Hearing Them

African Nova Scotian and Black Experiences of Sex Work, Childhood and Youth Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Nova Scotia

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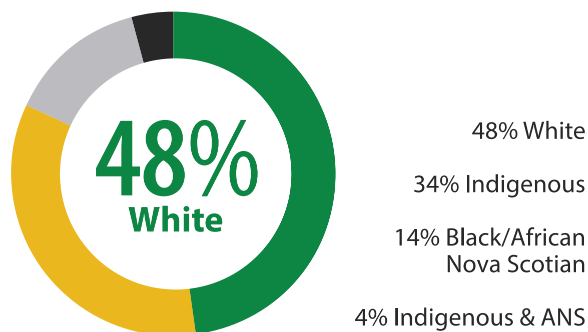
Introduction:

In 2021, the YWCA Halifax, the Association of Black Social Workers, and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association conducted a wide scale consultation, titled *Hearing Them*, involving 149 adult individuals with either past or present lived experience in the sex industry.

This paper is part one of a five-part paper series and describes the findings from these consultations related to understanding, addressing, and preventing risk factors for the involvement of children and youth in the sex industry in Nova Scotia. The other papers written by experts in these communities include papers specific to the Risk and Prevention, the Indigenous Community, the justice system, and stigma.

The survey provided sex workers in Nova Scotia with the opportunity to share about their journey, so that the public and service providers can learn from their lived experience and provide the resources needed to help those transitioning out of the industry. This article outlines findings from African Nova Scotian and Black respondents of the ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey.

Racial Identity



Sexual Orientation

30% Identified as 2SLGBTQ+

In terms of the racial demographics of all Hearing Them Survey respondents, 17.6% identified as African Nova Scotian or Black. Of the African Nova Scotian and Black respondents (hereafter referred to as respondents of the "ANS and Black Hearing Them Survey"), 24% identified as having at least one parent who was Indigenous.

"Black" and "African Nova Scotian" Hearing Them Survey Respondents:

For the purposes of this report, "Black" is a general term used to describe individuals who can trace their racial origins to the African continent and can relate to a history of colonisation and enslavement. "African Nova Scotian" is a term used to describe people who culturally or historically identify with the 400-year lineage of Black people of African descent in Nova Scotia. "African Nova Scotians" are the descendants of multiple waves of Black immigration to Canada, including Black Loyalists, Refugees, Maroons and other Black people who inhabited the fifty-two historically Black communities in the province (African Nova Scotian Affairs, n.d.). In 2016, 71.8% of the Black population in Nova Scotia identified as third-generation or more (Maheux & Do, 2019).

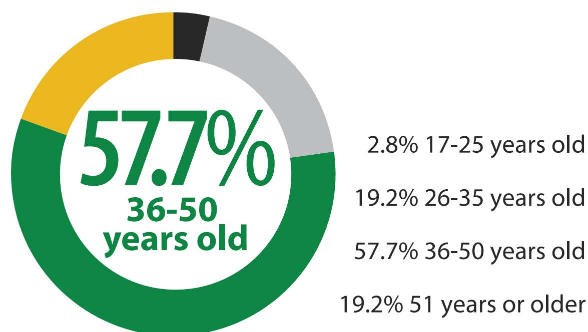
Little research exists on the Black experience with sex work, and specificity of the African Nova Scotian experience in the province. One of the goals of this Report is to shed light on this experience and provide service providers with the tools needed to interrupt the cycle of sexual exploitation and help those who would like to transition out of the industry.

Overview of the Report: Sections, Demographics, Recruitment, Terminology:

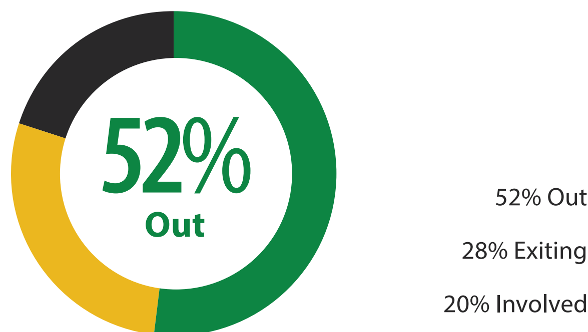
Findings from the respondents of the ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey are interwoven throughout the Report. In the first section, a general overview is provided on sex work, human trafficking and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (CSEC). The second section addresses the impact of systemic racism and inequality on the Black community in Canada, and the African Nova Scotian communities in the province. The third and fourth sections address the relationship between grooming, pimping, and social influences on the respondents' experiences of sex work, human trafficking, and CSEC. The final section addresses how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and risk factors can impact a person's decision to enter the sex trade. The Report concludes with a discussion on the barriers people who work in the sex industry face when trying to access services and supports, and recommendations for moving forward.

