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CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

ACT NOW: PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Karen Vecchio, Chair

**FEBRUARY 2024
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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**ACT NOW: PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING
OF WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE
PEOPLE IN CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
the Status of Women**

**Karen Vecchio
Chair**

FEBRUARY 2024

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

TENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied human trafficking of women, girls and gender diverse people and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

In Canada, human trafficking is an ongoing and serious issue. Women, girls and gender diverse individuals are overly represented among victims and survivors of human trafficking. As a result, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) conducted a study, and produced this report, on human trafficking of women, girls and gender diverse individuals in Canada. The study and report focus predominantly on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This report discusses terminology related to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the currently available statistics about human trafficking in Canada and the federal legal mechanisms in place to address this crime.

The Committee heard that various systems of oppression are identified as factors contributing to the persistence of human trafficking, notably, sexism and discrimination based on gender and sexual identities, colonialism, racism, ableism, and social and economic inequalities. Certain groups of people in Canada may face other systemic challenges, including migrant workers and international students.

To ensure that the needs of victims and survivors of human trafficking in Canada are met and these individuals are adequately supported, witnesses noted that certain services should be made accessible and available to all, including those in rural, remote and urban areas. These services include social services that reduce poverty, including shelter and housing services, and other trauma-informed culturally appropriate services, such as health and mental health services. Organizations providing these services should be sufficiently funded to continue delivering and improving victim and survivor-centred services in Canada.

Finally, witnesses highlighted various approaches and initiatives to prevent human trafficking in Canada that should be implemented. Among these initiatives were: a continued federal national strategy to combat human trafficking that is intersectional; education, training and awareness efforts; improvements to data collection and sharing across jurisdictions; and possible legislative changes in Canada.

The report makes 22 recommendations to the Government of Canada, with the goals of improving support to victims and survivors of human trafficking in Canada, as well as addressing human trafficking currently occurring, and preventing further instances of human trafficking in Canada.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada amend anti-trafficking laws, policies and programs to differentiate between consensual sex work, sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors. 13

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that any existing and new federal policies addressing human trafficking clearly define the concept within human trafficking, including human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and sexual exploitation of minors, to avoid the conflation of these terms with other concepts such as consensual sex work. 14

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada improve the collection of data on human trafficking so that it is disaggregated by identity factors, including disability, race, Indigenous identity, sexuality, immigration status and others, ensuring that the data collection process is culturally safe and trauma-informed for victims and survivors. 23

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada support Statistics Canada to establish a national human trafficking database to allow jurisdictions across the country to access standardized information on perpetrators of human trafficking in Canada. 23

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada support organizations that work with youth involved in the child welfare and foster care system, including Indigenous youth, to ensure that they receive culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services that meet their needs and reduce their vulnerability to becoming victims of human trafficking..... 46

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada implement a Red Dress Alert for missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people..... 46

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdiction of provinces and territories, and in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, support the development of awareness campaigns and resources in diverse languages for international post-secondary students related to preventing, and reducing the risk of experiencing, human trafficking, including human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. 46

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, implement measures to further protect migrant workers with an irregular immigration status from human trafficking and exploitation, and from abuse in difficult workplaces where they may be subject to blackmail, threats, coercion and violence from employers if they leave or report this abuse, jeopardizing their work permits and opening themselves up to deportation to their home country, and consider measures such as:

- accelerating and simplifying the process of obtaining permanent residence status from a temporary resident permit for a victim of trafficking in persons;**
- studying potential repeal or amendment of regulations in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations that criminalize migrant workers engaging in sex work; and**

- continuing to implement open- or sector-based work permits instead of employer-specific work permits..... 46

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of, and in collaboration with, the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples, consider measures that can reduce poverty and ensure that individuals’ basic needs are met, including:

- implementing a guaranteed annual liveable income or other financial support models, making sure to minimize barriers to these supports for low income households;
- supporting the provision of safe, affordable and accessible housing, including emergency shelters, safe houses and transitional housing, for all; and
- continuing to invest in long-term funding for organizations providing culturally appropriate and trauma-informed gender-based violence programs and services. 47

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations, continue investing in victim support services, including trauma-informed and culturally sensitive counselling, legal assistance, and safe housing options for survivors of human trafficking. 54

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of, and in collaboration with, the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples, provide funding to diverse organizations and initiatives that support individuals, such as Indigenous, Black and migrant individuals, who are involved in the sex industry, including victims and survivors of human trafficking as well as sex workers, to ensure that they have access to adequate legal, justice, health, mental health and addictions services. 54

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, law enforcement agencies, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, schools, and community groups, support comprehensive public awareness and education programs, aimed at raising awareness about human trafficking, its signs, and its impact on women, girls, and gender diverse individuals, and ensure the distribution of educational resources and training programs to vulnerable populations, law enforcement agencies, and frontline service providers. 68

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada fully implement all Calls for Justice from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, including:

- **Call for Justice 1.3 to address the social and economic inequalities experienced by Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals, including their economic security, access to healthcare and to social and cultural supports;**
- **Call for Justice 1.9, respecting the jurisdiction of, and in consultation and collaboration with other levels of government and Indigenous peoples, to develop public education campaigns to challenge the normalization of violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people;**
- **Calls for Justice 3.2 and 4.3 to provide stable and long-term funding for Indigenous women’s organizations, including those that provide programs and services for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals in the sex industry; and**
- **Call for Justice 4.5 to establish a guaranteed annual liveable income for Indigenous peoples and all other Canadians. 68**

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada continue to provide sustainable funding to non-profit organizations conducting data collection on human trafficking, including disaggregated data on the identity factors of groups facing elevated risks of being trafficked, such as individuals with disabilities, those with precarious immigration status, and wards and survivors of the child welfare system. 69

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada support programs that provide training for those who work with victims of sex trafficking to include trauma-informed approaches on how to recognize the difference between sex work and human trafficking..... 69

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with provinces, territories Indigenous peoples and municipalities, renew the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking for 2024, ensuring that the Strategy:

- is intersectional and developed in collaboration with victims, survivors and others with lived experiences, such as Indigenous peoples, migrant individuals, racialized individuals and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other individuals with minority gender and sexual identities;**
- includes sustainable funding for programs combatting human trafficking that are victim and survivor centred;**
- addresses structural and systemic barriers; and**
- implements prevention and awareness campaigns, which include information for parents, about human trafficking..... 69**

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada consider undertaking a thorough review of the application of the *Criminal Code* regarding section 213 as it applies to vulnerable people, such as women, girls and gender diverse individuals who are involved in the sex industry, and also studying a possible process to expunge pre-2014 convictions related to consensual sex work. 69

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada, in respecting the jurisdictions of, and in collaboration with, the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples, ensure that human trafficking awareness training provided for law enforcement includes information about the distinction between consensual sex work and human trafficking..... 70

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada support organizations providing youth education and awareness about human trafficking and exploitation that is culturally relevant, age appropriate and that includes information about online safety, healthy relationships, and consent. 70

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada report on its plan and future actions to protect women, girls and gender diverse people from sexual slavery, human trafficking and the negative effects of pornography..... 70

Recommendation 21

The Government of Canada continue to support the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* and provide supports to evidence-based prevention community initiatives focused on children and youth from 6 to 18 years of age. 70

Recommendation 22

That the Government of Canada develop an awareness campaign about the signs of human trafficking and the supports and services available for victims and survivors, and that it:

- **encourage all federally regulated workplaces, particularly industries in the transportation sector, to implement it in their workplace; and**
- **work with provinces and territories to encourage the development of similar campaigns to be implemented across any location identified as high risk for human trafficking. 70**



ACT NOW: PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that human trafficking occurs in Canada, and that women, girls and gender diverse individuals are disproportionately affected by these crimes, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) undertook a study with the goal of improving Canada's approach to addressing and preventing human trafficking, as well as supporting victims and survivors.¹ Between 20 March and 18 May 2023, the Committee heard from 55 witnesses and received 57 written submissions. Representatives from Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Department of Justice Canada, Women and Gender Equality Canada, Public Safety Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Canada Border Services Agency provided testimony. In addition, the Committee traveled to Vancouver, the Greater Toronto Area, Sault Ste. Marie and Halifax to meet with organizations and services working to combat human trafficking in Canada. A table outlining the various services that were presented to the Committee during its travel can be found in Appendix A.

Testimony, written submissions, and informal meetings and site visits have informed the Committee's report and highlighted certain focus-areas. Notably, this study and the resulting report focus predominantly on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, however, other forms of trafficking are also discussed. The report is structured into four sections:

- Context and background information, including legal frameworks, terminology and data;
- Systems of oppression that affect human trafficking in Canada;
- Improving services for survivors of human trafficking; and

1 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), *Minutes of Proceedings*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 February 2022.



- Preventing human trafficking in Canada.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Committee was provided valuable context about the terminology used in legislation and policies, the overall trends and data on human trafficking in Canada, and the legal mechanisms related to human trafficking in Canada. These topics are briefly outlined below.

Overview: Terminology and Concepts

The Committee heard a diversity of perspectives on human trafficking in Canada throughout its study. While witnesses predominantly discussed human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Canada, various definitions and understandings of key terminology were presented. The concepts that were discussed during the study included human trafficking with a focus on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation as well as sex work. The following sections provide an overview of various witness perspectives on these concepts.

When speaking about human trafficking, which could include “everything from forced labour to sexual exploitation,”² witnesses noted that this crime includes the violation of an individual’s human rights and freedom of choice, by a “third party”³ or “trafficker” typically for the trafficker’s “personal gain.”⁴ Violence, exploitation, coercion, deception and force were often used in the description of human trafficking.⁵ In a written brief, Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto explained that:

Human trafficking is a violent experience along a spectrum of exploitation, compounded by intersecting individual circumstances and systemic oppressions. Within this

2 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1100 and 1145 (Daniel Anson, Director General, Intelligence and Investigations, Canada Border Services Agency); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1240 (Julia Drydyk, Executive Director, Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1210 (Angela Wu, Executive Director, SWAN Vancouver, Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform).

3 Janine Benedet, [Study into the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

4 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1100 (Daniel Anson).

5 Ibid. and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1240 (Julia Drydyk); Aura Freedom International, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1115 (Diane Matte, Co-founder, Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle).

spectrum, people can experience a range of violations and crimes against them, including labour law violations, human rights violations, criminal code violations, and human trafficking.⁶

Kate Price, Executive Director of the Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta Association, explained that very rarely is the “true definition of trafficking” understood.⁷ In addition, Angela Wu, Executive Director of SWAN Vancouver, Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, noted that current definitions are “broad and ambiguous,” encompassing many different “issues” and impeding the creation and implementation of “tailor[ed] solutions to the actual problem.”⁸ Kate Price further explained that the ways in which trafficking is defined are “wildly inaccurate” compared to “what we are seeing on the front lines” and that the experiences of consensual sex workers are “vastly different” from her clients who have experienced sexual exploitation.⁹ As such, the Committee was told that developing a clear and consistent understanding of the concept is important. Regarding the inconsistency in terminology and in the understandings of these, Jenn Clamen, the National Coordinator of the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform explained that the term human trafficking is being used by many to “describe everything from intimate partner violence to sex work to labour exploitation.”¹⁰ Inconsistency in terminology can lead to complicated statistics and data collection, making it harder to gauge levels of human trafficking in Canada.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada amend anti-trafficking laws, policies and programs to differentiate between consensual sex work, sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors.

6 Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, *Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

7 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1205 (Kate Price, Executive Director, Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta Association).

8 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1250 (Angela Wu).

9 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1205 (Kate Price).

10 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen, National Coordinator, Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform).



Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that any existing and new federal policies addressing human trafficking clearly define the concept within human trafficking, including human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and sexual exploitation of minors, to avoid the conflation of these terms with other concepts such as consensual sex work.

Distinguishing Between Sex Work and Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation

While witnesses acknowledged that there are various types of human trafficking occurring in Canada, many focused on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, referred to as “sex trafficking” by some witnesses. The Committee heard diverse perspectives on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Some witnesses explained that the sex industry—and the demand that it creates—are inextricably linked to the persistence of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in Canada.¹¹ Among witnesses who presented this perspective, several noted that all interactions in the sex industry are underpinned by coercion and/or exploitation of some kind; for example, the Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution stated that “in reality, the sexual act obtained by sex buyers is always coerced.”¹²

11 Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation, [*Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity, [*National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation, [*Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, [*National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1230 (Fay Blaney, Lead Matriarch, Aboriginal Women's Action Network); Women's Equality Coalition, [*Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

12 Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, [*Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Janine Benedet, [*Study into the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, [*Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

In contrast, other witnesses told the Committee that consensual sex work and sex trafficking are not equivalent.¹³ For example, Julia Drydyk, Executive Director, Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, explained that:

Human trafficking is the exploitation of someone else for your personal gain, so not all consensual sex work has anything to do with human trafficking. In fact, they're completely different. Where we look at human trafficking is when there is another individual who is threatening, coercing and enforcing someone into the commercial sex industry and where they are profiting. It's also where you see individuals not feeling able to exit, again, because of the fear and the threats imposed on them.¹⁴

The distinction between sex work and human trafficking was referenced throughout the Committee's study by various witnesses. Some witnesses explained that generally, sex work is inherently consensual. Therefore, exploitation and absence of choice are not automatically present when someone is working as a sex worker.¹⁵ Kate Sinclair, Member, Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, stated that:

It's very important to understand that people make their choices for different reasons. Just because it's a choice that someone else wouldn't make doesn't automatically make it trafficking.¹⁶

She further explained that, from her perspective, trafficking may occur if an individual is in sex work and did not make the choice to be there; however, she added that survival sex work, or individuals engaging in sex work based on "survival choices" should not be labelled as trafficking.¹⁷ In a written submission, Freedom United defined terms in the following way:

Sex work describes an informed transaction between consenting adults engaging in sexual activities. Like in other labour sectors where trafficking and forced labour occur, trafficking for sexual exploitation happens when coercion, threat and manipulation are

13 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1710 (Bonnie Brayton, Chief Executive Officer, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada).

14 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1240 (Julia Drydyk).

15 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1230 (Kate Sinclair, Member, Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition); PACE Society and Pivot Legal Society, [Joint Written Brief](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Canadian Women's Foundation, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1230 (Angela Wu).

16 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1230 (Kate Sinclair).

17 Ibid.



present, and the threshold is met under the definition set out in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children.¹⁸

Kathleen Quinn, the Executive Director of the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation acknowledged that there is a continuum of consent in sex work; however, from her perspective sex workers who have “autonomy, no trauma history, no poverty and high negotiating control” is a “small minority of people” with the majority of individuals in the industry falling under the survival sex work circumstance.¹⁹ However, individuals’ voices should be prioritized and trusted, as they are the experts on their own experiences and needs.²⁰ Figure 1 provides one perspective on a visual representation of this continuum.

