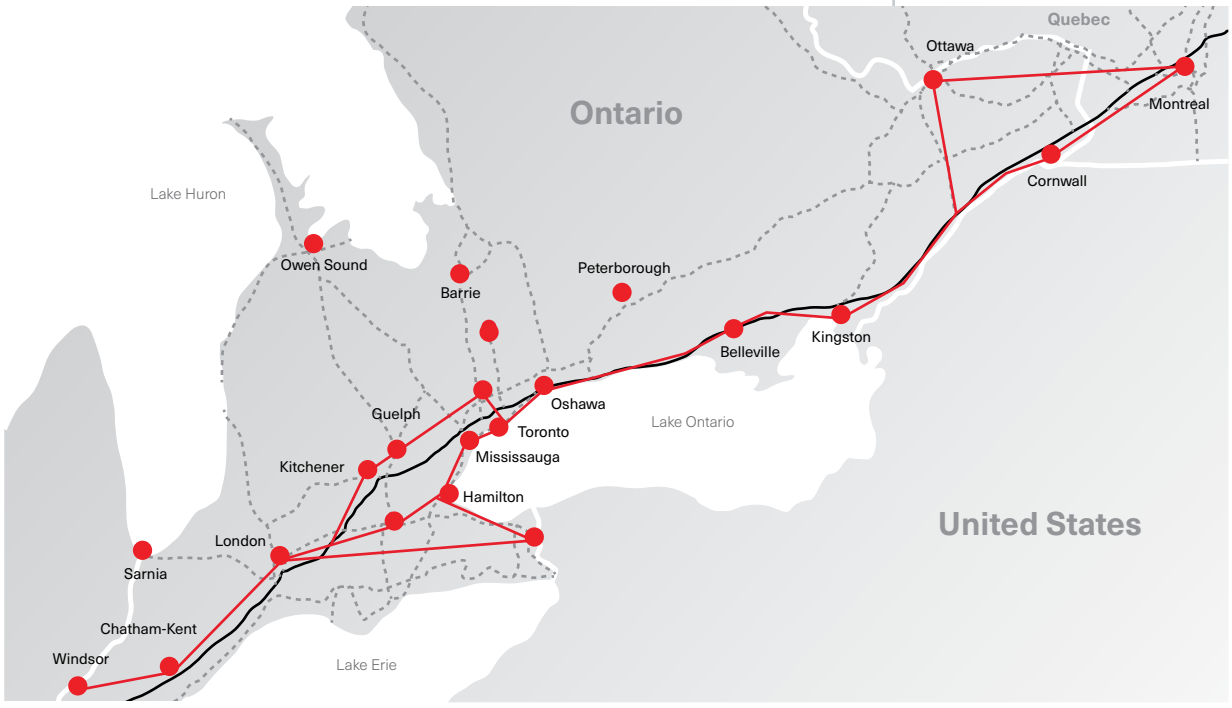
Intra-provincial Corridors

Our research indicates that intra-provincial corridors connect cities and commercial sex markets in a single province. These geographically short circuits are easy to travel by car. They may also connect to much smaller commercial sex markets on the way to larger markets, staying a day or two in even the smallest towns if they can arrange enough commercial sexual exchanges to make it profitable for traffickers.

Example

Ontario's Hwy 401 Corridor

Ontario's 401 Highway connects Montreal, QC and Windsor, ON. Between these two end points, there are several populous urban centres. Traffickers may operate along the entire 401 corridor, or capitalize on movement through a densely populated region, such as the Greater Toronto Area.



Example

Calgary – Edmonton – Fort McMurray/Grande Prairie

Alberta's human trafficking corridors connect the province's largest online commercial sex markets, while also accessing markets affiliated with extraction work camps in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie.

Interview respondents commented that this corridor is used by both traffickers local to Alberta and those from outside the province, notably from Ontario and Quebec. A growing trend in this corridor is the number of victims and survivors from Quebec who speak little to no English. Not only do language barriers serve as another method of control, but it is also believed that sex buyers see women from Quebec as exotic and novel.

Inter-provincial corridors

Our research indicates that inter-provincial corridors occur when traffickers transport victims across provinces to access various commercial sex markets. They are largely organized around accessing the most competitive and highest paying markets. Because of the additional operational costs associated with flying or driving long distances, inter-provincial corridors tend to run between large urban centres with large markets.

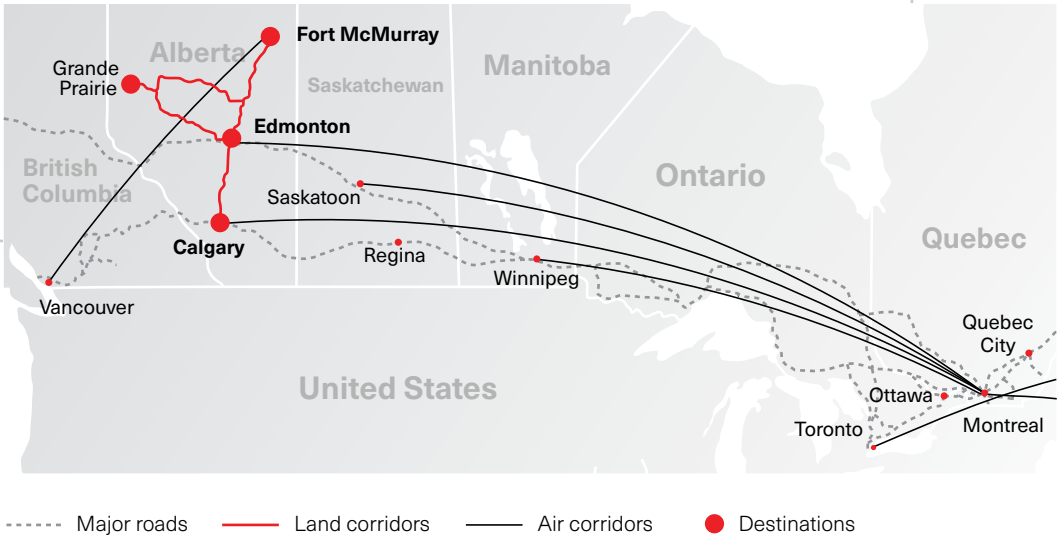
Once a trafficker and victims arrive in a new province, they may stay and capitalize on the major urban commercial sex market in the city of arrival, or they may access other intra-provincial corridors within that province.

Example

Canada's West Coast Circuit

The Quebec – Alberta corridor was one of the most commonly identified by interviewees, with a noticeable trend in the trafficking of young women from Quebec in central and western Canada, most notably Alberta.