In terms of the age range, the majority (57.7%) were between the ages of 36 - 50, 19.2% were 51 years old and older, 19.2% were between the ages of 26 - 35, and 2.8% were between the ages of 17 - 25. All of the respondents identified as female, and 24% identified as part of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community. In terms of their level of engagement in the sex industry, 52% had exited at the time of the Survey, 28% were exiting and 20% were still involved.

ANS How old are you?



Level of Engagement



Half of the respondents were referred to the survey from four community-based organisations (the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Center, YWCA Halifax's NSTAY Program, and Stepping Stone), and half were referred from community.

It is important to use the right terms when describing the sex work industry and those who participate in it. The first reason is because not everyone who works in the sex industry considers themselves to be a sex worker. For example, sugar babies, escorts and strippers may not provide sexual favours to clients. Secondly, exploitation does not form an integral part of every sex worker's experience. As will be illustrated in the section below, many sex workers participate in the industry with full consent and autonomy, and even youth who participate might consider themselves to be doing so willingly (even though according to laws in Canada, anyone under the age of 18 who participates in sex work is being exploited). Service providers must be educated about the laws surrounding sex work and careful about the terms used to describe the industry and those participating in it so they do not alienate their clients. For more information on sex work, human trafficking and CSEC in Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada, see the YWCA's ***Hearing Them***: Exploring the Vulnerability and Risk Factors for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth in Nova Scotia.

Sex Work, Human Trafficking and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (CSEC):

The sex work industry is a billion-dollar industry that exists across the world, in many forms. Sex workers can exchange sexual favours for money and other needs such as shelter, food, and clothing. Their work can also vary, and include working in strip clubs, meeting clients in person or online, using camming websites, escorting, and acting as "sugar babies." The Spectrum of Choice Chart (Gagnon, 2020) below provides further detail on the multiple pathways to entry in the sex trade.

As the Spectrum of Choice Chart illustrates, some people enter the sex industry fully autonomous and educated about their decision to participate, while others enter it by means of force, fraud, manipulation, or coercion. People can also enter the industry because of a lack of access to opportunity and economic need. Depending on a person's ability to choose their circumstances, they might be considered trafficked, engaging in survival sex work, or fully empowered in their decision to participate in the industry.

THE SPECTRUM OF CHOICE

NO CHOICE	COERCED CHOICE	PERCEIVED CHOICE	SITUATIONAL CHOICE	APPARENT CHOICE	EVIDENT CHOICE
3RD PARTY CONTROLLED			MAY BE 3RD PARTY	INDEPENDANT	
KIDNAPPED	DECEIVED	MANIPULATED	CO-DEPENDANCY	EDUCATED DECISION TO PARTICIPATE	
FORCED	THREATENED	ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT	LACK OF ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY		ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY
CONFINED	BLACKMAILED /SEXTORTED	ECONOMIC DEPENDANCY			AUTONOMOUS
SLAVERY	SEXUAL EXPLOITATION		EXPLOITATIVE		EMPOWERED
TRAFFICKING			SURVIVAL SEX WORKER	SEX WORK	

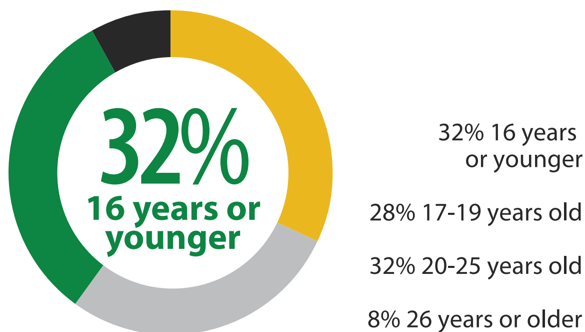
All of the ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey Respondents stated that they began working in the sex industry in Nova Scotia.

Human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation also exists for adults and is a subset of the category of human trafficking offences. Human trafficking is a criminal offence that involves exploiting people for their labour. Most human trafficking occurs when people are being forced to perform work duties that they are not being appropriately compensated for. Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation comprises 4 in 10 of trafficking cases (Conroy, 2022), and can be considered in terms of its impact on adults and minors. In Canada, people under the age of 18 who are involved in the sex industry are automatically considered to be sexually exploited. The name given to this type of offence is the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (CSEC).

Almost one-tenth (8.3%) of ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey Respondents stated that they were forced to enter the sex industry[1]. Thirty-two percent were 16 years or younger when they became involved (the youngest respondent entered the industry at 7), 28% were 17 - 19 years old, 32% were 20 - 25 years old and 8% were 26 years or older. This indicates that many of the sex workers were first exploited by the industry as children

[1] 8% of respondents did not answer this question.

How old were you when you first became involved?

