



Evaluation of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

Evaluation Report
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The purpose of this Treasury Board required evaluation was to examine the continued relevance of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (the Hotline), as operated by the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, and program administration. The evaluation also examined the progress made towards the achievement of outcomes, including reaching at-risk populations, accessing services through partnerships, achieving service goals to victims and survivors, increasing awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking, and data collection and use. The evaluation covered the years from the launch in 2019 to March 2022.

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Background

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person for the purposes of exploitation. More simply put, someone is being forced, coerced, or defrauded to do work, or sexual acts for someone else's profit.

Human trafficking is not the same as migrant smuggling, which involves a person crossing illegally over an international border, is voluntary, and usually ends when the smuggled person arrives at their destination.

There are many different forms of human trafficking existing around the world, including:

- Sexual exploitation
- Domestic servitude
- Child soldiers
- Forced labour
- Organ removal
- Forced marriage
- Debt bondage
- Forced begging

In Canada the most common forms of human trafficking are sexual exploitation or forced labour.

There are several provisions in the *Criminal Code* and the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) prohibiting human trafficking.

Victim or Survivor

In this evaluation the term "victim" is used to describe a person still in a human trafficking situation, while the term "survivor" describes a person who has been able to leave the human trafficking situation.

Background

Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking

Sex trafficking is highly gendered and disproportionately affects women and girls. Statistics Canada reported that 96% of detected victims of human trafficking between 2011 and 2021 were women, and that 45% of all detected victims were aged 18 to 24 and 24% under the age of 18.

Although exact numbers are unknown, Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately represented among sex trafficking victims, as reported in the *Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

Other populations at higher risk of being trafficked or targeted by human traffickers for sex trafficking include:

- Youth in or who had been in the child welfare system;
- 2SLGBTQI+ persons, especially transgender men and women and gender non-conforming individuals;
- Migrants; and
- People experiencing social or economic marginalization.

With regards to labour trafficking, the gender and age of victims differs across Canadian regions and economic sectors, however, the data is limited.



Background

Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (the Hotline) and its activities followed the recommendations of the 2016-2017 Public Safety Canada (PS) Evaluation of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, which identified a need for:

- A mechanism for victims/survivors of human trafficking to access services or report suspected cases;
- Data collection to better understand the scope and nature of the problem; and,
- Increased collaboration with various partners.

Accordingly, a consultation process took place in 2018 in order to identify gaps and challenges in countering human trafficking, as well as potential actions to address them. The evaluation recommendations were echoed in stakeholder feedback collected from other consultations and findings from the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

A contribution agreement was signed with the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (the Centre) in October 2018 and is set to expire March 31, 2023.

The Centre launched the Hotline on May 29, 2019, as part of the current *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* (2019-2024).

Background

Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

The Centre is a national registered charity founded in 2016, dedicated to combatting all forms of human trafficking in Canada, including sex trafficking and labour trafficking. As part of the contribution agreement with PS, the Centre is responsible for:



A toll-free, bilingual, national hotline operated by trained professionals



A secure national human trafficking data management and collection system



An online portal to house human trafficking resources in both official languages



A national referral mechanism to service partners to refer victims and survivors of human trafficking



National and targeted awareness campaigns in English and in French that promote the hotline number and services



Acting as a centralized resource to effectively provide services to victims/survivors, particularly tailored to vulnerable groups

Budget 2018 announced \$14.5 million in funding from 2018-19 to 2022-2023 to establish a human trafficking hotline, and in October 2018 PS awarded the Centre \$12.5 million in contribution funding to operate the Hotline over the five-year period. The total amount spent by the program from 2018-19 to 2021-22 is \$11.2 million, out of which \$9.2 million was spent by the Centre.

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this Treasury Board required evaluation was to examine the continued relevance of the Hotline, as operated by the Centre, and program administration. The evaluation also examined the progress made towards the achievement of outcomes, including reaching at-risk populations, accessing services through partnerships, achieving service goals to victims and survivors, increasing awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking, and data collection and use. The evaluation covered the years from the launch in 2019 to March 2022.

Interviews

17 interviews were conducted with internal PS stakeholders, as well as with Centre employees and partners.

Literature and Program Document Review

Literature (e.g. media, reports) and corporate documents (e.g. policy and program documents) were reviewed.

Performance and Financial Data

Performance data from the Hotline was reviewed from its launch in 2019 to 2021-22. Program financial data was analysed.

Limitations

There was limited data from the Centre as the Hotline launched in 2019-20, so only 2 full years of data were available. To mitigate this challenge, the evaluation made use of other program documents and publicly available information and evidence provided during interviews with program staff and partners.

Relevance

Continued Need



Finding: There is a continued need for a hotline. Evidence suggests that human trafficking continues on an upward trend in Canada.

There was an increase in police-reported human trafficking incidents from 2010 to 2019, but then a slight decrease occurred in both 2020 and 2021. The most recent data indicates that there were 552 offences reported to police in 2021.

The decrease in reported incidents is not an indication of fewer human trafficking crimes and has been speculated to be a result of the COVID-19 restrictions. Stemming from COVID-19 restrictions, common locations where traffickers would lure individuals into human trafficking were closed, and with further isolation human trafficking could be more difficult to identify.

