



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

A Review of the Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI)

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2022

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A Review of the Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI)

J4-111/2022E-PDF
978-0-660-44188-7

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Highlights

This study uses data from the Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI) to present some of the socio-demographic characteristics and experiences of people who provide or have provided sexual services in Canada's sex trade and received support services through organizations funded by the Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI). Data are for the period of 2015-16 to 2019-20 and represent 2,291 people (referred to as MAPI clients throughout the report).

The following is a list of the study's key findings:

- The majority (94%) MAPI clients were women and girls; gender diverse people accounted for about 2% of all MAPI clients.
- Indigenous peoples represent about 5% of the population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017) but accounted for 16% of the MAPI clients.
- Over 40% of the MAPI clients were young adults aged 20 to 29 years. About 6% of MAPI clients were minors, younger than 18, at the time of data collection.
- The majority (79%) of MAPI clients were single and about 40% of clients had children. One in five (21%) MAPI clients had children who had been removed by child welfare agencies.
- Almost 70% of MAPI clients had an addiction to drugs and/or alcohol; addictions to drugs were the most prevalent at 34%.
- Many (67%) of the MAPI clients had been physically and/or psychologically coerced by others into providing sexual services.
- The majority (81%) of MAPI clients reported wanting to exit the sex trade. Less than 1% reported they did not want to exit the sex trade, and less than half a percent indicated they were unsure or ambivalent about exiting.
- Among those seeking to exit the sex trade, many (45%) requested access to support services such as safe housing, mental health and trauma therapy, and addictions treatment.
- About 15% of MAPI clients requested support for caring for children and for working with child welfare agencies to regain custody or visitation rights.
- About 12% of MAPI clients were seeking safety from threats or experiences of physical violence in the sex trade.
- About a quarter (24%) of MAPI clients referred themselves to the MAPI organizations for support.
- Just under half (46%) of MAPI clients had attempted to exit the sex trade at least once.
- Three of the most commonly accessed services at MAPI organizations were mental health supports (52% of clients), housing (38%), and education and life skills programs (35%).
- By the end of the MAPI funding period, 2015-16 to 2019-20, close to 65% of clients reported there had been a positive change in their lives (reduced risk factors) after working with a MAPI organization.
- Based on individual client case notes, about one in five (21%) clients had exited the sex trade by 2019-20, and 5% remained in or returned to the sex trade. There were no notes indicating status of sex trade involvement for over 70% of clients. MAPI organizations reported that most clients who returned to the sex trade did so for money due to poverty, chronic homelessness, substance abuse issues, or because they returned to abusive relationships.

Introduction

This study examines the socio-demographic characteristics as well as the experiences of people who provide or have provided sexual services in Canada's sex trade and received support services through organizations funded by the Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI).¹ The MAPI was established to provide funding to non-profit organizations and law enforcement agencies during the period of 2015-2016 to 2019-2020. The funding was allocated to 23 non-profit organizations and law enforcement agencies in the provinces² who offer support services to people who provide sexual services in Canada.

The primary sources of data in this study are a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data come from an administrative database based on standardized variables and responses; however, not all of the quantitative data was collected systematically. The administrative database includes some open-ended responses that were coded for this study; there is therefore variability in results across the 13 MAPI organizations that provided the client data, as well as some high rates of non-response. For example, a few variables that had standard response categories across MAPI organizations are gender identity, age groups, and specific target group, whereas other variables like reasons for wanting to exit the sex trade were open-ended and coded according to recurring themes.

The qualitative data in this study come from semi-structured interviews with representatives of 18 MAPI organizations. Although there was an interview guide with standard questions, interviews allowed the respondents the freedom to raise issues and provide details they felt were important based on their experience and knowledge. For example, in many interviews, issues such as childhood abuse, poverty and the child welfare system were raised spontaneously; whereas, others focused more on the experiences of their clients in the sex trade.

Background

On December 6, 2014, former Bill C-36, the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* came into force. Former Bill C-36 implemented a "Nordic" approach to the sex trade which was first implemented in Sweden in 1999 and then in several other countries, such as Norway, Iceland, France, Ireland and Israel (Allen and Rotenberg, 2021). The "Nordic" approach targets purchasers of sexual services and third parties who profit from others' sexual services. Providers of their own sexual services are not criminalized; they are viewed as requiring support not punishment (Department of Justice Canada 2014).³

Following the coming into force of former Bill C-36, the MAPI was established to support and improve services that assist people who provide sexual services to exit the sex trade (Department of Justice Canada 2017). The MAPI funding started in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, with potential for multi-year funding for a maximum of five years. A key goal of this funding was to support the work of non-profit organizations that provide support services to people who provide sexual services, such as housing, healthcare, therapy, addictions treatment, family reunification and life skills programs.

¹ The MAPI program funding comes from Justice Canada under the Victims Fund.

² The organizations who received MAPI funding are located in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

³ See Justice Canada's Technical Paper on Bill C-36, available at: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/protect/p1.html>

Another priority for the MAPI funding was to support Canadian law enforcement agencies in providing new or enhanced supports and outreach activities to assist providers of sexual services who would like to leave the sex trade, as well as to conduct public education and awareness campaigns on the effects and signs of sexual exploitation.

Overview of study and data

The data in this study represent people who provide sexual services in Canada and who have sought support from the non-profit organizations and law enforcement agencies that received funding from the MAPI program. This study uses the term “client” to refer to people receiving supports from these organizations. The data from the MAPI program come from three sources: 1) anonymous client data from the non-profit organizations (2,289 clients from 13 organizations), 2) semi-structured interviews (18 organizations during summer 2021), and 3) narrative activity reports (total of 129 reports, 81 from non-profit organizations and 48 from law enforcement agencies). Data in this report mostly come from the first two data sources.

Although MAPI funding was distributed to non-profit organizations and law enforcement agencies to support their clients in exiting the sex trade, all of the MAPI organizations expressly stated that they do not require any of their clients to exit the sex trade. The focus of both non-profit organizations and law enforcement agencies is on harm reduction and safety planning with their clients. The MAPI organizations work on building trust with their clients so that they can provide them with resources and services regardless of whether they choose to exit or remain in the sex trade.

1.0 Socio-demographic characteristics

This section examines the socio-demographic characteristics of the people in the MAPI dataset, such as their gender identity, racial and ethnic identity, age, marital status and presence of children. These characteristics are not mutually exclusive. For many clients there are multiple intersections between socio-demographic characteristics.

1.1 Gender identity

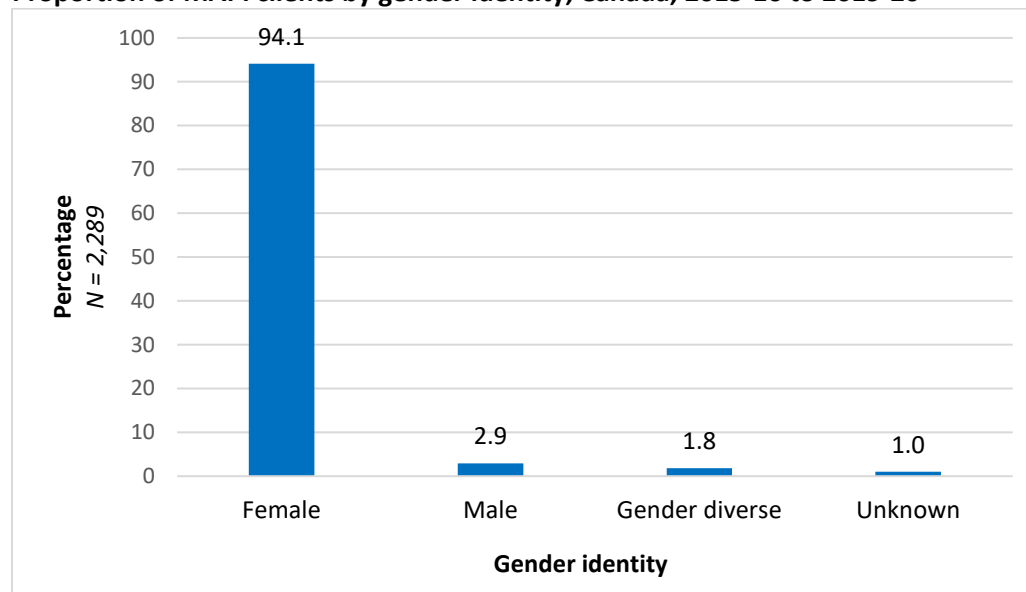
In the MAPI dataset, based on over 2,289 people, 94% identified as female and 3% as male. About 2% of clients identified⁴ as gender diverse, that is, transgender women (1%), transgender men and Two-Spirit people.⁵ It was noted in the interviews with the representatives of MAPI organizations that there is an underreporting of gender diverse people in the sex trade in general.