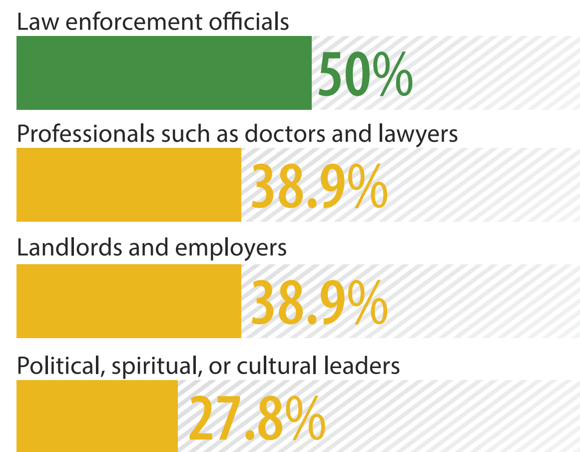


or youth. Furthermore, 61.5% of respondents stated that they have been sexually assaulted or experienced physical violence or emotional abuse from a customer and 92.3% of respondents stated that they have experienced physical violence or emotional abuse from a romantic partner. When these different experiences are considered together, they provide further evidence for the fact that even though not all sex workers are harmed by the industry, high rates of exploitation and abuse exist within the industry.

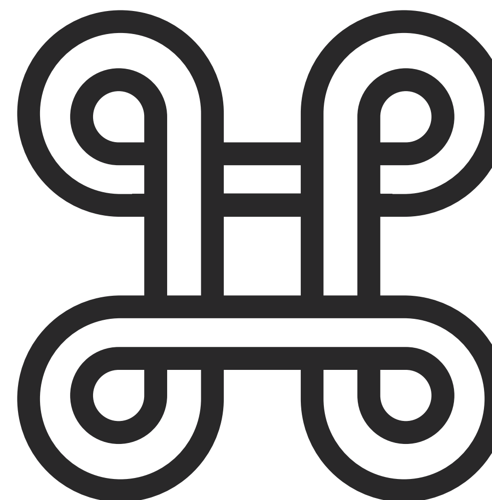
Difficult questions arise within the sex industry beyond the issue of choice or even abuse and exploitation. The tenuous legal status of sex work in many countries has also resulted in the criminalization of those involved in the industry. In Canada, laws exist that prohibit certain types of acts from taking place. According to Bill C-36, buying sex; attempting to buy sex; advertising, communicating, and/or profiting from the provision of sexual services; and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation are all illegal.

The majority of ANS and Black *Hearing Them* respondents (60%) had a criminal record, and 28% were incarcerated as youth. This demonstrates that a high correlation exists between involvement in the sex work industry and the criminal justice system. Yet even though procuring sexual services is illegal in Canada, 50% of respondents stated that they had dates with law enforcement officials, 38.9% with professionals such as doctors and lawyers, 27.8% with political, spiritual, or cultural leaders and 38.9% with landlords and employers.

Customers



*Respondents were asked to select all that apply, so percentages do not add up to 100%



MPATAPO - symbol of reconciliation, peacemaking and pacification
"knot of pacification/reconciliation"

Systemic Racism and its impact on the African Nova Scotian and Black community in Canada:

There are multiple pathways to entry within the sex industry. Some people enter as fully autonomous agents in control of their decisions, while others enter by means of exploitation. All these decisions are made against a backdrop of social and economic circumstances that often extend beyond an individual's control. When it comes to the Black community in Canada, these circumstances include a history of slavery and anti-Black racism in the country.

In Nova Scotia, the history of anti-Black racism extends four hundred years. The province is home to one of the largest Indigenous Black populations in Canada, the Preston Township, and its Black population has experienced generations of systemic discrimination, including slavery. However, African Nova Scotians are not only the descendants of slaves. Their family tree is also composed of Black Loyalists and waves of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean, who formed part of the over fifty historically Black communities in the province. African Nova Scotians experienced overt racism, from living in segregated communities, to being given the worst plots of land to cultivate and live on and by having their communities used as dumping grounds for waste (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994; Waldron, 2018).

Presently, Black people in Nova Scotia experience higher rates of socioeconomic inequality than other groups in the province. According to a 2016 Statistics Canada report entitled "Canada's Black Population: Education, Labour and Resilience" (Do, 2020), for Black individuals between the ages of 25 - 59 in Halifax,

> **Both men and women in the Black population were less likely than their counterparts in the rest of the population to hold a bachelor's degree or higher, but the gap was more pronounced for women (14 percentage points).**
>
> **The unemployment rate for Black men was two and a half times higher than that for men in the rest of the population.**
>
> **There was a gap of $20,000 between median annual wages of Black men and that for the other men of this region. For women, the gap was not as large ($8,000).**
>
> **The percentage of Black children living in a low-income situation in Halifax was 38.5%—more than double the percentage for the rest of the population.**

All of the factors noted above have a negative impact on the overall health and well-being of African Nova Scotians. They have also contributed to intergenerational trauma, which has manifested itself in a lack of trust in state authorities and challenges experiencing an overall sense of physical and mental health and well-being (Leary, 2005; Mullings et al., 2021).