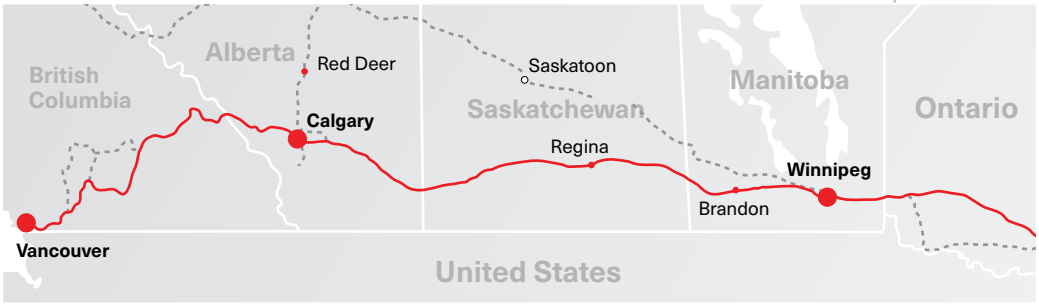
Law enforcement respondents specifically noted the trafficking of victims from Montreal to Calgary by airplane. Victims either travel with their traffickers, or may travel alone and are met by traffickers or an associate upon arrival in Alberta. Traffickers and victims may stay in Calgary and arrange for commercial sex interactions in hotels near the airport or downtown, or traffickers may move victims along the intra-provincial corridor between Calgary and Fort McMurray.



Examples

The Trans-Canada Highway

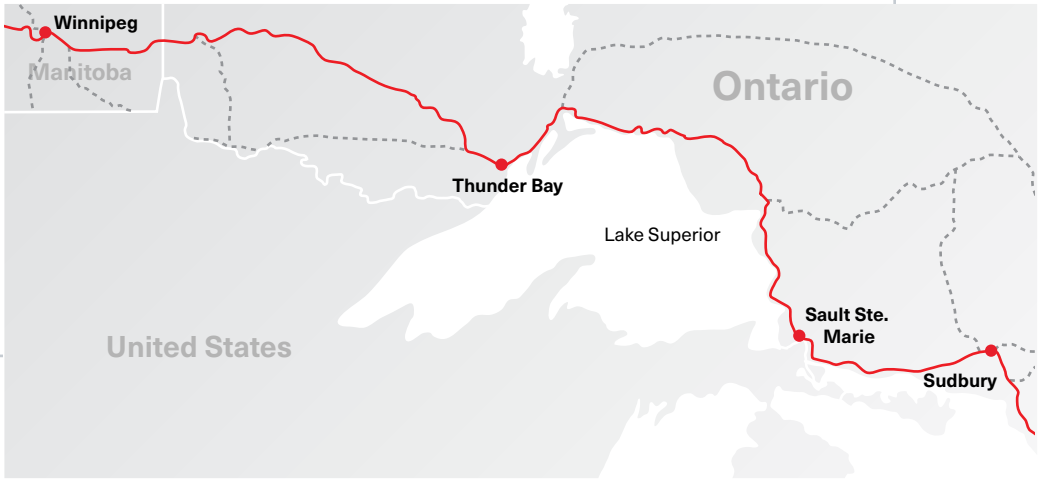
Our research findings confirm previous anecdotes about the scope and scale of sex trafficking in Canada. Trafficking occurs where there is a highway and access to the internet. The Trans-Canada highway in particular functions as a corridor that connects to commercial sex markets within all provinces, and across the country.



Major roads — Land corridors ● Destinations

Highways 11 & 17 Northern Ontario – Winnipeg, Manitoba

Traffickers use Highways 11 & 17 to move victims from Sudbury and Thunder Bay through Northern Ontario and to connect to the online commercial sex market in Winnipeg. While the "payoff" may not be as large as in other parts of Canada due to the long distance between smaller online commercial sex markets, traffickers view the low population density and relative remoteness of these highways as a benefit in efforts to avoid detection by law enforcement.

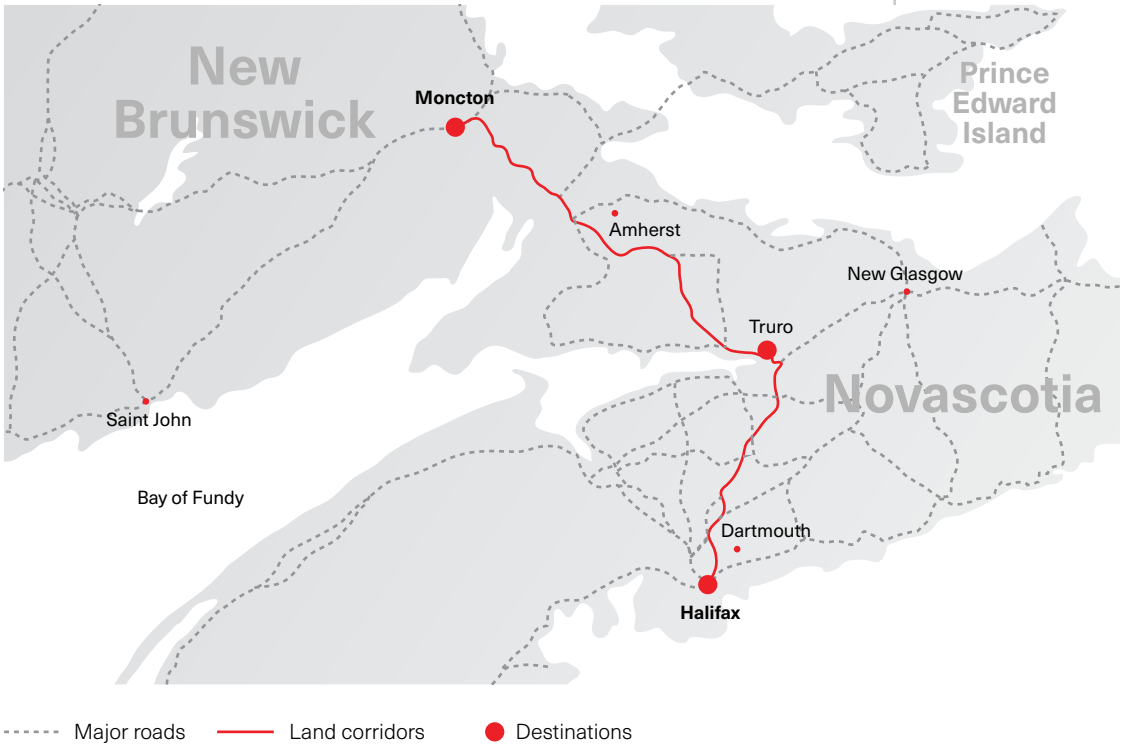


Major roads — Land corridors ● Destinations

Example

Halifax, Nova Scotia – Moncton, New Brunswick

Within Atlantic Canada, the stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway between Halifax and Moncton was the most frequently mentioned by interviewees, and well-known human trafficking corridor. Traffickers go to Moncton not only to connect to the online commercial sex market, but also to access the commercial markets in strip clubs. Strip clubs operate in New Brunswick but are not legally permitted in Nova Scotia.