⁴ Please note that gender identity is based on self-reporting by clients either on intake forms themselves or to program staff. Also, the reporting of gender identity is affected by the client’s relationship with the organization, and the representation of certain characteristics in the population for that area. For example, some MAPI organizations had a higher proportion of Two Spirit people than others.

⁵ Counts for transgender men and Two-Spirit people were too small to be published on their own.

Chart 1.1

Proportion of MAPI clients by gender identity, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Notes:

1. Gender diverse refers to three categories in the MAPI dataset that were not publishable on their own due to small sample sizes and suppression rules. The three categories consist of transgender women, transgender men, and Two-Spirit people.
2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" or "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

1.2 Indigenous identity

In the MAPI dataset, 16% of clients identified as Indigenous (Table 1.1). Of those, 97% were Indigenous women and girls⁶ (data not shown). Data for people of other racial and ethnic groups were not collected.

Table 1.1

Proportion of MAPI clients by Indigenous identity, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Indigenous identity	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Indigenous peoples	15.7
Indigenous identity not stated	71.3
Unknown	12.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Notes:

1. Indigenous peoples refers to people who identified as Indigenous. No distinction is available as to whether they are First Nations people (Status or non-Status), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) in the MAPI data.
2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" or "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

⁶ Counts for Indigenous peoples who identify as transgender or Two-Spirit were too small to be published even when grouped together as gender diverse.

1.3 Age groups

In the MAPI client data, most clients were either 20 to 24 years old (24%) or 25 to 29 years old (21%) (Table 1.2). About 1% were younger than 15 years old and 12% were between 15 and 19 years, which compares to older age groups such as 9% among 35 to 39 years and 13% for clients aged 40 years and older.

Table 1.2
Proportion of MAPI clients by age group, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Age groups	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Under 15 years	0.7
15 to 19 years	12.4
20 to 24 years	23.9
25 to 29 years	20.5
30 to 34 years	13.1
35 to 39 years	9.1
40 years and older	13.4
Unknown	6.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Note: The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" or "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

1.4 Family status

The majority of MAPI clients were single (79%) as opposed to married (5%)⁷ (Table 1.3). About 40% of clients had children (data not shown), of which about half had their children removed from their care, mostly by child welfare services, and the other half had their children in their care. Over 40% of clients did not have children.

⁷ Data were not collected on common-law relationships.

Table 1.3**Proportion of MAPI clients by marital status and presence of children, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20**

Marital status	Percentage <i>N = 2,289</i>
Single	78.7
Married	4.7
Unknown	16.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Presence of children	
Have children in their care	19.2
Have children but not in clients' care	21.1
Pregnant	0.5
No children	42.5
Unknown	16.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Notes:

1. The category "Pregnant" refers to clients who were pregnant at the time the MAPI program ended.
2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" or "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

2.0 History with the sex trade and reasons for seeking support

2.1 MAPI clients by select characteristics

The MAPI dataset does not provide a full description of how clients entered the sex trade, nor the age at which they entered the sex trade; however, there is some information with regard to their history and involvement in the sex trade. Although it was not possible to determine if clients entered the sex trade by choice or for survival specifically, information is available with regard to some groups that are generally overrepresented in the sex trade (please see section [1.0 Socio-demographic characteristics](#) for more information).

Most notably, 67% of MAPI clients were physically and/or psychologically coerced by others into providing sexual services (Table 2.1). About 6% all MAPI clients were under age 18 at the time of reporting (Table 2.1), and 0.4% of MAPI clients were Children's Aid wards (data not shown).

Table 2.1**Proportion of MAPI clients by select characteristics, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20**

Select characteristics	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Under 18 years	5.7
Indigenous peoples	15.7
Physically and/or psychologically coerced by others to provide sexual services	66.9
Other	15.5
Unknown	12.8

Notes:

1. Categories are not mutually exclusive, some clients identify under multiple groups therefore percentages do not add to 100%.

2. The “Unknown” category consists of responses of “Unknown” and “Not stated” (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

2.2 Entry into the sex trade

Based on interviews with the representatives of the MAPI organizations, five key themes were identified as important influences that facilitate entry into the sex trade. These themes include: experiences of violence and/or sexual abuse during childhood; involvement of child welfare services during childhood; colonization and intergenerational trauma; poverty and homelessness; and, the allure of the sex trade lifestyle, which is viewed by some as glamorous and as providing opportunities for financial and social success.

- Childhood abuse was frequently cited as a common characteristic among MAPI clients, and more than half of the interviews brought up childhood sexual abuse as a key factor.
- Clients who had experienced some form of violence prior to entering the sex trade was commonly observed.
- The effects of colonization and intergenerational trauma are crucial factors that make Indigenous peoples vulnerable to involvement in the sex trade and to being physically and/or psychologically coerced by others into providing sexual services.
- In more than half of the 18 interviews for this study, poverty and low socio-economic status were raised as important pre-disposing factors that make people vulnerable to involvement in the sex trade, as well as to being physically and/or psychologically coerced by others into providing sexual services. In particular, when people cannot meet their own basic needs or those of their family, they become increasingly desperate and willing to do things they would not normally do in order to survive.
- The allure of the sex trade—the money, attention and luxuries—is an important risk factor that make youth vulnerable to involvement in the sex trade and to being physically and/or psychologically coerced by others into providing sexual services.⁸ Some noted that traffickers

⁸ This topic was not measured in the MAPI dataset, however, it was brought up frequently by representatives of MAPI organizations during the semi-structured interviews.

target youth and use the allure of the lifestyle to draw them in, such as through the grooming process that includes expensive gifts. One interviewee described this phenomenon as follows:

The victims get used being driven around in fancy cars, you don't have that when you leave. For young people it's about selling a lifestyle and a sense of self-worth, you feel like you're special. It's this concept of Pretty Woman with Julia Roberts, the idea of a great lifestyle. Hundreds and thousands of girls have entered and even if choice was their main intention, it is not usually possible to maintain control or escape exploitation.

2.3 Types of support requested

Overall, 81% of MAPI clients requested support for exiting the sex trade from MAPI organizations (Table 2.2). Less than 1% of clients reported they were not interested in leaving the sex trade, and less than half a percent were unsure or ambivalent about exiting the sex trade.

Table 2.2

Proportion of MAPI clients seeking to exit the sex trade, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20

	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Provided a reason for wanting to exit the sex trade	80.6
Stated they do not want to exit the sex trade	0.8
Unsure or ambivalent about exiting the sex trade	0.4
Unknown	18.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Note: The “Unknown” category consists of responses of “Unknown” and “Not stated” (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Among MAPI clients who requested support to exit the sex trade, almost 40% requested access to programs and services. The most commonly requested support was mental health counselling (25%) to heal from trauma (Table 2.3).⁹ This was followed by 8% who requested support with addictions and sobriety, and 5% who needed access to safe housing.

Support with raising children was requested by 15% of MAPI clients (Table 2.3). Regaining custody or visitation rights, as well as keeping children from being apprehended by child welfare services, was mentioned by 14% of clients.

⁹ Please note that the data in Table 2.3 were not reported consistently across all MAPI organizations—data were coded from open-ended notes.

Table 2.3**Proportion of MAPI clients by main types of support requested, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20**

Types of support requested	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Access to programs and services	37.4
Safe housing	4.6
Addictions treatment	8.4
Mental health and trauma therapy	25.1
Physical health services	1.2
Support with the justice system	2.5
Advocacy	3.0
Support with children	15.2
To regain custody or visitation	13.7
To raise/care for children	1.5
Safety / Fear of violence	11.8
Leave unhealthy and abusive relationships	27.4
Leave sexual exploitation	26.3
Leave abusive relationship(s)	1.0
Improve and change life	28.0
Improve life/lifestyle	21.0
For stability in life	3.8
Acquire coping and life skills	3.0
Stigma and guilt	1.9
Unknown	17.6

Notes:

1. Categories are not mutually exclusive; clients often identified multiple categories therefore percentages do not add to 100%.
2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" and "Not stated" (blanks) as well as clients who indicated they are not interested in exiting the sex trade or who are unsure.

