

Human Trafficking

A Global Problem

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Prostitution. Servitude. Forced Labor.

International Women's Day – March 8

On this International Women's Day, Peel Institute on Violence Prevention (PIVP) has decided to address the issue of Human Trafficking (HT), a topic that is often overlooked in discussions on Violence Against Women (VAW).

Human trafficking is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, coercion, deception, repeated provision of a controlled substance) for an illegal purpose, including sexual exploitation or forced labour” is a social issue of growing concern across the globe, as the estimated number of individuals affected worldwide is 20.9 million people.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 paid special attention to this subject, against the backdrop of the human rights of women. While there are various forms of human trafficking that require attention, the focus of PIVP will be trafficking for the purposes of sex work. A common factor in human sex trafficking is the movement of victims across borders from poor nations to affluent nations. Domestic human trafficking in Canada, however, has a more national scope. Recent interviews completed with survivors at PIVP revealed the following: the most common victim of trafficking in Canada is a white female, between the ages of 14-18, attending High School, lured into trafficking by a boyfriend of the same age or a bit older. The attraction of being involved in sex work often includes the desire for economic autonomy, where young girls have the ability to purchase items that are categorized as high class or luxurious. However, the fallout of this aspiration often results in being forced to isolate themselves from their families and community. The Peel Police (2012) stated that over half of the human trafficking cases in Canada have occurred in Peel Region, including both Mississauga and Brampton.

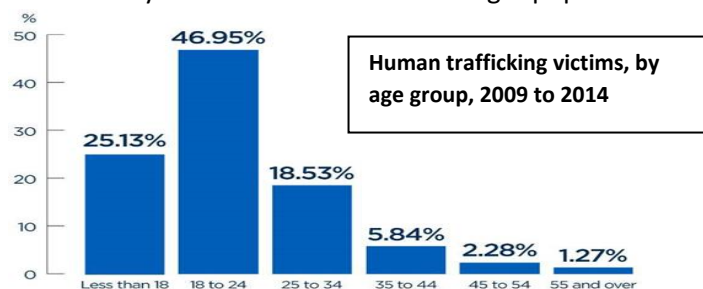


In order to address solutions that contribute to the decrease of the numbers of young girls who fall victims to human trafficking for the purposes of sex work, it is crucial to understand the societal and power structures that influence their lives in all aspects and how it contributes to the violation of their human rights.

Highlights on Human Trafficking Statistics in Canada and Ontario.

Peel Institute on Violence Prevention (PIVP) is conducting an extensive study for the project: “A Survivor Centered Approach to Build Capacity to Address Human Trafficking in Peel” funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The target population are women and girls exploited by the sex trade.

The statistics presented here reflects the data in Ontario and Canada. Data from the Region of Peel is currently unavailable. “The extent of this crime and the number of victims remains underreported, despite the number of human trafficking investigations handled by the courts, several of which resulted in convictions”, Domestic Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Canada October 2013, Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre (HTNCC).



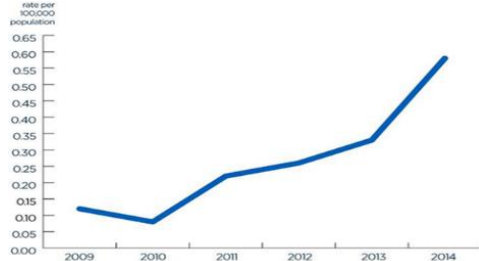
Source: Statistics Canada, Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2014

Government Statistics on Human Trafficking

Ontario: "Ontario is a major center for human trafficking in Canada, accounting for roughly 65 percent of police-reported cases nationally." (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking, 2016). "Of Ontario's reported cases of human trafficking, about 70 per cent are for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The majority of survivors are Canadian citizens or permanent residents". (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking, 2016).

Canada: According to the Statistics Canada report: "Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2014, "between 2009 and 2014, there were 396 victims of police-reported human trafficking. The vast majority of these victims were female (93%)". The flow chart showed that over 25% of these female victims were under the age of 18 years and 46.95% of them were between the age of 18 to 25 years (almost 70% of the victims were under the age of 25 years), which reflects how young girls have been targeted by the traffickers and the majority of traffickers (83%) are men. "Persons accused of human trafficking were most commonly between the ages of 18 to 24 (41%) and 25 to 34 (36%)". Victims who are trafficked by individuals under the age of 18 years are usually under 18 years old themselves". Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre (HTNCC), Domestic Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Canada October 2013).

Police-reported human trafficking violations in Canada, 2009 to 2014



"Rate of police-reported human trafficking violations nearly doubled between 2013 and 2014", Statistics Canada, (Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2014), the doubling of police reported human trafficking violations is a catalyst to look at the root cause of 'trafficking'.

Source: Statistics Canada, Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2014

Needs of Human Trafficking Survivors

The long-term effects of human trafficking result in numerous physical, emotional and mental health needs for survivors. Subsequently, the supports needed can range from emotional, moral, legal and medical support, child care, employment support, housing, clothing and food. The needs are varied unique to their personal situation, hence and not all survivors require the same intervention.

Survivors of human trafficking require immediate and ongoing emotional and psychological support not only to address their most recent/current situation but their historical situation as well. Many survivors have experienced extreme levels of sexual and physical abuse/violence prior to being trafficked which increases the potential of future victimization. Each one of us deals with traumatic events in our own unique way and therefore interventions to support human trafficking survivors needs to be flexible and specific to the individual needs. Physical needs for post-trafficking survivors is crucial as their normal everyday activities are affected. There are many physical issues for survivors, such as headaches, stomach aches, difficulty breathing, hair falling out, frequent colds, low blood pressure, sexually transmitted diseases, frequent urinary tract infections, and issues with incontinence and bowel control. These are just some of the physical symptoms that these individuals can encounter. Some survivors reported head injuries resulting in confusion, mental slowing and other cognitive difficulties. It is possible that these symptoms can be the body's way of dealing with psychological stress through physical symptoms, which can be associated with complex trauma. With that said, there is an urgent need for survivors to seek medical attention to help them deal with their physical issues, in addition to coping with their emotional health. Thus, it is important to fully understand the needs of survivors, to ensure that their recovery process is as effective as possible.

Stories from the Survivors:

Service providers who work with trafficking victims in Canada say that the majority of trafficking survivors, are Canadian-born teenaged girls.

Vanessa, 18, was a typical high school student in Mississauga, a city just west of Toronto. Her life took a drastic turn two years ago, when she fell in with a new boyfriend who had enrolled in her school: "Right from the beginning, he knew ... I was the one that was, I guess vulnerable", said Vanessa. "He always kind of told me what to do, and I would do it. I'm very kind of submissive." One day, a car showed up with two men in it who Vanessa didn't know. Her boyfriend asked her to get in, and she did. "I was still in my school uniform," she said. As they drove to a motel on a strip of Dundas Street East in Mississauga, one of the men told her she could make a lot of money doing sex work. Vanessa said she was unsure and scared but felt pressured to go along with it, because the two men were friends of the boy she knew. "At that time, I didn't try to understand what was going on," she said. "My friend promised me all these things that I felt that I needed — a stable place, money in my hands. It was kind of part of me wanting to do it and see if I could get something better, and then a bigger part was that I was already there, and I couldn't really say no anymore."



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