Methods of Transportation

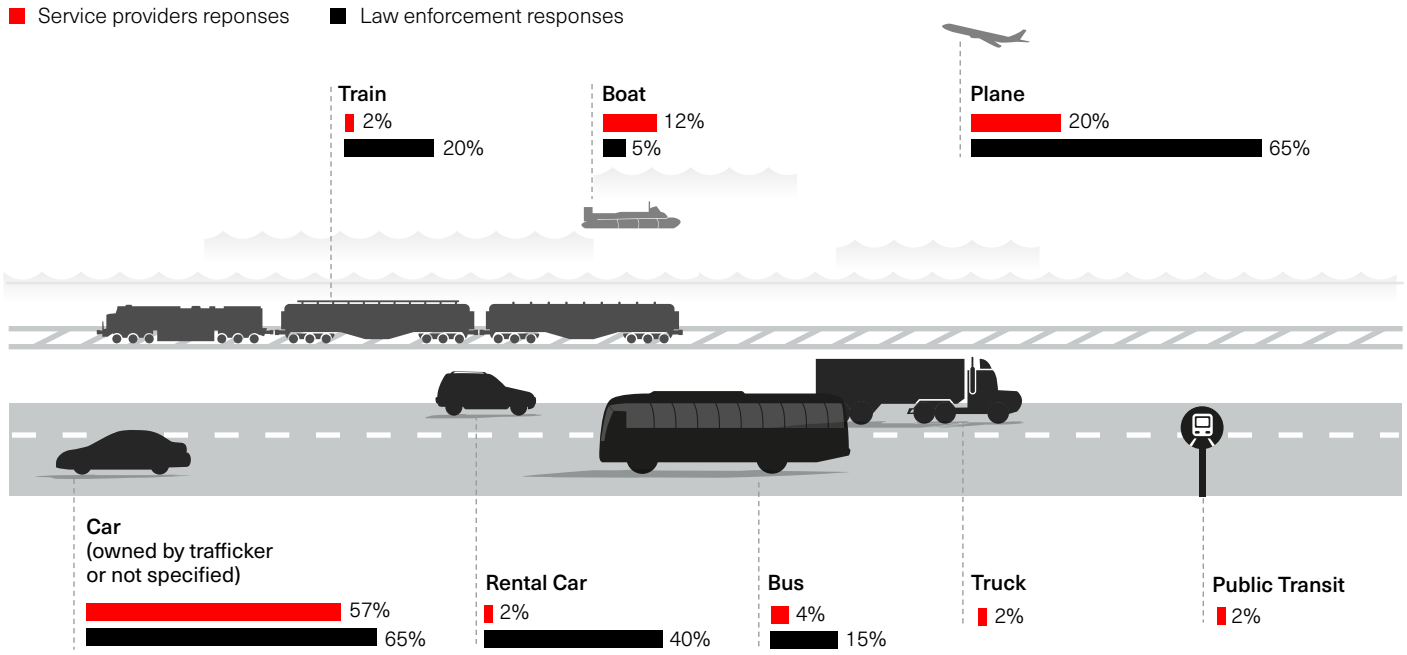
Cars are by far the most frequently used method of travel in human trafficking corridors, especially along circuits. The overhead costs associated with driving are lower than for air travel, and traffickers can be nimble and adjust travel routes according to demand for commercial sexual services.

Law enforcement respondents stressed how rental cars are used to avoid detection and evade law enforcement. Traffickers often rent multiple cars at various stages of a corridor to make identification more difficult. Renting vehicles with fake identification makes it even more challenging for law enforcement to track the movements and actions of traffickers. Using the names of victims and survivors when renting cars helps control and coerce victims into commercial sex. For example, traffickers may threaten to damage or withhold the rental car, resulting in potential charges against the victim, unless the victim does as they are told.

Airplanes are also used to transport victims along human trafficking corridors, primarily when a significant distance exists between markets/cities along the corridor, and there are limited market stops between the first and final destination. Flights are used when car travel is either impossible or very inconvenient.

Figure 6: Interview responses to the following question: *"What mode of travel is used when they are travelling? Prompt for personal car, bus, train, plane, hitch-hiking, ride shares, taxis etc."* Responses do not add up to 100% because responses were not mutually exclusive.

Methods of transportation used along human trafficking corridors



Sites of Exploitation

Most respondents indicated that trafficking along corridors took place through escort services in hotels, motels, short term stays, and private residences/condos. Despite overhead costs associated with travel, the total amount of revenue generated by one day of trafficking greatly outweighs the costs of operation.

Law enforcement respondents pointed to a noticeable increase in traffickers' use of short term stays, which can pose challenges to investigations. For hotels and motels, more opportunities exist to train staff in detecting and reporting human trafficking. Relationships can also be forged with hotel management and cleaning staff to report to management or call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline if they suspect human trafficking is taking place.

Short term stays offer fewer opportunities to equip staff with knowledge about human trafficking. The owners and operators may never actually meet the renter, and traffickers may fully remove any signs of human trafficking before they leave the short term stay or the owner returns.

Traffickers may also be hard to identify if they are not directly supervising the individuals they are exploiting. Law enforcement respondents stated that traffickers might be in a separate room from the victim in a hotel, motel or short term stay, or in the nearby vicinity to arrange calls, schedule purchasers and collect money.

In This Section:

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Exiting Human Trafficking

Why do victims of human trafficking not just leave if they are not being physically restrained, confined or controlled? Escaping traffickers can be psychologically and emotionally challenging for victims as well as physically dangerous. Traffickers forge strong trauma bonds with the individual(s) they are exploiting to create a sense of dependency and isolation. Controlling and/or detaining victims is necessary to continue exploiting them.[20] Control is achieved through emotional, physical and sexual violence, as well as economic abuse.[21] Constant monitoring and surveillance, and forging divisions between victims and their previous support networks (e.g., friends, family, community members), can make victims feel escape is impossible and they have nowhere to turn.[22]

Barriers to Exiting

Survivors face four mutually reinforcing types of barriers when they attempt to leave their trafficker:[23]

- **Individual:** The negative psychosocial impacts of trafficking can damage the sense of self-efficacy that victims require to leave their controller. These impacts include experiencing trauma, shame, internalized stigma, substance abuse and mental illness, health issues and a lack of awareness of available external resources.

- **Relational:** Traffickers often intentionally create cleavages between individuals they are exploiting and their social and support networks. Strained or limited relationships with family and friends can reinforce dependence on traffickers.