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Another key reason for requesting help from a MAPI organization was for safety from violence. About 12% of clients were looking for safety after experiences or threats of violence, including rape and being attacked by purchasers and third parties, or were escaping violence in general on the streets (Table 2.3). During the interviews, the representatives of MAPI organizations consistently mentioned that their clients often require physical health care. Several interviewees listed a few of the most common injuries they see on their clients:

- Black eyes;
- Bruising from the neck down (frequently done by traffickers);
- Lacerations from knives and other devices;
- Strangulation marks;
- Teeth knocked out;
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI);
- Bullet wounds from being shot (generally when there is organized crime / gangs involved);
- Internal injuries to female reproductive organs and tissue damage from violent sexual activity and being penetrated with various objects; and

- Nipples pulled off.

Some MAPI organizations reported in their narrative reports to the MAPI program that they have clients with permanent disabilities because of violence in the sex trade, such as permanent hearing or vision loss and mobility issues. In one interview, one MAPI organization representative reported that some of their clients viewed their experiences as torture.

In about a quarter of the interviews conducted for this study, MAPI organization representatives talked about clients who were branded with hot irons by third parties; members of criminal organizations, gangs and traffickers were specifically mentioned. Other MAPI clients had been tattooed with the names of those who were profiting from their sexual services, or with gang symbols. MAPI organizations reported that both the branding and tattoos cause clients significant mental and emotional pain because they are a constant reminder that they did not, or do not, have ownership of their bodies. Part of the healing and exiting process is reclaiming autonomy over their bodies, which for some involves removing or covering up unwanted tattoos and brands.

A small proportion, 2%, of MAPI clients specifically sought support from the MAPI organizations to overcome feelings of disgust, guilt, and stigma from being involved in the sex trade and the lifestyle associated with it (Table 2.3).

Overall, close to 30% of MAPI clients requested support to improve and change their lives. One in five (21%) clients declared that they wanted support from MAPI organizations to improve their lives and change their lifestyle for a better, happier and healthier life. About 3% of MAPI clients wanted to learn coping and life skills.

Almost 30% of MAPI clients stated they wished to leave their current situation of sexual exploitation. A small proportion of clients (1%) reported that their reason for seeking services was to leave an abusive relationship or break out of a cycle of unhealthy relationships.

3.0 Characteristics at program intake

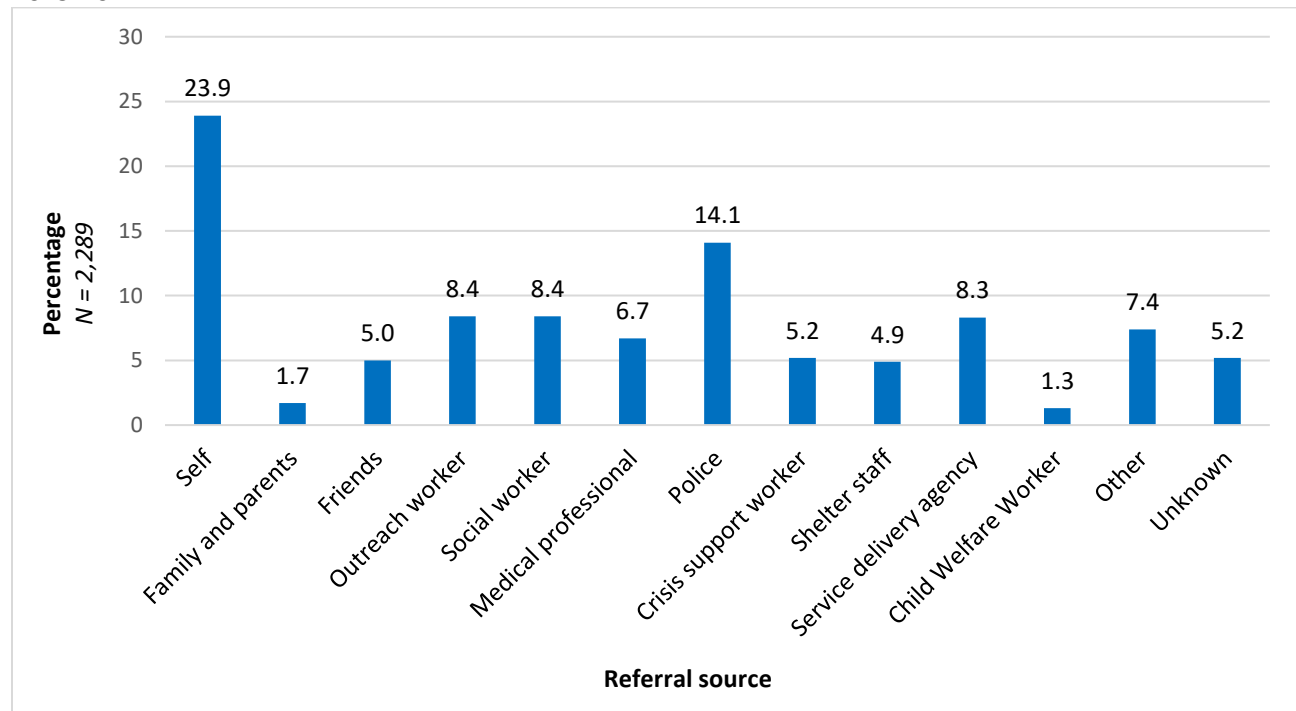
In this section, data from the MAPI program related to client characteristics at program intake are presented. These variables are the referral source (to the MAPI organization), the number of previous attempts to exit the sex trade, the risk level for returning to the sex trade, as well as the types of support networks clients have.

3.1 Referral source

Almost a quarter (24%) of clients in the MAPI dataset had referred themselves to a MAPI-funded organization for supports, programs and services (Chart 3.1). Police were the second largest referral source at 14%, whereas family and friends made up a small proportion of referrals (2% and 5%, respectively in Chart 3.1). This variable has standard response categories that present different professionals in social services separately; however, when social workers, outreach workers, crisis support workers, child welfare workers, shelter staff and other service delivery agencies are combined they account for close to 40% of client referrals to the MAPI organizations (data not shown).

Chart 3.1

Proportion of MAPI clients by source of referral to MAPI funded organizations, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Notes:

1. Categories are not mutually exclusive; clients may have reported multiple referral sources therefore percentages will not add to 100%.

2. The “Unknown” category consists of responses of “Unknown” and “Not stated” (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

3.2 Exit attempts

During interviews, many representatives of the MAPI organizations explained that people who seek to exit the sex trade often go through several attempts before they finally exit. In the MAPI data, at program intake, 46% of clients indicated that they had attempted to exit the sex trade at least once (Table 3.1). For almost 20% of clients this was their first attempt to exit the sex trade, and for 10% it was their second attempt. About 15% of clients indicated that this was their third attempt or more (data not shown). There was a high proportion of cases where that information is not available (54%), due to high numbers of responses indicating the information is unknown or not stated (data not shown).

In the interviews, it was also reported that some clients wanted to exit the sex trade, but returned to it because they simply could not afford to pay bills, care for themselves and their families, or maintain their lifestyle on income assistance or through mainstream employment. One interviewee described it like this:

The sex trade is an old business – it has an allure that working at Tim Horton’s for minimum wage does not. The minimum wage also doesn’t pay the bills, it’s difficult to do that when you know you can post an ad and make \$1,000 in one night. Often they have family and children to care for too.

The significant lack of safe and affordable housing, as well as emergency shelters, is another critical barrier to exiting the sex trade. Throughout the interviews with MAPI organizations, respondents frequently referred to the housing crisis across cities and communities in Canada. Those interviewed frequently described the significant lack of safe and affordable housing as one of the most crucial barriers for people trying to exit the sex trade. Over a third (38%) of people in the MAPI client dataset accessed housing supports through their MAPI organization, which includes programs such as emergency shelter and crisis beds, transitional housing, and support with longer-term housing such as social housing, and finding other safe and affordable housing options (Chart 4.1).

