

## **Written Statement for 54<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council**

by Women's Federation for World Peace International and Co Signatories

### **Trafficking in Men and Boys, Detrimental Impacts and Rebuilding Lives**

#### **Introduction**

*"Boys and men are struggling. Profound economic and social changes of recent decades have many losing ground in the classroom, the workplace, and in the family. While the lives of women have changed, the lives of many men have remained the same or even worsened. Our attitudes, our institutions, and our laws have failed to keep up."*<sup>1</sup> (Reeves, 2022)

Human trafficking is happening worldwide, and it sadly affects men, women, and children alike. Both genders are being affected, however, this review will examine the effects of how males are being affected in adulthood specifically because of their traumatic experiences in childhood. Such cases are overlooked in research; therefore, it is required that society as a whole, governmental organizations, further scrutinize and understand this rising problem from the stigma men are associated with. We need to address and strategize together to come up with effective preventative solutions and in hopes provide emotional support to those vastly affected, within a new paradigm for men's empowerment.

We will address a number of worldwide case studies in this study, however let us start by examining a 2020 statistic of this issue stated by *The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking*, that "most research suggests that 10 to 20% of all males will experience some form of sexual abuse or sexual assault at some point in their lives", while the Ontario government echoes this statement by saying the number is 'approximately one in six', and while other studies suggest this number could be even higher."<sup>2</sup>

While domestic violence is heavily discussed in the media, often portraying the female experience, it is often not taken seriously, or overlooked, if men experience violence. This discounting of the male experience is again emerging because of how they are labelled. If they are being abused or experiencing a form of violence and voice this, they may be labelled as weak, powerless, effeminate, etc.

#### **Current situation**

While numerous studies have provided us with a better understanding of human trafficking, much of these cases bring about an analysis of how females are subjected to such horrendous treatment. We have a tendency to refrain from raising the issues of males, because of its implications and/or societal perceptions, as stated in the previous section. While there are some organizations beginning to show the importance of equity of both genders, there is still much work to be done. Let us examine the example of a male named *Jose Alfaro*, who is 16 years of age. He was put in the situation where he was pushed out of his home because of his sexual orientation, thus forcing him into the world of male

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<sup>1</sup> Richard V. Reeves. "Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do About It," Swift Press. September 2022.

<sup>2</sup> "Sex Trafficking of Males," Human Trafficking Insights, The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, July 2 2020,

<https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.ca/sex-trafficking-of-males/>

trafficking for the very purpose of his survival. Moreover, boys may be forced to raise money for drugs for the purpose of their families, or they have a history of rape by a family member or neighbour, which demonstrates that there are various reasons for which trafficking occurs. Jennifer McKim, of *NPR*, reinforced this mindset, by saying, that “male victims often go unseen and unhelped.”<sup>3</sup>

### Impacts of Males Being Trafficked

The trafficking industry has had an enormous impact on adult men, particularly if they were put in the position of being exploited as children. Those affected are now traumatized for their horrendous experiences, and undoubtedly exhibit struggles with mental health. For example, “boys and men who have been trafficked present with issues that are similar to many victims of complex trauma: poverty, sexual abuse, violence or living in a home where substance abuse takes place. Behaviors can include drug use, running away, depression, anxiety and oppositional behavior disorders.”<sup>4</sup>

### Latest Research

As stated previously, there is evidence to show that trafficking of males is beginning to be researched and discussed in the media. One campaign by the name of *HeForShe*<sup>5</sup>, establishes itself with various partners around the globe, advocates and emphasizes the need for gender equality. While HeForShe stands up against the maltreatment of both genders, it also emphasizes the need for respect between genders. Furthermore, they reinforce the importance of what role men play in institutions and the valuable contributions they can make.

There are surprising recently published Canadian statistics that show males are being trafficked at noticeably higher rates than females, particularly as they get older. See Fig. 1 below for a clearer picture of this pattern.