- **Structural:** Exiting a human trafficking situation requires transitioning to a different kind of life, which ideally is non-exploitative and enables survivors to actualize their potential. Structural factors affect a victim's ability to leave, including barriers to employment, prior criminal records, educational attainment, ability to maintain housing, staying out of poverty and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

- **Societal:** Sex trafficking survivors and consensual sex workers face tremendous stigma as a result of their experiences in the commercial sex industry. Negative attitudes can result in discrimination against survivors or further social isolation or stigmatization.[24,25,26]

Service providers identified the following barriers that victims and survivors face in accessing services: stigma, challenges navigating the service system, addictions, lack of appropriate housing/shelter, lack of emergency services, lack of trust in the system, fear and safety concerns, lack of trauma-informed services, and lack of flexible services aligned to meet their needs.

Barriers to accessing services, service provider responses

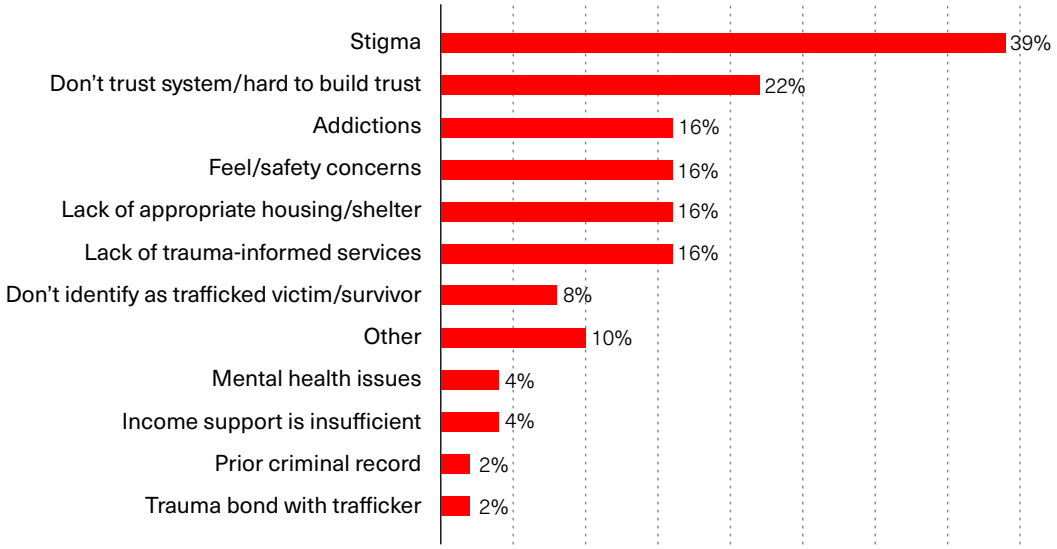


Figure 7: Service provider responses to the following question: *"What barriers or obstacles do survivors or victims face when accessing services?"* Responses do not add up to 100% because responses were not mutually exclusive.

Law enforcement respondents had a slightly different perspective with limited financial options/insufficient income support (30%) cited most frequently, along with stigma and addictions. Social assistance rates and provincial minimum wages provide subsistence income at best and are far less than what victims would "earn" on any given day. Even though victims are often forced to hand over their earnings to traffickers, the idea of working a minimum wage job or relying on social assistance presents significant barriers to exiting.

Barriers to accessing services, law enforcement responses

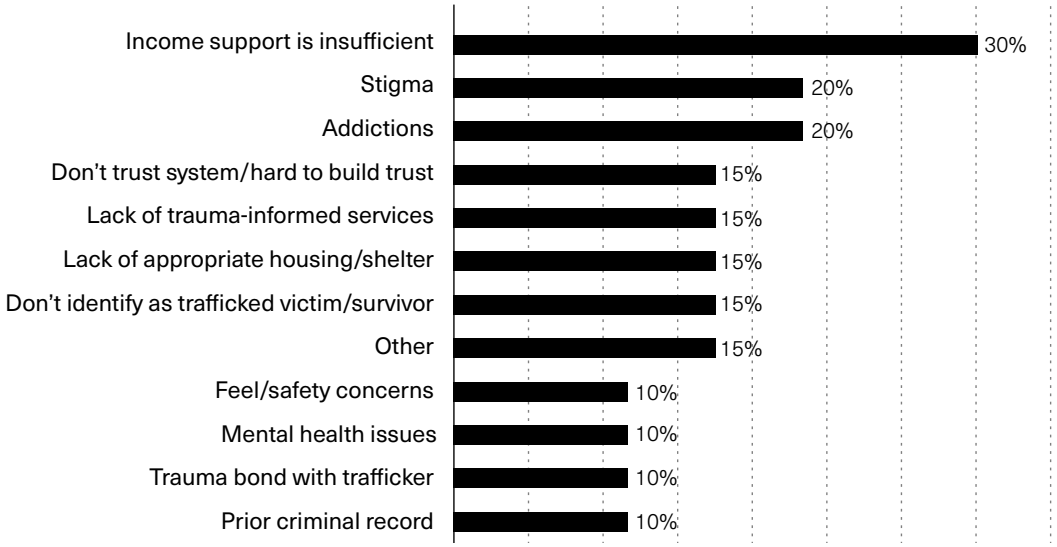
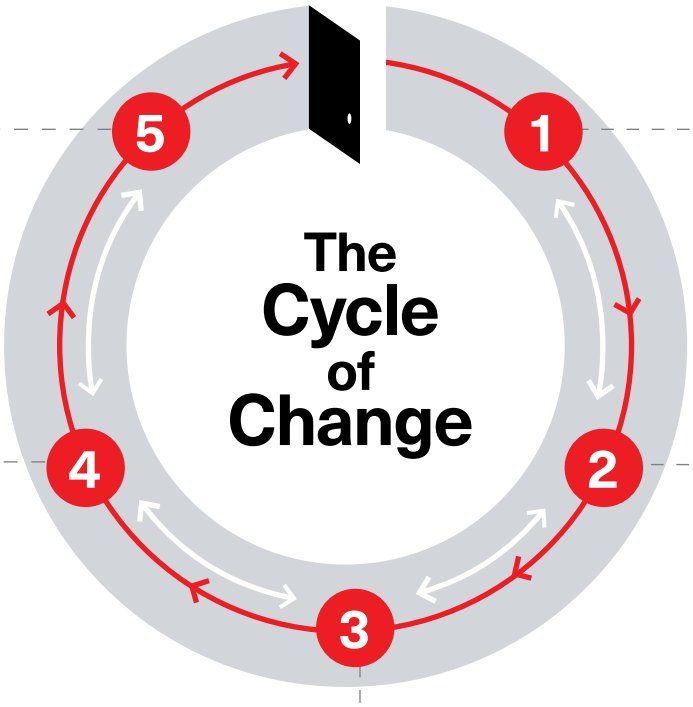


Figure 8: Law enforcement responses to the following question: *"What barriers or obstacles do survivors or victims face when accessing services?"* Responses do not add up to 100% because responses were not mutually exclusive.