Figure 1—The Spectrum of Choice

NO CHOICE	COERCED CHOICE	PERCEIVED CHOICE	SITUATIONAL CHOICE	APPARENT CHOICE	EVIDENT CHOICE
3RD PARTY CONTROLLED			MAY BE 3RD PARTY	INDEPENDANT	
KIDNAPPED	DECEIVED	MANIPULATED	CO-DEPENDANCY	EDUCATED DECISION TO PARTICIPATE	
FORCED	THREATENED	ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT	LACK OF ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY		ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY
CONFINED	BLACKMAILED/SEXORTED	ECONOMIC DEPENDANCY			AUTONOMOUS
SLAVERY	SEXUAL EXPLOITATION		EXPOLOITATIVE		EMPOWERED
TRAFFICKING			SURVIVAL SEX WORKER	SEX WORK	

Source: This figure was reproduced by the Library of Parliament with permission, based on the figure presented in *Hearing Them: African Nova Scotian and Black Experiences of Sex Work, Childhood and Youth Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Nova Scotia*.

Sandra Wesley, Executive Director of Stella, l'amie de Maimie, explained that sexual exploitation, assault and violence occurs in the sex industry, but she emphasized that the

18 Freedom United, *Human trafficking of women girls and gender diverse people in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

19 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1255 (Kathleen Quinn, Executive Director, Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation).

20 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1245 (Jessica Stone, Project Manager, Yukon Status of Women Council); Living in Community, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

victims of these crimes are sex workers who are left vulnerable due to a lack of labour standards and safety for workers in the industry.²¹ She stated:

When we as a group do not have access to basic labour standards, when we don't have minimum wage, when we don't have any maximum working hours, when we don't have sick pay, vacation pay, maternity leave or access to occupational health and safety, it is impossible to even start to talk about what trafficking could possibly look like in such an industry. Trafficking is a concept that is useful when we are talking about workers who have rights and things that go outside of the norm. Focusing on trafficking hides the violence that we actually experience. We are telling you there are serial killers who are murdering us and that's not interesting. If we don't phrase it as trafficking, no one cares.

The Committee heard that the conflation of sex work and sex trafficking and exploitation—and the sole focus on trafficking—can be harmful to sex workers.²² The Committee was told that individuals who are perceived to be engaging in sex work often face stigma.²³ Victims of human trafficking who are involved in the sex industry may experience this stigma as well. Witnesses emphasized the importance of reducing the stigma around sex work, as well as the conflation of sex work with sex trafficking and exploitation.²⁴ Jessica Stone, Project Manager, Yukon Status of Women Council,

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- 21 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1540 (Sandra Wesley, Executive Director, Stella, l'amie de Maimie); Canadian Women's Foundation, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1150 (Angela Wu).
- 22 Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, [For the study on: Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Canadian Women's Foundation, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SafeLink Alberta, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 23 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1215 (Kate Price); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1210 (Angela Wu).
- 24 Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Jamie Liew, [Harm of Anti-Trafficking Policies on Migrant & Non-Citizen Sex Workers](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Yukon Status of Women Council, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SafeLink Alberta, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



explained that “when all violence experienced by sex workers is mislabeled and understood as trafficking, we create a false narrative and we perpetuate harm.”²⁵ During its travel, the Committee heard perspectives that reinforce this statement. In a written submission, Living in Community explained that:

When the entire sex industry is understood as sex trafficking, only crimes that meet the trafficking threshold are of interest to police. Crimes such as assault, sexual assault, robbery, and other serious crimes are unaddressed. Predators seize this opportunity and act with impunity. When ill-informed antitrafficking strategies such as police raids on massage parlours or hotel stings are applied to sex workers, these increase sex workers’ distrust of and animosity toward police. This results in underreporting of crimes when sex workers actually experience violence or exploitation.²⁶

Other witnesses noted that the conflation of these terms can dissuade individuals from reporting crimes they experience. In some instances, individuals may need to self-identify as a victim of trafficking—whether they identify with that term or experience, or not—to access services. In turn, the underreporting, the conflation of terms and the requirement to self-identify as a victim of trafficking can lead to difficulties in accurate data collection. As a result, the statistics related to sexual exploitation and trafficking that are often presented, and applied to policy development and implementation, may be inaccurate or misrepresent the true numbers in Canada.²⁷

During discussions of underage victims of human trafficking, some witnesses asserted that young girls are victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Canada.²⁸ Concerns were raised about youths’ vulnerability to exploitation, including grooming and recruitment into human trafficking online and by peers.²⁹ However, other witnesses cautioned against using trafficking terminology to describe these cases, as any situation involving an individual “under the age of 18 who is engaging in sex work is

25 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1155 (Jessica Stone).

26 Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

27 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1155 (Jessica Stone); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen).

28 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1120 (Miriam Pomerleau, Director General, Quebec, Crime Stoppers).

29 Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., [Study on human trafficking of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals for sexual exploitation in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Aura Freedom International, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

considered [sexual] exploitation [of a minor]”³⁰ which should be understood separately from human trafficking.³¹ Similarly, minors should not be labelled sex workers, as they are not able to consent to engaging in sex work.

Overview: Human Trafficking in Canada

Witnesses explained to the Committee that because human trafficking data are based on police-reported incidents, these numbers may not be an accurate representation of human trafficking in Canada.³² Nonetheless, the Committee was told about existing data trends and considerations.

According to the 2021 Statistics Canada report on Trafficking in Persons in Canada, there were 3,541 police-reported incidences of human trafficking between 2011–2021.³³ Over the period from 2011–2017 there was a “year-over-year increase in the number of police-reported incidents” of human trafficking. Statistics Canada cited the 2018–2019 period as having “really high numbers,” which then “flatlined” in 2020–2021.³⁴ Julia Drydyk added that since “last year’s Human Trafficking Awareness Day, we’ve seen a 50% increase in calls to the [Canadian Human Trafficking] hotline,” adding that the cause of this increase is unknown, but speculated about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and of an increase in public awareness of the issue.³⁵

Statistics Canada noted that based on the police-reported data, the type of human trafficking—such as labour trafficking,³⁶ sex trafficking or a combination—cannot be identified.³⁷ However, when “other related charges” in reported human trafficking cases were explored, approximately 41% of these incidents involved a secondary offence, with almost six in 10 of these being a “sex trade offence” and one-quarter a sexual assault.³⁸

30 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1255 (Kate Price).

31 Ibid.

32 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1145 (Kate Price).

33 BRAVE Education Foundation, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

34 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1710 (Kathy AuCoin, Chief of Analysis Unit, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada).

35 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1240 (Julia Drydyk).

36 According to [Public Safety Canada](#), labour trafficking “involves recruiting, moving, or holding victims to coerce them into doing any kind of work.”

37 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada).

38 Ibid.



Finally, based on Statistics Canada’s police-reported data, nine out of 10 victims of human trafficking “knew their trafficker, and one-third of the victims were trafficked by an intimate partner.”³⁹

Canada’s geography may contribute to human trafficking in various ways. Statistics Canada explained that “[b]etween 2011 and 2021, the large majority of human trafficking incidents were reported to police in urban areas. More specifically, since 2011 more than four in 10 of these incidents were reported to police in four cities: Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.”⁴⁰ For example, cities in close proximity to major highways that cross borders to the United States may be common trafficking “hubs.”⁴¹ Many witnesses noted that Ontario has high rates of human trafficking;⁴² according to the Peel Regional Police, “approximately two-thirds of police-reported human trafficking cases in Canada occur in Ontario, and 62% originate in the Greater Toronto Area.”⁴³ Community organizations in Sault Ste. Marie emphasized the concentration of human trafficking cases in Ontario, some highlighting the over-representation of Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people among victims. During its meetings in Sault Ste. Marie, the Committee heard about the effects that the child welfare system can have on Indigenous children, and the ways in which this may lead to complex mental and physical healthcare needs, as well as an increased risk of becoming trafficked or exploited.

Human Trafficking Data Collection

Challenges and limitations related to human trafficking data collection were discussed. Statistics Canada relies on police-reported data and data obtained from shelters across

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1105 (Megan Walker, Women’s Advocate and Retired Executive Director, London Abused Women’s Centre, as an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1700 (Shelley Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Women’s Trucking Federation of Canada).

42 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1540 (Kathleen Douglass, President Elect and Advocacy Chair, Zonta Club of Brampton-Caledon); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Jody Miller, Managing Director, EFRY Hope and Help for Women); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1120 (Megan Walker); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1545 (Jakki Buckeridge, Manager, Family Services, Indus Community Services).

43 Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; EFRY Hope and Help for Women, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Canada.⁴⁴ However, reporting experiences of violence and exploitation to the police is often not a priority for survivors, who are usually looking to access emergency services, such as securing housing.⁴⁵ Survivors may not report to police for various reasons, including their previous traumatic experiences, mistrust of police forces, or the fear of becoming retraumatized or criminalized in the process.⁴⁶

While some individuals involved in the sex industry, including victims of human trafficking, have received valuable support from police and law enforcement, some organizations explained that law enforcement and other individuals in the justice system are included among sex work customers. For example, in 2021, the YWCA Halifax, the Association of Black Social Workers and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association, conducted a survey of 149 adult individuals "with either past or present experience in the sex industry." The publication *Hearing Them: Voices and Lived Experiences from the Sex Industry in Nova Scotia* provides an overview of Black and African Nova Scotian participants' responses to this survey. According to the publication, Black and African Nova Scotian adults involved in the sex industry reported that of their customers, 50% were law enforcement officials, 38.9% were professionals such as doctors or lawyers, 38.9% were landlords and/or employers, and 27.9% were political, spiritual or cultural leaders.⁴⁷

In addition, current human trafficking data may be disaggregated by gender and age only. Statistics Canada indicated that these data may be expanded to include ethnicity, indigeneity and immigration status in the coming years.⁴⁸ Witnesses highlighted that policymakers and legislators need access to accurate and disaggregated data to adequately respond to human trafficking in Canada. As such, witnesses called for improvements in data collection to obtain comprehensive quantitative and qualitative

44 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1710 (Kathy AuCoin).

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid. and; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1640 (Nathalie Levman, Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1110 (Supt Kimberly Taplin, Director General, National Crime Prevention Indigenous Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1600 (Raman Hansra, Project Director, Family Services, Indus Community Services); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1145 (S/Sgt Robert Christmas, as an individual).

47 Teaira Caine, Justine Colley-Leger, Tiffany Gordon and Katrina Jarvis, [Hearing Them: African Nova Scotian and Black Experiences of Sex Work, Childhood and Youth Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Nova Scotia](#), p. 6.

48 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1715 (Kathy AuCoin).



human trafficking data disaggregated by various identity factors and geographic locations, including rural and remote areas.⁴⁹ Kate Price explained that:

[Data collection] requires the survivor to feel safe enough to provide that level of detail to someone who is collecting data. And that is an inherently flawed system to require a survivor to have to share highly painful testimonial in order for the data collection to be improved. I'm not entirely sure what recommendation to make other than to further invest in community-based response services who are able to build the trust and have a nuanced understanding of the regional and cultural needs of the individuals in question and that they may be able to help and assist with data collection.⁵⁰

As well, a representative from Statistics Canada indicated that there is a lack of systems and standards for data collection in addition to challenges sharing information about human trafficking cases across jurisdictions in Canada.⁵¹ Police services may not classify an incident as human trafficking if the survivor does not want to press charges, or if there is insufficient evidence to go forward with human trafficking charges, in which case these cases may be filed under other charges.⁵² The representative suggested that the creation of a national database “would lead to establishing comparable standards, processes and information systems” and “would also ensure that [missing persons] cases are in fact reported and investigated more closely.”⁵³ The Committee was told that Statistics Canada was working with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to create this national database.⁵⁴

In addition, Kate Sinclair explained that current data might include some cases of individuals working in the sex industry consensually but are classified as human trafficking victims.⁵⁵ As such, police-reported data is not necessarily an accurate

49 National Council of Women of Canada, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, *Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1205 (Jessica Stone).

50 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1235 (Kate Price).

51 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1655 (Lucie Léonard).

52 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1715 (Kathy AuCoin).

53 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1720 (Lucie Léonard).

54 Ibid.

55 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1220 (Kate Sinclair).

representation of human trafficking in Canada. Building trust within the community, including within the sex work community, is essential to improve data collection.⁵⁶

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada improve the collection of data on human trafficking so that it is disaggregated by identity factors, including disability, race, Indigenous identity, sexuality, immigration status and others, ensuring that the data collection process is culturally safe and trauma-informed for victims and survivors.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada support Statistics Canada to establish a national human trafficking database to allow jurisdictions across the country to access standardized information on perpetrators of human trafficking in Canada.

Groups Facing Elevated Risks of Being Trafficked

The Committee heard that the majority of trafficking cases in Canada involve Canadian citizens, and approximately 70% of police-reported victims are under the age of 25.⁵⁷ According to a brief submitted by the National Council of Women of Canada, 25% of victims of human trafficking in Canada are under the age of 18,⁵⁸ this statistic was reaffirmed by Statistics Canada.⁵⁹ Various witnesses asserted that many human trafficking victims in Canada were young women and girls,⁶⁰ pointing to the use of social media and the internet as a possible contributing factor to youth and young adults' vulnerability to human trafficking.⁶¹

56 Ibid.

57 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1100 (Tiana Sharifi, Chief Executive Officer, Exploitation Education Institute).

58 National Council of Women of Canada, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

59 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard).

60 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1220 (Kyla Clark, Program Coordinator, Creating Opportunities and Resources Against the Trafficking of Humans); Exploitation Education Institute, *Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women*.

61 Exploitation Education Institute, *Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women*.



Witnesses indicated that upwards of 90% of human trafficking cases involved women and girls, as such, they are disproportionately represented among victims and survivors of human trafficking.⁶² When examining human trafficking data, Statistics Canada observed that human trafficking is a form of gender-based violence, with the “vast majority” of victims being women and girls.⁶³ Julia Drydyk added that of the victims and survivors who contact the human trafficking hotline, 2% identify as trans and/or gender diverse individuals, which means that “these groups are eight times more overrepresented in the data relative to their share of the population.”⁶⁴

Witnesses explained that the perpetrators of these crimes are typically men.⁶⁵ Regarding individuals charged with human trafficking, eight in 10 accused persons are men and boys.⁶⁶ However, Lucie Léonard, Director of the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Statistics Canada explained that a large proportion of young women who are accused of trafficking, were themselves victims of trafficking. Lucie Léonard specified that:⁶⁷

While men represented the large majority of adult accused persons, more than half of the youth accused were girls. Female youth, more and more, are perceived as being better positioned to appear trustworthy and thus are tasked with luring other girls. It is important to note that the boundaries between female trafficking victims and offenders

62 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1135 (Miriam Pomerleau); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1130 (Michelle Van De Bogart, Director General, Law Enforcement, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1215 (Julia Drydyk); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1610 (Crystal Garrett-Baird, Director General, Gender-Based Violence, Department for Women and Gender Equality); Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; London Abused Women's Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1100 (Daniel Anson); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1105 (Michelle Van De Bogart); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1130 (Miriam Pomerleau).

63 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard).

64 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1215 (Julia Drydyk).

65 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1110 (Maria Mourani, Criminologist, PhD in Sociology and President, Mourani-Criminologie).

66 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard).

67 Ibid.

are becoming increasingly blurred. Therefore, a high proportion of the female youth accused of trafficking were themselves victims of human trafficking.⁶⁸

Despite a lack of disaggregated data on human trafficking in Canada, witnesses highlighted certain groups of people who may face elevated risks of exploitation and becoming trafficked, for example:

- Indigenous women and girls,⁶⁹
- Young women and girls;
- Individuals who have interactions with the child welfare system in Canada,⁷⁰
- Individuals with identity factors that may contribute to marginalization and vulnerability, including experiences of poverty and precarious immigration status;⁷¹
- Individuals living with disabilities;⁷²
- International students;

68 Ibid.

69 Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; National Council of Women of Canada, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.; Exploitation Education Institute, *Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1210 (Fay Blaney).