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<sup>3</sup> “Growing Number Of Male Survivors Talk About Being A Sex Trade Victim,” National, *NPR*, May 24 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/24/999726614/growing-number-of-male-survivors-talk-about-being-a-sex-trade-victim>

<sup>4</sup> Raney, Rebecca Fairley. “Unseen victims of sex trafficking,” *American Psychological Association: Monitor on Psychology*, Vol 48, No. 4, p. 22, April 2017, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/04/sex-trafficking>

<sup>5</sup> “HeForShe Alliance Impact Report 2022,” UN Women, HeForShe Alliance, 2022, [https://www.heforshe.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/HeForShe%20Alliance%20Impact%20Report%202022\\_1.pdf](https://www.heforshe.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/HeForShe%20Alliance%20Impact%20Report%202022_1.pdf)

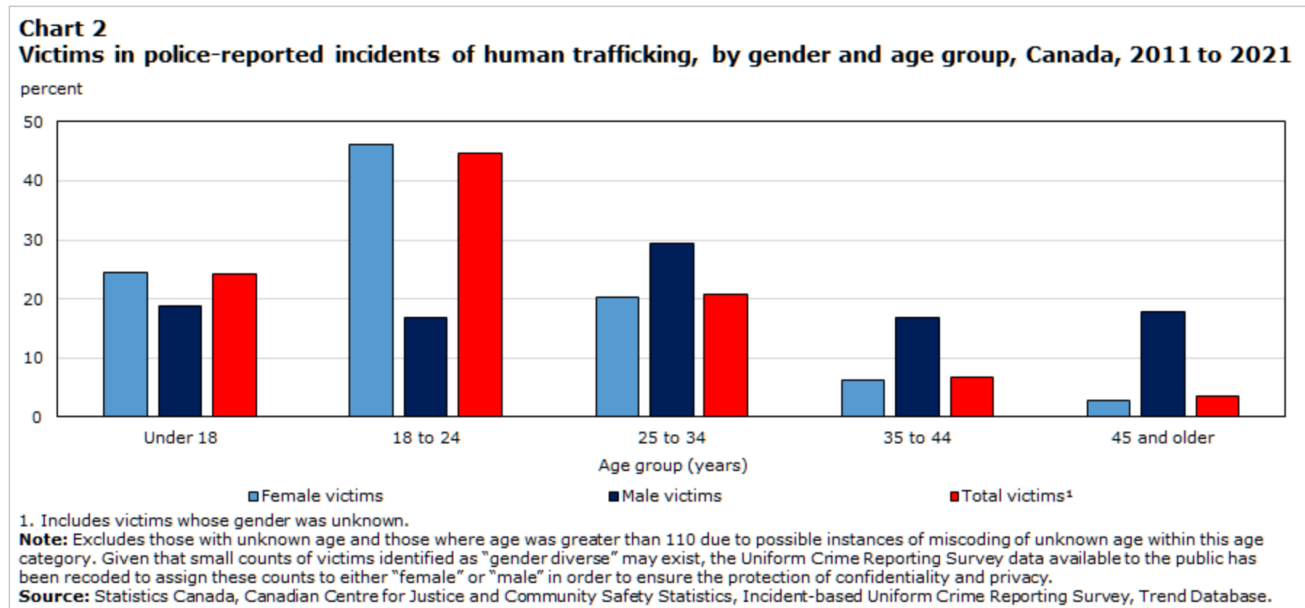


Fig. 1 Human trafficking showing differences in age and gender, StatCan 2022.<sup>6</sup>

The ways in which males and females are controlled in trafficking are somewhat diverse, in the fact that females are often subject to various forms of abuse while men are frequently controlled "through false promises, and labour related methods such as withholding of earnings and excessive working hours."<sup>7</sup> This shows an evident indication that males have been exploited for the purposes of labour more so than females, however in recent years, specifically since 2012, the increase of sexual exploitation amongst men has increased.

In reference to children being trafficked, the pattern is similar to the above discussion. The evidence appears to show that prior to 2012, labour exploitation was more common amongst boys more so than girls, whereas girls were victims of more sexual exploitation. Although, as the trend shows, this is beginning to change amongst children as well, and there is an increase of sexual exploitation in boys. We need to first acknowledge this increase, understand the reasoning for it, and we have to make a positive change for the lives of boys and adult men who have experienced such trauma.

### Rights and Empowerment of Men

It is apparent that research acknowledges that males are being ignored in regards to documenting and discussing the impacts of human trafficking it has on them. There is further understanding and reflection needed in order to move forward and advocate for the rights and empowerment of men. We need to allow their voices to be heard, listened to and understand what they need from society as a whole and how they should rightfully be seen in the public eye.

As we continue to analyze the reasoning for men and boys being overlooked in this trade, we realize that cases are also considered underreported. The United Nations estimates that boys account for

<sup>6</sup> "Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2021," Statistics Canada, December 6 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-005-x/2022001/article/00001-eng.htm>

<sup>7</sup> "Human Trafficking and Gender: Differences, Similarities and Trends," CTDC, August 14 2023, <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends>

15% of global trafficking victims, and adult men account for 20%.<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that there are 1,000,000 orphans worldwide, while 5700 children become orphans every day. One may question how many of these orphans involuntarily are led to the trafficking industry. Furthermore, UNICEF states that “60% of orphan girls will become victims of the sex trade, 10-15% of orphan children will commit suicide before age 18 and 70% of orphan boys in Eastern Europe will become criminals.”<sup>9</sup> This is a frightening thought, which provides another reason why we must act immediately to stop this rising trend from continuing.