Reports from the Centre and the U.S. human trafficking hotline Polaris noted that human trafficking increased throughout the pandemic because traffickers were able to adapt their luring and grooming techniques quickly to respond to the increase in internet use and time on social media, especially by youth.

Some reasons why human trafficking is underreported

- Language and cultural barriers
- Victims unaware of legal rights
- Lack of awareness of what human trafficking is, including by police and healthcare workers
- Victims/survivors threatened by traffickers
- Mistrust of authorities

Relevance

Continued Need



Finding: Canadian awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking is low.

Public opinion research conducted for PS in 2020 and for the Centre in 2021 found that awareness of human trafficking in Canada and the Hotline among Canadians was generally poor or misinformed.

While Canadians consider human trafficking to be a serious issue (73%), many held several misconceptions. For example, many Canadians believed that: human trafficking affects relatively few young people (49%); most human traffickers are strangers (56%) or organized criminals (72%) and are less likely to be people known to the victim; and around half believed that people being willingly smuggled across borders is a form of human trafficking.

Very few Canadians (6%) were aware of the Hotline, even after prompting, and most did not know of any anti-human trafficking organizations (91%).

It is worth noting that Indigenous parents were more likely to report having a good awareness of human trafficking (82%) and to have heard of the Hotline (26%).

Evaluation of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline

Several interviewees noted the lack of public understanding of labour trafficking, specifically, and some noted the need to target sectors which have elevated numbers of victims/survivors of labour exploitation.

Since the launch of the Hotline there has been an increase in awareness and understanding of human trafficking and the Hotline as a result of Centre activities, something some interviewees attributed to the use of social media.



Relevance

Roles and Responsibilities



Finding: The creation of a hotline is aligned with government priorities, departmental objectives, and federal roles and responsibilities.

The Government of Canada has consistently highlighted the fight against human trafficking as a priority. In September 2019, the Government of Canada announced the *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* (\$57.2 million over 5 years, with \$10.3 million annual thereafter). The National Strategy is a whole-of-government approach led by PS to bring together federal anti-human trafficking activities under one strategic framework. It includes enhanced supports to victims and survivors of human trafficking; increased awareness and capacity-building efforts to prevent the victimization of vulnerable and marginalized populations; and improved criminal justice system experiences for victims and survivors.

The 2020-21 Departmental Plan stated that “[...] other criminal activities, like human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation, happen under the radar, in the darkest corners of society. Public Safety Canada will continue its efforts to combat these crimes, which have a disproportionate impact on women and girls”. The 2022-23 Departmental Plan stated that “Public Safety Canada will also continue to provide funding to the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking for the multilingual, 24/7 toll-free Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.” The plan noted that data collected by the Hotline has provided further insight into the characteristics of individuals who are victims or vulnerable to being victimized.

Canada’s approach to human trafficking is guided by its international obligations under the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* and the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*. Canada ratified the Convention and the Protocol in 2002. PS also supports the advancement of the United Nations’ *Sustainable Development Goals*, where trafficking in persons is cited in targets 8.7, 16.1 and 16.2, through its leadership on countering human trafficking. Specifically, target 8.7 calls to take measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking.

Performance

Accessibility for priority populations



Finding: The Hotline has made a significant effort to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for diverse GBA Plus populations while also trying to reach at-risk populations.

During the design of the Hotline, the Centre implemented several measures to increase accessibility of the Hotline. For example, the Hotline is accessible by phone, email, and webchat in over 200 languages and over 27 Indigenous languages, and can also communicate with deaf, hard of hearing, and non-verbal people.

Information on the Hotline website is available in English and French, with some information available in 12 additional languages. The numerous languages offered through the Hotline were perceived by interviewees as an effort to make the Hotline accessible to multiple populations.

Also, services on the online National Referral Directory can be filtered to find options based on location, or specific populations, such as Indigenous people and 2SLGBTQI+.

The Centre's adaptability to current events

After the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, but before the influx of Ukrainian refugees to Canada, the Hotline ensured that services would be available to this at-risk group. For example, the Hotline translated awareness material into Ukrainian and ensured translation services in Ukrainian for people contacting the Hotline.

Performance

Accessibility for priority populations

Over the evaluation period, the Centre has undertaken a variety of work to target vulnerable populations. Some of this work includes :

Engagement activities

The Centre worked with the FCJ Refugee Group to engage migrant workers to increase knowledge of labour trafficking and the Hotline. The Centre convened focus groups of migrant workers in March 2022 to examine the impact of COVID-19 on labour trafficking in Canada, and to better understand exploitation in the labour supply chain.

Awareness Campaigns


The Centre took into consideration at-risk populations in its awareness campaigns. For example, media campaign posters have been translated into 29 languages, many of which are Indigenous. The posters included images that were more relatable to the targeted audiences. For example, posters had examples of labour trafficking (e.g. persons working in a kitchen, a farm, or a greenhouse) and images of persons who were identifiably Indigenous without being stereotypical (e.g. persons with braids, wearing moccasins, and wearing mukluks). The Centre also partnered with influencers from different stakeholder groups (young women, 2SLGBTQI+ community members) to increase awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking among at-risk populations.



Despite these efforts, the Centre has recognized that they need to partner with community groups to identify community-led solutions to engage with Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQI+ communities. interviewees noted the importance of participatory research and the need to do more with Indigenous and Black communities.