70 Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

71 Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, *Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1145 (Kate Price); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1110 (Supt Kimberly Taplin); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1715 (Bonnie Brayton).

72 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, *Human Trafficking of diverse women and girls with disabilities in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



- Black and racialized individuals;⁷³ and
- Individuals who are Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex or other sexual minority identities (2SLGBTQI+).⁷⁴

Certain identity factors and experiences may contribute to an individual’s susceptibility to exploitation, these identity factors—some of which are listed above—will be discussed in greater detail in the following section entitled *Systems of Oppression and Human Trafficking*. Traffickers can use existing vulnerabilities to “groom,” “lure” and “recruit” individuals into human trafficking. Witnesses highlighted some potential approaches and locations that may be common among traffickers for this recruitment process. Traffickers may target schools, universities, bars and online spaces to recruit individuals into trafficking.⁷⁵ During its travel, the Committee heard that airports are a location used by traffickers to target, and transport, victims of trafficking. In addition, traffickers may present themselves as a romantic or intimate partner, may promise a pathway to a “better life” for the individual. Finally, traffickers may take steps to ensure that the individual becomes dependent on them, such as the provision of shelter and food, emotional support or drugs.⁷⁶

Overview: Legal Framework

This section will provide a brief overview of legislation in Canada that has been enacted with the purpose of combatting human trafficking. As well, some witnesses spoke about

73 Exploitation Education Institute, [Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#).

74 DisAbled Women's Network of Canada, [Human Trafficking of diverse women and girls with disabilities in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1130 (Miriam Pomerleau); National Council of Women of Canada, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

75 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1105 (Megan Walker); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1100 (Tiana Sharifi); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1145 (Maria Mourani).

76 London Abused Women's Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard); Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1100 (Tiana Sharifi).

the ways in which these laws affect different populations and made suggestions for amendments to improve existing legislation.

Human Trafficking Legislation in Canada

In 2002, Canada ratified the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*. Article 3 of this protocol defines “trafficking in persons” based on the presence of three elements: “an act, such as recruiting, transporting or harbouring another person,” which is “effected through specific means, such as coercion, abduction, deception or the abuse of positions of vulnerability,” and for the “specific purpose of exploiting that person.” Exploitive conduct is described using examples such as, sexual exploitation or forced labour, which requires proof of coercive practices.⁷⁷

Also in 2002, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* was amended to include a human trafficking-specific offence that applies in transnational cases only, found in section 118(1). This offence does not require proof of an exploitative purpose; instead, only proof that the accused committed a specific act, such as recruiting, transporting or harbouring a person through specific illicit means, such as abduction, deception, force or coercion, is required.⁷⁸

In 2005, the *Criminal Code* was amended to include trafficking in persons-specific offences in sections 279.01 to 279.03; the main trafficking offences don’t require proof that the act element was effected through illicit means.⁷⁹ Instead, the Act only requires proof that the accused committed a specific act, such as recruiting, transporting or harbouring a person for the purpose of exploitation.⁸⁰ Exploitation is understood as occurring when “a reasonable person in the victim’s circumstances would believe that their physical or psychological safety were threatened if they failed to provide the labour or service required of them.”⁸¹

Several witnesses proposed that the *Criminal Code* should be amended to more clearly define what constitutes exploitation, some highlighted Bill S-224, An Act to Amend the

77 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1620 (Nathalie Levman).

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.



Criminal Code (Trafficking in Persons).⁸² Regarding changes to the *Criminal Code*, various written submissions suggested that certain sections should be repealed, including section 213,⁸³ and all records of convictions under sections 210.1, 213(1)(c) and 212 committed prior to 2014 should be expunged.⁸⁴

Regarding penalties under the *Criminal Code* for individuals convicted of human trafficking, Nathalie Levman, Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice, explained that there are often a “significant number of charges” in each human trafficking case.⁸⁵ She added that human trafficking provisions “don’t make [the distinction between forced labour and sex trafficking],” but that the majority of human trafficking cases going through courts include sexual exploitation.⁸⁶ In human trafficking cases, there are six offences in the *Criminal Code* that could result in different penalties:⁸⁷

- “Trafficking in Persons (section 279.01): which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a mandatory minimum penalty of 5 years where the offence involved kidnapping, aggravated assault, aggravated sexual assault or death, and a maximum penalty of 14 years and a mandatory minimum penalty of 4 years in all other cases;

82 National Council of Women of Canada, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Janine Benedet, [Study into the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

83 Women's Equality Coalition, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; London Abused Women's Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

84 Women's Equality Coalition, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, [Study on the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; London Abused Women's Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

85 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1655 (Nathalie Levman).

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

- Trafficking of a person under the age of eighteen years (section 279.011) which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a mandatory minimum penalty of 6 years where the offence involved kidnapping, aggravated assault, aggravated sexual assault or death, and a maximum penalty of 14 years and a mandatory minimum penalty of 5 years in all other cases;
- Receiving a Financial or Other Material Benefit for the purpose of committing or facilitating trafficking in persons—Adult Victim (subsection 279.02(1)): which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment;
- Receiving a Financial or Other Material Benefit for the purpose of committing or facilitating trafficking in persons—Child Victim (subsection 279.02(2)): which carries a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment and a mandatory minimum penalty of 2 years;
- Withholding or Destroying a Person’s Identity Documents (for example, a passport) for the purpose of committing or facilitating trafficking of that person—Adult Victim (subsection 279.03(1)): which carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment; and,
- Withholding or Destroying a Person’s Identity Documents (for example, a passport) for the purpose of committing or facilitating trafficking of that person—Child Victim (subsection 279.03(2)): which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment and a mandatory minimum penalty of 1 year.”⁸⁸

To convict an individual of human trafficking charges, there must be proof of the “act element, which is recruiting, transporting or harbouring someone,” and proof that the act element was “done for the purposes of exploiting the victim, [...] or for the purposes of facilitating their exploitation by someone else.”⁸⁹

While legislation has been implemented against trafficking in persons, witnesses noted that human trafficking cases may not result in charges being laid, nor in convictions;⁹⁰ some suggested that either penalties are not enforced,⁹¹ or those who do receive

88 Government of Canada, “[Legislation](#)”, *Human Trafficking*.

89 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1700 (Nathalie Levman).

90 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1215 (Julia Drydyk).

91 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1710 (Cathy Peters, Educator, as an individual).



penalties, do not receive sufficiently harsh punishments to dissuade the crime.⁹² Some of the Committee’s informal meetings during travel mirrored this perspective. Nathalie Levman added that:

It is well established that human trafficking offences can be difficult to prove regardless of how they are framed. As noted in Statistics Canada’s 2020 human trafficking juristat, prosecutors may struggle to secure convictions, including because the trauma to which victims are subjected may create difficulties in recalling the relevant events, resulting in victims being perceived as less credible. Victim support and trauma-informed care, therefore, are critical to both healing and successful prosecutions.⁹³

Julia Drydyk agreed that victims may be reluctant to share details about their experiences for various reasons, including the retraumatization that can occur during a court process.⁹⁴ During travel, the Committee heard that victims and survivors can be highly traumatized and may face intersecting oppressions; these realities can impede individuals’ access to services and justice. Various organizations the Committee visited described their efforts to provide low-barrier access to a continuum of services, either housed within the organization itself, or through a network of community partners. For example, during the Committee’s travel, Peel Regional Police Services told Committee members that in the region, a continuum of services for human trafficking victims and survivors are provided in one centralized location, which facilitates access to these services for victims and survivors.

Lucie Léonard agreed that human trafficking in Canada is difficult to prosecute, and as a result of this, “some police services, under the advice of the Crown, may recommend or lay other types of charges to move the cases through the justice system.”⁹⁵ While the purpose of laying charges that are unrelated to trafficking is to hold perpetrators of trafficking accountable in some way, this practice may have an effect on human trafficking-related data collection.⁹⁶

While Nathalie Levman explained that justice officials “regularly train law enforcement on the legislative framework.... [as well as] victim vulnerability,” some witnesses called

92 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, *Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1710 (Kelly Tallon Franklin, Chief Executive Director, Courage for Freedom); Sudbury and Area Victim Services, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

93 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1620 (Nathalie Levman).

94 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1215 (Julia Drydyk).

95 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1635 (Lucie Léonard).

96 Ibid.

for increased training for those involved in the judicial process on the ways in which victims may be affected by their experiences.⁹⁷ During its travel, the Committee heard from select police services, such as the Peel Regional Police, about the community organization partnerships and networks they rely on to provide safe and trauma-informed services to victims.

SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation are part of a “continuum of intersecting oppressions such as poverty, homelessness, sexism, racism, the ongoing legacy of colonization, lack of access to work and education, food insecurity, dependency on chemical substances, intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, and pornography.”⁹⁸ Systems of oppression and discrimination can put some groups of people at higher risk of experiencing human trafficking or exploitation within the sex industry. The following sections describe some of those systems.

Witnesses noted that anti-trafficking policies must consider systemic oppression and discrimination as well as social and economic inequalities, and not only individual vulnerabilities, to fully address human trafficking.⁹⁹ Prevention initiatives are discussed in another section of this report.

Sexism and Discrimination Based on Gender Identity and Sexuality

Witnesses noted that structural violence and oppression against women as well as sexual inequality, make women more vulnerable to experiencing exploitation, including in the sex industry.¹⁰⁰ The Committee was told that the demand for sex, and for access to women’s and girls’ bodies, “fuels and supports” exploitation.¹⁰¹ This demand is easily

97 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1250 (Julia Drydyk).

98 Salvation Army, [Brief Submission for Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

99 Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, [Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Freedom United, [Human trafficking of women girls and gender diverse people in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

100 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1100 (S/Sgt Robert Christmas); Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

101 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



met because of the wide distribution of sexually exploitative or coerced material for profit on online platforms.¹⁰²

As discussed in a previous section, most survivors of human trafficking are women, girls and gender diverse individuals. However, in a written brief, Crime Stoppers noted it is important to remember that most victims do not report the violence they experienced. The organization stated that “[i]n marginalized communities, where there are fewer complaints and reports and fewer resources to help men in difficulty, male victims of sexual exploitation are almost absent from census statistics, but they are indeed there on the ground.”¹⁰³

Colonialism

Historical and modern forms of colonialism have ongoing negative impacts on the safety and security of Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals in Canada. Melanie Omeniho, President of Women of the Métis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, told the Committee that Indigenous women:

[H]ave always been specifically targeted for violence through federal policies and legislation, such as strict policies, marriage laws and the rights to property that were created to undermine family, community and the political structures that existed within [Indigenous] communities.¹⁰⁴

The impacts of colonialism, which include loss of culture and identity, the hypersexualization of Indigenous women and girls, high rates of poverty, the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in foster care, intergenerational trauma and experiencing abuse and mental health issues, make Indigenous women, girls and gender

102 Association for Reformed Political Action Canada, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; National Council of Women of Canada, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Cathy Peters, [Human Sex Trafficking in Canada; its impact on women and children and how to stop it](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

103 Crime Stoppers, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

104 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1720 (Melanie Omeniho, President, Women of the Métis Nation — Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak).

diverse individuals vulnerable to exploitation.¹⁰⁵ Violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals is “so normalized that people don't realize that when these young people are being sexualized through the Internet, they become victims and fall prey to people who are trying to exploit them.”¹⁰⁶ Further, high rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals also make them more likely to live with a disability, including invisible disabilities like traumatic brain injuries.¹⁰⁷

The systems of oppression and discrimination described in other sections of this report also make Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals who live in poverty more likely to rely on sex work to generate income and support themselves.¹⁰⁸ In turn, this makes them more vulnerable to over-policing¹⁰⁹ and of being labelled as trafficking victims which negates “the agency of Indigenous women who sell sexual services and ... deflects from recognizing the numerous ways a colonial state reproduces violence, injustices and other harms.”¹¹⁰

To eliminate the exploitation of Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals, the social and economic inequalities they experience must be addressed, including

105 Ibid. and; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1210 (Fay Blaney); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1610 (Crystal Garrett-Baird); DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, [Human Trafficking of diverse women and girls with disabilities in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Salvation Army, [Brief Submission for Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Aura Freedom International, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

106 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1745 (Melanie Omeniho).

107 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, [Human Trafficking of diverse women and girls with disabilities in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

108 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen).

109 Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

110 Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



ensuring their income security, such as through Call for Justice 4.5, a guaranteed annual liveable income, access to healthcare and to social and cultural supports.¹¹¹

Racism

Racialized individuals in Canada do not access the same economic opportunities as non-racialized individuals, which leads to higher rates of poverty and poor educational and health outcomes within racialized communities.¹¹² Those inequalities may contribute to their decision to enter sex work and their vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking. During its visit in Halifax, the Committee met with Katrina Jarvis, a representative from the Association of Black Social Workers. She shared the findings of the report entitled *Hearing Them: Voices and Lived Experiences from the Sex Industry in Nova Scotia*. This report notes that the decision to enter sex work and the social and economic circumstances within which African Nova Scotian and Black Nova Scotians make that choice include “a history of slavery and anti-Black racism” in Canada.¹¹³

As well, the Committee was told that racialized individuals involved in the sex industry could be subjected to profiling from law enforcement officers. In a written brief, Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard said: “Black women are often assumed to be involved in sex work merely for walking in public spaces due to sexualized stereotypes about them, and Indigenous and Black sex workers have themselves been accused of human trafficking when they work collectively.”¹¹⁴

Ableism

Women, girls and gender diverse individuals with disabilities “are particularly vulnerable to childhood sexual violence, gender-based violence, and human trafficking.”¹¹⁵ They experience sexual violence “repetitively and frequently because of the precise fact

111 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1715 (Coralee McGuire-Cyrette, Executive Director, Ontario Native Women's Association); Living in Community, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

112 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1215 (Julia Drydyk).

113 Teaira Caine, Justine Colley-Leger, Tiffany Gordon and Katrina Jarvis, *Hearing Them: African Nova Scotian and Black Experiences of Sex Work, Childhood and Youth Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Nova Scotia*, p. 6.

114 Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

115 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, *Human Trafficking of diverse women and girls with disabilities in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

that [they are] disabled.”¹¹⁶ This increased vulnerability to violence, including human trafficking, is rooted in ableism and other forms of oppression and discrimination that women, girls and gender diverse individuals with disabilities face throughout their lives, including:

[C]ommunications barriers, increased likelihood to live in poverty, lack of inclusive and affirming sexual education or access to sexual health services, reliance on or control of caregivers, stereotypes labelling them as not sexual or hypersexual, barriers with the criminal justice system, and not being believed when reporting abuse.¹¹⁷

In a written brief, the DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada stated that these patterns of exploitation should be addressed in anti-trafficking policies.¹¹⁸ More precisely, the DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada recommended that policies need to “[a]ddress the systemic barriers that make women and girls with disabilities and other groups more vulnerable to trafficking: isolation, social exclusion and discrimination, low income and poverty, housing precarity, inadequate access support services.”¹¹⁹

Social and Economic Inequalities

Sexual exploitation results from “existing social and economic inequalities that affect women in particular.”¹²⁰ For many women, girls and gender diverse individuals, these social and economic inequalities oftentimes result from oppression or discrimination, and/or from personal life experiences. Several factors and life experiences can make people more vulnerable to human trafficking, including:

- experiencing poverty, isolation and lack of family support;¹²¹
- being a survivor of abuse in childhood;¹²²

116 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1705 (Bonnie Brayton).

