

# HUMAN

## TRAFFICKING

**NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO  
RESEARCH ALLIANCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**for the purpose of sexual exploitation**



# **NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO RESEARCH ALLIANCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR THE PURPOSE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (NORAHT)**



Nipissing University, Amelia Rising Sexual Assault Centre of Nipissing, the Union of Ontario Indians, and the AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area have partnered to investigate human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation sex trafficking in Northeastern Ontario. The community organizations in the research partnership encounter suspicions and rumours of sex trafficking in their everyday work in the Nipissing region. While research exists on trafficking in and through large urban centers across the nation, including Southern Ontario, less is known about the processes and patterns of human trafficking in the North, which has rural, remote and underserved communities, as well as diverse Indigenous cultures. Thus, the research project aims to:

1. Understand patterns of trafficking in Northeastern Ontario;
2. Identify service gaps and barriers for persons who have been trafficked; and
3. Recommend social policy measures for the prevention of sex trafficking.

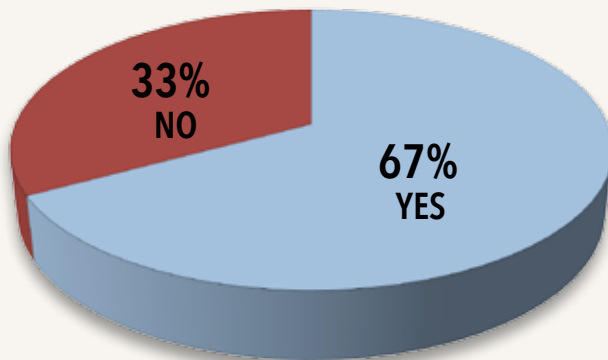


Fig. 1: Service provider awareness of human trafficking in the region.

In the spring of 2016, the research group conducted a baseline survey with 42 service providers across Northeastern Ontario (police agencies, victim support services, domestic violence services, mental health agencies, Indigenous support agencies, etc.). A majority of the service providers who were surveyed have heard that human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is occurring in the region (see Figure 1). For some, however, this awareness appears to be based on suspicions, rumour, and media reports, rather than conclusive evidence.

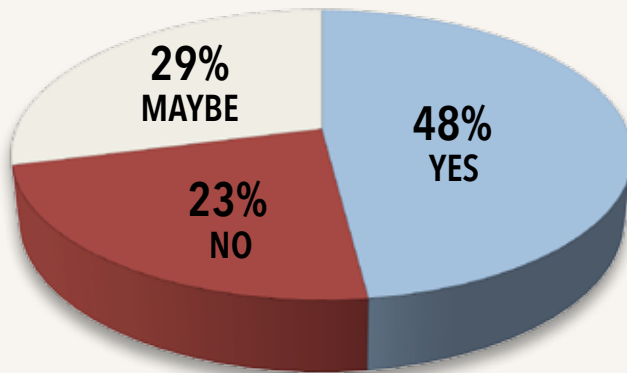


Fig. 2: Service providers who have encountered a trafficked person.

Nonetheless, almost half of the survey participants (N=22) say they have encountered a trafficked person in the last six months, mainly due to clients disclosing that they have been trafficked (N=18). Over one quarter of the surveyed service providers are unsure but suspect they have encountered a trafficked person in the last six months. Twenty-three percent do not think they have encountered sex trafficking in their work (see Figure 2).

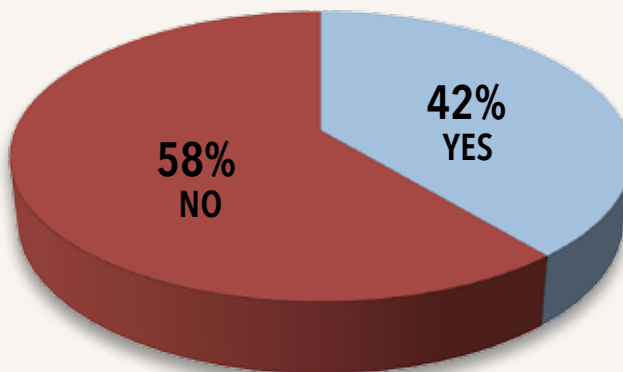


Fig. 3: Service providers who have had training on human trafficking.