Performance

Increased access to services through partnerships

 **Finding:** Since the launch of the Hotline, the Centre has increased partnerships with a range of service providers and law enforcement organizations across Canada.

National Referral Directory



The Centre created a National Referral Directory for the use of Hotline Response Advocates (HRA) and people visiting the Hotline website. This directory includes partner information for service providers, law enforcement agencies, and child protection services. HRAs use the directory while responding to calls or web-chats to help refer victims/survivors to services that can best address their needs locally, and, if necessary, they can find and contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.

There is also a publicly accessible version of the National Referral Directory on the Centre website, however, it does not contain the Hotline partners who need to remain confidential (e.g., safe houses). The Hotline conducts regular work to ensure services and programs in the directory are up-to-date.

Partnerships with Service Providers

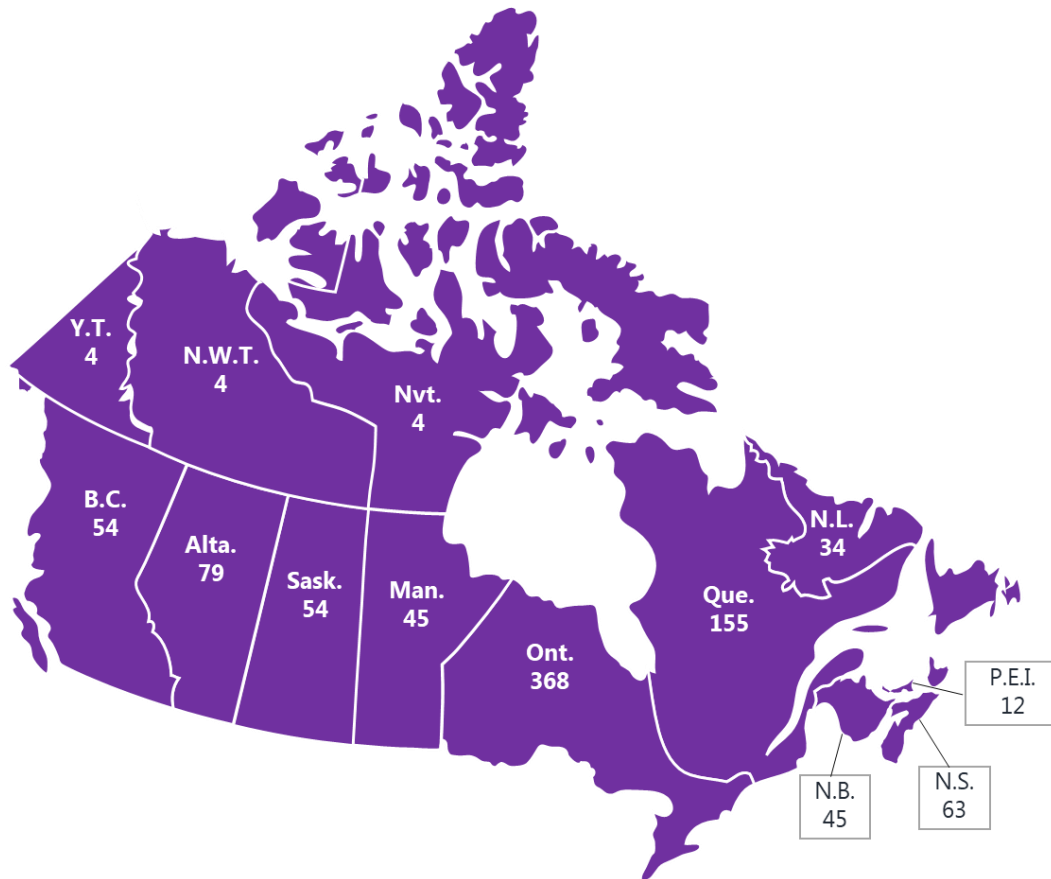


At the end of 2021-22, the Centre had partnerships with 923 service providers across Canada and one in the United States. The Centre reported a total of 3,690 services available through the 924 service providers. Services include case management, supportive counselling, emergency, transitional, and long-term shelter, mental health treatment, transportation assistance, and education/job training and life skills.

Interviewees mentioned that the Centre facilitated access to support services for victims/survivors through the National Referral Directory.

Performance

Increased access to services through partnerships



Out of the 924 service providers, 40% were in Ontario and 17% in Quebec, while 9% were Alberta and 7% in Nova Scotia. There was also one provider in the United States and two that are Canada-wide.

It is important to note that the Centre could only partner with existing and willing service providers in the provinces and territories, and some areas have more service providers than others. The Centre continues to reach out to potential partners, which may change the representation in the future.

Several interviewees indicated that the Centre has been open to establishing partnerships and collaborations with a range of service providers, and that they work hard to connect with harder-to-reach communities.

Performance

Increased access to services through partnerships



Impact of COVID-19 on service partners

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic (April-May 2020), the Hotline surveyed members of the directory to determine how their services had been impacted. This allowed them to ensure the National Referral Directory was as up-to-date as possible, which then allowed the Hotline to provide the most appropriate referrals.