117 DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, [Human Trafficking of diverse women and girls with disabilities in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1125 (Diane Matte).

121 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1205 (Mario Catenaccio, as an individual).

122 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1140 (Kate Price); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1705 (Bonnie Brayton).



- struggling to secure affordable housing or being homeless, and facing barriers because of a disability, language skills;¹²³ and
- mental health issues or trauma, including traumatic brain injuries.¹²⁴

Kyla Clark, Program Coordinator at Creating Opportunities and Resources Against the Trafficking of Humans, referred to these as “invisible identities.”¹²⁵

Many witnesses explained that traffickers are exploiting vulnerable individuals who are socially isolated or do not have their basic needs met, such as financial and housing needs.¹²⁶ As well, the Committee was told that poverty can be both a factor for entry into the sex industry and a barrier to exiting it.¹²⁷ Sandra Wesley noted:

In our communities, we often see [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] youth who've been expelled from their families, particularly young gay men who find themselves on the street and who have no choice, in order to survive, but to find someone who will pay the rent, someone with whom they will have sex. For many of these young people, the central problem in their lives is not the exchange of sexual services. They will be very vulnerable to abusers who will take advantage of the situation. Ultimately, it's because they don't have a place in society. They have nowhere to live. They don't trust the child welfare system. They have to hide from the police. That's where most of this violence comes from.¹²⁸

In addition, witnesses noted that traffickers often use drugs to keep victims dependent and exploitable:

That method is used to try to alter victims' judgment so they are simply desensitized, until they become mere commodities in the sex trade. The organizers and traffickers want their prey to be fragile. When they are using, they are easy to control. Drug

123 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1105 (Miriam Pomerleau).

124 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1200 (Timea E. Nagy, Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Timea's Cause Inc.).

125 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1220 (Kyla Clark).

126 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1625 (Nathalie Levman); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1255 (Julia Drydyk).

127 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1110 (Diane Matte).

128 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1605 (Sandra Wesley).

trafficking is therefore directly associated with human trafficking, as shown in the percentage of reports received.¹²⁹

Individuals who are being exploited can also start using drugs to cope with their situations.¹³⁰ Furthermore, drugs were presented as “the most effective way to keep [victims of sexual exploitation] in servitude”¹³¹ because “when they are using, they are easy to control.”¹³² It was also noted that “[t]he shorter the period of time a victim is in the situation and the sooner they are recognized, the sooner they’ll be pulled out of the situations and can rehabilitate their life and find their way back to society.”¹³³

Additionally, Ieesha Sankar, Director, Program and Services, at Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc., explained that people who are homeless and involved in sex work might fear reporting violence they experienced because the person committing violence against them might also be the person fulfilling their basic needs.¹³⁴ Lack of affordable housing is also a situation that leads to exploitation.¹³⁵ Monica Abdelkader, Director, Resettlement and Settlement Services, Association for New Canadians, explained that many individuals who seek the help of her organization “are at heightened risk for trafficking or become victims of trafficking because they end up turning to people who offer what seems like genuine help to get them out of this abject poverty.”¹³⁶

The Committee was told that the digital space has changed the profile of individuals vulnerable to human trafficking. Tiana Sharifi, Chief Executive Officer of Exploitation Education Institute, explained that “[w]hen online, youth seek to meet their higher[-]level needs, such as belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization.”¹³⁷ Witnesses noted

129 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1105 (Miriam Pomerleau).

130 Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

131 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1105 (Miriam Pomerleau).

132 Ibid.

133 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1135 (Timea E. Nagy).

134 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1615 (Ieesha Sankar, Director, Program and Services, Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.).

135 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1600 (Raman Hansra); London Abused Women's Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1230 (Julia Drydyk).

136 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1555 (Monica Abdelkader, Director, Resettlement and Settlement Services, Association for New Canadians).

137 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1100 (Tiana Sharifi).



that youth are seeking connection and interaction online,¹³⁸ but many girls who thought that the person they were connecting with was a friend were instead being groomed and/or recruited.¹³⁹ As well, the abundance of hypersexualized and objectification content on social media platforms normalizes self-exploitation which can lead to youth being groomed into exploitation and trafficking.¹⁴⁰

Other Systemic Challenges

Over the course of this study, witnesses highlighted other systemic issues related to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, notably those affecting migrant workers and individuals involved in the sex industry. The sections below describe these issues.

Challenges Facing Individuals Involved in the Sex Industry

The Committee heard that anti-trafficking policies and initiatives could push sex work underground,¹⁴¹ which results in dangerous working conditions in the sex industry.¹⁴² For instance, sex workers can be profiled and criminalized by law enforcement officers, particularly racialized, Indigenous and migrant sex workers, as officers attempt to locate trafficking victims.¹⁴³ Witnesses noted that approaches called “raid and rescue” or “rescue” operations are harming sex workers.¹⁴⁴ For example, in a written brief, Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project stated:

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- 138 Ibid. and; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1745 (Melanie Omeniho).
- 139 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1155 (Megan Walker); Glenda Carson and Rolande Chernichan, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 140 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1155 and 1200 (Tiana Sharifi).
- 141 Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 142 Canadian Women's Foundation, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 143 Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SafeLink Alberta, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 144 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1530 (Elene Lam, Executive Director, Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network); Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Many anti-trafficking initiatives result in increased police presence in our workplaces, surveillance, interrogation, harassment, detention and deportation. Under the guise of “protection” antitrafficking policies often further criminalize our communities, endanger our lives, impose deadly working conditions, strip us of our agency, perpetuate systemic violence and harmful stereotypes onto the most marginalized of sex workers that have real-world implications for our communities.¹⁴⁵

The conflation of sex workers and trafficking victims by law enforcement results in sex workers working in isolation and without social supports; this can lead to increased vulnerability to experiences of violence and discrimination.¹⁴⁶ Excessive policing within the sex industry also deters sex workers from reporting violence they experience.¹⁴⁷ For this reason, witnesses recommended decriminalizing sex work to improve safety within the industry and reduce sex workers’ vulnerability to exploitation.¹⁴⁸ Sandra Wesley explained:

When you're in a criminalized industry, where everyone has to protect themselves from the police, where the driver, the receptionist, the client can all go to jail, it gives abusers the opportunity to be violent or take advantage of people. That's why it's impossible to separate human trafficking concerns from the decriminalization of sex work.¹⁴⁹

Challenges Facing Migrant Workers

The Committee heard that there are systemic issues affecting migrant workers’ vulnerability to human trafficking and to exploitation within the sex industry. Jovana Blagovcanin, Manager, Anti-Human Trafficking, at the FCJ Refugee Centre, noted that migrant women “are highly vulnerable to exploitation due to their gender, precarious immigration status, language barriers and limited knowledge of their rights or available

145 Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

146 Women and HIV / AIDS Initiative, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SWAN Vancouver Society, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

147 Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

148 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1620 (Kate Sinclair).

149 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1605 (Sandra Wesley).



resources, which in turn results in limited access to their rights.”¹⁵⁰ Monica Abdelkader explained that data from a recent project showed that migrant workers’ vulnerability to trafficking was higher the remoter or more rural the communities they were settling in.¹⁵¹

The Committee was told that oftentimes exploitation of migrant workers in Canada starts after the person travels to Canada¹⁵² and is gradual, going from poor working conditions to labour and/or sexual trafficking.¹⁵³ Julia Drydyk explained that the “vast majority of individuals who experience trafficking where the [Canada Border Services Agency] is involved are those migrant workers who are coming into Canada through temporary foreign worker permits and are largely experiencing labour trafficking in our agricultural and manufacturing sectors.”¹⁵⁴ During its visit in Vancouver, the Committee met with representatives of Migrant Workers Centre in Vancouver who explained that labour trafficking intersects with sex trafficking, as employers might force migrant workers to perform sex services as part of their employment, a situation they described as being increasingly common.¹⁵⁵

Temporary Resident Permits for Victims of Trafficking in Persons in Canada

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is responsible for “helping protect out-of-status foreign national victims of trafficking.”¹⁵⁶ Representatives from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) told the Committee that there are services available to migrant workers who find themselves in situations of exploitation or who are being trafficked, such as emergency housing and funding as well as support services to regularize their status in Canada.¹⁵⁷ For example, victims of trafficking in persons in Canada can be issued temporary resident permits (VTIP TRP), which initially allows them to secure temporary resident status for a period of six months (a subsequent or longer-term VTIP

150 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1535 (Jovana Blagovcanin, Manager, Anti-Human Trafficking, FCJ Refugee Centre).

151 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1625 (Monica Abdelkader).

152 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1125 (Daniel Anson).

153 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1240 (Julia Drydyk).

154 Ibid.

155 Information received by the Committee during its meeting with representatives from the Migrant Workers Centre in Vancouver on 11 April 2023.

156 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1615 (Alexis Graham, Director, Social and Discretionary Policy and Programs, Social and Temporary Migration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

157 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1140 (Daniel Anson).

TRP can be issued for up to three years).¹⁵⁸ A VTIP TRP also provides survivors access to health care, including mental health care, under the interim federal health program and allows them to apply for an open work permit.

Witnesses noted several issues with the VTIP TRP process. Firstly, the Committee was told that the number of VTIP TRP issued is low:¹⁵⁹ 155 VTIP TRPs were issued in 2022.¹⁶⁰ In a written brief, the organization Migrant Workers Alliance for Change said that most VTIP TRP applications are refused “because the definition of trafficking for the purposes of accessing temporary resident permits is specific and limited, despite the expansion of discourse and funding on the concept of trafficking.”¹⁶¹ The Committee also heard that VTIP TRPs are not always renewed, which forces workers to leave Canada or to stay but become undocumented.¹⁶²

In a written brief, the organization Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto explained that the VTIP TRP “is limited in scope and has an uncertain outcome due to the discretionary process. Outdated criteria and understanding of exploitation by [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada] officers reduce migrant experiences to individual culpability often blaming them for their own demise.”¹⁶³

While survivors are technically not required to testify against their trafficker to be granted a VTIP TRP,¹⁶⁴ Jovana Blagovcanin noted that VTIP TRP applications are being denied because there are no pending investigations or cases in court. In this situation, survivors of trafficking have “very few options to safely remain in Canada.”¹⁶⁵ As well, witnesses mentioned that some services and supports might not be available to individuals who are residing in Canada under a VTIP TRP, such as housing supports or

158 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1645 (Sarah Hayward, Director, Visitors, Permits and Horizontal Initiatives, Immigration Program Guidance Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration); Government of Canada, *Temporary resident permits (TRPs): Considerations specific to victims of trafficking in persons*.

159 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1615 (Alexis Graham).

160 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1655 (Sarah Hayward).

161 Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, *Human Trafficking Of Women, Girls And Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

162 Ibid.

163 Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, *Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

164 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1615 (Alexis Graham).

165 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1535 (Jovana Blagovcanin).



family reunification.¹⁶⁶ Finally, the pathway from a VTIP TRP to a permanent residency is challenging as it can take years of being legally in Canada under a VTIP TRP before being eligible for permanent residency.¹⁶⁷ Witnesses recommended making this process quicker and more accessible to survivors.¹⁶⁸

Migrant Workers in the Sex Industry

Migrant workers involved in the sex industry face specific structural violence because of “[r]estrictive immigration policies preventing them from legally engaging in sex [work] and related industries.”¹⁶⁹ The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (IRPR) prevent migrant workers from working in sex industry-related employment,¹⁷⁰ namely for employers and workplaces that offer striptease, erotic dance, escort services or erotic massages.¹⁷¹ If involved in such activities, migrant workers would be at risk of being criminalized, deported, and barred from Canada, even if they do not face criminal charges themselves.¹⁷²

As described in a previous section, sex workers can be profiled and criminalized by law enforcement officers, as officers attempt to locate trafficking victims.¹⁷³ Migrant women involved in sex work are regularly assumed to be trafficked, a view “often based on racist understandings, particularly of Asian women, who are believed to be naïve and duped into doing sex work.”¹⁷⁴ Because of this assumption, police services and the Canada

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- 166 Ibid. and; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1640 (Chiara Rossi, Coordinator, Anti-Human Trafficking Women’s, FCJ Refugee Centre).
- 167 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1640 (Jovana Blagovcanin).
- 168 Ibid.
- 169 Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, [Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 170 Ibid. and; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1220 (Angela Wu).
- 171 [Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#), SOR/2002-227, s. 183(1)(b.1).
- 172 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen); Jamie Liew, [Harm of Anti-Trafficking Policies on Migrant & Non-Citizen Sex Workers](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 173 Christine Bruckert et al., [Study on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SafeLink Alberta, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 174 Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Border Services Agency target workplaces where migrant workers and racialized individuals are present, as part of their anti-trafficking initiatives.¹⁷⁵

This criminalization of migrant workers involved in sex work push them not to report the violence they experience or not to access services “to avoid invasive and potentially harmful questions and disclosures.”¹⁷⁶ Angela Wu stated:

When they choose to work in the sex industry, they automatically are placed at risk of arrest, detention and deportation. We have actually seen that happen several times with the women we support. Often they come to the attention of the police because they have decided that they want to report violence or exploitation. Unfortunately, almost every single time we have seen the women actually end up getting deported.¹⁷⁷

The Committee was told that efforts to protect migrant sex workers from exploitation that only focus on the role of traffickers “absolves the government of addressing systemic causes of human trafficking among im/migrant sex workers.”¹⁷⁸ To protect migrant workers against exploitation, witnesses recommended the Government of Canada repeal regulations that prohibits migrant workers from engaging in sex work.¹⁷⁹ In particular, witnesses recommended repealing sections 183(1)(b.1), 185(b), 196.1(a), 200(3)(g.1) and 203(2)(a) from the IRPR.¹⁸⁰

175 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen).

176 Kamala Kempadoo, [Study of Human Trafficking in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

177 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1220 (Angela Wu).

178 SWAN Vancouver Society, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

179 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1150 (Angela Wu); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1620 (Elene Lam); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1145 (Rosel Kim, Senior Staff Lawyer, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund); PACE Society and Pivot Legal Society, [Joint Written Brief](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, [Human Trafficking Of Women, Girls And Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Women's Equality Coalition, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

180 SWAN Vancouver Society, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, [Human Trafficking Of Women, Girls And Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



Impacts of Closed Work Permits

Closed work permits tie migrant workers to a specific employer, which puts workers at risk of experiencing exploitation and limits their ability to seek help once they are in Canada and have started working.¹⁸¹ Maria Mourani, Criminologist, PhD in Sociology and President of Mourani-Criminologie, shared this example with the Committee:

[Closed work permits] are issued to young women from abroad who are supposedly required to work in places like Montreal's posh restaurants, but who end up working unwillingly in the sex trade. The so-called employers, who are really pimps disguised as restaurant owners, use these permits to keep women on a tight leash. The women don't dare to report them, because they're afraid of being sent back to their home country.¹⁸²

Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation because their “employers know that they are breaking the terms of their [closed] work permits” and employers can “use this knowledge to underpay workers, force them to work longer hours, and in more hazardous conditions.”¹⁸³

For this reason, witnesses recommended abolishing employer-specific work permits in favour of open work permits.¹⁸⁴ Representatives of Migrant Workers Centre suggested sector-based permits as an alternative to closed work permits.¹⁸⁵ Witnesses also recommended the Government of Canada issue permanent residency to migrant

181 Mourani-Criminologie, *Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1635 (Jovana Blagovcanin).

182 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1140 (Maria Mourani).