Table 3.1

Proportion of MAPI clients by the number of attempts to exit the sex trade, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Number of attempts to exit the sex trade	Percentage <i>N = 2,289</i>
Tried to exit the sex trade at least once	45.6
First attempt	19.2
Second attempt	10.4
Third attempt	5.1
Fourth attempt	2.2
Fifth attempt or more	8.5
Unknown	54.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Note: The “Unknown” category consists of responses of “Unknown” and “Not stated” (blanks).

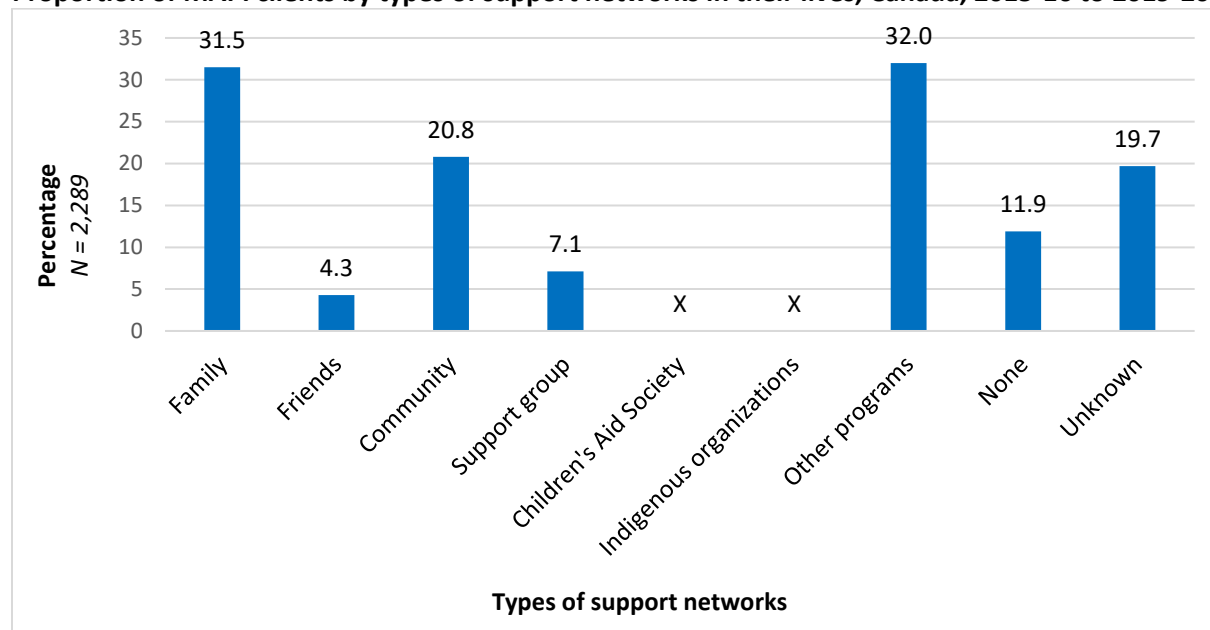
Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

3.3 Types of support networks

The two most frequently mentioned support networks in clients’ lives were family (32%) and other programs (32%) (Chart 3.2). About 4% of clients reported that friends are an important support network for them, and 21% identified their community as a support. For 12% of clients there were no reported support networks.

Chart 3.2

Proportion of MAPI clients by types of support networks in their lives, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Notes:

1. X means data have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.
 2. Categories are not mutually exclusive as clients often have multiple support networks, therefore percentages do not add to 100%.
 3. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" and "Not stated" (blanks).
- Source:** Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

4.0 Programs and services

This section describes the different types of programs and services delivered to clients of MAPI organizations. The list of programs and services are as follows.

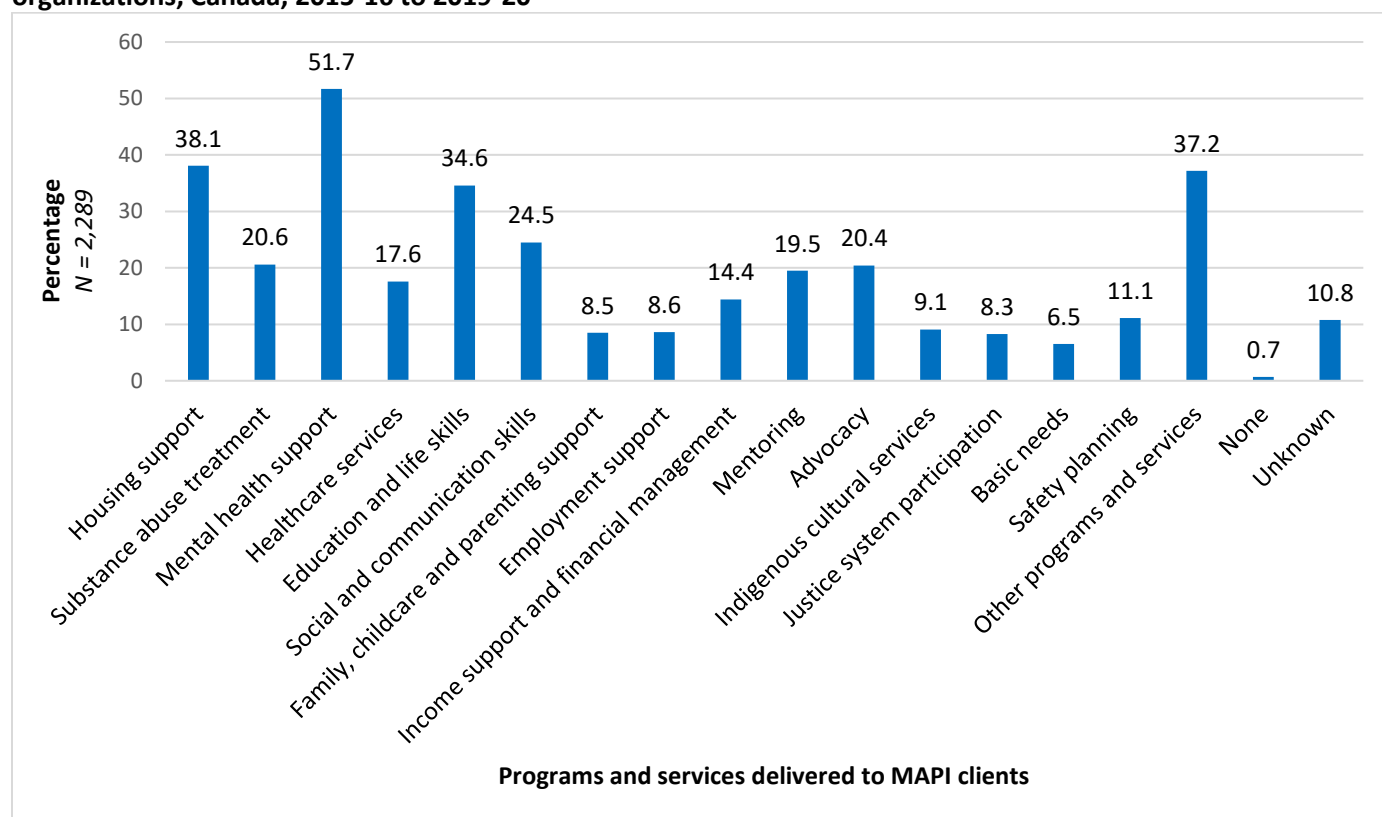
- *Housing support:* Emergency shelter, transitional housing and/or longer-term housing.
- *Substance abuse treatment:* Detox and substance abuse treatment.
- *Mental health support:* Counselling, trauma therapy, and crisis intervention and support.
- *Healthcare services:* Medical care, dental care, and specialized physicians.
- *Social and economic programs:* Education support, life skills programming, programs for developing social and communication skills, income assistance, financial and debt management support, and employment support.
- *Family supports:* Parental training, family support programs, and childcare.
- *Indigenous support services:* Elders, healing circles and Indigenous-designed support programs.
- *Mentoring, advocacy and justice system participation:* Mentoring and peer support, advocacy services, and support with the legal system (as accused or victim).
- *Other programs and services:* Food bank, clothing, safety planning, sexual assault and domestic violence support, and computer literacy courses.