As result of the pandemic, the Hotline found that COVID-19 had negative impacts on service providers, particularly access to shelter supports. Most service providers implemented some changes during the pandemic such as modified services hours; remote/digital services; and prioritization of crisis over non-urgent referrals. In addition, some service providers were not offering or accepting new referrals.



Performance

Increased access to services through partnerships

Hotline – Law Enforcement Success Story

A victim of trafficking asked her friend to call the Hotline while she was with a client. The traffickers came back early, and she had to hang up. The HRAs felt the women were in immediate danger and called the Hamilton police dispatch, which led to police responding to the residence. As a result, the police rescued two women from human trafficking and charged two men.

Partnerships with law enforcement agencies and child protection services

At the end of 2021-22, the Hotline had partnerships with 99 law enforcement agencies, and 196 active law enforcement contacts. HRAs at the Hotline have reported some tips and enquiries to law enforcement through their triage system. From the launch of the Hotline to the end of 2021-22, there were a total of 202 reports made to law enforcement.

In October 2021, the Hotline added a child protection services field in the National Referral Directory and formalized their child protection reporting protocols, providing HRAs clear protocols to follow in cases of child trafficking, abuse or neglect.

Collaboration and partnerships with private industry, provinces and territories and stakeholders

The Hotline collaborated with private industries such as AirBnB, Uber, airlines, airports, the hospitality industry, and organizations such as Truckers Against Trafficking. The Hotline has also worked with provinces and territories, especially those without a human trafficking strategy, and has collaborated with non-governmental organizations, community groups, and frontline service providers. Additionally, the Centre collaborated with international organizations such as Polaris (US Hotline) and Consejo Ciudadano (Mexico Hotline).

Performance

Trauma-informed services for victims and survivors



Finding: The Hotline has made trauma-informed support more accessible to victims and survivors.

"You can really see as time has gone on that there are many individuals, who are survivors that are experiencing faster help again in that trauma-informed way that the hotline intake folks do."

The Hotline is non-discriminatory and has a policy to "do no harm" in order to best address the needs of victims and survivors. The intake process for people contacting the Hotline is considered very important, as the safety assessment allows HRAs to quickly determine if the person contacting them is in a safe location. Should the individual(s) be in an unsafe location, safety planning may commence. Alternatively, if currently deemed safe, a needs assessment may commence. The trauma-informed support provided by the HRAs to people contacting the Hotline is considered extremely important since it builds trust and has led to victims and survivors making repeated calls to the Hotline.

Some suggested improvements to increase the accessibility of support to victims/survivors included: peer support for victims/survivors; better support for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities; expanded promotion of the Hotline number nationwide; and translation of awareness materials into additional languages.

Interviewees also made some suggestions for technological accessibility, including implementing texting and WhatsApp functions, as some victims/survivors, including migrant workers, are more likely to use these functions.

Performance

Achieving Service Goals to Victims and Survivors

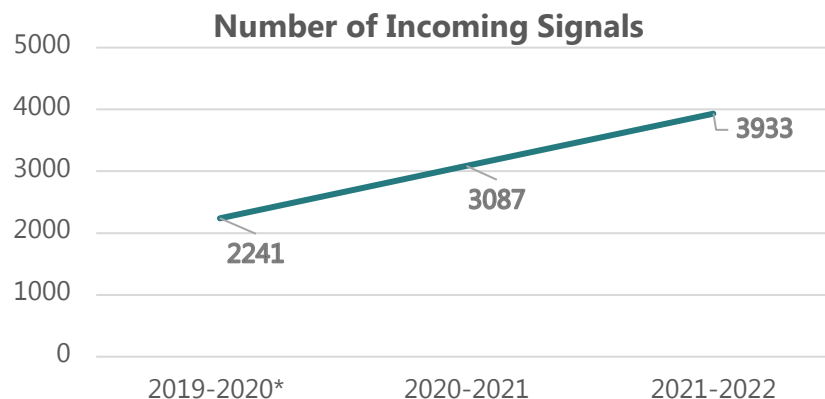


Finding: The number of contacts to the Hotline have increased each year and the Hotline has been able to provide services to its target audiences. The Hotline has provided an increasing number of referrals to partner services for victims and survivors in Canada.

The Hotline can be reached through phone calls, emails, web chats and web forms (these methods of contact are referred to as “signals”). The HRAs use a standard process to determine whether signals are human-trafficking related or not, then they classify cases.

Over the evaluation period, the number of incoming signals has increased by 76% from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Since the launch of the Hotline to 2021-22, there have been 1,907 incoming signals classified as trafficking cases, with 804 (42%) in 2021-22 alone. Signals received that are deemed non-trafficking cases often do not meet the full criteria to be classified as trafficking, although some may have elements of human trafficking or be in the early stages, e.g. grooming or luring. Furthermore, some non-trafficking contacts are people looking for information on the signs of human trafficking, and what supports are available.



* May 29, 2019 to March 31, 2020

Each case of human trafficking may have more than one signal associated with it, for example, a victim or survivor calling back about their situation or needs, or multiple individuals contacting about the same case. The number of human trafficking cases increased from 235 in 2019-20 to 356 in 2021-22 (51% increase).



Phone calls to the Hotline were the most popular form of contacts, representing 72% of all the signals.