183 Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, *Human Trafficking Of Women, Girls And Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

184 Mourani-Criminologie, *Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women*; Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, *Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

185 Information received by the Committee during its meeting with representatives from the Migrant Workers Centre in Vancouver on 11 April 2023.

workers to combat possible exploitation.¹⁸⁶ In a written brief, the Yukon Status of Women Council noted that permanent residency would give “im/migrant sex workers ... increased access to legal recourse, support services and protections if needed.”¹⁸⁷

Challenges Facing International Students

International students can also be vulnerable to exploitation¹⁸⁸ in part, “because of their financial situations, living conditions, lack of affordable housing... Language barriers are another thing.”¹⁸⁹ For example, they can become dependent on landlords or employers if they have no other way to generate income than to comply with what their employer asks them to do.¹⁹⁰ Combined with “the compounding issues of racism, colonialism and sexism,”¹⁹¹ these risk factors mean that “[international students] become easy targets of these traffickers.”¹⁹² Often, international students may hesitate or feel unsafe to report their situation and seek support, “because of their [immigration] status and because they don’t know how to navigate the system.”¹⁹³ Kathleen Douglass, President Elect and Advocacy Chair at the Zonta Club of Brampton-Caledon, stressed the importance for international students to receive the information, upon arriving to Canada, needed to understand “that they have rights and do not have to be trafficked because they have to pay back loans and are obligated to provide for their families.”¹⁹⁴

186 Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, *Human Trafficking Of Women, Girls And Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Kamala Kempadoo, *Study of Human Trafficking in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SafeLink Alberta, *Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, *For the study on: Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

187 Yukon Status of Women Council, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

188 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1255 (Julia Drydyk).

189 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1610 (Raman Hansra).

190 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1605 (Jakki Buckeridge).

191 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1255 (Julia Drydyk).

192 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1610 (Raman Hansra).

193 Ibid.

194 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1625 (Kathleen Douglass).



Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada support organizations that work with youth involved in the child welfare and foster care system, including Indigenous youth, to ensure that they receive culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services that meet their needs and reduce their vulnerability to becoming victims of human trafficking.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada implement a Red Dress Alert for missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdiction of provinces and territories, and in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, support the development of awareness campaigns and resources in diverse languages for international post-secondary students related to preventing, and reducing the risk of experiencing, human trafficking, including human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, implement measures to further protect migrant workers with an irregular immigration status from human trafficking and exploitation, and from abuse in difficult workplaces where they may be subject to blackmail, threats, coercion and violence from employers if they leave or report this abuse, jeopardizing their work permits and opening themselves up to deportation to their home country, and consider measures such as:

- **accelerating and simplifying the process of obtaining permanent residence status from a temporary resident permit for a victim of trafficking in persons;**
- **studying potential repeal or amendment of regulations in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations that criminalize migrant workers engaging in sex work; and**
- **continuing to implement open- or sector-based work permits instead of employer-specific work permits.**

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of, and in collaboration with, the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples, consider measures that can reduce poverty and ensure that individuals' basic needs are met, including:

- **implementing a guaranteed annual liveable income or other financial support models, making sure to minimize barriers to these supports for low income households;**
- **supporting the provision of safe, affordable and accessible housing, including emergency shelters, safe houses and transitional housing, for all; and**
- **continuing to invest in long-term funding for organizations providing culturally appropriate and trauma-informed gender-based violence programs and services.**



IMPROVING SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA

“Our women, girls and gender diverse people deserve more than a common shelter bed where they wonder if the person next to them is coming to retrieve them for their trafficker. They deserve more than 20 counselling sessions. After all the atrocities and abuses that they've endured, they shouldn't have to give up their pets. These may seem like small, trivial things to those who have stability in their lives, but to the person who is finally able to exit human trafficking, those are the things that can help a person move into rehabilitation from the most heinous life instead of returning to it, which they often feel is their only option, due to the guilt and shame from the abuses they have suffered.”

FEWO, *Evidence*, 4 May 2023, 1535,
(Tiffany Pyoli York, Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator and Public Educator,
Sudbury and Area Victim Services).

Survivors of human trafficking oftentimes “have become completely dependent upon the traffickers for food, money and companionship.”¹⁹⁵ For this reason, they often require access to a variety of specialized supports and services to successfully exit situations of exploitation, such as housing, mental health services and training and educational programs.¹⁹⁶ During its travel, the Committee heard that victims and survivors of trafficking face significant barriers in accessing transitional housing after they leave emergency or short-term shelter services. The lack of availability of transitional housing and related supports may contribute to victims and survivors remaining vulnerable to further exploitation and trafficking. Raman Hansra, Project

195 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1205 (Mario Catenaccio).

196 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1615 (Derrick Flynn, Board Chair, Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1650 (Shelley Walker); Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, *National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Director, Family Services, at Indus Community Services, noted that a “trauma-informed approach and culturally and linguistically appropriate services are the key to supporting these survivors or victims.”¹⁹⁷ Without these, survivors are at risk of experiencing exploitation again.

During this study, the Committee met with and visited many organizations providing frontline and direct support to survivors of trafficking. Some were invited to appear at Committee meetings in Ottawa, and some shared information with the Committee during its travel to Vancouver, the Region of Peel, Sault-Sainte-Marie, and Halifax. An overview of the different service providers the Committee met with during its travel in the Spring of 2023 is available in Appendix A.

Despite community organizations across Canada offering a wide variety of services and programs, survivors of human trafficking do not have access to the full continuum of supports and services they require.¹⁹⁸ Witnesses mentioned, for instance, the lack of financial support, educational and training support, mental health services, and legal support for survivors, as well as the lack of adequate funding for these services.¹⁹⁹ Jody Miller, Managing Director of EFRY Hope and Help for Women, told the Committee that all levels of government and community organizations need to work collaboratively to offer the continuum of services needed.²⁰⁰ The Committee was told that women wanting to leave sex work, or who have been engaged in sex work in the past, also need access to similar services.²⁰¹

197 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1610 (Raman Hansra).

198 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Jody Miller); Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

199 Women's Trucking Federation of Canada, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1610 (Melissa Marchand, Member, Zonta Advocacy Committee, Zonta Club of Brampton-Caledon); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Sgt Andrea Scott, Counter Exploitation Unit, Winnipeg Police Service).

200 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1255 (Jody Miller).

201 Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Women's Equality Coalition, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, [Study on the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1210 (Fay Blaney); BC Coalition of Experiential Communities, [Human Trafficking Study](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



During its meeting with a representative of Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, the Committee heard that the organization utilizes a low-barrier approach to providing services to its clients. The representative noted this approach means that women do not have to disclose information about their situation to access their services; being asked for information is a barrier to access services.

In particular, several witnesses told the Committee about the importance of providing housing options to survivors for them to exit their situations of exploitation successfully. The following section focusses on this issue.

Housing Services

The Committee was told that having access to safe and affordable housing was essential for survivors of human trafficking to be able to exit their situations enduringly.²⁰² For instance, a representative from the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline told the Committee that “housing is the number one biggest need that's requested for a referral service through the hotline.”²⁰³ However, accessing housing is a major barrier for survivors.²⁰⁴ Emergency housing might be difficult to access as shelters are often full or because human trafficking survivors do not meet shelters’ mandates, policies or requirements, in which case survivors of human trafficking might go to a low-barrier shelter that does not provide the services they need.²⁰⁵ There are also long waitlists for housing, especially for survivors who might need more specialized services or who are older.²⁰⁶

Both witnesses who appeared in meetings held in Ottawa and witnesses the Committee met during its travel, noted that a full continuum of long-term housing supports is needed to address human trafficking, such as rent geared to income, portable housing benefits and rent supplements.²⁰⁷ In particular, Jody Miller recommended that a

202 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Jody Miller).

203 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1230 (Julia Drydyk).

204 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Jody Miller); Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

205 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1610 (Tiffany Pyoli York, Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator and Public Educator, Sudbury and Area Victim Services).

206 EFRY Hope and Help for Women, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

207 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1225 (Jody Miller); Information received by the Committee during its travel to Vancouver, the Region of Peel, Sault-Sainte-Marie and Halifax.

dedicated housing strategy “that addresses access to immediate beds, as well as independent housing and support services within housing for trauma, mental health and addiction” be developed.²⁰⁸

Funding Services for Survivors

“More funding needs to go directly to survivor support and the understanding of the nature of the survivor and the layers that are incorporated into the healing of that survivor.”

FEWO, *Evidence*, 4 May 2023, 1625,
(Melissa Marchand, Member, Zonta Advocacy Committee,
Zonta Club of Brampton-Caledon).

To improve supports and services offered to survivors of human trafficking, witnesses indicated that additional funding should be provided to organizations offering such services. In particular, witnesses noted that funding should be provided to “peer-type projects and peer agencies”²⁰⁹ and to groups directly supporting survivors of violence.²¹⁰ Timea Nagy, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Timea's Cause Inc., noted:

We survivors are also asked to lend our voices and expertise to build programs and policies, only to find out that our suggestions are constantly cut out. Programs, safe houses and services are getting kick-started and funded that we don't actually need or that we as survivors don't actually benefit from.²¹¹

Another issue highlighted by witnesses was the impact of the current project-based funding model; under this funding model, organizations only receive funding for a limited time, usually a few years, and for a specific project. This means that organizations sometimes are not able to keep offering supports and services if their funding is not renewed.²¹² Witnesses called for the Government of Canada to provide

208 Ibid.

209 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1150 (Krystal Snider, Lead Project Consultant, Women's Centre for Social Justice).

210 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1220 (Jenn Clamen).

211 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1110 (Timea E. Nagy).

212 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1740 (Crystal Garrett-Baird); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1750 (Coralee McGuire-Cyrette).



operational funding to organizations offering services to survivors of human trafficking.²¹³ Jody Miller explained:

I feel that being able to have sustainable long-term funding in communities is essential as well, so that we don't have to rebuild these supports that we've put in place and we don't have to start over, and so that we can also provide our staff, who have been trained in providing these models and who are primarily female, with stable employment in providing these services.²¹⁴

Specifically, Coralee McGuire-Cyrette, Executive Director of the Ontario Native Women's Association, explained that current funding models do not work for Indigenous women's organizations. She stated: "We need that core sustainable funding for [I]ndigenous women's agencies. That hasn't happened here in Canada, and there has to be that long-term, sustainable funding to support [I]ndigenous women's safety."²¹⁵ Fay Blaney, Lead Matriarch at the Aboriginal Women's Action Network, explained that by resourcing programs and services by and for Indigenous women, Indigenous women "would not be subjected to the systemic racism [they] experience within the programs and services [they] access."²¹⁶

The Committee was also told that the Government of Canada should support and provide funding to sex worker-led initiatives, in particular initiatives that support Indigenous-, Black- and migrant-led sex workers groups.²¹⁷ In a written brief, the SWAN Vancouver Society explained that "sex work organizations are best positioned to provide comprehensive, non-judgmental, and tailored services," yet they are under-resourced to prevent and respond to human trafficking.²¹⁸

Also, the Committee was told that sex workers can struggle to access services if they do not identify as victims of human trafficking or agree to exit sex work. However, access to

213 Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

214 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1255 (Jody Miller).

215 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1730 (Coralee McGuire-Cyrette).

216 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1235 (Fay Blaney).

217 Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Yukon Status of Women Council, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

218 SWAN Vancouver Society, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

support services can help prevent sex workers becoming victims of exploitation.²¹⁹ In a written brief, the Canadian Women’s Foundation noted that there is a “funding disparity between sex worker support programs and anti-trafficking programs in Canada.”²²⁰ Witnesses recommended the Government of Canada shift away from an anti-trafficking funding framework to ensure that projects funded also meet the needs of sex workers.²²¹

In a written brief, the Peel Regional Police recommended establishing a national criminal injuries compensation board for victims of gender-based violence, including human trafficking, which could be used “to support on-going medical treatments, trauma counselling and substance use recovery.”²²²

Services for Migrants in Canada

Migrant workers might face additional barriers in seeking help and services, such as language and cultural barriers, uncertainty related to their employment and immigration status and lack of awareness or understanding of Canadians laws. A representative from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada explained that migrant workers:

[A]re sometimes in a particular situation of precarity where they may not have permanent residence status or are living in a difficult set of circumstances. That precarity adds to those complex dimensions of their feeling like they don't necessarily have the agency to come forward.²²³

219 Living in Community, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Robyn Maynard, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

220 Canadian Women's Foundation, *Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

221 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1205 (Jenn Clamen); Yukon Status of Women Council, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Women and HIV / AIDS Initiative, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

222 Peel Regional Police, *Brief on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

223 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1645 (Alexis Graham).



Some services and supports might also not be available to individuals without legal status or with temporary status in Canada, such as legal aid supports²²⁴ and housing supports.²²⁵ Witnesses stressed the importance of providing migrant workers with trauma-informed and victim-centered services as well as information about their rights and the various forms of exploitation.²²⁶

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations, continue investing in victim support services, including trauma-informed and culturally sensitive counselling, legal assistance, and safe housing options for survivors of human trafficking.

Recommendation 11

That the Government of Canada, respecting the jurisdictions of, and in collaboration with, the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples, provide funding to diverse organizations and initiatives that support individuals, such as Indigenous, Black and migrant individuals, who are involved in the sex industry, including victims and survivors of human trafficking as well as sex workers, to ensure that they have access to adequate legal, justice, health, mental health and addictions services.

PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA

The Committee heard about the importance of prevention in addressing human trafficking in Canada; witnesses provided various pathways towards the prevention of the crime in Canada. The discussions included: ways to reduce the demand for sexual services; improved education and awareness; a national strategy; initiatives involving police and law enforcement; amendments to existing legislation, including strengthening penalties for traffickers, as well as the decriminalization of sex work; and the implementation of select social policies and programs.

224 Information received by the Committee during its meeting with representatives from the Migrant Workers Centre in Vancouver on 11 April 2023.

225 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1630 (Jovana Blagovcanin); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1640 (Chiara Rossi).

226 Ibid. and; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1240 (Julia Drydyk).

Witnesses told the Committee that addressing the demand for sexual services has a significant role to play in preventing human trafficking in Canada. Many witnesses indicated that doing so would require stricter penalties for individuals who purchase sexual services and/or a greater enforcement of *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA)*.²²⁷ Diane Matte, the Co-Founder of the Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle, added that Canada's current anti-trafficking approach does not address the demand for sexual services, which is a "root cause" of trafficking.²²⁸ S/Sgt Robert Christmas, who appeared as an individual, suggested further research related to the ways in which a combination of enforcement and education may affect the demand.²²⁹

To prevent human trafficking in Canada, many witnesses spoke about the importance of education in schools and for youth.²³⁰ The Committee heard that students should be taught in culturally relevant, age appropriate and safe ways about healthy relationships, consent, online safety, identifying exploitation and human trafficking and the supports

227 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1135 (Diane Matte); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1105 (Megan Walker); Nancy Brown, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; National Council of Women of Canada, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Pour les droits des femmes du Québec, [Consolidating an Abolitionist Approach](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1230 (Fay Blaney); Glenda Carson and Rolande Chernichan, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

228 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1135 (Diane Matte).

