



Photo: Thomas Wanhoff

Definition

According to the United Nations, human trafficking is considered a crime against humanity. Human trafficking is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the

prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”¹

Statistical reports of human trafficking are largely estimates because the activity is grossly underreported and clandestine. Understandably, victims are fearful, do not fully understand their rights, may not have documentation revealing their identity and/or may have been forced into criminal activity. Consequently, they are hesitant to report their own victimization to authorities. Additionally, laws and their enforcement vary from country to country resulting in an inaccurate picture of the scope of the crime.²

International Estimates

- The United Nations estimates the total market value of illicit human trafficking to be \$32 billion USD annually.³
- The most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation (79%).⁴
- The second most common form of human trafficking is forced labour (18%), although this may be underestimated because forced labour is less frequently detected and reported than trafficking for sexual exploitation.⁴
- Worldwide, almost 20% of all trafficking victims are children. However, in some parts of Africa and the Mekong region of South East Asia, children are the majority.⁴
- In 30% of the countries which provided information on the gender of traffickers, women make up the largest proportion of those who are exploited.⁴
- The estimated number of adults and children who are in forced labour, bonded labour, and forced prostitution around the world is 12.3 million.⁵



Photo: tribune.com.pk

Canadian Estimates

- According to the RCMP, 600-800 persons are trafficked into Canada annually, predominantly for sexual purposes, and that an additional 1,500-2,200 persons are trafficked through Canada into the United States.⁶
- Trafficking in Canada has consequences estimated between \$120 million to \$400 million per year and accounts for approximately 8,000 to 16,000 people arriving in Canada per year illegally.⁶
- Girls as young as 12 are trafficked in Canada for sexual purposes according to Criminal Intelligence Service Canada’s 2008 Strategic Intelligence Brief, Organized Crime and Domestic Trafficking in Persons in Canada.²
- There have been five convictions of human trafficking since the Human Trafficking law was enacted in the criminal code in 2005. There are 12 outstanding cases at the moment according to the Justice Canada representative at the Bill C-268 committee hearings.²

Canada

For the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour, Canada has become a source, place of transit, and destination for exploited individuals.⁷ Human trafficking in Canada has been found to occur discreetly behind prostitution fronts, like escort agencies and residential brothels, and is extremely difficult for law enforcement to detect without proactive investigations. Some victims of domestic human trafficking in Canada have been underage girls exploited through prostitution in exotic dance clubs and/or escort services. Domestic trafficking victims in Canada have mostly been recruited through the Internet or by an acquaintance. The victims were groomed, manipulated, and coerced to enter the sex trade.⁸

By law, Canada prohibits all forms of human trafficking through Section 279.01-279.04 of the Criminal Code. Transnational human trafficking is specifically prohibited by Section 118 of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a \$1 million fine.⁷ Recent convictions of human trafficking have mostly involved individuals found guilty of trafficking citizens and/or permanent residents of Canada for the purpose of sexual exploitation.⁸

In 2006, Canada strengthened victim protection by providing foreign trafficking victims with Temporary Residency Permit and quick access to health benefits and services. Alberta now extends Income Support Benefits to trafficked persons with a Temporary Resident's Permit. It is the first province to provide this support.⁷

Alberta

According to the 2008 Alberta Report on Organized Crime from the Criminal Intelligence Service, human trafficking appears to manifest itself in two distinct forms. The first form is the trafficking of foreign individuals into Alberta by criminal networks. Recent investigations have revealed that women and young girls from several Asian countries have been brought to Canada under the guise of visitor or work visas. Once these women arrive in Canada, they are redistributed to urban centres within Canada and forced to work in the sex trade to pay off the travel arrangement 'fees' they owe. Victims of this form of human trafficking can be found within run-down houses and illegitimate massage parlours throughout Alberta.⁷

The second form of human trafficking that has been reported in Alberta is the recruitment and movement of Canadian born women by organized crime groups. Young women are recruited unwittingly into the sex trade and then appear to be circulated throughout major centres within Canada and the United States. The movement of these women is believed to be orchestrated and controlled by multiple criminal networks operating in Alberta. Information indicates that the organized crime groups may cooperate with each other on occasion and are possibly associated to a larger organized crime networks which stretch across Canada.⁷

Informative Books and Publications

Benjamin Perrin (2010). *Invisible Chains: Canada's Underground World of Human Trafficking*. Viking Canada.

International Labor Organization (2005). *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour*.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (February 2009). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

Department of State (June 2010). *Trafficking in persons report: 10th Edition*. United States of America.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (March 2010). *Human Trafficking in Canada: A Threat Assessment*. Government of Canada.

NOTES

- 1 United Nations (December 2000). "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Organized Crime." Online at http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf.
- 2 World Vision (2011). "Human Trafficking Statistics - Global and Canadian." Online at <http://www.worldvision.ca/ContentArchives/content-stories/Pages/human-trafficking-statistics-global-and-canadian.aspx>.
- 3 International Labor Organization (2005). *A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour*.
- 4 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (February 2009). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.
- 5 Department of State (June 2010). *Trafficking in persons report: 10th Edition*. United States of America.
- 6 Canada Fights Human Trafficking (2010). "The Problem." Online at <http://www.canadafightshumantrafficking.com/canada.html>.
- 7 ACT Alberta (2011). "About Human Trafficking." Online at <http://www.actalberta.org/about-human-trafficking>.
- 8 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (March 2010). *Human Trafficking in Canada: A Threat Assessment*. Government of Canada.



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