The proportion of MAPI clients who accessed these programs and services are presented in Chart 4.1.

All of the representatives of MAPI organizations who participated in interviews stressed that their clients need access to significant supports regardless of whether they wish to remain in or exit the sex trade. Many of their clients do not have a safe place to live. Exiting the sex trade generally means losing their main source of income and they may not have access to transportation, identity documents, or a cell phone. They may have addictions that need treatment, as well as significant mental and physical health issues. As one interviewee explained, *“I would describe the exiting process as excruciating. It is excruciating. One survivor summed it up really well, she said ‘I went into exploitation and sex work with nothing and I left with even less.’”*

Chart 4.1

Proportion of MAPI clients by the types of programs and services delivered to them by MAPI funded organizations, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Notes:

1. Categories are not mutually exclusive as clients often use several programs and services, therefore percentages do not add to 100%.
2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" and "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

4.1 Housing support

Close to 40% of MAPI clients accessed housing support services (Chart 4.1). Almost a third (32%) of all clients received housing support such as transitional housing and support finding affordable and longer term housing, and 16% of all clients used emergency housing supports such as shelters and crisis beds (data not shown).

According to a few of the interviews with MAPI organization representatives, when shelters are full, some cities will pay for people to stay in motels and hotels, which is very dangerous for clients as there are generally traffickers and exploiters working in motels and hotels. This compromises clients' safety and puts them at a higher risk of being recruited or lured back into the sex trade.

4.2 Substance abuse treatment

Over two-thirds (68%) of MAPI clients had a substance abuse issue, whereas 19% reported not having any addiction issues (Table 4.1). More specifically, about a third (34%) of MAPI clients reported an addiction to drugs, 6% reported an addiction to alcohol, and 16% reported addictions to both drugs and alcohol.

Overall, 21% of MAPI clients attended some form of substance abuse treatment, which was either delivered by a MAPI organization or was a referral to another service delivery agency (Table 4.1). During interviews with MAPI organization representatives, the majority reported that their clients having an addiction to drugs and/or alcohol is one of the main reasons they struggle with leaving the sex trade.

One interviewee explained that sometimes third parties and purchasers will provide drugs, openly or covertly, to people selling their sexual services which is often the start of a dependence.

Table 4.1
Proportion of MAPI clients by type of addiction issues, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Type of addiction issues	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Total addictions	68.0
Addiction to drugs	34.0
Addiction to alcohol	5.5
Addictions to both drugs and alcohol	15.5
Addiction(s) but not specified	12.9
No addiction issues	18.5
Unknown	13.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Note: The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" and "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

4.3 Mental health support

Just over half (52%) of clients in the MAPI dataset received mental health support such as counselling, trauma therapy, and crisis intervention and support (Chart 4.1). Other examples of mental health supports included in this category are grief counselling and anger management.¹⁰

During interviews with MAPI organization representatives, all interviewees identified that most of their clients, not only those in the MAPI-funded programs, have mental health issues resulting from their involvement in the sex trade. Mental health support was the most frequently used program/service among the clients of MAPI-funded organizations from 2015-16 to 2019-20 (Chart 4.1).

¹⁰ These numbers are not publishable on their own due to small sample sizes.

In one interview it was explained how providing sexual services in the sex trade has an intense impact on people psychologically and emotionally:

You don't totally know how you're going to respond to certain circumstances, certain requests for sex acts or fetishes or all the rest. And I can tell you from hearing the nightmares for years and the screaming in their sleep that this affects people in a profound way.

It's not about morality; it's about understanding psychologically that sex is an act that for some people has a much more intimate engagement with who they are. You can do your best to shut it down, but it's so physical, it's so engaged with the person and it's a stranger that very often doesn't respect you and a stranger where there is an inherent power imbalance because of the services rendered and financial component.

The interviewees from the MAPI organizations generally referred to the trauma that results from involvement in the sex trade as complex trauma, which involves being repeatedly exposed to multiple traumatic events. All MAPI organizations either referred their clients to counselling or provided counselling services directly.

In several MAPI interviews, the representatives of the organizations indicated that many of their clients exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) such as flashbacks, nightmares and night terrors, or have an official diagnosis for PTSD. Additionally, in a few of the interviews, interviewees noted that a mental health issue they commonly see among their clients is dissociation. Dissociation occurs when a person experiences a feeling of detachment from their body and loss of memory (American Psychiatric Association 2018). It can be a result of involvement in the sex trade, as people providing sexual services often have to split or change their personality in order to conduct themselves in certain ways that appease the requests of different sex purchasers.

In one interview, a MAPI organization representative described how many of their clients engage in self-harm as a direct result of trauma they experienced from involvement in the sex trade, as well as suicidal ideation. Staff at all the MAPI organizations have witnessed some very serious self-harm and suicide attempts by their clients, and some clients did complete suicide during the MAPI program (data not shown).

The majority of MAPI organization representatives emphasized in interviews that their clients tend to suffer from very low self-esteem and self-worth for various reasons, such as the stigma of being in the sex trade, guilt from things they have done while in the sex trade,¹¹ and pre-existing lack of self-esteem. These feelings of worthlessness are often tied to past trauma and to trauma from sustained physical and sexual assault in the sex trade, to the point that many of their clients accept violence and abuse, including because they feel they deserve it. MAPI organizations reported that low self-efficacy can be a huge barrier to a successful exit from the sex trade, which is why all the MAPI organizations provide programs that focus specifically on building self-esteem. Self-efficacy is about how well a person is able to cope with a given situation based on their experiences and skills.

¹¹ During interviews with MAPI organization representatives, the main reasons provided for their clients' guilt include degrading acts they have had to perform for sex purchasers, as well as violence and crimes they have committed and guilt from luring/grooming others to enter the sex trade.

4.4 Healthcare services

Close to 20% of clients accessed healthcare services through a MAPI organization (Chart 4.1). Some examples of referrals to healthcare services are family medicine clinics, dental clinics, hospitals, specialized physicians, pharmacies, diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), dietitians, pre-natal care and occupational therapy (this last example represents a very small portion of healthcare services). This category does not include mental health support services, which was measured as a separate category.

4.5 Social and economic programs

Among clients of MAPI organizations, 35% accessed supports for education and life skills programs (Chart 4.1). Examples of education supports include support with accessing and completing formal education such as high school or equivalency, as well as vocational training and college or university programs. Life skill programs focus on teaching MAPI clients how to cook and eat healthily, how to access public transportation, how to obtain identity documents,¹² as well as other general life skills and information on different social programs.

MAPI organizations have noted that many of their clients have not had much exposure to different social processes and structures due to the isolating nature of the sex trade, and many of their clients lack basic knowledge and skills.

A quarter (25%) of MAPI clients attended a program that assists with development of social and communication skills. One organization noted in their interview that the sex trade is very isolating; their clients usually work alone and they work irregular hours any time during the day and night. They often have not had the time to develop relationships and social networks outside of the sex trade and lack basic social skills. MAPI organization staff have observed that their clients often struggle to work in teams in mainstream employment when they do attempt to exit the sex trade.

Many MAPI organizations have noted that as a result of a general lack of social, life and communication skills, their clients find navigating through mainstream society challenging, which makes exiting the sex trade even more difficult. Many clients view their time in the sex trade as lost time, as described in one of the MAPI interviews:

Another challenge is that it is not cross-transferable; most clients will say it's completely lost time. Any time they are in sex work, nothing else in their life was able to develop or grow, everything actually started to die in their life.

In the MAPI client dataset, 9% accessed employment supports such as help finding employment, career coaching, job shadowing, paid work experience programs, and support for starting a small business (Chart 4.1). About 14% of clients accessed financial management programs such as income support and debt management, including learning how to open a bank account.

¹² These numbers/percentages include clients who used I.D. clinics to obtain their identity documents, as some clients have had their I.D. withheld from them by traffickers and exploiters.

4.6 Family supports

About 9% of MAPI clients received some form of family support through a MAPI-funded organization, most of which were related to parenting and children (Chart 4.1). MAPI organizations offered three types of family programs and services to their clients: family support, parental training and childcare. For some of these programs and services, clients were referred to other service delivery agencies.