229 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1150 (S/Sgt Robert Christmas).

230 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1230 (Cst Joy Brown, Community Mobilization Unit, Peel Regional Police); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Sgt Andrea Scott).



and resources available.²³¹ Witnesses added that youth often respond well to peer-to-peer education, or other formats and language that are relevant for different age groups, and that these considerations should be acknowledged in the provision of education.²³²

A Federal Approach to Combatting Human Trafficking in Canada

A National Strategy Combatting Human Trafficking in Canada

Witnesses called for a national approach to combat and prevent human trafficking in Canada that places victims and survivors at its centre, and addresses structural and systemic barriers.²³³ Julia Drydyk, and other witnesses,²³⁴ emphasized that there should be a holistic and “whole-of-Canada” approach to ensure that provinces and territories are “acting similarly and in line.”²³⁵ In written submissions, organizations noted that a national strategy should be sufficiently funded, and that the strategy should be

231 Glenda Carson and Rolande Chernichan, [*National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; London Abused Women’s Centre, [*Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., [*Study on human trafficking of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals for sexual exploitation in Canada*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Association for Reformed Political Action Canada, [*Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; BRAVE Education Foundation, [*Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1220 (Kathleen Quinn); Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking, [*Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; EFRY Hope and Help for Women, [*Brief on Human Trafficking*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1600 (Kathleen Douglass); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1555 (Melissa Marchand); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1130 (Tiana Sharifi); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1125 (Miriam Pomerleau); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1220 (Kyla Clark); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1740 (Cathy Peters).

232 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1600 (Kathleen Douglass); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1130 (Tiana Sharifi).

233 Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, [*For the study on: Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

234 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1135 (Timea E. Nagy); Exploitation Education Institute, [*Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women*](#); FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1700 (Kelly Tallon Franklin).

235 FEWO, [*Evidence*](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1255 (Julia Drydyk).

permanent to avoid a disruption in funding during strategy and funding cycle transition periods.²³⁶

Public Safety Canada is the federal department responsible for the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (the Strategy), which was launched in 2019. Department representatives told the Committee that this Strategy brings together federal efforts across departments under one framework and is based on several pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, partnership and empowerment. Between 2018 and 2024, \$75 million in funding was allocated to the Strategy, including a \$14.5 million investment for the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline. The Strategy is “in its last year” and while achievements have been made, department representatives noted that “there is much more to do.”²³⁷ Crystal Garrett-Baird, the Director General, Gender-Based Violence at the Department for Women and Gender Equality, added that the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence “helps federal, provincial, and territorial governments to build on existing initiatives and continues to work with victims and survivors, Indigenous partners,” and other relevant service providers and experts to prevent and address gender-based violence, including human trafficking.²³⁸

Some organizations explained that policies that are meant to combat trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, may lead to the sex industry being unfairly targeted by police.²³⁹ This targeting may lead sex workers to evade detection by police, increasing these individuals’ vulnerability to violence, isolation and marginalization.²⁴⁰ According to several organizations, as there is an over-representation of Indigenous and racialized individuals working in the sex industry, the over-surveillance and policing of the sex

236 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, *Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Peel Regional Police, *Brief on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

237 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1105 (Michelle Van De Bogart).

238 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1615 (Crystal Garrett-Baird).

239 Yukon Status of Women Council, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; PACE Society and Pivot Legal Society, *Joint Written Brief*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1145 (Rosel Kim).

240 Kamala Kempadoo, *Study of Human Trafficking in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sydney Brown, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Living in Community, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1150 (Angela Wu).



industry may disproportionately affect these individuals.²⁴¹ The Yukon Status of Women Council wrote in its submitted brief, that:

Anti-trafficking policies enable over-surveillance of sex workers, especially racialized or otherwise marginalized workers, and push sex workers further underground, where exploitative conditions can thrive more easily... Further harm is experienced by Indigenous sex workers, when they are mislabeled as trafficking victims, as it not only disregards their autonomy, but also reinforces racist and colonial narratives, without addressing or acknowledging the impacts of colonization. Essentially, in the place of addressing root causes of trafficking, anti-trafficking policies create better conditions for exploitation to grow - and do nothing to support people who have experienced trafficking or exploitation.²⁴²

Finally, witnesses cautioned that some anti-trafficking policies and the language used in these policies may harm individuals who have experienced sex trafficking.²⁴³ Kate Price explained that the language used to describe experiences of human trafficking, particularly in the media, may be so sensationalized and informed by stereotypes of “bars on windows,” that victims do not feel that their experience is valid or reflected. As a result, they may not report the crime nor seek support.²⁴⁴

Some witnesses called for recognition that anti-trafficking policies should not be anti-sex work,²⁴⁵ as well as for the inclusion of sex workers and individuals with experience in the sex industry in the development and implementation of policies that are meant to reduce exploitation and violence—including human trafficking—in the sex industry.²⁴⁶ Krystal Snider, the Lead Project Consultant at the Women’s Centre for Social Justice

241 Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, *For the study on: Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; PACE Society and Pivot Legal Society, *Joint Written Brief*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Yukon Status of Women Council, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1155 (Jessica Stone); Critical Trafficking and Sex Work Studies Research Cluster, *Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

242 Yukon Status of Women Council, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

243 Ibid.

244 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1140 (Kate Price).

245 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1150 (Angela Wu).

246 Legal Assistance of Windsor and Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, *Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Canadian Women's Foundation, *Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

agreed that: “you can support the work to end human trafficking while also protecting the rights of those who are engaged in the sex industry by choice.”²⁴⁷

Human Trafficking Education, Training and Awareness

Under the Strategy’s Prevention pillar, the awareness campaign “It’s not what it seems” was launched to educate the public, in particular youth and parents, about human trafficking. Educational materials for Indigenous-specific audiences are under development.²⁴⁸ Witnesses spoke about public awareness campaigns, which can be helpful tools in prevention. The Committee heard that awareness campaigns on human trafficking should include information on gender equality and respect for women and girls, identifying human trafficking, the realities of sexual exploitation and human trafficking in Canada.²⁴⁹ Bonnie Brayton, Chief Executive Officer of the Disabled Women’s Network of Canada, added that public education on human trafficking responsiveness must centre disability, as “many survivors become disabled because of trafficking, and their disability makes them targets for being trafficked.”²⁵⁰

Daniel Anson, the Director General of Intelligence and Investigations with Canada Border Services Agency added that CBSA has been working to implement the Strategy. As part of this Commitment, CBSA officers receive training to recognize indicators associated with victims of human trafficking and provide support through referrals to the appropriate government agencies.²⁵¹ When speaking about training initiatives, various witnesses explained that service providers, individuals working in industries that may interact with victims of human trafficking—including the transport, hospitality and service industries—as well as police, law enforcement and judges, should receive training on human trafficking. This training should include information related to

247 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1140 (Krystal Snider).

248 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1105 (Michelle Van De Bogart).

249 Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; London Abused Women’s Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women ; Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1120 (Maria Mourani); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1215 (Jody Miller).

250 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1745 (Bonnie Brayton).

251 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1100 (Daniel Anson).



identifying human trafficking, supporting victims of these crimes, trauma-informed approaches, as well as the nuanced differences between sex work and human trafficking.²⁵² Some organizations advocated for training for law enforcement and judges on “understand[ing] how to enforce and prosecute under PCEPA.”²⁵³ Finally, training and resources for parents were highlighted as important aspects of prevention.²⁵⁴

Additional Approaches to Preventing Human Trafficking in Canada

Beyond education, training and awareness building, witnesses spoke about and supported several social services, programs and policies that could be beneficial in preventing human trafficking in Canada and in empowering individuals to make their own decisions regarding their own lives, including their employment. These policies and services were predominantly focused on poverty reduction and meeting every individual’s basic needs, such as shelter, food and safety. Witnesses emphasized the importance of supporting survivor-led initiatives, as well as listening to, and including the perspectives and voices of, individuals with lived experience in the sex industry in

252 BRAVE Education Foundation, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; SWAN Vancouver Society, *Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Peel Regional Police, *Brief on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1215 (Kate Price); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1645 (Shelley Walker); EFRY Hope and Help for Women, *Brief on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Peel Regional Police, *Brief on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1530 (Derrick Flynn); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1145 (Timea E. Nagy); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1200 (Miriam Pomerleau); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 March 2023, 1220 (Kyla Clark); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 30 March 2023, 1550 (Ieesha Sankar); Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals for Sexual Exploitation*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1155 (Timea E. Nagy); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1115 (Krystal Snider).

253 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, *National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

254 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1130 (Tiana Sharifi); FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1105 (Megan Walker).

the creation and implementation of any programs and policies.²⁵⁵ Among the suggestions were the following:

- implementation of a guaranteed basic liveable income;²⁵⁶
- provision of safe, affordable and accessible housing for all, including emergency shelters, safe houses and transitional housing;²⁵⁷
- continue to invest in services and programs for gender-based violence survivors, including sex workers and youth;²⁵⁸ and
- support any efforts to disrupt the sexualization and dehumanization of Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people, as well as the

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- 255 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1155 (Krystal Snider); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1245 (Kate Price); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1250 (Jessica Stone); Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 256 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1535 (Kate Sinclair); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1210 (Fay Blaney); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1110 (Diane Matte); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1140 (Megan Walker); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1140 (Krystal Snider); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1200 (S/Sgt Robert Christmas); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1200 (Miriam Pomerleau); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1200 (Maria Mourani); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1745 (Bonnie Brayton); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1255 (Kathleen Quinn); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1700 (Kelly Tallon Franklin); Nancy Brown, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Exploitation Education Institute, [Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#); Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, [Committee on The Status of Women's Motion on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; PACE Society and Pivot Legal Society, [Joint Written Brief](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1630 (Kate Sinclair, Member, Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1225 (Angela Wu); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1245 (Kate Price).
- 257 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1200 (Miriam Pomerleau); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1200 (Maria Mourani); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1700 (Kelly Tallon Franklin); Peel Regional Police, [Brief on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1210 (Cst Joy Brown).
- 258 Canadian Women's Foundation, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



implementation of a Red Dress Alert for missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people.²⁵⁹

Finally, the Committee was told that organizations serving victims of human trafficking, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation need more funding—particularly long-term core funding for community, front-line and non-profit organizations providing trauma-informed and culturally sensitive services—as well as a simplified approach to applying for this funding.²⁶⁰

Data Collection and Reporting Experiences of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

The Committee heard from witnesses that individuals involved in the sex industry, whether they are victims of human trafficking or consensual sex workers, often hesitate to report abuse, exploitation and violence they have experienced, because:²⁶¹

- “They may have a general distrust of authorities;”²⁶²
- do not want to be re-traumatized in the reporting process;
- may fear punishment and arrest; and
- do not want to testify against their traffickers.

Witnesses added that this hesitancy to report these crimes can skew data related to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, as these data are typically gathered through police-reported incidences. Finally, as these data typically inform policies, programs and

259 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1750 (Coralee McGuire-Cyrette); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1745 (Melanie Omenihó).

260 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1705 (Shelley Walker); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1205 (Jessica Stone); Aura Freedom International, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Individuals in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Mourani-Criminologie, [Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women](#); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1745 (Bonnie Brayton).

261 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1210 (Rosel Kim); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1250 (Kate Price); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1240 (Cst Joy Brown); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1530 (Derrick Flynn); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1250 (Kathleen Quinn); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1200 (Krystal Snider).

262 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 23 March 2023, 1640 (Nathalie Levman).

services targeting these groups of people, these policies, programs and services may not be developed or implemented in ways that truly meet the community's needs.²⁶³ As well, Kate Price explained that bias can appear in data due to the ways in which these data are collected; as such, training on data collection related to human trafficking for frontline agencies or community-based organizations would be "transformative in the ability to provide nuanced understanding of what an individual is saying happened to them."²⁶⁴

In response to these data-related challenges, witnesses called for additional funding and commitments to trust-building between communities and institutions collecting these data, including governments.²⁶⁵ Witnesses reiterated support for the creation of a national human trafficking database, to more effectively share information related to these crimes across jurisdictions.²⁶⁶

Prosecution and Criminal Sentencing for Human Trafficking

The Committee heard, from diverse witness perspectives, about the PCEPA, which was enacted in 2014. In a written brief, Freedom United explained that under this Act, the sale of sex is legal in Canada, but "surrounding activities are criminalized," including the purchase of sexual services and the conduct of third parties.²⁶⁷ Freedom United noted that these third parties could be an individual supporting a sex worker, such as a receptionist.²⁶⁸ According to the London Abused Women's Centre, PCEPA seeks to "ensure the safety of all by reducing the demand [for sexual services] and focusing on individuals who purchase sexual services" and by shifting the criminality "from women to the exploiter or profiler."²⁶⁹

263 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1205 (Jessica Stone).

264 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1250 (Kate Price).

265 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1250 (Jessica Stone).

266 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1210 (Cst Joy Brown); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1255 (Sgt Andrea Scott).

267 Freedom United, [Human trafficking of women girls and gender diverse people in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

268 Ibid.

269 London Abused Women's Centre, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



Some witnesses supported the enactment and strengthening of PCEPA.²⁷⁰ In contrast, other witnesses encouraged the Committee to consider the impacts of increased criminalization for Indigenous, Black and other racialized people, gender diverse individuals and those with precarious migration status in Canada before proceeding with such an approach.²⁷¹ Others indicated that sex workers are harmed by the criminalization of sex work²⁷² and called for a full decriminalization of sex work in Canada.²⁷³ Decriminalization will be discussed in greater detail in the section entitled *Discussing the Decriminalization of Sex Work in Canada*.

Some witnesses underscored the importance of strengthening the enforcement of existing legislation related to human trafficking in Canada, in particular, measures under the *Criminal Code* and PCEPA.²⁷⁴ While the laws exist, they are not enforced sufficiently to deter human trafficking. Witnesses specified that the individuals who are being trafficked should not be criminalized under these laws.²⁷⁵

Certain witnesses also reaffirmed that under PCEPA, individuals who are “selling sex” are “immune to prosecution” unless they are “prostituting themselves in areas close to schools.”²⁷⁶ Most sex work organizations and advocates countered this claim, however,

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- 270 Debra Haak, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1640 (Cathy Peters).
- 271 Hayli Millar and Tamara O'Doherty, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 272 Sydney Brown, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1205 (Angela Wu).
- 273 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1620 (Sandra Wesley).
- 274 Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Glenda Carson and Rolande Chernichan, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Salvation Army, [Brief Submission for Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1150 (Maria Mourani); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1120 (Megan Walker); Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity, [National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1210 (Fay Blaney); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1110 (Diane Matte).
- 275 Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, [Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.
- 276 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1130 (Megan Walker).

indicating that sex workers are unfairly criminalized under PCEPA and face unwarranted arrests “every day for crimes related to trafficking.”²⁷⁷ Finally, instead of enforcing PCEPA, Sandra Wesley explained that laws related to sexual assault and violence need to be enforced to protect individuals working in the sex industry: “[f]orcing someone to have sex for money, or not money, is sexual assault—period. We need to enforce that.”²⁷⁸

In addition to greater enforcement, some witnesses suggested that there should be “stiffer fines” and longer sentences for human trafficking offences.²⁷⁹ They proposed that financial penalties associated with trafficking offences be redirected into supports and services for victims of these crimes.²⁸⁰ As well, for individuals convicted under these laws, witnesses suggested they be required to participate in “accountability programs” as a means to educate and build empathy, to deter these behaviours in future.²⁸¹

Discussing the Decriminalization of Sex work in Canada

Witnesses explained that regardless of an individual’s employment, everyone deserves to be safe in their work; their agency should be respected and they should be empowered to make their own decisions. During its travel, the Committee heard that some victims of sex trafficking who exit this exploitative situation may remain in the sex industry, as they are familiar with the industry and do not have any other options for work. Systemic issues that may restrict or impede individuals’ abilities to do so should be addressed, to ensure that everyone can access safety and leave an exploitative situation, if one were to occur.²⁸²

277 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1145 (Krystal Snider).