In recent years, the issue of systemic racism in the criminal justice system has been at the forefront of collective conversation. Black and Indigenous peoples across Canada are incarcerated at much higher rates than other groups (The Canadian Press, 2022), which is in part due to the systemic discrimination that exists in the justice system (see, for example, Government of Canada, 2021).

Given the high rates of interaction between the Black community, law enforcement, and the tenuous legal status of sex work in Canada, it should serve as no surprise that 60% of ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey respondents reported having a criminal record and 72% stated that they had encounters with police in community. Of those who noted having an encounter with police, 44.4% stated that the experience was positive, 38.9% stated that it was negative, and 16.7% stated that it was both. A little over half (54.5%) of respondents stated that they have experienced physical violence or emotional abuse from police.[2] Yet despite the fragile relationship that the African Nova Scotian community has with law enforcement officials, 73.1% of respondents stated that they had called the police or RCMP, and of those 36.8% stated that the interaction was positive, 36.8% stated that it was negative, and 26.3% stated that it was both.

[2] 15.4% of respondents did not answer this question.

Grooming, Pimping, and Social Influences:

According to NSPCC, "Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited, or trafficked. Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender, or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative" (NSPCC, n.d.). According to one respondent of the ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey who entered the sex industry at 20,

"I was groomed and I was not aware I was being groomed."

A close relationship exists between grooming, pimping, and the multiple ways that people are influenced by peers and/or family to join the sex industry. These factors are discussed in more detail below.

Anyone could potentially groom a person into entering the sex industry, however some of the most visible people who are associated with exploitation in the sex trade are pimps. According to Bill C-36, a "pimp both induces another person to sell sexual services and receives money from the sale of those services" (Government of Canada, 2018). Pimps are often physically abusive and control the people they exploit through manipulation and emotional abuse. While there is no specific profile of a pimp, they can be categorized based on their relationship with their victims. Two of the main types of pimps are Romance Pimps and Gorilla Pimps. The "Gorilla Pimp" is an individual who uses force or physical abuse to control their victims while the "Romance Pimp" convinces the victim that they are in love and in a real relationship. The Romance Pimp is the most difficult to identify because the people who they exploit often develop an emotional connection to them. Trauma bonds can also form because of going through difficult times together. In the African Nova Scotian community, this type of trauma bond might be used to garner loyalty and make the victim feel as though they are betraying their perpetrator if they leave the relationship. Half (50%) of ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey respondents stated that they have experienced physical violence or emotional abuse from a pimp.[3]

Almost half (45.8%) of ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey respondents stated that they made the decision to enter the sex industry themselves while 54.2% stated that they did not.[4]

One respondent stated that she "didn't have a choice" and another stated "People were involved."

In terms of others who might have influenced their decision to enter, 34.8% of respondents stated that family involvement in the industry or influence positively impacted their decision to enter,[5] 29.2% stated that a romantic partner influenced their decision[6] and 29.2% stated that peers or friends influenced their decision.[7]

The data above demonstrates that there were strong social pressures in the participants lives that influenced their decisions to enter the sex industry. A "Peer influence" refers to when someone chooses to do something they would not usually do in hopes of being accepted or valued by people who they know. For example, according to one respondent, what increased their risk factor for being involved in the sex industry was that they

"Didn't have good education, product of my environment, hung around with many people who were involved in sex work/addiction."

[3] 38% of respondents to this question stated that it was either "not applicable" or did not answer.
[4] 8% of respondents did not answer this question.
[5] 11.5% of respondents did not answer this question.
[6] 8% of respondents did not answer this question.
[7] 8% of respondents did not answer this question.

In the African Nova Scotian community, a sense of family and belonging are central to people's self-development. African Nova Scotians have been raised to lean on each other for survival and support. To highlight this, when a respondent was asked what increased their risk when they first became involved in the sex industry, they answered:

"Disconnected from family, where this was a relationship I wanted to feel loved, I was attending University at that time."

This shows how important being connected to family is in the African Nova Scotian community. When people feel disconnected from their families and do not have anyone to talk them through their decisions it is easier for them to be influenced by their peers. Another respondent stated, they were

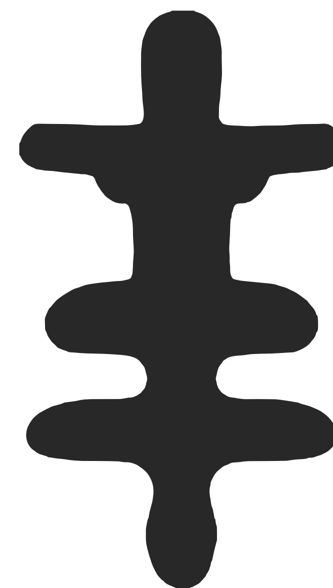
"able to leave sex work by finding a support system."