Among MAPI clients, 6% accessed family support programs such as support for working with child welfare services, family preservation units and early childhood intervention programs¹³ (data not shown). About 4% of MAPI clients attended parental training programs, and 2% accessed childcare services such as day care, early childhood learning programs and summer camps.

4.7 Indigenous support services

MAPI organizations were asked to report on the number of clients they referred to arts and cultural programs. In the MAPI dataset, just under 10% of clients were referred to at least one of these programs (Chart 4.1). The majority of these programs are Indigenous support services such as access to Elders, healing circles, Indigenous arts programs, Indigenous cultural teachings and Indigenous court support workers.

4.8 Mentoring, advocacy and justice system participation

About 20% of clients received mentoring and peer support from MAPI organizations, and 20% used advocacy services available through the organization (Chart 4.1). During interviews with MAPI organizations, a few explained that their clients often encounter discrimination and stigma when trying to access mainstream services such as healthcare and the justice system and that, due to their lack of knowledge of societal structures and organizations, many clients struggle with navigating these systems. MAPI organizations provide advocacy services to support their clients and ensure they are able to access the services they need.

Around 8% of MAPI clients received some form of support when dealing with legal systems in Canada, as offenders and/or victims (Chart 4.1). These include support with accessing Legal Aid, dealing with criminal records,¹⁴ accessing victim compensation, accessing transportation and the per diem for food when the day is spent at court, working with police, statements to police and court appearances, and Indigenous court support programs.¹⁵ In interviews, MAPI organizations noted that their clients find the criminal justice system very difficult to navigate, especially when the matter concerns charges against a third party who has financially benefitted from their sexual services as this process is often re-traumatizing and substantial support is required, including outside of court hours.

¹³ In this study, early childhood intervention programs were coded separately from early childhood learning programs to differentiate the use of targeted and extra supports from standardized early learning and play programs such as the Head Start program.

¹⁴ Includes bail, incarceration, and parole.

¹⁵ Clients who accessed the Aboriginal Court Worker Program were counted in both categories of “Indigenous support services” and “Justice system participation” (Chart 4.1).

4.9 Other programs and services

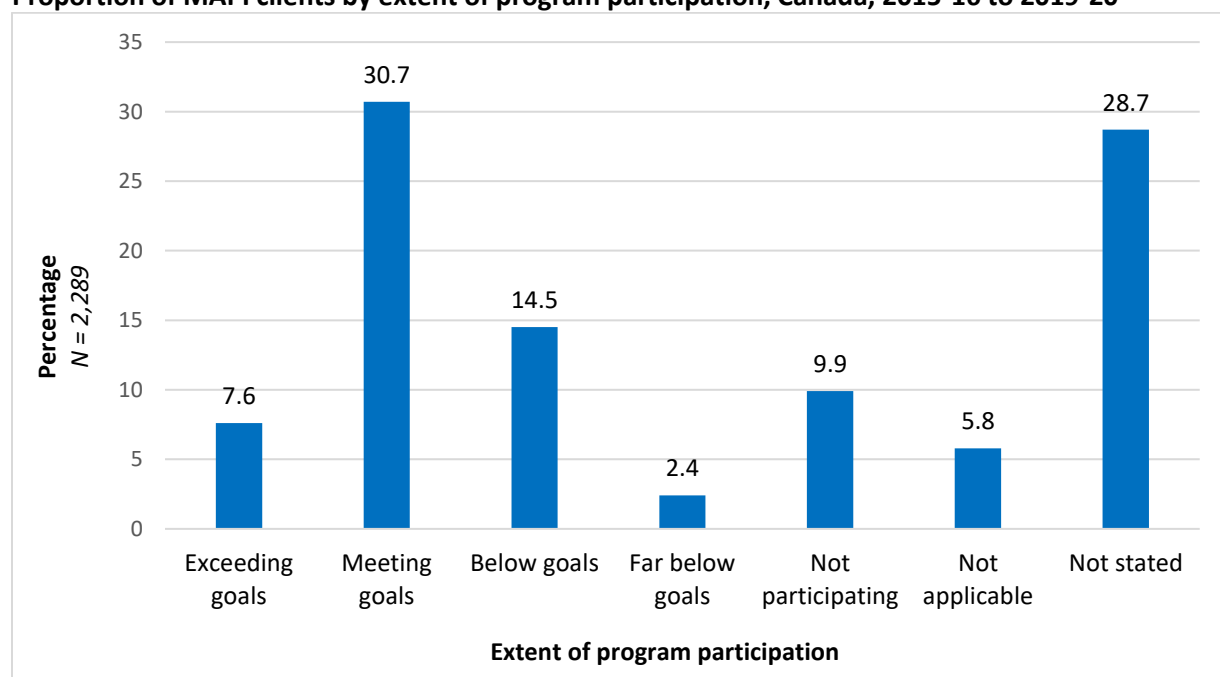
Among the MAPI clients, 7% accessed supports for meeting basic needs such as the food bank and for clothing (Chart 4.1). Around 11% worked on safety planning with the MAPI organization, and almost 40% participated in other programs. The category for other programs contains a wide variety of programs and services that did not fit under the other categories, such as (but not limited to) sexual assault and domestic violence support, after hours support, transportation (e.g., a low income bus pass), computer literacy courses, and pet care.

4.10 Program participation and completion

When assessing the level and extent of their clients' participation in MAPI programming, organizations were more likely to report that their clients are meeting program goals (31%) than exceeding them (8%) (Chart 4.2). The proportion of clients who were assessed as not meeting program goals, below and far below goals, is 17% (data not shown). About 10% of clients were not participating in MAPI programming, such as those who were discharged from the program or who stopped contact with program staff. The proportion of cases for which information was missing (not stated) is notably high at almost 30% (Chart 4.2).

Chart 4.2

Proportion of MAPI clients by extent of program participation, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Note: In some cases, information from an open-ended variable was used to identify clients who were discharged from the program or who stopped contact with program staff. These counts were added to the existing category of "Not participating".

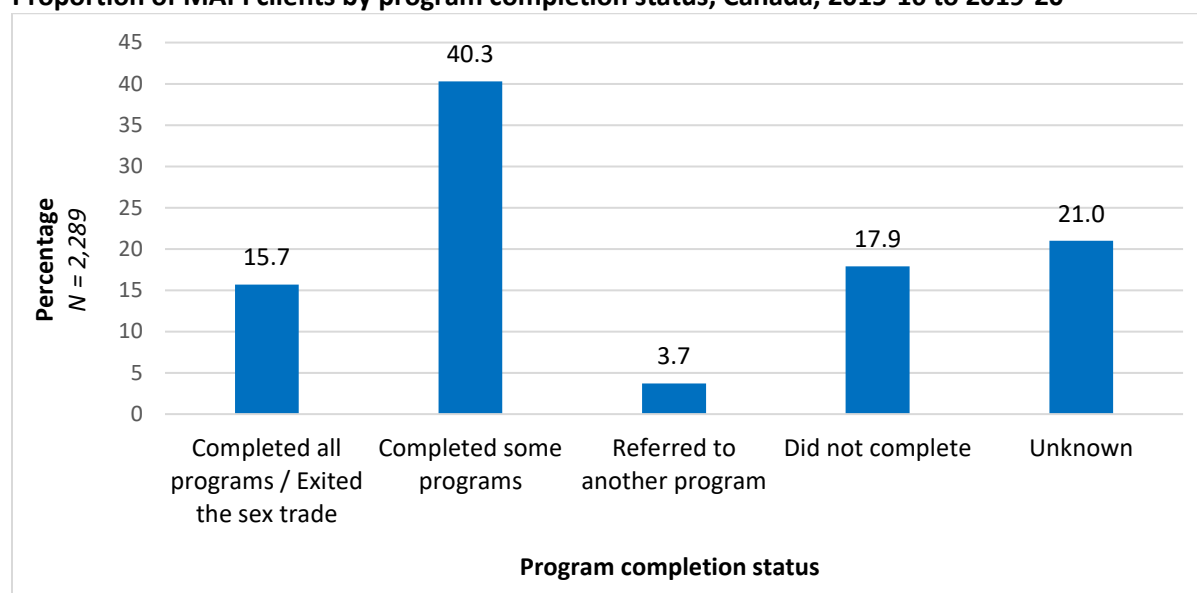
Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

About 16% of MAPI clients completed all of their organization's program(s) or exited the sex trade; the largest share of MAPI clients had partially completed their programs or completed some of their

programs (40%) (Chart 4.3). Almost one fifth (18%) did not complete any program, and 4% were referred to another program.