The "Cycle of Change"

Research has identified a five-stage model of change to describe the process of exiting human trafficking relationships:[27]



Precontemplation: person is unaware there is a problem and has no intention of making change.

Contemplation: person is aware there is a problem and is considering change, but hasn't made any commitments to do so.

Preparation: person starts making small changes to their behaviour with the intention they will make additional, larger changes in the near future.

Action: person makes visible and overt behaviour changes, such as leaving a trafficker.

Maintenance: if change has persisted for 6 months or longer, individuals are in a maintenance stage. Here, the ultimate goal is to avoid relapse.

These stages are not linear. Victims and survivors may go back and forth between stages multiple times before they exit or are able to graduate towards a stage of maintenance.

Traffickers use multiple methods to control the individuals they are exploiting and prevent them from progressing through the stages of the cycle of change.

Traffickers often leverage the stigma associated with commercial sex work to prevent victims from reaching out for support or help. Psychological research has demonstrated the impact of stigma on preventing someone from reaching out for help.[28,29] Stigma can be understood as the attribution of inferior status to a person, or group of people, that either have a visible trait that is perceived to be discrediting (e.g., physical disability) or some perceived moral defect.[30] Individuals who have engaged in the commercial sex industry, either voluntarily or by force, are among the most stigmatized groups in Western society.[31]

While little research exists on the impact of stigma on help-seeking among survivors of sex trafficking, some research does show that individuals who perceive stigma, or who have been previously discriminated against due to their imposed stigma, fear rejection and are less likely to seek support directly from service providers.[32] Instead, stigmatized people are more likely to find indirect ways of seeking support, such as dropping hints about a problem when asking directly for other supports: "For instance, instead of asking for emotional support from a friend or a family member, individuals may choose to hint that a problem exists or act sad without giving details or directly stating reasons for the sadness."[33]

These factors can be further aggravated when victims are transported along human trafficking corridors and circuits. Moving victims to different parts of the province and/or country makes safety and exit planning even more challenging. Not knowing where they are, to whom they could go, or how they could safely leave their trafficker makes preparation and action even more dangerous for victims looking to exit.

Service Needs and Systems of Intervention

To better understand what services survivors require when exiting trafficking, we asked respondents about survivors' most urgent needs upon seeking help. Respondents stressed that, in many cases, survivors often escape their traffickers with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Services need to be available immediately once a victim decides to leave, and access to support needs to have as few rules attached as possible. Making access to support conditional on other actions, such as reporting to law enforcement, can cause significant barriers for victims and survivors. The severe threat of violence coupled with the tremendous psychological manipulation and control associated with trafficking requires an immediate and effective response embracing a harm-reduction approach. Service providers need to meet all basic needs of survivors including housing/shelter, food, clothes, medical care, emotional support and cell phones/communication tools.

> **They have multiple layers of trauma and abuse. They need an entire wrap around model – dental, tattoo cover up, treatment for addiction, medical care. One wanted to change their hair colour to be less recognizable. Domestic violence and sex assault victims often don't have these needs.**
>
> – Service provider respondent on how the needs of human trafficking victims differ from other groups served

Barriers to accessing services are not mutually exclusive: victims and survivors may experience multiple barriers concurrently or separately. Service providers also spoke to the complexity of care needs. Victims and survivors can present with multiple immediate needs including housing, addictions, mental health, basic needs (food, clothing, basic necessities) in addition to requiring a more comprehensive array of transitional and long-term supports.

By far, the most dominant service needs are related to housing, specifically safe and appropriate housing. Respondents highlighted the heightened safety and security risks that survivors face upon leaving their traffickers, and that safe emergency housing is critical to helping survivors exit. They defined safety in terms of housing needs in several ways:

- Emergency housing needs to keep survivors **physically safe** from their traffickers. Survivors need support for safety planning, and they need to be located somewhere where their trafficker cannot find them. This includes being protected and anonymous from the trafficker's associates, including other women or victims of trafficking who may find or identify them in emergency shelters.

- Housing needs to provide an **emotionally safe space.** According to 40% of service providers and 20% of law enforcement respondents, stigma and shame are among the biggest barriers for victims and survivors to access services; housing options must help clients overcome those barriers. Survivors need access to trauma-informed, non-judgmental spaces in the immediate and intermediate stages of leaving their trafficker.

- Housing needs to be **low-barrier** and take a harm-reduction approach to supporting survivors. Rules often associated with non-human trafficking specific shelters, such as violence against women shelters and family shelters, can be challenging for survivors due to potential addiction issues, intense trauma and physical and medical needs immediately upon exiting.

Trauma-informed programs

Close to three-quarters of all respondents highlighted that the service needs of trafficking survivors were different than those of other clients, including people who have experienced other forms of violence, sexual assault and abuse. The biggest difference is that trauma-informed services are an absolute requirement for trafficking survivors who have significantly higher and more complex levels of trauma. Many become dependent on substances as a means of self-medication and coping. Other services, often needed immediately, include addictions and/or detox services and income support (i.e., help accessing social assistance).

Respondents also stressed that survivors often face more complex challenges and more co-morbidities than other clients, meaning there are two or more significant physiological or psychological conditions or diagnoses.

Victims and survivors of human trafficking are often placed on the far end of the complexity continuum of trauma, which is associated with a significant amount of shame and heightened vulnerabilities including anxiety, panic disorder, major depression, substance abuse, and eating disorders as well as a combination of these.

Many service providers stressed that trauma-informed programs and services should be central in victims'/survivors' care plans.

Trauma and Trauma-Informed Services

What is trauma?

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, "Trauma is the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Long after the traumatic event occurs, people with trauma can often feel shame, helplessness, powerlessness and intense fear."[34]

What are trauma-informed services?

Trauma-informed systems of care are intentionally designed to respond to, and address, the trauma-related needs of victims and survivors and are based on the following set of core principles:[35]

- Trauma is a defining life event that can profoundly shape a victim's sense of self and their sense of others
- The victim's behaviours and symptoms are coping mechanisms
- The primary goals of services are empowerment, symptom management and recovery
- The service relationship is collaborative

Service provision challenges

The combination of safety concerns, physical threats, psychological control, dependence, trauma bonding and the constant surveillance by traffickers means that when survivors choose to exit, the response needs to be immediate. The window of time for a victim to exit can be incredibly short. If missed, it could end up causing more harm to victims and survivors due to potential retaliation from traffickers, reinforcing social isolation and stigma. Victims moved along human trafficking corridors could subsequently be moved to another part of the province or country and may not be traceable again.

Challenges in providing services to victims and survivors of human trafficking vary slightly between service providers and law enforcement; however, the largest common challenge is a lack of funding and resources to do the job well.

