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Human Trafficking Public Awareness Campaign (ACET) Research

Executive Summary

Prepared for Public Safety Canada

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Prepared for Public Safety Canada by Environics Research

March 2022

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Executive summary

A. 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 that aim to address 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."

The National Strategy includes funding commitments of \$57 million over five years and \$10 million ongoing to help strengthen Canada's response to human trafficking, support broader Government of Canada commitments, prevent and address gender-based violence, and support the safety and security of Indigenous peoples.

Human Trafficking consultations were conducted across Canada in 2018, helping inform The Way Forward to End Human Trafficking Consultations Discussion Paper. The insights gathered through in-depth consultations addressed the vital need for increased public awareness and knowledge to help communities and stakeholders better recognize the early signs of human trafficking, and reduce the stigmatization of victims and improve proactive response to incidents.

In 2019-20, as the first step in addressing public awareness needs, Public Safety contracted Environics Research to conduct Public Opinion Research (POR) to establish baseline levels of awareness about Canadian's perceptions, behaviours, and understanding of human trafficking, as well as helped identify optimal target audiences.

Public Safety Canada launched a national marketing campaign focused on raising awareness and educating Canadians about human trafficking in February 2021, with its most recent advertising running from November 2021 to February 2022.

This current research will enable PS to measure the effectiveness of the campaign and also to track how awareness of human trafficking has evolved since the baseline survey conducted in 2020.

This research project had two key research objectives:

- Pre- and post-campaign evaluation will be used to assess and track campaign performance using the advertising campaign evaluation tool (ACET), in accordance with the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, and mandatory for all advertising campaigns with a media component of \$1 million or more;
- Track changes in Canadian audiences' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to human trafficking.

B. Methodology

Environics conducted bilingual, national, online surveys: one as a baseline, in advance of the advertising campaign, and one near the end of the advertising campaign, to measure changes in awareness and intent to visit resources over time, in order to assess impact of the campaign. Both waves were online surveys of a minimum of 2,000 Canadians, conforming to the Government of Canada ACET template. The samples included

at least 300 youth between the ages of 16 and 25, and at least 300 parents of 13- to 19-year-olds. Each survey instrument was based on the Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool questions used by the Government of Canada in all of its advertising evaluation research, with the addition of a few questions about human trafficking that were previously asked in the initial baseline online survey of 2,236 Canadians 16 years of age and over conducted for Public Safety Canada by Environics in March of 2020¹.

The pre-campaign ACET field period was from July 14 to 23, 2021 and the post-campaign ACET was undertaken from January 24 to February 7, 2022. Data were weighted by region based on 2016 Census proportions.

Because respondents are recruited from a panel, this is a non-probability survey, and no formal estimates of sampling error can be calculated. Although opt-in panels are not random probability samples, online surveys can be used for general population surveys provided they are well-designed and employ a large, well-maintained panel, as was the case here.

More information about the methodology for these surveys is included in Appendix B.

C. Contract value

The contract value was \$79,045.25 (including HST)

D. Report

This report begins with an executive summary outlining the key findings and conclusions of the human trafficking tracking questions asked in the ACETs, followed by a detailed analysis of those questions, and a methodology section covering both survey phases. Provided under separate cover are the detailed ACET “banner tables” presenting the results of the surveys for all questions by population segments as defined by region and demographics. These tables are referenced by survey question in the detailed analysis.

E. Use of findings of the research

Results from ACET testing and the added behavioural questions will evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. The behavioural questions will allow for comparison with previous baseline quantitative results to identify valuable trend data on changes in Canadians’ attitudes, knowledge and behaviours related to Human Trafficking since the campaign launched. The ACET testing results will evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign’s messaging and media tactics, and will provide the Government of Canada valuable insight into Canadians’ media consumption habits and the effectiveness of the media strategy.

¹ Note the 2020 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 difference in sample composition may contribute to differences in response.