Due to the legacy of racism, segregation and isolation in the province, African Nova Scotians have had to stick together and protect each other. Through a deep sense of community and desiring more for our people, we have worked hard to preserve and maintain family bonds. "We went through a lot of things while growing up: segregation, being isolated. But we were still proud of who we were and in our small communities we did a lot of things together, directed by the parents and the community, so we were a unit." This quote, taken from an article by The CBC entitled "An Exploration of Black Communities Around Nova Scotia" (CBC News, 2016), highlights the importance of family and community connection.

In cases where people are living in poverty, some have turned to sex work as a means of bettering their lives. For example, when asked the question "When you first became involved what increased your risk?" one respondent from the ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey replied,

"I had to raise my brother."

This highlights the importance of keeping the family together by any means necessary. Risk of entry is increased when a member of the family is already in the sex industry. For example, when asked "When you first became involved did you keep the money you made?," one respondent stated that they entered the industry to help their mother. Another respondent's mother collected the money that they made. When family members are involved in this type of work, it is difficult to not become a part of it, as a victim or perpetrator.



okodee mmowere - symbol of strength, bravery, power - "the talons of the eagle"

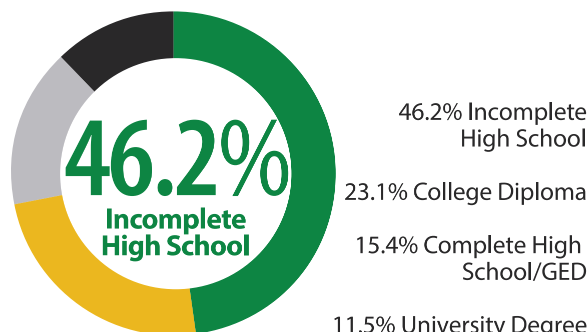
Adverse Childhood Experiences and Risk Factors for Involvement in the Sex Industry:

"Adverse Childhood Experiences" (ACEs) is a term used to describe negative or abusive experiences in childhood that can end up having long-term effects on a person's overall degree of happiness or sense of well-being. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example: experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home or community; having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with: substance use problems; mental health problems; instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2022).

According to the CDC, the consequences of ACEs include "chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adolescence and adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential" (Ibid.)

What is the highest level of Education that you have?



ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey respondents potentially speak to the issue of ACEs, when responding to a question about their highest level of education. Almost half of respondents (46.2%) did not complete high school, while 15.4% received a high school diploma, 23.1% received a college diploma and 11.5% received a college degree.

Almost one-fifth (19.2%) of respondents stated that they continue to experience learning challenges. In terms of their current pursuit of education,15.4% stated that they were currently enrolled in courses and 3.8% were in-between schooling. These rates of educational attainment might be reflective of the underlying family dynamic. In response to the question of what increased their risk when they first became involved in the industry, 48% of respondents attributed it to an unstable family dynamic (experienced violence in the family home, fighting with parents, were in foster care or group homes, or had family members involved in the sex industry).[8]

Some of the respondents also demonstrate that being exposed to ACEs might increase the likelihood of someone entering the sex industry or experiencing CSEC. Approximately 36% of all respondents were involved with Child Welfare or Mi'kmaq Family Services as a child or youth.[9] The vast majority of respondents stated that they experienced physical violence or emotional abuse in their family home (84.6%), 65.2% stated that they witnessed physical violence or emotional abuse as a child,[10] and 54.2% stated that they were sexually abused as a child.[11]

According to one respondent, when they first became involved in the industry, they were

"Forced to work at home through" their mom, who "would allow men to take me for periods of time she also used the basement for men to sexually abuse me."

[8] 3.8% of respondents did not answer this question.
[9] 3.8% of respondents did not answer this question.
[10] 11.5% of respondents did not answer this question.
[11] 8% of respondents did not answer this question.

Respondents also demonstrated that survival sex work or engaging in sex work to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and other basic necessities, might form a significant part of the reason why individuals enter the industry. This type of sex work is sometimes undertaken by children and youth, who might struggle to provide for themselves because of circumstances arising from ACEs. In response to the question "when you first became involved in the sex industry, what did you trade sexual services for?," only 50% of ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey respondents stated that they first traded services for cash. Sexual services were also traded for food (26.9%), cigarettes or substances (19.2%), rent or a place to stay (30.8%), safety (15.4%), transportation (11.5%), clothing or luxury items (15.4%), and other material items (11.5%). Respondents also stated that when they first became involved, they traded sexual services for tuition or school fees (3.8%) and hair or nails (3.8%).

The factors that increase the chances that someone will participate in the sex industry as adults or being exploited as children are "Risk Factors." Risk factors exist for independent and exploitative involvement in the sex industry. Factors such as being involved with child services, experiencing poverty or an overall lack of economic opportunity, contribute to the chances that someone will be exploited as a child or adult. Risk factors also intersect with race, because being racialized can increase a person's chances of experiencing social and economic marginalisation.