278 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1625 (Sandra Wesley).

279 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1225 (Cst Joy Brown); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1550 (Tiffany Pyoli York); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1645 (Shelley Walker).

280 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1205 (Kathleen Quinn); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1220 (Mario Catenaccio); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1625 (Tiffany Pyoli York); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1225 (Linda MacDonald, Co-Founder, Persons Against Non-State Torture); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1220 (Timea E. Nagy); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 4 May 2023, 1645 (Shelley Walker).

281 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 1 May 2023, 1205 (Kathleen Quinn).

282 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1530 (Elene Lam); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1230 (Kate Price); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1230 (Angela Wu).



The Committee heard discussions about the decriminalization of sex work in Canada as a means to reduce exploitation and trafficking in the sex industry. Some witnesses argued against the decriminalization of sex work and instead called for a strengthening of the enforcement of PCEPA.²⁸³ However, the Committee heard from other witnesses that certain anti-trafficking and sex work-related laws should be repealed and for sex work, and individuals involved in the sex industry, to be decriminalized.²⁸⁴

The Committee heard that anti-trafficking and sex work-related laws in Canada, such as PCEPA, can have harmful consequences for sex workers. For example, these laws can lead to:

- the criminalization of all individuals in the sex industry;²⁸⁵
- increased violence against women;²⁸⁶
- the arrest of sex workers, family members, often disproportionately from racialized communities;²⁸⁷

283 Cathy Peters, [Human Sex Trafficking in Canada; its impact on women and children and how to stop it](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 17 April 2023, 1110 (Maria Mourani); Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, [Brief on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation, [Study on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1145 (Diane Matte).

284 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1220 (Jenn Clamen); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1535 (Kate Sinclair); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 15 May 2023, 1230 (Angela Wu); Canadian Women's Foundation, [Study on the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, [Committee on The Status of Women's Motion on Human Trafficking](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Yukon Status of Women Council, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Living in Community, [Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Kamala Kempadoo, [Study of Human Trafficking in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 18 May 2023, 1745 (Bonnie Brayton); Freedom United, [Human trafficking of women girls and gender diverse people in Canada](#), Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

285 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 27 March 2023, 1225 (Jenn Clamen).

286 Ibid.

287 Ibid.

- a lack of trust between individuals in the sex industry and law enforcement; and²⁸⁸
- increased and over-surveillance of sex workers.²⁸⁹

In advocating for the decriminalization of sex work, some witnesses highlighted several positive potential outcomes of such a change for workers, including:

- increased safety, through working together and communicating freely with clients and each other;²⁹⁰
- enhanced access to essential services, including health care;²⁹¹
- improved autonomy and protection, with options to unionize;²⁹²
- creation of labour standards and reducing abuse;²⁹³
- increased access to essential safety measures and ability to report abuse, exploitation and human trafficking without fear of being arrested;²⁹⁴
- a clear boundary between safe consensual sex work and exploitation and violence, which allows law enforcement to target trafficking more effectively;²⁹⁵ and

288 Ibid.

289 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1535 (Kate Sinclair).

290 Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, *Committee on The Status of Women's Motion on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

291 Women and HIV / AIDS Initiative, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

292 Ibid. and; Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, *Committee on The Status of Women's Motion on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

293 FEWO, *Evidence*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 20 April 2023, 1615 (Sandra Wesley).

294 Yukon Status of Women Council, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women; Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, *Committee on The Status of Women's Motion on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

295 Living in Community, *Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



- staff hirings by workers, including administrative staff, drivers and security.²⁹⁶

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, law enforcement agencies, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, schools, and community groups, support comprehensive public awareness and education programs, aimed at raising awareness about human trafficking, its signs, and its impact on women, girls, and gender diverse individuals, and ensure the distribution of educational resources and training programs to vulnerable populations, law enforcement agencies, and frontline service providers.

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada fully implement all Calls for Justice from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, including:

- **Call for Justice 1.3 to address the social and economic inequalities experienced by Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals, including their economic security, access to healthcare and to social and cultural supports;**
- **Call for Justice 1.9, respecting the jurisdiction of, and in consultation and collaboration with other levels of government and Indigenous peoples, to develop public education campaigns to challenge the normalization of violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people;**
- **Calls for Justice 3.2 and 4.3 to provide stable and long-term funding for Indigenous women’s organizations, including those that provide programs and services for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals in the sex industry; and**

296 Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, *Committee on The Status of Women’s Motion on Human Trafficking*, Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

- **Call for Justice 4.5 to establish a guaranteed annual liveable income for Indigenous peoples and all other Canadians.**

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada continue to provide sustainable funding to non-profit organizations conducting data collection on human trafficking, including disaggregated data on the identity factors of groups facing elevated risks of being trafficked, such as individuals with disabilities, those with precarious immigration status, and wards and survivors of the child welfare system.

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada support programs that provide training for those who work with victims of sex trafficking to include trauma-informed approaches on how to recognize the difference between sex work and human trafficking.

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada, in consultation and collaboration with provinces, territories Indigenous peoples and municipalities, renew the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking for 2024, ensuring that the Strategy:

- **is intersectional and developed in collaboration with victims, survivors and others with lived experiences, such as Indigenous peoples, migrant individuals, racialized individuals and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other individuals with minority gender and sexual identities;**
- **includes sustainable funding for programs combatting human trafficking that are victim and survivor centred;**
- **addresses structural and systemic barriers; and**
- **implements prevention and awareness campaigns, which include information for parents, about human trafficking.**

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada consider undertaking a thorough review of the application of the *Criminal Code* regarding section 213 as it applies to vulnerable people, such as women, girls and gender diverse individuals who are involved in the sex industry,



and also studying a possible process to expunge pre-2014 convictions related to consensual sex work.

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada, in respecting the jurisdictions of, and in collaboration with, the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples, ensure that human trafficking awareness training provided for law enforcement includes information about the distinction between consensual sex work and human trafficking.

Recommendation 19

That the Government of Canada support organizations providing youth education and awareness about human trafficking and exploitation that is culturally relevant, age appropriate and that includes information about online safety, healthy relationships, and consent.

Recommendation 20

That the Government of Canada report on its plan and future actions to protect women, girls and gender diverse people from sexual slavery, human trafficking and the negative effects of pornography.

Recommendation 21

The Government of Canada continue to support the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* and provide supports to evidence-based prevention community initiatives focused on children and youth from 6 to 18 years of age.

Recommendation 22

That the Government of Canada develop an awareness campaign about the signs of human trafficking and the supports and services available for victims and survivors, and that it:

- encourage all federally regulated workplaces, particularly industries in the transportation sector, to implement it in their workplace; and
- work with provinces and territories to encourage the development of similar campaigns to be implemented across any location identified as high risk for human trafficking.

CONCLUSION

During this study, the Committee heard that human trafficking, including human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, in Canada remains a pressing issue that disproportionately affects women, girls and gender diverse individuals. In its report, the Committee recognizes the systemic inequalities and challenges that contribute to the persistence of human trafficking in Canada. The testimony in this report presents possible avenues to minimize and eliminate these inequalities. In addition, the report summarizes diverse suggestions to support victims and survivors of human trafficking and to prevent and address human trafficking in Canada. The Committee makes 22 recommendations to the Government of Canada to achieve these goals.

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES VISITED DURING TRAVEL

Table 1—Overview of Programs and Services

Program, Service or Organization	Details
<u>Vancouver Rape Relief & Women’s Shelter</u>	The Vancouver Rape Relief & Women’s Shelter is a not-for-profit organization that operates a 24-hour rape crisis centre and a shelter for women and children experiencing family violence. The organization also provides public education events that are free and accessible to all. As well, the organization supports women and girls involved in prostitution, including those who are victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Services offered for the latter survivors include a crisis line support, transitional housing, support for survivors through police visits, and crisis supports for women experiencing violence.
<u>Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre</u>	The Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre provides meals and practical support for over 1000 women and children daily. The organization works to connect individuals who identify as women to a continuum of services, including outreach services, drop-in centre services, emergency shelter services, counselling services, advocacy services, wellness and recreation services, which includes self-help rehabilitation programs, as well as housing and skills development supports. Services, including shelter services, provided through the organization focus on harm reduction and are low barrier. Finally, the organization provides victim services that are culturally safe and trauma-informed to women who are survivors of crime and violence.

Program, Service or Organization	Details
Covenant House Vancouver	<p>Covenant House Vancouver provides supports and services to youth experiencing homelessness and human trafficking. It applies a person-centred care approach to ensure that the overlapping mental health, substance use, medical health and other challenges are addressed in a coordinated and specialized way. The organization also provides integrated case management, a drop-in centre, an outreach team, a crisis program, Rights of Passage transitional housing support, housing support workers, substance use programs, and mental health services.</p>
Migrant Workers Centre	<p>Migrant Worker Centre (MWC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to legal advocacy for migrant workers in British Columbia. MWC facilitates access to justice for migrant workers through the provision of legal education, advice, and full representation. MWC works to advance the rights of migrant workers and provides resources and education related to labour exploitation and trafficking and works in partnership with other agencies to ensure that all the needs of workers are met through wraparound supports. MWC can provide support to workers in the form of free legal services, including advice on immigration status, employment standards and civil complaints. In addition, the organization can provide referrals for other support services such as housing and health care.</p>
Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel-Halton (Bonnie McPhee House and Female Mobile Support Program)	<p>The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel-Halton operates the Bonnie McPhee House, which offers short-term emergency housing, as well as specialized programming and supports, to female-identifying survivors of human trafficking aged 16 to 24 years. The house can host up to six residents at a time.</p>
Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel-Halton (Female Mobile Support Program)	<p>The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel-Halton operates the Female Mobile Support Program, which offers support to women and girls aged 12 years and over who are at risk of or experiencing exploitation. In particular, the program offers case management services.</p>

Program, Service or Organization	Details
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<p>Our Place Peel (nCourage Hub)</p>	<p>Our Place Peel operates the Anti-Human Sex Trafficking Integrated Service Hub (nCourage Hub). The nCourage Hub is an integrated service hub located in the Region of Peel. It hosts several organizations offering services to survivors of violence, including of human trafficking, in the same building. This ensures that survivors only have to go to one location to receive the services and supports they need, and that they do not have to tell their stories to multiple agencies and service providers.</p>
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<p>Safe Centre Peel</p>	<p>The Safe Centre of Peel provides wraparound services to adults who have experienced violence and abuse. Services offered to survivors include risk and needs assessments, individualized safety planning, counselling, referrals to specialized sexual assault services, and transitional housing support. The organization uses a "Client Navigator" system, which is a person assigned to a survivor who follows them through the process of accessing services and support. The organization's offices are located within the nCourage Hub.</p> <p>The Safe Centre of Peel, in collaboration with the Peel Regional Police, launched a pilot project of "Safe Centre Response Teams" in January 2023. Two response teams consisting of a mobile support worker with expertise in gender-based violence and a specially trained police officer will provide support services and initial care to victims of intimate partner violence.</p>
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<p>Peel Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee</p>	<p>The Committee met with members of the Peel Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee during a roundtable hosted by the Peel Regional Police. This committee consists of organizations based in the Region of Peel and the Greater Toronto Area working in education, employment, health and social services. The goal of this committee is "to reduce victimization and enforce human trafficking laws."</p>
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<p>Hope Alliance and Victim Services</p>	<p>Hope Alliance works actively with people affected by human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Hope Alliance offers a number of training and education services, as well as other prevention services, with the mission to reduce the risks of individuals becoming victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in the Sault Sainte-Marie region. The organization prioritizes each individual's autonomy and dignity.</p>
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Program, Service or Organization	Details
<u>Algoma Family Services</u>	Algoma Family Services works to promote individual wellness by providing specialized mental health services to children, youth, adults and families in the District of Algoma. Their work includes developing specialized programming for youth and substance use, as well as on family violence. Algoma Family Services created collaborative workshops on the community human trafficking response plan.
<u>Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services</u>	<p>Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services works to support seven First Nations. Services and programs offered through the organization include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural services, such as debriefing, supporting, teaching and referrals; • youth Prevention services including Mino Madzwin, education liaison, housing support and youth in transition programs; and • children and adults’ mental health services, related to trauma, anxiety, depression, coping skills and intake and counselling, as well as access to a Behavioural Therapy Model Program.
Sault Ste. Marie Airport	The Committee met with representatives from the Sault Ste. Marie airport. The airport partners with the anti-trafficking awareness organization, Not In My City, to raise awareness about and prevent human trafficking. Training is provided to airport employees, including at airline counters, security staff, car rental counters, or others working in terminals, to recognize the signs of human trafficking.
Halifax Regional Police	The Committee visited the headquarters of the Halifax Regional Police. During the visit, the Committee met with members of the human trafficking and sexual assault units.