F. Human trafficking survey questions – key findings

Level of understanding of human trafficking

- Just over half of Canadians believe they understand the issue of human trafficking at least somewhat well; one in ten believe they understand it very well.
- The overall finding regarding understanding is similar to that found in the pre-campaign survey but is down by 11 points from March 2020.

What activities constitute human trafficking

- Strong majorities agree human trafficking includes people being smuggled across international borders for exploitation, someone being pressured into the sex trade, or someone being forced to work or having organs harvested against their will. Canadians are less certain about the phenomenon of people being *willingly* smuggled across international borders.
- Findings are largely consistent with the previous two surveys, with the exceptions of a decline since March 2020 in the proportion agreeing that people being forced to work against their will constitutes human trafficking, and an increase since the pre-campaign survey in the perception that human trafficking includes people being willingly smuggled across international borders.

Perceptions of seriousness of human trafficking in Canada

- Three-quarters think human trafficking is at least a somewhat serious problem in Canada, with three in ten thinking it is extremely serious. Only a small minority (16%) regard it as not being a serious problem in Canada.
- Following a sharp decline between the March 2020 and the pre-campaign surveys, the proportion considering human trafficking a serious problem in Canada has rebounded, although not quite to the level found in March 2020.

Perceptions of the rate of change in human trafficking in Canada

- Six in ten Canadians think human trafficking is becoming more of a problem in Canada than it has been in the past. Three in ten think there has been no change, and just one in ten feel it is becoming less of a problem.
- The proportion thinking human trafficking is more of a problem has increased somewhat from the pre-campaign survey, but is still well below that found in March 2020.

Parents' level of concern for their own children becoming victims of human trafficking

- Seven in ten parents of children up to 19 years old are at least somewhat concerned about the possibility of their children becoming victims of human trafficking, with one-third being very concerned. Three in ten are not very or at all concerned.
- The level of concern in the current survey marks the second consecutive increase since the March 2020 survey, when only half of parents expressed concern.

Canadian youth concerns about becoming victims of human trafficking

- Among younger Canadians aged 16 to 25, personal concern about the potential for becoming a victim of human trafficking is lower than parental concern: four in ten are at least somewhat concerned, while six in ten are not very or at all concerned, with two in ten being completely unconcerned.
- While similar to the results found in the pre-campaign survey, overall concern is somewhat higher than that found in March 2020, when only one-third expressed concern.

Most likely to be perpetrators of human trafficking

- Canadians are most likely to think human traffickers are people not initially known to their victims, such as members of criminal organizations, strangers and people with criminal records. They are less likely to identify people that victims might know socially or through work, such as intimate partners (past or present), temporary work firms, friends or family members, or business acquaintances. Just under two in ten have no idea.
- These findings are largely similar to those found in the previous two surveys. Since the March 2020 survey, family members and personal friends are now less likely to be considered to be perpetrators.

How to respond to human trafficking

- Three-quarters of Canadians would contact local police if they suspected a case of human trafficking. One-quarter would talk to a friend or trusted family member. Very few would take other actions.
- A total of one in five would not know what to do or how to respond, or would do nothing.
- These findings are largely similar to those from the previous two surveys, with the exception that the total proportion that says they wouldn't know how to respond or what to do, or they would do nothing, has declined since March 2020 – with nearly all of this decrease coming from responses of not knowing how to respond or what to do.

Awareness of human trafficking helplines and websites

- Just over nine in ten Canadians are not aware of any help lines or websites specifically to support people regarding human trafficking.
- Among the fewer than one in ten who provide a response, Canadians would most likely turn to calling 911 or the police. Just one percent mention the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.
- These findings are essentially unchanged over the past two surveys.

Awareness of Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

- When prompted, eight percent of Canadians are aware of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline that provides support to victims, provides general information on human trafficking and helps facilitate the reporting of incidences of human trafficking.
- This proportion remains essentially unchanged from the previous two surveys.

G. 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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