In response to the question of what increased their risk when they first became involved in the industry 68% of ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey respondents noted economic risk factors (needed money to survive, supporting kids or family), 44% stated cultural social and cultural risk factors (hanging out with people involved in the sex industry, bored or wanting excitement, experimenting with their sexuality), 44% stated substance use, 28% stated homelessness, and 16% stated school and community risk.[12] One respondent stated that running away from home increased their risk factor, while another stated that her mother was addicted to cocaine and crack and used to sell her.

50% Only accepted cash

Trades

Rent/A place to stay

Food

Cigarettes

Substances

Safety

Clothing

Luxury items

Transportation

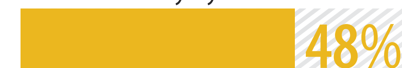
Other material items

Tuition/school fees

Risk factors

Economic risk factors

Unstable family dynamic



Social/cultural risk factors

Substance use

Homelessness

School and community risk

[12] 3.8% of respondents did not answer this question.

Mental Health:

In Nova Scotia, mental health continues to be an upwards battle for individuals and families in the African Nova Scotian communities. At times, individuals will turn to substances such as alcohol and drugs to escape their traumatic experiences that are damaging to people's health. For some individuals within the African Nova Scotian communities, mental health can go unchecked and misdiagnosed. In fact, on a national scale it is common for Black Canadians to not access mental health services. This creates vulnerabilities within the African Nova Scotian population that places individuals at risk for sexual exploitation.

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, "38.3% of Black Canadian residents with poor or fair self-reported mental health used mental health services compared with 50.8% White Canadian residents (between 2001 and 2014)" (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2022). Furthermore, "based on a 2018 survey of 328 Black Canadian residents; 60% said they would be more willing to use mental health services if the mental health professional were Black; 35.4% were experiencing significant psychological distress; 34.2% of whom never sought mental health services and 95.1% felt that the underutilization of mental health services by Black Canadian residents was an issue that needed to be addressed" (Ibid.).

ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey respondents noted the challenges they faced with mental health. Half of respondents stated that they had mental health issues or diagnoses at one point in their lives, and 15.4% stated that they had been involuntarily held in a facility due to their mental health status.

Barriers that African Nova Scotian people face in seeking mental health treatment include the underrepresentation of African Nova Scotian and Black service providers. It is challenging for African Nova Scotians to find physicians that provide culturally appropriate services. There is a lack of research on the status of mental health and addictions in the African Nova Scotian community.

While a lack of research exists on the status of mental health and addictions in the African Nova Scotian community, a significant research report was published in 2020 by Dr. Ingrid Waldron on ANS and Black women's experiences with mental health supports. "Black Women's Experiences with Mental Illness, Help-Seeking & Coping in the Halifax Regional Municipality" (Waldron, 2020) was a study developed to inform Nova Scotia Health Authority's approach to creating a mental health program for Black women called the Nova Scotia Sisterhood Initiative. The report concluded with five recommendations to help mold the Sisterhood Initiative into an organization that could "effectively address Black women's mental health needs:" (44)

Hiring Black health and mental health professionals with diverse educational and professional backgrounds

Offering holistic community-driven trauma-informed services.

Providing accessible services

Conducting community outreach to increase access to services

Creating awareness about the Nova Scotia Sisterhood and its services

Many of these recommendations are echoed in the feedback provided by ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey respondents.

Sankofa - symbol of importance of learning from the past - **"return and get it"**

Barriers to Exit:

Systemic factors that contribute to survival sex work create barriers for sex workers who want to exit the industry. Approximately half (52%) of participants had already exited the sex trade at the time of the survey, while 28% were exiting and 20% were still involved.[13]

Those who exited the industry stated that they did so for various reasons, including:

"family reasons"

"felt like it wasn't the life for me"

"got tired of the games, deceit, hussle, just the entire lifestyle in general. I wanted a different way of living"

"stopped doing drugs and had kids"

The first barrier to exit that ANS and Black *Hearing Them* Survey respondents identified was financial security. All (100%) of the respondents who were still involved in the sex industry stated that they continued because the money was good and 27% stated that they continued to be involved for survival (to provide for food or shelter). Some respondents stated that they did not want to work a minimum wage job (9.1%), liked the lifestyle (9.1%), or were afraid of the change they would have to make when leaving (9.1%). None stated that they continued to be involved to support substance use, a partner or family, or because sex work was their chosen career.

In response to the question of what career they would choose if they had the resources or supports, respondents stated that they would choose being "a youth advocate worker," chef, teacher, social worker, "cleaning company owner," "community advocate for high risk marginalised people," "counsellor," "Doctor," and "entrepreneur."