Trafficked persons may not disclose that they are in a coercive situation due to fear of retaliation from traffickers or distrust in service providers. Therefore, it is very important that service providers learn how to identify sex trafficking. The survey revealed that there is a lack of clarity amongst service providers regarding the definition and indicators of sex trafficking. Fifty-eight percent of service providers do not have any training in sex trafficking (Figure 3), and 61% do not feel confident in their ability to identify a person who has been

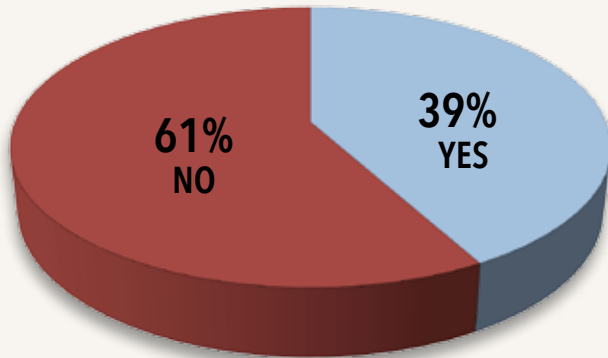
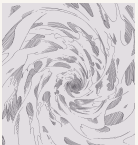


Fig. 4: Service provider confidence in ability to identify human trafficking.

trafficked (Figure 4). All of these factors hamper the ability to respond to sex trafficking in the region. Yet, the survey shows that multiple indicators of sex trafficking—sex work coercion, untreated medical problems, forced labour or debt, and isolation—are present in the region.



**The information gathered confirms that human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is an issue in Northeastern Ontario and that community-appropriate steps must be taken to strategically prepare organizations and service providers to be able to identify and serve survivors.**

Survey participants who have encountered or suspect they have encountered a trafficked person indicated that almost all the cases involved the domestic trafficking Canadian citizens, with an even split between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women (only one respondent out of 18 encountered a trafficked man). Furthermore, the methods of recruitment—through a trusted person or overt coercion—are consistent with national patterns of recruitment for domestic trafficking.

The survey data shows that the needs of trafficked persons are far-ranging, with basic needs such as safe housing, transportation, food, and communication with social supports being the most pressing. Another critical request that clients make is access to the therapeutic treatment for PTSD, depression, anxiety, etc. or access to addictions treatment/harm reduction (see Figure 5).

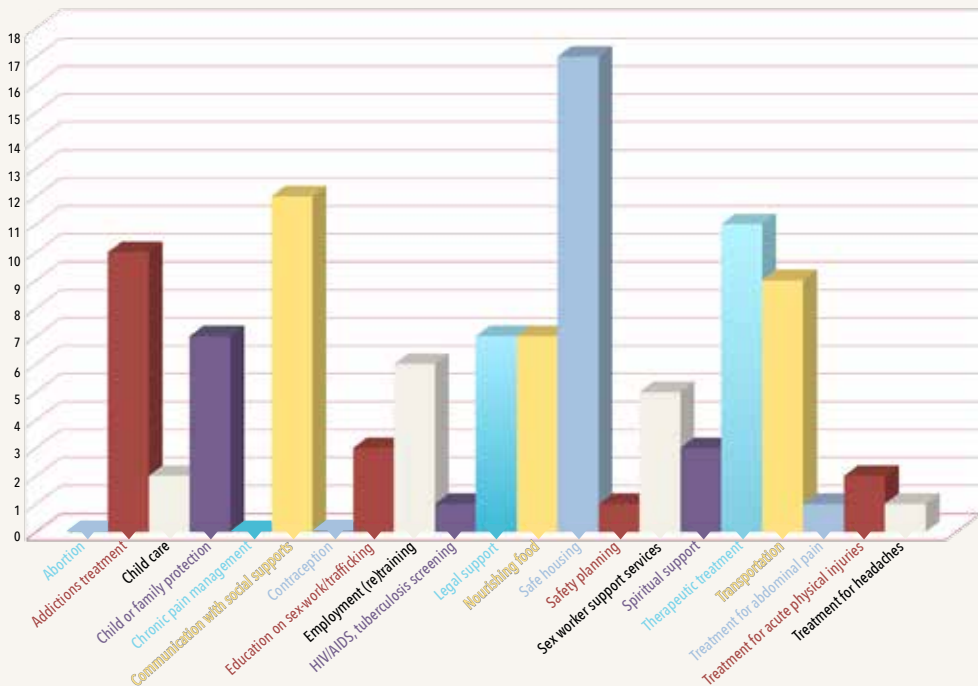
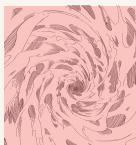
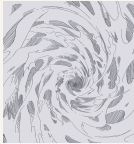


Fig. 5: Needs of trafficked persons.



**In the coming months, the research group will be building on its analysis of the baseline survey through participatory action workshops with service providers across the region. The long-term objective is to establish a regional anti-trafficking coalition that will support service providers and broader communities to meet the complex needs of the women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. To become involved in the project or for further information, please contact [noraht@nipissingu.ca](mailto:noraht@nipissingu.ca).**



**The RCMP define trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation or harbouring of persons for the purpose of exploitation (typically in the sex industry or for forced labour. Traffickers use various methods to maintain control over their victims, including force, sexual assault, threats of violence and physical or emotional abuse. Human trafficking may occur across or within borders, may involve extensive organized crime networks, and is clearly a violation of the basic rights of its victims.”**



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