Chart 4.3

Proportion of MAPI clients by program completion status, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Notes:

1. The category "Completed all programs" includes "Exited prostitution" when that was the only response submitted by the MAPI organization.
2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Not applicable" and "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

5.0 Outcomes

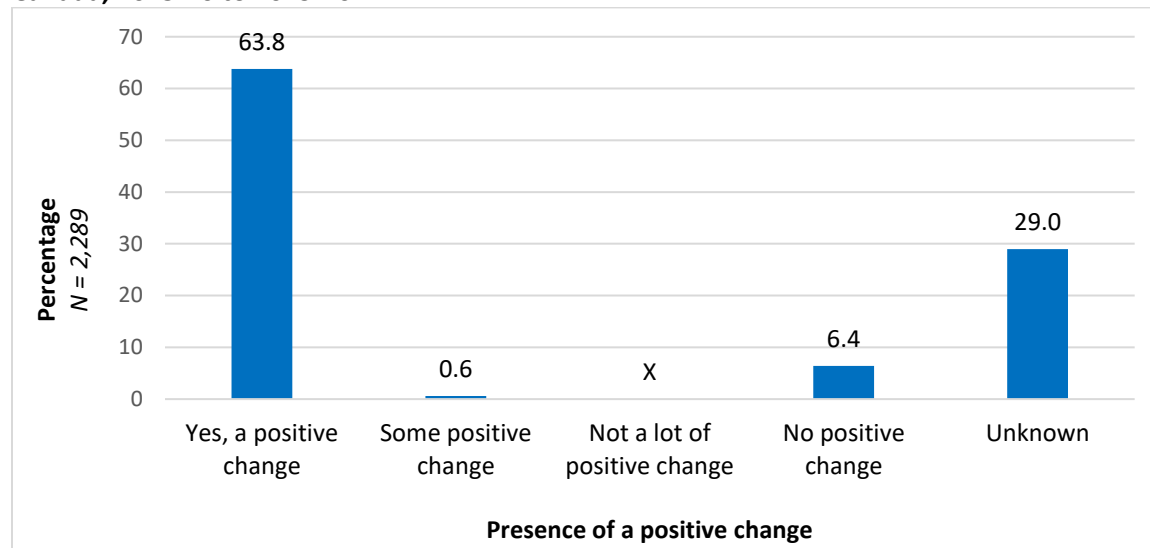
In this section, information on outcomes is analysed from variables indicating the presence of a positive change since involvement with the MAPI program. This could be whether the client has exited the sex trade or not, and final notes on family reunification, housing situation, education, employment, mental health issues and presence of abusive relationships in MAPI clients' lives.

5.1 Reduced risk factors

MAPI organizations were asked to assess and report on whether they had observed a positive change in the lives of their clients, that is, a general reduction in risk factors for sex trade involvement. Overall, it was reported that 64% of clients had experienced a positive change in their lives after involvement with the organization's programs and services (Chart 5.1). Only 6% did not appear to have a positive change in their lives after interacting with a MAPI organization.

Chart 5.1

Proportion of clients by presence of a positive change after involvement with a MAPI organization, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Notes:

1. X means data have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.
 2. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" and "Not stated" (blanks).
- Source:** Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

5.2 Final program outcomes

A fifth (21%) of MAPI clients were reported as having exited the sex trade¹⁶ by the end of the 2015-16 to 2019-20 funding period (Table 5.1). This represents about one third of the 81% of MAPI clients seeking to exit the sex trade (data not shown; Table 2.2). Only 5% of clients were reported as having remained in or returned to the sex trade.¹⁷ However, for the majority of clients (71%), there was no information in the MAPI organization reports on their involvement in the sex trade. The MAPI organizations also reported that they lost contact with 2% of their clients.

The MAPI organizations provided some context in their client notes on why 5% of clients remained in or returned to the sex trade. For many, involvement in the sex trade is a way to survive. For others, chronic homelessness, drug use, trauma and the sex trade have become an entrenched part of their lives (Chart 5.1).

¹⁶ This category includes clients who left sex work and who left exploitation/trafficking.

¹⁷ This category includes clients who remained in or returned to sex work as well as those who remained in or returned to exploitation/trafficking.

Table 5.1**Proportion of MAPI clients by involvement in the sex trade at the end of the MAPI program, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20**

	Percentage <i>N = 2,289</i>
Exited the sex trade	21.1
Remained in or returned to the sex trade	5.3
Lost contact	2.1
Unknown	70.5
Not applicable	0.8
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Notes:

1. The category "Exited the sex trade" means the person had stopped engaging in the sex trade by the end of the MAPI funding period.
2. Clients were only coded as having stayed in the sex trade if the final outcome variable (open-ended notes) indicated this.
3. The category "Lost contact" means that MAPI organizations had lost contact with the client so it was not possible to determine if they were actively involved in the sex trade.
4. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" or "Not stated", meaning there was either no response or it was not indicated if the client had exited or remained in the sex trade.
5. The "Not applicable" category includes clients who had passed away.

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Case notes for individual clients showed that 18% had obtained safe and stable housing by the end of the MAPI program (Table 5.2),¹⁸ which includes living with family, friends or supportive and transitional housing. Less than 4% of clients were in a shelter by the end of the MAPI program, and 2% had unstable housing meaning they were couch surfing,¹⁹ engaging in survival sex²⁰ for a place to stay, sleeping rough,²¹ or a combination of these.

Among the MAPI clients who exited the sex trade, 20% had stable housing (data not shown), and the number of people who had unstable housing was small (too small to publish). Among the MAPI clients who remained in or returned to the sex trade, 8% had stable housing whereas a quarter (25%) were homeless (data not shown).

About 6% of MAPI clients had reconnected with their families and/or their children, while 4% of clients were able to regain custody or visitation rights with their children (Table 5.2). About 1% of clients had their children apprehended by child welfare services during the MAPI program.

¹⁸ Please note that the results in table 5.2 were coded according to open-ended variables in the MAPI dataset meaning there is variability in responses across organizations.

¹⁹ Couch surfing refers to people sleeping at other people's places due to their own lack of housing.

²⁰ In this study, "survival sex" refers to people who provide sexual services to meet immediate basic needs, such as access to a meal or a place to sleep for the night because they have no other meaningful options. It was noted several times throughout the MAPI reports that clients who engage in survival sex often struggle with chronic homelessness and poverty.

²¹ Sleeping in the streets, in tents or anywhere outdoors due to lack of housing.

One in five (20%) of the MAPI clients reduced their substance use by the end of the MAPI period, meaning they were maintaining sobriety and/or receiving treatment for substance abuse issues, whereas 9% were reported as struggling with addictions and relapses (Table 5.2). About 20% of clients who were discharged or who voluntarily left the MAPI program were struggling with addictions and 14% were struggling with their mental health (categories are not mutually exclusive, data not shown).

Almost 30% of MAPI clients were reported as having improved and/or stabilized mental health after participating in the MAPI program, and they were engaging with mental health supports such as counselling (Table 5.2). About 7% of clients were struggling with their mental health, and 1% of were struggling with their physical health.

Among the MAPI clients, 15% had to flee to the MAPI program/area for safety, or they had to leave the program to go to another area for safety due to threats of violence from abusive partners and third parties such as gang members, traffickers and sex purchasers (Table 5.2). About 2% of clients were reported as victims of assault and/or domestic violence during the MAPI program period, they often required significant medical care such as hospitalization and surgeries.

About 8% of all MAPI clients were involved in court cases against their traffickers, and 5% were dealing with their own personal legal issues (Table 5.2). Around 2% of clients were incarcerated or in custody at some point during the MAPI program.

About 18% of clients left the MAPI program, were discharged or stopped contact with the MAPI organization staff (Table 5.2). Around 4% of MAPI clients had re-located by the end of the program, usually to their home communities, and close to 1% of clients had passed away by the end of the MAPI program.