Performance

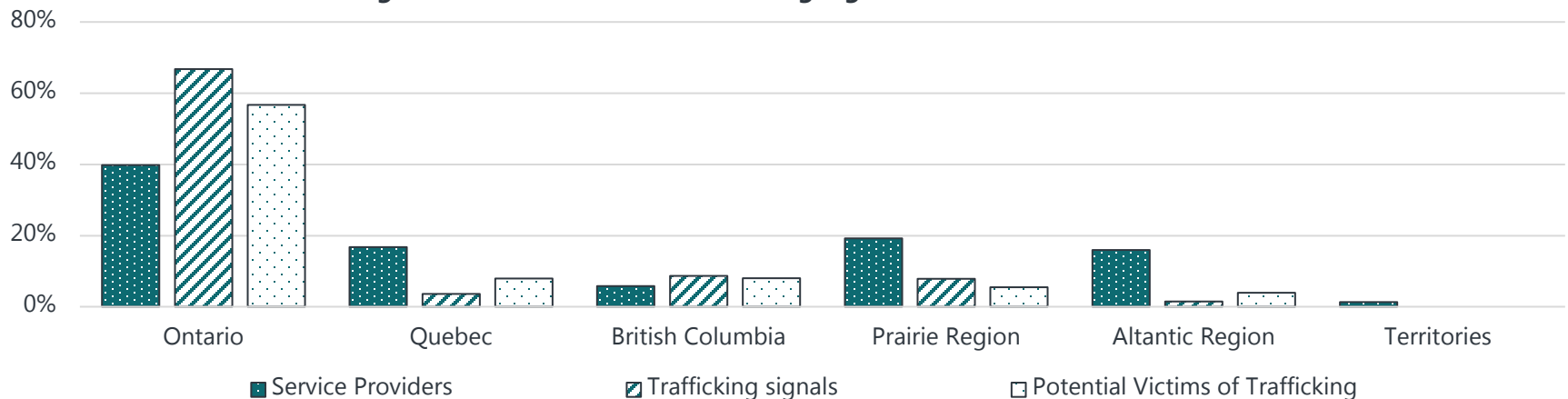
Achieving Service Goals to Victims and Survivors

In 2021-22, the majority of trafficking-related signals, potential victims, and service provider partners were from Ontario. In almost all regions, the percentage of service provider partners was larger than the percentage of trafficking signals and potential victims, with the exception of British Columbia and Ontario.

While the number of trafficking signals to the Hotline and the number of potential victims is not always representative of the Canadian population, discrepancies may be related to differences in language or exposure to Hotline advertising and campaigns.

It is important for people contacting the Hotline to be able to reach an HRA as quickly as possible. The Hotline has been able to keep wait times low and has missed very few contacts. In 2021-22, the average wait time for a phone call was 17 seconds, and the wait for a web chat was 31 seconds. The average length of a phone call with the Hotline was 17 minutes and 25 minutes for a web chat. 4% of phone calls and 3% of web chats were missed in 2021-22.

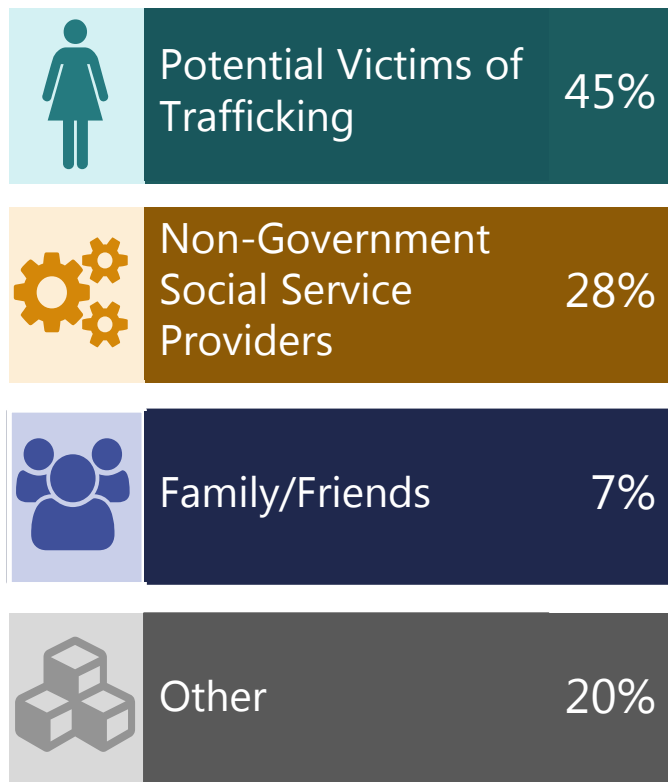
Percentage of Service Providers, Trafficking Signals, and Potential Victims



Performance

Achieving Service Goals to Victims and Survivors

Out of the 448 individuals who reached out to the Hotline about a trafficking situation in 2021-22 (the most recent year for data), the biggest proportion were potential victims of trafficking.



Since the launch of the Hotline, the HRAs have provided 1,042 referrals in relation to trafficking cases.

The number of service provider referrals has consistently increased over the evaluation period, from 258 in the 2019-20 to 429 in 2021-22. The most referrals in relation to human trafficking cases in 2021-22 were for shelter/housing assistance (22%); supportive counselling (20%); and case management (19%).



