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Human Trafficking Public Awareness Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for Public Safety Canada

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Executive summary

1. Background and objectives

Following the Government of Canada's 2019 budget announcement and formal evaluation of Canada's National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, the federal government introduced a new *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* that sets out a comprehensive way forward to address this complex issue. The strategy brings together all federal efforts aimed at addressing human trafficking in Canada (and abroad) under one plan, framing all federal activities under the internationally recognized pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships, and adding a new pillar of "empowerment." In-depth consultations conducted by Public Safety Canada identified the vital need for increased public awareness and knowledge, to help communities and stakeholders better recognize the early signs of human trafficking, reduce the stigmatization of victims, and improve proactive response to incidents.

As a first step in addressing public awareness needs, Public Safety's marketing team contracted Environics to conduct an online survey of Canadians to establish a quantitative baseline of the current state of public opinion among Canadians on the issue of human trafficking, and provide the data required to conduct an analysis of the knowledge attitudes and behaviours of the Canadian public, to identify target audience segments (primary and secondary) for a future marketing campaign on human trafficking.

2. Methodology

Environics Research conducted an online survey of 2,236 Canadians, 16 years of age and older. The surveys were completed between March 2 and 26, 2020. In addition to a survey of the general public, the survey oversampled subgroups of interest: 500 parents of children aged 13 to 19, 250 youth ages 16 to 19, 250 young adults aged 20 to 25, and 230 Indigenous parents and youth. This size of sample provides robust data to understand behaviours, opinions, and attitudes within the total population and subgroups of interest for each parents and youth. Environics set quotas by age, gender, and region, and the data have been weighted to ensure the sample is representative of these populations according to the most recently available Census information.

An oversample of 230 surveys were completed with Indigenous people who were part of the target subgroups of parents of 13 to 19-year olds or being 16 to 25 years of age themselves. Due to challenges in weighting the Indigenous oversample of target audiences, a separate set of tables based on a sample size of 290 was prepared. Those tables combine the 230 people from the Indigenous oversample plus 60 Indigenous respondents who responded to the general public survey who were also either parents or youth.

The survey achieved the following distributions:

General public, plus general public oversamples		
Target group	Actual Unweighted	Actual Weighted*
General population	2,006	2,006
Youth and young adults	570	301
<i>16-19 years old</i>	259	114
<i>20-25 years old</i>	311	188
Parents of children aged 13-19 years old	586	566
Indigenous Canadians	308	66
Total respondents	2,006	2,006
<i>Atlantic Canada</i>	142	145
<i>Quebec</i>	489	491
<i>Ontario</i>	772	767
<i>Prairies</i>	336	333
<i>BC</i>	204	203

*Results are weighted by region, gender and age to 2016 Census data.

Indigenous oversamples		
Target group	Actual Unweighted	Actual Weighted*
Indigenous	290	290
Youth and young adults	194	194
<i>16-19 years old</i>	79	79
<i>20-25 years old</i>	115	115
Parents of children aged 13-19 years old	96	96

As an online survey is a non-probability sample, no margin of sampling error is reported. More information about the methodology for this survey is included in Appendix A.

3. Cost of research

The cost of this research was \$106,720.48 (HST included).

4. Key findings

The findings of this research can be summarized as follows:

Safety and human trafficking in context/general awareness

- Of eight safety issues impacting younger people, Canadians are most likely to rate child sexual exploitation/harassment, human trafficking and cyberbullying as extremely serious with six in ten rating human trafficking as extremely serious.
- Cyberbullying, child sexual exploitation, climate change and illegal drug use are seen as the biggest single threats to the safety of younger Canadians. One in ten identify human trafficking as the biggest threat and one third consider it to be among the top three threats.
- Two-thirds of Canadians think they understand the issue of human trafficking at least somewhat well and three-quarters think they know what “grooming” is.
- Canadians most commonly define human trafficking as people being forced into the sex trade or as the more general trading of humans
- Most Canadians consider people being smuggled across borders to be exploited, being pressured into the sex trade, being forced to work against their will or having organs harvested as examples of human trafficking. Half have a misconception that people being willingly smuggled across borders is an example of human trafficking.
- Canadians take the issue of human trafficking seriously. Most agree that it is a growing problem in Canada and most reject the notion that Canadian youth are safe from online predators, or that human trafficking is happening mostly in other countries, or that forced labour crimes are rare here.

Perceptions of risk and prevalence

- Eight in ten Canadians consider human trafficking to be at least a somewhat serious problem in Canada and most also feel that human trafficking is becoming more of a problem in Canada. However, most Canadians feel that human trafficking is not a serious problem in their own local community.
- Most Canadians feel that only a minority of young people in Canada are at serious risk of being victims of human trafficking.
- Half of Canadian parents are at least somewhat concerned their own child could be a victim of human trafficking.
- Three in ten Canadians believe human trafficking is quite prevalent and affects many young people, but most feel it happens only occasionally or rarely and affects relatively few young people.
- Canadians tend to identify runaway youth, young women and girls, low income youth, youth with mental health issues and Indigenous youth as the most likely potential victims of human trafficking.
- The most likely human trafficking perpetrators are generally thought to be organized criminals or strangers who lurk online. Canadians are less inclined to identify people who would be known to the victims, such as current or former intimate partners, as the likeliest perpetrators.
- Canadians tend to think of human trafficking as something that happens most in big cities, although significant minorities think it is likely to be happening in border or coastal towns. They are also most likely to think human trafficking is more prevalent in Ontario.
- Canadians tend to associate human trafficking with such businesses or sectors as massage parlors, domestic service and hospitality.

Perceptions of Safety and Recognition of Warning Signs

- The vast majority of younger Canadians feel at least somewhat safe at home, at work, at school and walking in their neighbourhoods.
- Eight in ten younger people would be at least somewhat comfortable discussing personal safety issues with parents or older adults in their life.
- Nine in ten younger Canadians would usually or always inform a friend or family member if they were going to meet someone in person who they'd met online.
- One-third of younger Canadians are at least somewhat concerned about personally being a victim of human trafficking; one in ten are very concerned.
- Canadians are most likely to be suspicious of human trafficking if someone did not have control over important documents, had excess cash, had more than one cell phone, or had been deceived about their employment.

Awareness of human trafficking ad campaigns, organizations and how to respond

- The vast majority of Canadians are unaware of any specific anti-human trafficking organizations.
- Three in ten Canadians recall hearing or seeing an ad or PSA on the subject of human trafficking in the past year. Most have vague recollections of who sponsored the ad or PSA.
- Seven in ten Canadians would contact their local police if they suspected human trafficking activity. One quarter would not know what to do.
- Nine in ten Canadians are not aware of any specific anti-human trafficking help lines or web sites and six percent of are aware of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline after prompting

Political neutrality certification

Political neutrality statement and contact information

I hereby certify as senior officer of Environics that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

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