Program, Service or Organization	Details
Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers	<p>The Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers is a not-for-profit organization composed of Black social workers and human service workers in Nova Scotia. One staff member works as the Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinator. This employee is working to “build strong partnering relationships with other organizations who are engaged in human trafficking, support communities and organizations in building public awareness on sexual violence, human trafficking and exploitation of ANS [African Nova Scotian] youth and engage in prevention work for ANS youth specifically for ANS boys and men.”</p>
YWCA Halifax (Safe House)	<p>YWCA Halifax is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the economic security, well being and opportunities of women, girls and their families in the Halifax region. The organization’s activities include programs for survivors of human trafficking. YWCA Halifax has a specific program to support youth aged 13 to 24 years who are victims of sexual exploitation or human trafficking. The program offers multiple services tailored to participants’ needs, including housing support, one-on-one support, legal assistance, material support, and employment and education counselling. In Halifax, the Committee visited a safe house operated by YWCA Halifax.</p>

Source: Table prepared by the Library of Parliament.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canada Border Services Agency Daniel Anson, Director General, Intelligence and Investigations	2023/03/20	55
Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking Julia Drydyk, Executive Director	2023/03/20	55
Creating Opportunities and Resources Against the Trafficking of Humans Kyla Clark, Program Coordinator	2023/03/20	55
Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Michelle Van De Bogart, Director General, Law Enforcement	2023/03/20	55
Royal Canadian Mounted Police Cpl Jennifer Demers, National Human Trafficking Section Supt Kimberly Taplin, Director General, National Crime Prevention and Indigenous Policing Services	2023/03/20	55
Department for Women and Gender Equality Crystal Garrett-Baird, Director General, Gender-Based Violence	2023/03/23	56
Department of Citizenship and Immigration Alexis Graham, Director, Social and Discretionary Policy and Programs, Social and Temporary Migration Branch Sarah Hayward, Director, Visitors, Permits and Horizontal Initiatives, Immigration Program Guidance Branch	2023/03/23	56

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Justice Nathalie Levman, Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section	2023/03/23	56
Ontario Native Women's Association Coralee McGuire-Cyrette, Executive Director	2023/03/23	56
Women of the Métis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Melanie Omeniho, President	2023/03/23	56
As an individual Megan Walker, Women's Advocate and Retired Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre	2023/03/27	57
Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform Jenn Clamen, National Coordinator	2023/03/27	57
Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle Diane Matte, Co-founder	2023/03/27	57
Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition Kate Sinclair, Member	2023/03/27	57
Women's Centre for Social Justice Krystal Snider, Lead Project Consultant	2023/03/27	57
Association for New Canadians Monica Abdelkader, Director, Resettlement and Settlement Services	2023/03/30	58
FCJ Refugee Centre Jovana Blagovcanin, Manager, Anti-Human Trafficking Chiara Rossi, Coordinator, Anti-Human Trafficking Women's	2023/03/30	58
Indus Community Services Jakki Buckeridge, Manager, Family Services Raman Hansra, Project Director, Family Services	2023/03/30	58

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. leesha Sankar, Director, Program and Services	2023/03/30	58
As an individual Mario Catenaccio S/Sgt Robert Christmas	2023/04/17	59
Crime Stoppers Miriam Pomerleau, Director General, Quebec	2023/04/17	59
EFRY Hope and Help for Women Jody Miller, Managing Director	2023/04/17	59
Mourani-Criminologie Maria Mourani, Criminologist, PhD in Sociology and President	2023/04/17	59
Peel Regional Police Cst Joy Brown, Community Mobilization Unit	2023/04/17	59
Winnipeg Police Service Sgt Andrea Scott, Counter Exploitation Unit	2023/04/17	59
Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network Elene Lam, Executive Director	2023/04/20	60
Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition Kate Sinclair, Member	2023/04/20	60
Stella, l'amie de Maimie Sandra Wesley, Executive Director	2023/04/20	60
As an individual Cathy Peters, Educator	2023/05/01	63
Aboriginal Women's Action Network Fay Blaney, Lead Matriarch	2023/05/01	63
Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation Kathleen Quinn, Executive Director	2023/05/01	63

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Exploitation Education Institute Tiana Sharifi, Chief Executive Officer	2023/05/01	63
Persons Against Non-State Torture Linda MacDonald, Co-Founder Jeanne Sarson, Co-Founder	2023/05/01	63
Timea's Cause Inc. Timea E. Nagy, Chief Executive Officer and Founder	2023/05/01	63
Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking Derrick Flynn, Board Chair	2023/05/04	64
Courage for Freedom Kelly Tallon Franklin, Chief Executive Director	2023/05/04	64
Statistics Canada Kathy AuCoin, Chief of Analysis Unit, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics Lucie Léonard, Director, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics	2023/05/04	64
Sudbury and Area Victim Services Tiffany Pyoli York, Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator and Public Educator	2023/05/04	64
Women's Trucking Federation of Canada Shelley Walker, Chief Executive Officer	2023/05/04	64
Zonta Club of Brampton-Caledon Kathleen Douglass, President Elect and Advocacy Chair Melissa Marchand, Member, Zonta Advocacy Committee	2023/05/04	64
Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta Association Kate Price, Executive Director	2023/05/15	67
Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform Angela Wu, Executive Director, SWAN Vancouver	2023/05/15	67

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Rosel Kim, Senior Staff Lawyer	2023/05/15	67
Yukon Status of Women Council Jessica Stone, Project Manager	2023/05/15	67
As an individual Cathy Peters, Educator	2023/05/18	68
Courage for Freedom Kelly Tallon Franklin, Chief Executive Director	2023/05/18	68
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada Bonnie Brayton, Chief Executive Officer	2023/05/18	68

APPENDIX C: LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

AIDS Network Kootenay Outreach and Support Society
Association for Reformed Political Action Canada
Aura Freedom International
BC Coalition of Experiential Communities
Benedet, Janine
BRAVE Education Foundation
Bridge2Future
Brown, Nancy
Brown, Sydney
Bruckert, Christine
Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network
Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform
Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.
Canadian Women's Foundation
Carson, Glenda
Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation
Chernichan, Rolande
Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution
Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle
Crime Stoppers
Critical Trafficking and Sex Work Studies Research Cluster
De Shalit, Ann
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

EFRY Hope and Help for Women
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
Exploitation Education Institute
Freedom United
Global Alliance of Traffic in Women Canada
Haak, Debra
Hannem, Stacey
Heynen, Rob
HOPE Okanagan
Ishtar Women's Resource Society
Jeffrey, Leslie Ann
Ka Hon Chu, Sandra
Kempadoo, Kamala
Krüsi, Andrea
Legal Assistance of Windsor
Liew, Jamie
Living in Community
London Abused Women's Centre
MacDonald, Gayle
MacDonald, Linda
Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers Action Project
Maynard, Robyn
Mensah, Maria Nengeh
Migrant Workers Alliance for Change
Millar, Hayli
Mourani-Criminologie
National Council of Women of Canada
O'Doherty, Tamara
Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking
PACE Society

Peel Regional Police
Peers Victoria Resources Society
Peters, Cathy
Pivot Legal Society
Pour les droits des femmes du Québec
Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver
Roots, Katrin
SafeLink Alberta
Salvation Army
Sarson, Jeanne
Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition
Shaver, Frances
Sinclair, Kate
Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
Sudbury and Area Victim Services
SWAN Vancouver Society
Valverde, Mariana
van der Meulen, Emily
Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre
Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter
WISH Drop-in Centre Society
Women and HIV / AIDS Initiative
Women's Equality Coalition
Women's Trucking Federation of Canada
Yukon Status of Women Council

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 55 to 60, 63, 64, 67, 68, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 88, 95 and 97](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Vecchio
Chair

Supplementary Opinion of the Conservative Party: Human Trafficking in Women and Girls

Over the course of this study, “Human Trafficking women and girls”, Members of Parliament from the Status of Women committee spoke to advocates including law-enforcement officials and community organizations in a committee setting, and on site-visits. Most importantly, Members spoke with victims and survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. From the testimony presented, Conservative Members of the Committee recognize that there are 2 clear issues that must be addressed 1) Children and Youth 2) Enforcement of Legislation.

Children and Youth

“Sex purchasers rarely care if a woman or girl is trafficked or underage. In fact, many of them will pay more to have sexual services with an underage girl” - Megan Walker

Many witnesses testified at committee about the exploitation of young girls as young as 11 years of age. This included anecdotal stories of “kiddie stroll”, a section of a street in Vancouver, where young girls were purchased for sex in the 90’s and early 2000’s. However, with new technology, those who exploit children have multiple platforms to lure children.

“Of those women in prostitution who called Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter (VRRWS), 24% were 15 or younger when they entered prostitution. Furthermore, 43% of the women who called VRRWS were “underage” (younger than 18) when they entered prostitution. Most often, the girls resorted to prostitution because of on-going sexual assault by their father (in some cases the father also pimped the girl) or grooming by an adult “boyfriend,” who often gave them drugs to make sure they stayed dependent on him. Most girls in these situations were “runaways” from abusive homes and/or raised in foster care.”

Children and youth are being groomed through various technological platforms and are being exposed to pornographic images at a very young age. These platforms normalize the sexualization of young girls and women thus creating not only the supply for traffickers but also contributing to the demand.

Ms. Megan Walker of Women’s Advocate and Retired Executive Director, London Abused Women’s Centre, appearing as an individual stated,

“...online is a major hub for luring, but more importantly, it’s a major hub for exploitation. Many girls, particularly those who are underage, are groomed on social media to believe that the person talking to them is a friend who would like to have a relationship with them. On many occasions like that, she’s forced to touch herself, take off her clothes or do things like that. This is the link to Pornhub or pornography, because often whatever she is doing is then transferred and uploaded onto Pornhub and other porn sites.”

Ms. Tiana Sharifi, Chief Executive Officer, of the Exploitation Education Institute testified:

...particular platforms whose popularity only grew since the pandemic are now grooming minors with the promise of a luxurious lifestyle by means of influencing. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram have demonstrated to our younger generation that anyone could potentially come into fame or fortune, with much of this being directly connected with their hypersexualized content and objectification on these platforms. The more scandalous and sexualized you are, the greater your likelihood of likes and follows.

...a key piece of human trafficking is coercion. This coercion is happening through particular platforms that are normalizing self-exploitation. I believe the numbers we're seeing are actually exponentially higher, because we're seeing a lot of youth and children being groomed into self-exploitation. They are normalizing pimping each other and not defining it as "human trafficking". Once they turn 18, all of a sudden, they're consensual sex workers.

Timea Nagy is an advocate against human trafficking who was exploited when she immigrated to Canada. During her testimony, she stated "We have begged and pleaded for years with all governments to put real funding behind a national prevention strategy for our kids. We still don't have one. Instead, we are left to go to schools on our own time with our own resources to make uncoordinated efforts to prevent kids from being trafficked. That's something the government should have done years ago."

It is key to invest in education and awareness campaigns. As stated by Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), "I think we actually have a real challenge in helping men understand what healthy sexuality is, what mutuality in relationships is, what respect is, all of these things. Then it crosses over to the abuse of power."

Education and awareness campaigns are key in reducing instances of trafficking. As outlined by Meaghan Walker, the business of trafficking relies on the same principals as other business, supply and demand.

"Similar to the economics of supply and demand, it is the demand for prostitution that fuels the supply of women needed. That supply is provided by traffickers. When demand is reduced, so too is supply." This sentiment was supported by Ms. Diane Matte the Co-founder of Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle when she stated, "Addressing the demand should therefore be part of the national action plan. Addressing the demand is really of the utmost importance."

Enforcement of Legislation

Here's the example of a mother whose 16-year-old was trafficked. When the mother was in court, she witnessed the legal officials call her daughter a "sex worker" instead of a human trafficking victim. The misogyny in the system becomes clear when 16 year olds are called

“sex workers” when they are trafficked which “in itself is, to me, violating the crime, and that’s going on court of law”. Jeanne Sarson

Under the former Conservative Government, Bill C-36, the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, received Royal Assent on November 6, 2014. Bill C-36 treats prostitution as a form of sexual exploitation that disproportionately impacts women and girls. Its overall objectives are to:

- Protect those who sell their own sexual services;
- Protect communities, and especially children, from the harms caused by prostitution; and
- Reduce the demand for prostitution and its incidence.

According to [Justice Canada](#), the new criminal law seeks to protect the dignity and equality of all Canadians by denouncing and prohibiting the purchase of sexual services. This includes the exploitation of the prostitution of others, the development of economic interests in the sexual exploitation of others and the institutionalization of prostitution through commercial enterprises, such as strip clubs, massage parlours and escort agencies that offer sexual services for sale. It also seeks to encourage victims to report incidents of violence to the police and to leave prostitution. To achieve these goals, \$20 million in new funding has been dedicated to help individuals exit prostitution.

“A three-pronged approach is critical to the work of preventing trafficking. The three prongs include providing robust funding to organizations that work with women who are trafficked and prostituted, public awareness and education, and legislation and enforcement.”- Megan Walker

Unfortunately, under this government, funding to renew programs under this legislation was not renewed in 2020.

Secondly, as brought forward in testimony by the VRRWS, “due to the terror they experience and ongoing threats from pimps and traffickers, women are often fearful of reporting to police and testifying in court. At times, women have recanted their statements because of threats by their traffickers. When they are too scared to testify, we ensure that women understand that we are behind their decision and will support them regardless of if they testify. The experience of being trafficked removed their ability to make decisions for themselves and so, we believe it is crucial to follow their lead when making decisions about their bodies and own safety.”

As described by Timea Nagy, “what is the point of catching them if they're only going to get released? What do you tell the victim? Yes, please come to testify. Pour your guts out, be scared, be intimidated. Face your trafficker in court, who told you that if you do that you're going to be killed, only for the victim to watch this guy walk out on bail.” She also continued with the lack of efforts of this current government, commenting, “We also have a sitting government that is revising mandatory minimum legislation, such as the mandatory

minimum sentence of 10 years for trafficking in individuals under the age of 18. Instead, federal judges choose not to use the punishment because it's too harsh. I would like them to tell that to the victims as well."

What is important to recognize is that in almost all crimes against women, the sentence for the perpetrator is much less than it would be if it were a man. - Megan Walker

Throughout this study, we heard from multiple organizations who shared stories and backgrounds of victims and survivors they encountered. During the site visit to Peel Region, organizations shared their stories and concerns of International Students who are being exploited here in Canada. Exploitation can take many forms including sexual deeds for housing and food.

Megan Walker shared, "Over the last 25 years, I have seen a steady increase of women, and particularly girls, lured into the sex industry by traffickers or organized crime. Many girls are lured from universities, colleges, bars and even workplaces. Parents have often reported checking online sex sites to see if the sexual services of their daughters are being advertised. As painful as this is for parents, it is how they track whether their daughters are dead or still alive."

Ms. Jeanne Sarson the Co-Founder of Persons Against Non-State Torture believes "Criminal Code amendments would educate society about the severity of human trafficking and foster developing non-state torture victimization, traumatization-informed care and promote the healing ability of women and children."

Over the past 9 years, things are getting worse in Canada. The current justice system has created 'lost hope' for many survivors and their families. The government's investments have focused on their own priorities and not those of survivors.

..we have a sitting government that is not interested in being very effective in implementing these laws. They are not putting pressure on the judges, at all, to implement the law that has passed.

The judges who have decided not to go for the harsh sentences have said that these would be too harsh. Then I don't understand why we have laws. Why do we have laws if the judges are not implementing our laws? - Timea Nagy

Important exit strategies and solutions to assist survivors have become unaffordable including housing and lack of rehabilitation facilities. As Timea Nagy so intuitively stated, "we take the money away from the proceeds of crime, we just have to reform the granting system so that the money would actually go to the rehabilitation of the survivors".

Complementary opinion of the Bloc Québécois

The Bloc Québécois first reaffirms that health falls under Quebec's jurisdiction and that the federal government must respect this provincial jurisdiction. As a result, Quebec can implement important information programs aiming the raise of public awareness in the human trafficking, its manifestations and its repercussions on women, girls and people of diverse gender and identities. In addition, Quebec can ensure the distribution of educational materials and training manuals to vulnerable populations, law enforcement and front-line service providers in the province.

Furthermore, investments in support services for victims, such as support services that consider trauma and cultural realities, legal aid, and safe housing for victims of human trafficking, are also in Quebec's jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois strongly opposes the compartmentalization of victims of human trafficking, emphasizing that all lives are equal and must have equitable access to services, regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Regarding funding for organizations and initiatives that support people, including Indigenous, Black, and migrant people, involved in the sex industry, including victims and survivors of human trafficking, as well as workers gender, the Bloc Québécois insists that this funding be done in the form of transfers to respect Quebec's skills. These services should cover the areas of law, justice, health, mental health, and addiction.

Finally, the Bloc Québécois opposes the establishment of a procedure aimed at expunging convictions prior to 2014 linked to consensual sex work.