22% of referrals were for shelter/housing



20% of referrals were for supportive counselling



19% of referrals were for case management

Most interviewees were satisfied with the services provided by the Hotline. PS interviewees stated that the Hotline provides a critical service and fills a national gap. They highlighted that the national referral mechanism allows the Hotline to refer victims/survivors to services in their respective geographical locations across the country.

Performance

Achieving Service Goals to Victims and Survivors




Impact of COVID-19 on the Hotline services

At the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020), the Hotline closed their office due to public health orders. They then worked with PS to amend the contribution agreement to allow them to operate remotely. The Hotline then operated on decreased hours for a short while until they resumed their 24/7 services in April 2020. The Centre indicated that PS was instrumental in facilitating the transition to remote work by providing IT equipment, security protocols and fast-tracking an amendment to the existing Contribution Agreement, allowing the Hotline to operate remotely. The Centre reported operational changes during the pandemic as being sustainable, with no foreseeable return to in-person service delivery.

The pandemic had an unexpected impact on the staffing of the Hotline, including on staff retention. While there were some challenges in setting up remote work for staff, the integration of working from home was successful. The Hotline also improved communications and connection with staff, performed ongoing wellness checks, and improved access to counselling and mental health supports benefits. In addition, the Centre was able to staff the Hotline with more French-speaking HRAs as the remote work opened opportunities for employment outside of the Greater Toronto Area.

Performance

Increased public awareness

 **Finding:** The Centre developed various methods to increase the public’s awareness of human trafficking in Canada and the Hotline, including ones targeting groups at higher risk of being trafficked.

The Centre has paid for ads in different locations and on different platforms since the launch of the Hotline. Some ads were part of a larger campaign, and others were to increase awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking in Canada.

Ads and posters for the Hotline have been placed on subways, in convenience stores, and in search marketing (e.g. Google).

The Centre has also placed ads on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Ads placed on Facebook and Instagram were shown to generate interest, as they had a click-through rate of 1.6% in 2021-22, while the industry benchmarks is 0.75%. Posts on these platforms also had several thousand messages and comments.

Traditional media, such as newspapers and television news, have broadcast or written many stories about the Hotline and its activities since the contribution agreement was awarded to the Centre in 2018. This is a practice known as earned media.

2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
762 Media Stories	915 Media Stories	1,770 Media Stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Launch of the Hotline▪ 75 interviews with Centre staff were broadcast or written, leading to additional stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ First Human Trafficking Awareness Day held on February 22nd.▪ <i>Human Trafficking Corridors in Canada</i> report released.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Human Trafficking Trends in Canada 2019-2020</i> report released.

Performance

Increased public awareness

The Centre partnered with a public relations agency in Toronto to produce and conduct a detailed, two-phase campaign in 2021-22 to raise awareness about the Hotline and human trafficking.

Phase 1 Nov-Dec 2021

A survey on the awareness of human trafficking in Canada was conducted and results were shared with the media. The survey found that Canadians are generally unaware of the realities of human trafficking. The findings led to the development of media messaging with clear information about the signs of sex trafficking.

Phase 2 Jan-Mar 2022

Leading up to National Human Trafficking Day (February 22) the two key public messages included the Hotline contact information, and: "The World's Most Understanding Hotline", which focused on healthy versus unhealthy relationships; and "You Are Loved". The key theme for Valentine's Day and National Human Trafficking Awareness Day messaging was "Love Shouldn't Come at a Cost".

Findings

The campaign was seen as a great success by the Centre and the Agency. The Hotline reported an increase in contacts as well as visits to their website, and the wide range of earned and paid media reached a broad audience. Campaign material focused on ways to assist people at risk of or currently being victimized and did not include stereotypical or shocking images of human trafficking.

Performance

Increased public awareness



Finding: Collaborative work between the Centre, partners, and stakeholders led to increased awareness and education programs, as well as improved communication and relationships between organizations.

Since the launch of the Hotline, the Centre has actively collaborated with stakeholders and partners to improve awareness of human trafficking and the Hotline, including through providing or assisting with education programs, something beyond the requirements of the contribution agreement. Some of the partners and stakeholders are in unique positions to identify potential cases of human trafficking due to the nature of their work. The Centre's work with these organizations includes information about the Hotline's services, education on identification of possible human trafficking cases and how to put in place education programs, and how to avoid putting people at further risk. Some examples of these organizations are:

- Uber, whose drivers may come into contact with victims being moved around;
- Truckers Against Trafficking, as truckers may operate along known human trafficking corridors, and so may be able to identify potential cases.
- The hotel industry, where sexual trafficking may take place.

The Centre has used its experience and data to help increase the understanding of human trafficking in Canada among law enforcement. It has conducted or participated in presentations, seminars, panel discussions, and assisted in training at some police colleges.

While ideally police officers should receive training on this subject at a police college and through ongoing training, the Centre is able to fill a gap and provide more up-to-date information from the victim/survivor's perspective.

The Centre promoted their services to law enforcement agencies and worked to reach small police services. They also placed an advertising banner to promote the Hotline on the weekly Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police official eNewsletter, which had the potential to reach up to 1,372 chiefs of police and police executives.

