

# Human Sex Trafficking

## Why should I know about human sex trafficking?

Human sex trafficking is the sale of humans for sex, and involves deceit, force, coercion and control of a person by threats of emotional, mental and sometimes physical, violence for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is a criminal offence in Canada, and is a significant abuse of human rights.

Human sex trafficking is happening in Ontario and across Canada at alarming rates, and is largely going on undetected and unreported.

### The number of police-reported incidents of human sex trafficking is on the rise across Canada and in Waterloo Region.

Human sex trafficking is not the same thing as sex work. Sex workers offer sexual services for money, they consent to sex and have control over their work. Victims of human sex trafficking do not profit from the exchange, and have no control over their bodies or their lives.

Victims of human sex trafficking can be lured as young as 13 through false job offers or promises of love, romance, independence or a better life. Recruitment of victims into human sex trafficking is centred around large cities, but also takes place online, and in rural and northern communities. Human sex trafficking is not the same as human smuggling, and in fact **over 90% of sex trafficking victims come from within Canada's borders.**



## Who is at risk?

93% of victims of human trafficking are women and girls, most of whom are under the age of 25. Although anyone could potentially fall victim to traffickers, those from the most vulnerable groups in our society tend to be at a higher risk, such as:

- Those struggling with poverty or homelessness;
- Marginalized & disadvantaged groups;
- Migrants and new immigrants;
- Those who have suffered past abuse, bullying or family conflict;
- Those struggling with mental health, addictions, or developmental disabilities.

## #knowthesigns

Some victims of human sex trafficking are not aware that they are being trafficked. Some red flags to watch for include the following:

- Does not have access to money, cell phone, or personal identification (passport);
- Is isolated and kept away from family & friends;
- Has a new partner but will not introduce them;
- Shows poor attendance at work/school/social events;
- Is not allowed to go out alone; when out is accompanied or controlled by a third party.

## Canadian Stats

**70%** of human trafficking victims are women under 25

**66%** of traffickers are young men age 18 to 34

**\$280,800** is the average yearly income a sex trafficker in Canada makes for each victim they control

**70%** of human sex trafficking in Canada happens in Ontario

## What can I do?

- **Pay attention** as a parent, teacher or friend;
- **Stand up** against manipulation as a form of normalized relationship behaviour;
- **Challenge** toxic masculinity;
- **Participate** in awareness-raising events;
- **Speak up** for sustained resources, supports and funding for victims of human sex trafficking;
- **Donate** to organizations that support victims;
- **If you work in the hospitality industry**, educate yourself & your staff to recognize warning signs and join **The Code** at [www.thecode.org](http://www.thecode.org)
- **If you are male-identified**, learn more about how to be a safe ally at <https://maleallies.org/>

## If someone tells you...

If someone tells you they have been a victim of human sex trafficking, or you suspect that they are a victim, here are some helpful things that you can do:

- **Believe them**
- **Listen**
- **Don't judge**
- **Be patient** - understand that breaking away from those in control is dangerous and takes time
- **Do not confront the traffickers yourself**
- **Ask for help** – there are confidential supports available within Waterloo Region
- **Report** suspected human sex trafficking to:  
**Waterloo Regional Police Service 519-570-9777**  
**OR Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-8477**

**Victims of human sex trafficking are not legally responsible or charged for their involvement, though often they are told that they will be by the traffickers.**

## Confidential supports

Contact any of the supports listed below if this is happening to you or someone you know:

### The Anti-Human Trafficking Program

Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region

519-571-0121 ext. 111 or [ahtp@sascwr.org](mailto:ahtp@sascwr.org)

SASC 24-hour support line: 519-741-8633

Victims Services of Waterloo Region 519-245-6660

Ontario's confidential human trafficking helpline

1-833-999-9211, TTY 1-888-340-1001

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