One respondent stated that they would "go back to school to get my grade 12 to have the option to do what I want to do"

Given that many of these careers require a certain degree of educational attainment and skill set, a second barrier to exit might be a lack of access to educational and skills development opportunities.

In terms of what they would need to exit the sex industry, respondents who were still involved stated that they would need a good job or income replacement (66.7%), safe, secure and affordable housing (33.3%), confidence to make the change (25%), a driver's license (8.3%) or change in identity (8.3%). One-quarter (25%) of respondents stated that they did not want to leave the industry. None of the respondents stated that to leave the industry they needed an opportunity to go to school, support for their substance use or protection from a pimp or partner.

What would you need to exit

A good job/income replacement

Safe, secure and affordable housing

Confidence to make the change

Driver's license

Change my identity

One-quarter (25%) of respondents stated that they did not want to leave the industry.

[13] 3.8% of survey respondents did not answer this question.

Accessing Services and Supports:

Some of the services that ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey respondents accessed (in no particular order) included Barry House, MOSH Housing, HECHC, Mainline, Stepping Stone, Elizabeth Fry Housing Support, Coverdale, food banks, Metro Works, the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Child Development Centre, Sexual Assault Centre, Maggie's Place (Truro), Women's Resource Centre (Truro), the methadone clinic, Phoenix Youth, Chebucto Family Centre and NSTAY. Respondents also accessed counselling services and reached out to family and friends for supports.

In terms of ANS and Black ***Hearing Them*** Survey respondents, 62.5% stated that they had used a transition house or homeless shelter in the past, 8.3% stated that they were currently using either one, and 29.2% stated that they had never used one.[14] Of those who used them, 55.6% stated that the experience was positive, 16.7% stated that the experience was negative and 27.8% stated that it was both. Under half (42.3%) of respondents stated that they had accessed a detox program, and of those 36.4% stated that it was effective for long-term recovery and 63.6% stated that it was not.

In terms of the supports that respondents stated they needed now, counselling and therapy services, financial literacy courses, housing support, "food and groceries," transportation and truck training. In terms of gaps in services currently provided, respondents stated that children in the welfare system could use support, "housing, better income from social assistance," education, mental health care and social services, phone support ("no one calls back"), and holistic alternatives to medications.

In response to the question of the services and supports that are currently not available but should be developed, respondents suggested "[affordable] housing. Better mental health care, better elderly care. Better schools," to "shine light on services available, mentorship in universities, more safe spaces, education to the youth, needs more programs for perpetrators," a "safe place for women," a safe place for sex workers to work and more support for sex workers, peer support, more programs for children in welfare, and more support for mothers.

A few respondents noted race and lack of culturally relevant services and supports as a gap: there are "not enough people who can identify with me. Systemic barriers [exist] based on race;" "not having enough black workers"; there are "not many for African Nova Scotian Women" and there "seems to be nothing out there for black people." When recommending services and supports, many respondents also referred to addressing the lack of diversity: "hire more black people"; "more ethnic based services, if there are any, [they are] not well known," "more supports and services that are specific to Black/ Indigenous people" and "something in place that is specific to African Nova Scotia women involved in the trades or for any other reason."

Racial barriers to service provision include a lack of representation in service providers and racialized stigma. Cultural barriers also exist, that include service providers potentially being unaware of the uniqueness of the lived experience of their clients. This is important to African Nova Scotians because agencies will often have service providers who are Black and yet there are still cultural barriers for African Nova Scotians to access services. Other types of barriers to accessing services and supports include transportation, especially for people living in rural communities, and the cost of accessing certain services, such as mental health support and psychiatric care.

[14] 8% of respondents stated that this question was not applicable to them.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

African Nova Scotians and Black people in the province have been able to withstand anti-Black racism, segregation, prejudice, poverty, and many systemic barriers. They have demonstrated resilience for many centuries and generations. The Survey participants shared what they felt worked for them when they were accessing services. Many participants stated that the best services reduced the influence of stigma on their ability to access support.

1. Non-judgmental support includes having staff who can validate and make participants feel accepted by not discrediting their experiences. When people are validated, they are able to build a more trusting relationship and feel safe to advocate for themselves.

This sense of validation was highlighted by a respondent in the ANS and Black Hearing Them survey stating that "I felt validated and accepted for the first time in my life."

2. Peer Support from someone who has been through the same or similar experience as the person they are trying to help is also important. That similar experience might be having the same racial or cultural background, experienced living in poverty or participating in the sex trade. Peer supporters provide examples of what clients can look forward to and accomplish, when they are motivated to make a change. Most peer supporters have overcome great adversity and lead by example when working with clients.

When respondents from the ANS and Black Hearing Them Survey were asked to think about the services they have received and what made them good experiences, they responded "having someone that looked like me." When asked about negative experiences they had with services, one respondent stated "counselling, didn't appreciate a book smart person over someone with lived experience!"