Performance

Increased public awareness



Impact of COVID-19 on the Centre's Awareness Activities

COVID-19 restrictions on movement and gatherings meant the Hotline had to make changes in their awareness model and activities. At first, as the Hotline had to shut down for a short while, they suspended paid advertisements as they would not be able to be contacted but resumed quickly once the Hotline returned to 24/7 operations.

In response to Canadians' increased internet use during the pandemic, as many remained largely housebound the Hotline increased their online engagement leveraging social media outreach.


There were few mentions of the Centre working with or presenting to educational establishments since the launch of the Hotline, but this was likely in large part due to pandemic restrictions. Working to increase awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking in schools is important because young people (teenagers, young adults) are one of the key populations targeted by human traffickers.

Examples of the Centre's online presentations and webinars

- ❖ Brave Conversations: Spotlight on the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking – YWCA Moncton
- ❖ The National Human Trafficking Hotline as a Responsive Tool for Trafficking Cases – Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan
- ❖ Moving Forward: How we're tackling COVID: Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking – York University
- ❖ Stay Safe: Human Trafficking concerns for Ukrainian nationals – Ukrainian Canadian Congress

Performance

Data Collection and Use

 **Finding:** The Centre has advised federal and provincial governments on the development of legislation and policy, and Hotline data has been used in PS and Statistics Canada reports.

While most interviewees were not aware of any changes to policy or legislation, as a result of the Centre's activities, some of the PS interviewees noted Hotline performance reporting data and publicly available reports had improved their understanding of human trafficking and influenced their work. The Centre has provided advice based on Hotline data to federal departments and provincial governments to support their development of relevant policy, practices and legislation.


At the federal level, the Centre presented to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights to study Bill S-224, an Act to amend the *Criminal Code* (trafficking in persons) and presented expertise to a federal roundtable.



Provincially, the Centre has provided feedback on anti-human trafficking legislation and presented to provincial working groups.

Data from the Hotline's public reports was included in the *PS2020-21 Annual Report on the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking*, and Statistics Canada also highlighted Hotline reporting in their 2019, 2020, and 2021 Juristat *Trafficking in Persons in Canada* reports.

Program Administration

 **Finding:** The Centre recently signed a data-sharing agreement with Statistics Canada. While the Centre provides required reporting to PS, it is unclear if PS utilizes these reports to their full extent.

A requirement in the contribution agreement is the establishment of a data sharing agreement between the Centre and Statistics Canada. The agreement would allow Statistics Canada to have access to the raw data collected by the Hotline while still maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all people contacting the Hotline. The information collected by the Hotline is by its nature very sensitive information. At the same time, however, this information plays an important role in the development of evidence-based approaches to ending human trafficking. In addition, the data would allow Statistics Canada to better understand other human trafficking statistics and validate those they use to report on human trafficking, which, to date, have been limited to police reported crime data and convictions.

The Centre and Statistics Canada faced a number of challenges causing delays in signing the agreement, both internal (e.g. legal and logistical processes), and external (e.g. delays in research production as a result of COVID-19). The data-sharing agreement was signed in December 2022.



Program Administration

As part of the contribution agreement, the Centre is required to report regularly on its activities to PS. This includes information on the number of human trafficking cases during a reporting period. The Hotline data provides PS with more fulsome information about human trafficking in Canada, and feeds into the information needs of the National Strategy To Combat Human Trafficking.

While the Centre met the requirements in the contribution agreement, there could be improvements in how the data is reported to PS. While most PS interviewees mentioned how Hotline data plays a part in their understanding of human trafficking and impacts their work in this area, a couple raised concerns about how they did not know enough about what data the Hotline has, and how that data is analyzed for the reports provided to PS.

PS does not conduct its own analysis of the data but relies on the Centre's analysis and publicly available reports to provide a more robust picture of the extent of human trafficking in Canada. There was limited evidence of the progress reports being utilized in decision making or to guide activities within PS.



Program Administration



Finding: The development and maintenance of the Hotline model was mostly successful. The time limited nature of the funding model was identified as a serious concern because without continued funding the Centre would no longer be able to operate the Hotline, leaving victims and survivors without access to a dedicated hotline.

The agreement between the U.S. Polaris Hotline and the Centre was important in the creation of the Hotline, in part because they were able to model the Hotline on an already successful human trafficking hotline. The Hotline was customized to meet the needs of Canadians and was launched quickly.

While the agreement with Polaris has expired, the Centre maintains a good relationship with Polaris, as well as the Consejo Ciudadano hotline in Mexico.

The Centre conducts frequent maintenance of the National Referral Directory, including verification of existing partnerships, as they continue reaching out to potential service provider partners.

The Centre faces unique challenges because of its responsibilities outlined in the contribution agreement. Namely, the difficulty in balancing data collection expectations against the needs/privacy of the people contacting the Hotline.

The HRAs will collect data about the person contacting the Hotline, but only as far as the person is comfortable sharing that information. The trauma-informed model of the Hotline places the needs of victims/survivors above all else. While this does mean that some data from the Hotline (e.g. demographic data) will always lack some information, the data collected provides more information about human trafficking in Canada than existing crime data can.

Program Administration

Without continued funding from PS, or another government agency, after March 31, 2023, the Centre will no longer be able to operate, and the Hotline will shut down. This would be devastating to victims and survivors of human trafficking.