Close to half of all respondents said that lack of appropriate, sustainable and adequate funding presents a real challenge to the ability to provide services and supports to survivors. Service providers and law enforcement respondents both stressed that there is simply not enough funding or programming to meet the needs of victims and survivors. It can be incredibly dangerous when victims are attempting to leave their trafficker without the necessary supports and resources in place to do it safely.

> **It can be really hard to get statements from victims. Asking a woman to come in and disclose some of the worst things that have ever happened to her, or that she's done, to a stranger is not ok. I can't expect them to have blind trust. Having to retell their story constantly is a huge barrier, especially when they can be treated like they are the guilty ones. When the victim is treated like a liar, you end up with delays and the need to re-tell their stories multiple times. It can be very, very heavy on victims.**
>
> – Law enforcement respondent on building trust with victims and survivors, and navigating the judicial system

Law enforcement respondents stressed that it was challenging to investigate and pursue human trafficking cases because of insufficient full-time equivalent staff to follow through on investigations, and inadequate resources due to other caseload pressures. Only 30% of law enforcement interviewees worked in dedicated human trafficking units.

Of the frontline service delivery partners interviewed, 43% delivered human trafficking specific programs with dedicated funding, whereas 83% of all respondents regularly worked with victims and survivors of human trafficking directly.

The role of law enforcement in the continuum of support services for survivors is much narrower than that of service providers. Service providers tend to engage with survivors in more comprehensive and long-term ways. Police hold the primary responsibility for enforcing the law, including ensuring the safety of survivors and pressing charges against traffickers. Service providers, however, are more appropriately positioned to support survivors throughout the cycle of change, regardless of whether charges are being pressed.

Barriers to providing services, service provider responses

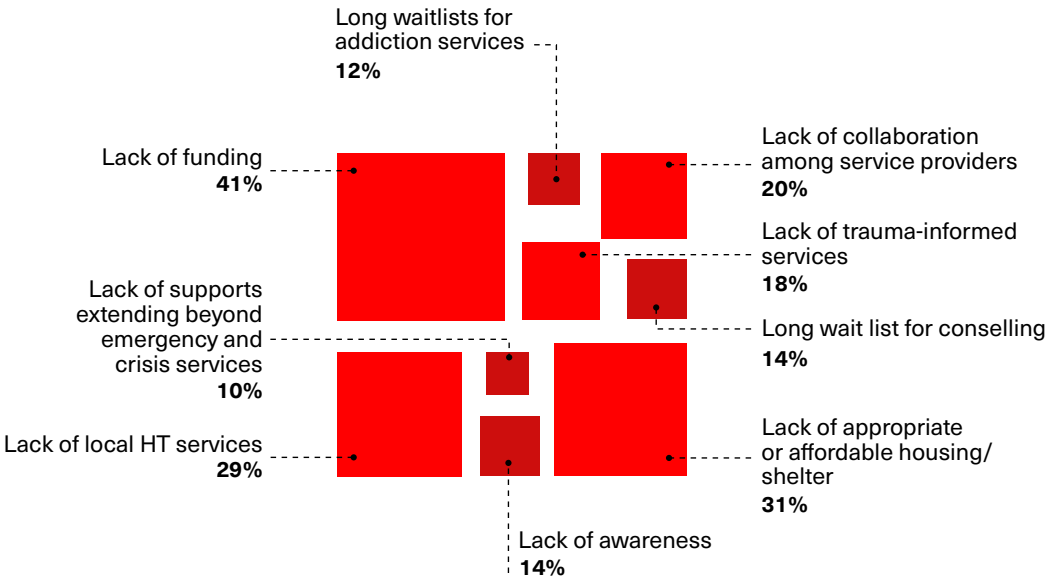


Figure 9: Interview responses to the following question: *"Which obstacles do you encounter in providing services to the victims?"* Prompts included for practical, legal and financial barriers. Responses do not add up to 100 because responses were not mutually exclusive.

In addition to a general lack of resources to support police interventions (45%), the biggest challenge identified by law enforcement is obtaining disclosures and building trust with victims and survivors (35%), followed by a lack of human trafficking training within the judiciary including all levels of law enforcement, judges and crown prosecutors (20%).

Law enforcement respondents who specialize in human trafficking cases stressed that to be successful, their approach with potential victims of human trafficking must be considerably different than the typical approach to victim engagement. Victims and survivors of human trafficking can have a very strong distrust of law enforcement, partly due to manipulation by trafficker who may convince them that no one will believe them and that they may be just as liable to be arrested as the trafficker. Victims and survivors can also face considerable stigma, shame, fear and isolation about their experiences in the commercial sex industry.

> **It's horrible that I have to ask victims to face their accuser – someone who will probably kill you, and have your entire family shame and blame you for 'choosing' this lifestyle – and then the courts just don't care. They say you made this bed, and now you lie in it. And while we make you do all these terrible things, we're going to house you in a room with 10 other women with no privacy, bad food, but maybe you'll get counselling if you're lucky. We need a better system, and we need to collaborate.**
>
> – Law enforcement respondent on challenges in service provision

Conclusions and Recommendations

Across Canada, traffickers utilize transportation routes and corridors strategically to exert control over victims and ensure that the victim has reduced opportunities for escaping or evading the trafficker. The disorientation arising from being uncertain of one's whereabouts can increase the trafficker's psychological control over the person being exploited. Given the central role of psychological manipulation within the boyfriend trafficker typology that is identified by this report, movement and transportation gives trafficker's a clear strategic advantage in exploiting individuals within the sex industry.

This research on human trafficking corridors in Canada was exploratory in nature, given that there is a lack of pre-existing evidence on the role of domestic transportation routes in this crime. The research indicates that labour trafficking is not occurring or is not visible to frontline service providers along transportation routes. In the future, it is important to investigate whether individuals in labour trafficking situations are primarily confined to one location or one region. Patterns of movement and confinement among victims of labour trafficking may differ substantially from those experienced by individuals exploited in the sex industry, and establishing these patterns may aid in the development of targeted interventions based on the type of trafficking.

Indigenous persons in sex trafficking situations are another group that either are not moved along transportation routes by traffickers, or are not readily detected by frontline service providers. This research indicates that sex trafficking of Indigenous women and girls may follow unique patterns when compared to other demographics, and that in particular, movement from a rural community to an urban centre exposes this population to traffickers, who may prey on their unfamiliarity with the new environment, and/or lack of local connections. What is clear is that a key mechanism of exploitation employed by sex traffickers is leveraging the isolation of the victim, and their unfamiliarity with their environment, in order to profit.

Based on the findings of this research on human trafficking corridors, we make the following recommendations:

1

Protection

- Invest in creating more inter-jurisdictional law enforcement teams that can act quickly and decisively across municipal and provincial jurisdictions. Early examples of this in Quebec and Ontario have shown to be promising. A national coordination strategy would make it harder for traffickers to evade police by simply moving jurisdictions once they are detected.

