

Submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women
National Consultation on Human Trafficking of Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People
Glenda Carson and Rolande Chernichan, May 2023

The trafficking of human beings is an affront to the dignity of the human person and a violation of their human rights.¹ Human trafficking is a gender-based crime, with most victims being women and girls. The majority of victims live socially or economically vulnerable lives. Statistics support that there is an overrepresentation of aboriginal girls and women, children and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, especially transgender persons. Others include youth from all socio-economic backgrounds, migrants and new immigrants, and those fleeing violence and neglect.²

Human trafficking corridors protect perpetrators from prosecution because they cross municipal and provincial jurisdictions, making it harder to detect, investigate, and prosecute human trafficking cases. These challenges, combined with the reluctance of victims to press charges and testify, reduce the success of prosecuting human trafficking cases, with only one in eight cases resulting in a guilty decision for a human trafficking charge. The corridors also make it challenging for victims to be able to escape and access community support groups, law enforcement and members of the public.³

While not the sole factor, human trafficking is associated with the sex trade. *Bill C-36, Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, targets perpetrators to counteract the exploitation of vulnerable Canadians.⁴ PCEPA follows the approach of the Equality Model to reduce sexual exploitation, recognizing that most individuals are not in prostitution by choice.⁵

The internet and social media contribute to human trafficking as most women and girls are recruited through digital media or by acquaintances. This is especially true for Indigenous women and girls from many Northern communities.⁶ Research has identified a gap in sufficient data about children's online habits being collected by research sources, such as Statistics Canada.⁷

¹ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church*. <https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CCCB-Human-Trafficking-Pastoral-Letter-2021-1.pdf>

² Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking. *Sex Trafficking*. <https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.ca/sex-trafficking/>

³ Government of British Columbia. *Human Trafficking RCMP Findings*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/human-trafficking/human-trafficking-training/module-2/rcmp-findings>

⁴ Government of Canada (2023). *Technical Paper: Bill C-36, Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/protect/p1.html#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20offences%20found,purchasing%20or%20selling%20sexual%20services.>

⁵ Government of Canada. Justice Laws Website. *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*. [https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_25/page-1.html#:~:text=This%20enactment%20amends%20the%20Criminal,to%20in%20paragraph%20\(a\)%3B](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_25/page-1.html#:~:text=This%20enactment%20amends%20the%20Criminal,to%20in%20paragraph%20(a)%3B)

⁶ Native Women's Association of Canada. *Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada*. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/JUST/Brief/BR10002955/br-external/NativeWomensAssociationOfCanada-e.pdf>

⁷ CSA Group, *Children's Safety and Privacy in the Digital Age*. <https://www.csagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/CSA-Group-Research-Childrens-Safety-and-Privacy-in-the-Digital-Age.pdf>

The Government of Canada is committed to preventing and addressing human trafficking, as outlined in the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.⁸ The following two pending bills address specific aspects of concern related to human trafficking:

- *Bill C-308: An Act Respecting the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking*.⁹ calls for a national strategy to end human trafficking that would include support for education that expands community awareness of human trafficking, support of culturally appropriate, trauma-informed community supports for victims and enactment of laws that better protect victims and ensure prosecution of perpetrators.
- *Bill S-210 Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act*.¹⁰ requires all pornographic websites accessible in Canada to use age verification to limit children's access to their content. Non-compliance would result in fines or blocking orders.

Recommendations

Encourage the Canadian government to:

- enforce the current laws on prostitution, staying true to the intent of *Bill C-36 - Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA)*.
- support research efforts that explore the influence pornography has on human trafficking and identify effective strategies for children's online safety, such as age verification.
- provide adequate funding for developing exit strategies that are trauma-informed, culturally sensitive community supports.
- continue to fund public education initiatives that focus on identifying the elements of human trafficking and the laws in place to combat it.
- support legislation and law enforcement efforts that increase the capacity of the criminal justice system to identify and prosecute human trafficking perpetrators.
- support legislation that prevents and intervenes with human trafficking, such as *Bill C-306: An Act respecting the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* and *Bill S-210 Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act*.

Who we are:

We are concerned citizens, mothers and grandmothers.

Glenda Carson: I am a retired perinatal clinical nurse specialist, currently teaching as a part-time academic at a local university. I have strived to be an ally and advocate for good government for those disadvantaged and most vulnerable in our society throughout my nursing career, my Ph.D. research interests, and community volunteer service, including being an active member for over 35 years in The Catholic Women's League of Canada.

Rolande Chernichan: I am a retired business owner with a lifetime of community volunteer involvement with a particular interest in social justice and advocacy to government achieved through initiating resolutions as a 35-year member of The Catholic Women's League and currently serving at the national level.

⁸ Statistics Canada. *Juristat Bulletin—Quick Fact. Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2021.*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-005-x/2022001/article/00001-eng.htm>

⁹ Government of Canada. LEGISinfo. *Bill C-308. National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Act.*

<https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bills?keywords=human%20trafficking>

¹⁰ Government of Canada. LEGISinfo. *Bill S-210 - An Act to Restrict Young Persons' Online Access to Sexually Explicit Material.* <https://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/s-210>