The Hotline, with its many partnerships and its National Referral Directory resources, provides a unique set of services that other Canadian hotlines and organizations providing assistance to victims/survivors cannot.

There are many risks to not continuing a human trafficking hotline with the Centre:

- A change to a hotline provider would mean having to start over, to the point of designing a hotline model and establishing relationships.
- The existing agreement notes that data collected through the Hotline remains with the Centre, meaning a new provider would not have access to data up to the end of the agreement.
- A loss in service to victims/survivors as a new hotline is developed.
- A loss of trust by existing Hotline partners and victims/survivors.

The Centre

- Creates partnerships with service providers.
- Analyses data from the Hotline and reports findings to PS and stakeholders.
- Conducts awareness activities about the Hotline and human trafficking.

The Hotline

- Communicates directly with victims/survivors of human trafficking, as well as answering questions and concerns from other people.
- Refers people contacting the Hotline to appropriate service providers.
- Collects data, when possible, from people contacting the Hotline.

Accordingly, without the Centre, there would be no Hotline, and without the Hotline, the Centre would not be able to continue much of its work in raising awareness of human trafficking in Canada.

Conclusions

Human trafficking in Canada is a growing and evolving problem which affects primarily GBA Plus populations, especially women and girls, Indigenous women and girls, and migrant workers. There is an ongoing need for a hotline to provide access to services and supports for victims and survivors of human trafficking. The support for a hotline is aligned with government and department objectives and priorities in supporting the fight against human trafficking.

The Centre signed a contribution agreement with PS to provide a hotline for victims/survivors of human trafficking in Canada, to collect data on human trafficking, to provide awareness programs on the Hotline and human trafficking and collect and maintain a directory of relevant service providers. However, this agreement is set to expire March 31, 2023, and without continued funding the Centre would no longer be able to operate the Hotline. The Centre's services are well developed, and it would be difficult to recreate with another organization.

The Hotline, which is the only one of its kind in Canada, was designed to be a trauma-informed, inclusive, and accessible option for diverse GBA Plus populations. The Hotline has access to translation services in over 200 languages, including over 27 Indigenous languages. The Centre furthered the goal of inclusivity in its awareness campaigns about the Hotline and human trafficking, ensuring that material was available in multiple languages, including Indigenous languages, and that images in material avoided typical stereotypes or typical exploitative imagery.

The Hotline's HRAs receive trauma-informed training and follow various protocols, such as when law enforcement or child protective services must be called. For human trafficking-related contacts, the HRAs utilize the National Referral Directory, which includes service provider partner information, such as location and the type of services offered. While the public can access some of the directory on the Hotline website, some service provider information is only available through HRAs for safety and confidentiality reasons (e.g. safe houses). The Centre regularly works to ensure information is up-to-date and reaches out to make new partnerships.

Conclusions

Since the launch of the Hotline there has been a 76% increase in the number of contacts to the Hotline (by phone, webchat, email). The continual increase in contacts has been attributed to the work the Centre has undertaken to raise awareness of the Hotline and human trafficking, whether through methods such as social media, traditional media, and/or presentations to stakeholders.






The contribution agreement indicated the requirement for the Centre to establish a data sharing agreement with Statistics Canada. This process faced a number of delays but was signed in December 2022. This agreement will allow Statistics Canada to use more than police-related crime data to examine the problem of human trafficking. The contribution agreement states that the Centre is also required to report regularly to PS, which it has, but there should be improvements made in how the data is reported. At this time, there was limited evidence of the Centre's reports being utilized in decision making or to guide activities within PS, although Centre findings have been included in PS and Statistics reports.

The Centre has shown itself able to adjust quickly and effectively to sudden changes and emerging needs, such as quickly moving Hotline activities to remote work because of COVID-19 restrictions on in-person work and working proactively to prepare for the influx of Ukrainian refugees. COVID-19 restrictions on in-person work also affected service provider partners, so the Centre surveyed directory members to ensure information was up-to-date. The Centre also moved more awareness information online, such as social media and online presentations and webinars.

Recommendations

The Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Crime Prevention Branch, should:

-  1. Work towards continued funding of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking in administering the Human Trafficking Hotline.
-  2. In upcoming agreements ensure that the Hotline continues to focus on the needs of, and outreach to, populations identified as being at higher risk of trafficking, as well as on victims and survivors of labour trafficking.
-  3. Clarify the areas around data ownership of the information collected by the Hotline, and in upcoming agreements ensure that PS has access to the data necessary for their work.

Management Action Plan

Recommendation	Action(s) Planned	Planned Completion Date
1. Work towards continued funding of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking in administering the Human Trafficking Hotline.	Implement a multi-year funding agreement to continue to administer the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline beyond the end of the current agreement in March 2023 based on performance measurement and evaluation findings.	June 2023
2. In upcoming agreements ensure that the Hotline continues to focus on the needs of, and outreach to, populations identified as being at higher risk of trafficking, as well as on victims and survivors of labour trafficking.	Identify options to address outreach needs for at-risk populations in subsequent contribution agreements to administer the human trafficking hotline.	June 2023
3. Clarify the areas around data ownership of the information collected by the Hotline, and in upcoming agreements ensure that PS has access to the data necessary for their work.	Work with the human trafficking hotline to identify options for data ownership of the information collected that can be reflected in subsequent contribution agreements.	June 2023