3. Cultural supports help people to identify with their community and historical background. An analysis of the ANS and Black Hearing Them Survey data demonstrates that culturally relevant services are important when working with people who are trying to exit the sex trade. One respondent stated that she "didn't feel cultural understanding," which highlights the importance of being understood as a whole person and fostering an environment of self-acceptance to help clients get beyond the shame and stigmas attached to being racially visible and a sex worker - two identities that tend to be discriminated against in our society.

4. "Belonging" refers to an intangible feeling of connectedness or importance. In the African Nova Scotian community, feeling welcomed and being a part of something can make a significant difference. In some responses to the ANS and Black Hearing Them Survey, people did not have a strong sense of belonging to their family or home community when they entered or choose to stay into the sex industry. Therefore, when working with people from African Nova Scotian and Black communities, it is important to help them foster a sense of importance by introducing them to cultural traditions and activities.

5. Non-Black service providers are encouraged to connect African Nova Scotian and Black individuals and families to appropriate resources within their communities while maintaining a supportive relationship. They should also allow African Nova Scotians and Black people to take the lead in how they would like to be supported.

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The statistics in the Appendix chart compares NS rates of risk indicators for CSEC to Canadian rates overall, and are not specific to the African Nova Scotian, African Canadian or Black communities. This chart was developed by Lila Pavey and Jenna Hopson from the IWK for the *Hearing Them* paper on Risks and Vulnerabilities.

Risk factors for being vulnerable to CSEC: Health and well-being indicators in Nova Scotia and Canada

Dimension	Indicator/Description	Nova Scotia	Across Canada	Year & Source
Poverty/Basic Needs Measures				
Poverty - Family Low Income Measures	After-tax census family low-income measure 2019	**24.3%**	17.7%	2019 Statistics Canada Canadian Income Survey
Housing	Children or youth living with housing need	**12.6%**	12.6%	2016 Statistics Canada
Food Insecurity	Household members having issues with the quality or quantity of food consumed or having experienced reduced food intake or disrupted eating pattern.	**11%**	8.8%	2017-2018 Statistics Canada
Violence & Abuse & Involvement in Child Protection Services				
Police Reported Children and Youth Victims of Violence	Children and youth victims of police reported **violence by a family member**	**343** per 100,000	308 per 100,000	2018-2019 Statistics Canada
	Police-reported **non-family violence against children and youth**	**839** per 100,000	655 per 100,000	
Victims of Violence During Dating Relationship	Percentage of students in grades 9 and 10 that report teen dating violence in the last 12 months	**21.9%**	17%	2018/2019 Health Behavior in School Aged Children
Witnessing Family Violence	One in 10 Canadians (10%) stated that before age 15 they had witnessed violence by a parent or guardian against another adult in the home	**unknown**	10% of Canadians before the age of 15	2015 – Profile of Canadian Adults who experienced childhood maltreatment
Involvement in Child Protection Services	Substantiated cases of abuse or neglect that required child protective services from the Department of Community Services	**3,686 cases**	N/A	Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, 2019
Children and Youth in Care	Children and youth from birth to 24 years of age in the care of the Department of Community Services	**927**	N/A	Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Jan. 1st-Dec. 31st, 2019
Connection, Belonging & Well-being				
Connection	The percentage of students who feel they have high family support	**38.3%**	37.3%	2018/2019 Health Behavior in School Aged Children
Social Exclusion	Incidence of being bullied in grades 7-9	**31.2%**	23.6%	2018-2019 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Survey
	Incidence of being bullied in grades 10-12	**27.1%**	19.9%	
Decreased Well-Being	Percentage of students reported feeling sad or hopeless every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing their usual activities	**33.8%**	30.3%	2018/2019 Health Behavior in School Aged Children
	Percentage of students that reported feeling low or depressed for a week or more	**30.5%**	27.4%	
Suicide	One year suicide mortality rate	**11.7%**	8.1%.	Statistics Canada and Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Open Data
Substance Use				
Alcohol	Percentage of students in grades 7 -12 engaging in high-risk alcohol consumption in the past year	**24.8%**	23.4%	2018-2019 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Survey
	Average age of first alcohol drink	N/A	**13.4 years**	
Cannabis	Percentage of students in grades 7 – 12 reported cannabis use in past month	**23.4%**	18.1 %	2018-2019 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Survey
	Average age of initial cannabis use	N/A	**14.3 years**	
Online Environment				
Luring stats	The rate for the criminal charges for luring a child online [88]	**6.75%**	5.05%	2021 Statistics Canada
Child Pornography & Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images (involving children)	The rate of adults charged per 100,000 population aged 18 years and older	**0.61%**	0.25%	2022 Incident-based crime statistics, Census Metropolitan Areas, and Canadian Forces Military Police
Online Sexual Offences Against children	Average number of incidents of online sexual offences against children in police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse, by province or territory, Canada, 2018 to 2020	**43%**	27	Statistics Canada police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Canada 2018-2020