While it is clear that much work needs to be done in order to address human trafficking, the government, specifically *Public Safety Canada* is combatting the issue specifically by implementing the *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking*. This detailed and complex plan involves strategizing and supporting Government of Canada’s commitments through prevention, addressing gender-based violence and supporting safety and security of Indigenous peoples. They also focus on the idea of “empowerment” which will in hopes provide needed services to victims and survivors, help them regain control and independence. Moreover, they place emphasis on increasing public awareness, education and capacity building to prevent victimization of vulnerable and marginalized populations.<sup>10</sup> While this is indeed promising that such measures are being put in place, it is an international problem, therefore governments and organizations worldwide must take the same tactics and follow similar procedures.

### Victims Can Bring Valuable Contributions

If men and women alike are given the support they need to prosper in their lives, they can then move forward by contributing to the workforce, develop valuable skills and/or assets to implement in their personal and professional lives. Men who have moved on from this horrific cycle, can potentially establish a relationship with the victimized, obtain their inside story, provide needed empathy and give a voice for which they do not yet have.

Philippines, in particular, is a country showing high numbers of sexual or labour exploitation and migrant workers are being impacted the most. Such industries include industrial fishing, shipping, construction, education, home healthcare, amongst many others.<sup>11</sup> If migrant workers were given the support, and further governmental policy were put in place, similar to Canada, they could potentially turn their lives around, be proactive and advocate against such reoccurrences. Officials in Philippines must further investigate and arrest individuals to prevent purchasing of commercial sex. Furthermore, more training must be provided so indicators of human trafficking are seen. Such poor methodology must be significantly improved in order to ensure a promising future exists for migrant workers.

### What Research is Lacking

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<sup>8</sup> “Human Trafficking Victims Include Boys and Men, Too,” The Orphans Hands, Platinum Transparency, August 14 2023, <https://www.theorphanshands.org/human-trafficking-victims-include-boys-and-men-too/#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20they%27re%20more,%2C%20abuse%2C%20and%20domestic%20violence.>

<sup>9</sup> **UNICEF. 2021.**

<sup>10</sup> “National Strategy To Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024,” Public Safety Canada, Government of Canada, July 21 2022, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2019-ntnl-strtyg-hmnn-trffc/index-en.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> “2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines,” Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, U.S. Department of State, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/philippines/#:~:text=A%20significant%20number%20of%20Filipino,janitorial%20service%2C%20and%20other%20hospitality%2D>

Aside from what was already stated in regard to having unreported cases, Barron from American Psychological Association, who has organized human trafficking conferences in Miami, states that they do not have conclusive data of the actual numbers. Therefore, they are unable to provide any shelters for men and/or boys. He states that if we do rescue boys off the street, we have to question where they will end up going.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, we need to document further cases of males who have been trafficked, in whichever form. By placing their story for the public to see and being explicit as to their experience, society can then begin to understand the trauma many males have faced. Moreover, gender equality is essential to understand and practice in their daily lives. Persons of all cultures need to be educated so they are aware of how to treat their partners with respect. Moreover, there needs to be further research/publications produced that discuss the ways in which to prevent further trafficking from occurring amongst the developing countries.

Such campaigns like *HeForShe* need to be reproduced and governments need to follow a similar mission and be more proactive regarding the children who are being trafficked, whilst recognizing the impact it has had on their lives. In the visions of the safety and security of children, objectives must be determined when putting preventative strategies in place. This is so the purpose of leading a positive lifestyle can begin to take shape.

Taking action by promoting public awareness, advocating for gender equality and gender rights, is crucial when governmental organizations devise plans for prevention against human trafficking. Addressing the increase of male sexual exploitation is essential in order to move forward in formulating preventative strategies in a gender disaggregated context. We must also as a society acknowledge this perception of men who have experienced such violence, provide them with the support they need to stand up and admit they have been abused and to find their dignity and rightful place in society.

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<sup>12</sup> Raney, Rebecca Fairley. "Unseen victims of sex trafficking," American Psychological Association: Monitor on Psychology, Vol 48, No. 4, p. 22, April 2017, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/04/sex-trafficking>