- Provide mandatory evidence-based training to all levels of law enforcement. Require that every single law enforcement officer in Canada participate in trauma-informed, best practice training. Evaluate the impact of training by measuring its impact on identifying human trafficking and in providing appropriate, trauma-informed responses.

2 Prosecution

- Explore ways to increase rates of prosecution by making the judicial process less traumatizing for survivors. Consider investing in establishing a network of expert witnesses who can participate in trials to reduce the burden of proof on the victim/survivor testimony.

3 Partnership

- Provide resources for cross-sectoral collaboration. Governments should provide resources for community-based agencies and service providers to participate in cross-sectoral collaboration aimed at ending human trafficking in Canada.

- Develop partnerships with sectors commonly used by traffickers. Governments and anti-human trafficking advocates should develop partnerships with sectors such as rental car companies, hotels and short term stays to increase awareness and detection of human trafficking.

4 Empowerment

- Invest in building an adequate and sustainable network of community services across the country to provide timely and effective supports for survivors along their continuum of healing.

- Adopt a systematic, evidence-informed strategy to adequately fund human trafficking programs and services across Canada. Undertake regular environmental scans, needs assessments and gap analyses to ensure equitable access to supports and services across the country.

At The Centre, we firmly believe that human trafficking is a non-partisan issue. We implore all levels of government to work together on this issue and commit to funding anti-human trafficking initiatives in perpetuity to ensure that programs and services can focus on what matters most: providing exceptional, meaningful and effective supports to victims and survivors. By increasing connections across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries, frontline service providers will have an increased capacity to provide timely and appropriate responses to individuals who are trapped by this destructive crime.

Glossary of Terms

A-C

- **Bottom:** a sex worker or sex trafficking victim that helps manage the business operations for a trafficker. Bottoms often control other sex workers/sex trafficking victims and sometimes embody the control required to protect the business.[36]

- **Coercion:** the use of force to persuade someone to do something that they are unwilling to do.[37]

- **Commercial sex:** the exchange of money or goods for sexual services. Commercial sex always involves a sex worker and a sex purchaser and it frequently also involves a third party.[38]

- **Commercial sex industry/market:** the combined phenomenon of individuals, establishments, customs and messages – explicit and implicit, desired and undesired – involved in commercial sex.[39]

- **Consensual sex workers and sex work:** sex workers include female, male and transgender adults (18 years of age and above) who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services, either regularly or occasionally. Sex work is consensual sex between adults, can take many forms, and varies between and within countries and communities. Sex work may vary in the degree to which it is "formal" or organized.[40] Exploitation and coercion are not the deciding factor for participation in consensual sex work.

- **Criminal organization:** a group, however organized, that is a) composed of three or more persons in or outside Canada, and b) has as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences that, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group or by any of the persons who constitute the group.[41]

E-H

- **Exploitation:** in the context of human trafficking a person exploits another person if they cause them to provide, or offer to provide, labour or a service by engaging in conduct that, in all the circumstances, could reasonably be expected to cause the other person to believe that their safety or the safety of a person known to them would be threatened if they failed to provide, or offer to provide, the labour or service.[42]

- **Familial sex trafficking:** sex trafficking that is perpetrated by family members, such as a parent, legal guardian or other family member.[43]

- **Gang-affiliated pimp:** a term used to describe traffickers that are members of a gang and/or who conduct human trafficking as a consequence of being a member of an organized crime group or street gang.

- **Human trafficking corridors:** systems of transportation (i.e. roads, flight paths, boats, buses and trains) that are *systematically* used by traffickers to profit off of the sexual exploitation of others by moving them to different cities and commercial sex markets across Canada.

- **Human smuggling:** facilitating the illegal entry of an individual into Canada for a profit. Human smugglers charge people large sums of money for their transportation, and facilitate illegal migration, often by counselling smuggled persons to claim asylum in the country to which they are smuggled.[44]

- **Human trafficking: t**he act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation.[45]

L-S

- **Labour trafficking:** a type of human trafficking. Labour trafficking involves recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control direction or influence over the movements of a person for the purposes of exploiting their labour.[46]

- **Pimp:** a person who facilitates or manages commercial sex transactions.[47] A pimp may also be a trafficker if they recruit, transport, transfer, receive, hold, conceal or harbour a person, or exercise control, direct or influence the movements of a person for the purposes of sexually exploiting them.

- **Romeo pimp/boyfriend trafficker:** traffickers that position themselves as boyfriends and enter what look like consensual intimate partnerships with the victim before they start convincing or coercing them into the commercial sex industry.

- **Sex trafficking:** a type of human trafficking. Sex trafficking involves recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control direction or influence over the movements of a person for the purposes of sexual exploitation.[48]

- **Stigma:** the attribution of inferior status to a person, or group of people, that either have a visible trait that is perceived to be discrediting (e.g., race, physical disability) or some perceived moral defect.[49]

- **Survivor:** a term of empowerment to convey that a victim of crime has started the healing process and may have gained a sense of peace in their life.[50]

T-Z

- **Trauma:** the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Long after the traumatic event occurs, people with trauma can often feel shame, helplessness, powerlessness and intense fear.[51]

- **Trauma-informed systems of care:** programs and services that are intentionally designed to respond to, and address, the trauma-related needs of victims and survivors and are based on the following set of core principles:[52]

  - Trauma is a defining life event that can profoundly shape a victim's sense of self and their sense of others.
  - The victim's behaviours and symptoms are coping mechanisms.
  - The primary goals of services are empowerment and recovery.
  - The service relationship is collaborative.

- **Victim:** a person who has suffered physical or emotional harm, property damage, or economic loss as a result of a crime. The offence committed against the victim must fall under the *Criminal Code*, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, or the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act*. The rights also apply to some offences under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and parts of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*.[53]

Full Methodology

In undertaking this research, we conducted three lines of inquiry to better understand how human trafficking corridors operate in Canada: literature review, media review, and qualitative research (interviews with service providers and law enforcement).

Literature Review

Despite a lack of reliable empirical data on human trafficking in Canada, a growing body of research aims to better understand and build awareness of how this crime is operating.

We reviewed more than 85 articles and reports, and assessed them for credibility, comparability and relevance to the research topic. We assessed credibility by prioritizing research with transparent and proven research methods. We gave academic and peer-reviewed articles top priority, followed by government reports and data, and "grey" literature issued by non-academic institutions, e.g., community agencies, think-tanks.

Since human trafficking is inherently an underground and covert crime, there are multiple barriers to conducting academic and peer-reviewed research. For example, researchers may not have the most recent data on evolving manifestations of this crime if they do not have direct access to victims or survivors. Ethical considerations in conducting research with human subjects may also prevent primary data collection.