Table 5.2

Proportion of MAPI clients by selected outcomes listed in individual case notes, Canada, 2015-16 to 2019-20

	Percentage <i>N</i> = 2,289
Housing situation	
Housing stability	18.3
Using shelters	3.6
Unstable housing / Homeless	2.3
Family reunification	
Regained custody of or visitation with children	3.6
Children apprehended or adopted out	1.0
Reconnecting with family and/or children	5.5
Addictions	
Reduced substance use and getting treatment	20.0
Struggling with addictions	9.0
Mental health	
Improved mental health and getting support	28.3
Struggling with mental health	6.7
Health	
Getting medical care	5.2
Struggling with physical health	1.2
Safety and violence	
Fled for safety / Immediate safety concerns	15.4
Experienced significant recent violence like assault	2.1
Life skills	
Acquired new life and coping skills	11.9
Strengthening or building social network	14.6
Socio-economic	
Returned to or finished school	8.9
Mainstream employment	6.3
Financial stability	5.0
Justice system participation	
Pursuing charges against traffickers	8.2
Attending to personal legal issues	5.2
Incarcerated before or during MAPI program	1.9
Other	
Left program, discharged or stopped contact	17.8
Re-located	3.9
Deceased	0.5
Unknown	6.6

Notes:

1. Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore percentages do not add to 100%.
2. In the category "Children apprehended or adopted out" a small number of MAPI clients had voluntarily placed their children in the care of the child welfare system, but in most cases children were apprehended.

3. The "Unknown" category consists of responses of "Unknown" or "Not stated" (blanks).

Source: Justice Canada, Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Conclusion

The MAPI organizations have provided critical insights into the experiences of their clients who often require multiple resources and supports such as housing, health care and counselling. Many MAPI clients require educational programs to build social, life and coping skills that they were not able to develop due to the isolating nature of the sex trade. Cultural support programs for Indigenous peoples were highlighted in the case notes as being critical for the well-being of Indigenous clients.

At the beginning of the MAPI program, the proportion of clients seeking support to exit the sex trade was over 80%. About 20% of clients were recorded as having exited and 5% remained involved with the sex trade by the end of the MAPI program. Over 70% of individual case notes did not specify what the client's status was in the sex trade.

Some MAPI clients were also able to achieve their other goals such as accessing safe housing, regaining custody of their children, and dealing with addictions and mental health issues, but these were not large proportions among those who had originally requested support for these issues.

About 18% of MAPI clients either left the program, stopped communicating with staff or were discharged. Case notes indicated that clients who were discharged by the MAPI organizations had exhibited violent behaviours and/or really struggled with their addictions (for example, consistent drug use). Some MAPI clients felt the program was not a fit for their needs and chose to self-discharge.

In conclusion, the MAPI dataset provided important insights into some of the socio-demographic characteristics and experiences of people who provide sexual services in Canada. This information will be useful for programs and service delivery. There are still some data gaps to be filled,²² for example the long-term impacts of the sex trade, as well as the services and supports people who provide sexual services are looking for.

²² Any research directly with providers of sexual services needs to protect their safety and well-being by providing appropriate protections for privacy and confidentiality as well as proper supports, such as mental health professionals to reduce the risk of re-traumatization.

Data sources and methods

Data from the Measures to Address Prostitution Initiative (MAPI)

All of the data in this study were collected from organizations who received funding from the MAPI program, during the period of 2015-2016 and 2019-2020. Two types of organizations received the MAPI funding: non-profit organizations and law enforcement agencies. The organizations who received MAPI funding are located in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

There are two key sources for the MAPI data in this study: client-based reports (2,289 clients from 13 non-profit organizations) and semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 MAPI organizations during the summer of 2021. MAPI organizations also supplied 129 narrative reports: 81 were from non-profit organizations and 48 from law enforcement agencies, which provided some qualitative information on their clients' experiences. These reports include interim progress reports and annual summaries.

However, the majority of data in this study come from the client reports and interviews. For the client reports, at the beginning of the funding period the 13 non-profit organizations were given an Excel spreadsheet with specific variables and categories covering three general areas: client information, characteristics at program intake and characteristics during program delivery. The variables and categories are listed below. These MAPI organizations were also given two documents with instructions for completing the Excel dataset, a coding guide and a user guide.

The following is a list of the pre-determined variables developed by the MAPI program staff at Justice Canada:

Client information variables

- Anonymized numeric client identifier
- Start date
- Age group
- Gender identity
- Member of specific target group
- Family status (separated into marital status and presence of children in this study)

Characteristics at program intake

- Referral made by
- Number of exit attempts
- Support networks
- Substance abuse issues
- Main reason for seeking help to exit prostitution (open-ended)
- Risk level at intake

Characteristics during program delivery

- Types of referrals
- Types of programs and services provided
- Types of programs completed
- Extent of participation
- Last date services were provided
- Outcomes
- Presence of a positive change (i.e. reduced risk factors)
- Describe changes/impacts (open-ended)

The two open-ended variables, “Reasons for seeking help to exit prostitution” and “Describe changes/impacts”, were used to correct coding for some of the pre-determined variables and to create multiple new variables. For example, both open-ended variables were used to correct coding in the “Family status” variables, such as identifying clients who were pregnant or whose children had been apprehended by child welfare services. The open-ended variables were also used to code which respondents had exited or remained in/returned to the sex trade, as well as several variables on outcomes such as housing, mental and physical health, and substance abuse issues.

Data analysis was conducted without survey weights. Counts under 10 were suppressed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of MAPI clients. All percentages are presented in the tables and charts unrounded at the first decimal place and then percentages are rounded in the text. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with select staff at organizations who received from funding from the MAPI program between 2015-16 and 2019-20. Of the 23 organizations that received funding, 18 consented to and completed an interview between June 23, 2021 and August 12, 2021. Most interviews were conducted in English, a small number were done in French.

There are eight standard questions in the interview guide, which was sent to interviewees at least a day before the interview. Usually one question was modified with a quotation from a narrative report to get more context on the clients of the specific organization. The standard interview questions are listed below. Interviews did not strictly follow all of these questions and may have included follow-up questions based on the information being provided by interviewees.

- 1) Could you describe your organization’s clients?
- 2) What are the backgrounds of the clients served by your organization?
- 3) What are some of the most common reasons for which your clients entered the sex trade? How do you identify clients who are working in the sex trade by choice and those who are not?
- 4) Based on your experience, what are some risk factors for people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation?
- 5) What types of challenges do your clients usually encounter when leaving the sex trade?
- 6) What are the success rates for your clients exiting the sex trade, are they more likely to return to it or to leave it? What would you say are some of the key factors that influence people to return to the sex trade, and are they related to the key factors associated with a successful exit?
- 7) How was information about clients obtained, and who completed the reports submitted to Justice Canada (MAPI program staff)?

- 8) Is there anything you would like to ask us, or is there other information about your clients that you would like to share?

Limitations

A few limitations with the data used in this study should be noted. There is some inconsistency in the reporting of client characteristics in the MAPI client dataset. During interviews, one MAPI organization representative noted that they were only able to select one characteristic per variable in the Excel dataset. For example, they only selected “Indigenous” instead of “Indigenous” and “Trafficked” which would have better represented their client. However, most of the MAPI organizations were able to provide multiple categories for the same variable, such as “Indigenous” and “Trafficked”.

All MAPI organization representatives explained in the interviews that their organization’s primary goal is relationship building with the clients. Staff do not enforce the idea that clients must exit the sex trade, they instead engage in safety planning and harm reduction strategies no matter what situation the client is in or has chosen.

In addition, some clients may not have fully disclosed all of their characteristics due to lack of trust. Over time, MAPI organizations have made efforts to update their client records when they became aware of new information. Therefore, when a client is present in several years of data for one organization, their characteristics from the most recent fiscal year were used for the dataset in this study. To the extent possible, duplicates were removed from the dataset. Clients with the same identifier but with vastly different characteristics and outcomes were kept in the dataset.

Finally, not all MAPI organizations offer the same programs and services. There is variability among the non-profit organizations in terms of reporting which programs their clients accessed and completed. For example, some organizations used the generic categories provided in the coding guide to code for programs and services, while others wrote in the exact name of the program, which required some online research in order to code to the generic categories.

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