To balance the need for rigour and still produce relevant and meaningful research, we were careful to not exclude research that could credibly speak to the lived realities and trends faced by victims, survivors and service providers on the ground, even if it did not meet the highest research standards of peer review.

We explored the following themes as they relate to human trafficking in Canada and North America:

- Canadian case studies and regional research;
- economic dimensions of human trafficking
- exiting human trafficking
- gangs and organized crime
- health and social services
- Indigenous communities
- legal constructs of human trafficking and sex work in Canada
- policing and law enforcement
- stigma and psychology;
- traffickers and pimps – motivations and methods of trafficking
- transportation systems
- trauma
- typologies of trafficking in North America.

Media Review

We did a systematic scan of human trafficking media coverage in Canada to better understand the following:

- To what extent are human trafficking corridors understood and reported on in the mainstream media?
- Where have human trafficking corridors been identified already?

We conducted 12 unique searches through Google news using the following search terms: *human trafficking Canada, human trafficking Ontario, human trafficking Nova Scotia*, etc.

We analyzed more than 1,800 search results by collecting data on the first 15 pages of each search term. Duplicate cases were removed, resulting in 267 news articles containing all unique stories between November 2013 and April 2019. Findings from this scan helped direct us to additional data sources:

- 91% of articles (242) were published between January 2017 and April 2019.
- 129 articles were written to raise awareness of the issues of human trafficking, but did not report any specific cases.
- 138 articles mentioned specific cases where actual incidents of human trafficking took place within one or more Canadian jurisdictions.

Qualitative Research: Interviews

While research on human trafficking generally in Canada is increasing, the literature review and media scan did not produce enough meaningful data to come to any firm conclusions in response to our research questions. To develop a robust understanding of how and where human trafficking corridors operate, we held 69 key informant telephone interviews with frontline service delivery staff and law enforcement officers with direct experience working with victims and survivors of human trafficking. We used the following inclusion criteria for our analysis:

- Do they or have they recently worked directly with victims and/or survivors of human trafficking?
- Do they work with victims or survivors as part of an anti-human trafficking program or organization?

To identify agencies, organizations and individuals likely to meet these criteria, we drew on the expertise of The Centre's Partnership Specialists and the Hotline's National Referral Directory, and sought to include key informants from across the country.

We took precautions to ensure that a consistent definition of human trafficking was used throughout the interviews (see *Terms and definitions*), and that interview respondents were able to differentiate between human trafficking and consensual commercial sex work.

We provided interviewees with an overview of the research project including the goals and methodology. We confirmed confidentiality in the interview invitation, and each participant provided consent at the beginning of the interview.

We developed an interview guide based on best practices in similar research projects identified through the literature review. We provided the guide to interviewees upon request in advance of the interview. Interviews took on average between 45 and 60 minutes; however, actual times varied based on the amount of information the respondent was able to contribute. The shortest interview was approximately 15 minutes, and the longest interview was approximately two hours. Because we expected interview respondents to have differing levels of experience, knowledge and information, we conducted semi-structured interviews to allow for greater flexibility in information gathering.

We conducted a thematic analysis of the data to identify trends among interview responses. A review of similar research projects showed this to be a best practice in undertaking qualitative research that is exploratory in nature, or on a topic where there is limited pre-existing research. Because we were engaging in novel research, it was important that our data analysis methodology did not impose any predetermined assumptions or apply any bias to the relevance and weight of individual responses. We rigorously analyzed verbatim notes from each interview to extract all responses and themes. Each response to each question was coded and counted, and individual responses were then clustered and organized according to broader themes.

Qualitative data analysis was an iterative process. We continued to conduct interviews until we reached a level of saturation, meaning that additional interviews no longer yielded new information and that trends could be considered credible.

Law enforcement respondents

We interviewed 20 law enforcement respondents from the following jurisdictions:

Alberta
Calgary, AB
Edmonton, AB
British Columbia
Vancouver, BC
Victoria, BC
Winnipeg, MB
Newfoundland
Nova Scotia
Halifax, NS
Ontario
Kingston, ON
London, ON
Niagara Falls, ON
Thunder Bay, ON
Toronto, ON
Windsor, ON
Montreal, QB
Saskatchewan RCMP
Saskatoon, SK

The vast majority (70%) of interviewees were from municipal services followed by RCMP (25%) and provincial agencies (5%). Broadly speaking, this reflects the fact that the majority of law enforcements units in Canada are municipal, followed by RCMP and provincial jurisdictions.

Officers interviewed came from a range of units responsible for human trafficking files including Vice, Guns and Gangs, Special Victims and Counter-exploitation:

- 30% of respondents worked specifically in human trafficking units
- 70% of units were responsible for investigation of crimes not specific to human trafficking.
- Units had on average six full-time equivalent officers on staff (with a median of four)
- 95% of respondents confirmed that they had worked directly with at least one victim/survivor of human trafficking
- Law enforcement respondents tended to work with fewer victims and survivors of human trafficking than those at frontline agencies. This is likely due to two factors:
  - Victims and survivors may fear or distrust law enforcement.
  - Identification and assessment of victims may vary between law enforcement and frontline service providers.

Service provider respondents

We interviewed 49 service providers from the following jurisdictions:

Brooks, AB
Calgary, AB
Edmonton, AB
Fort McMurray, AB
Medicine Hat, AB
Strathmore, AB
Prince George, BC
Surrey, BC
Vancouver, BC
Manitoba (provincial agency)
Winnipeg, MB
Fredericton, NB
Moncton, NB
St. John, NB
St. John's, NL
Government of Nova Scotia
Halifax, NS
Truro, NS
Government of Ontario
Elgin County, ON
Fort Frances, ON
Greenstone, ON
Haldimand and Norfolk County, ON
London, ON
Sarnia, ON
Thunder Bay, ON
Waterloo, ON
Niagara, ON
Quebec (Provincial agency)
Kahnawake, QB
Laurentians, QB
Government of Saskatchewan
Lloydminster, SK
Melfort, SK
Regina, SK
Saskatoon, SK

The vast majority of service provider participants were from frontline agencies (88%) that work directly with victims and survivors of human trafficking (82%). The majority (61%) were program managers or coordinators who reviewed case files, oversaw frontline staff or worked directly with survivors of human trafficking as part of their roles. Other respondents included executive directors (35%) and case workers (4%).

Of the agencies interviewed, 43% provide human trafficking-specific programs or services. The remainder were either government department representatives (7%) overseeing human trafficking strategies or umbrella organizations/ associations (6%) that did not provide direct services to clients. While these organizations were limited in their ability to speak to the individual needs and circumstances of human trafficking victims and survivors, they were credible sources of information arising across sectors serving human trafficking victims and survivors.

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