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# A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS' RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC SEX TRAFFICKED PERSONS



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# BACKGROUND

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## **Sex Trafficking**

**“Sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking. It involves recruiting, transporting, or holding victims for sexual exploitation.” (Government of Canada, 2021)**

## **Domestic Sex Trafficking**

**“When the entirety of the crime occurs within a country’s borders and no international boundary is crossed.”  
(Government of B.C., 2014)**

# BACKGROUND

- **Canada and Ontario recognized as major sex trafficking sites**
  - **National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024**
  - **Ontario Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2020-2025**



(Government of Ontario, 2020; Conroy & Sutton, 2022)



# RESEARCH GAPS

Empirical research on domestic sex trafficking in Canada is in its infancy (Hodgins, Mutis, Mason, & Du Mont, 2022)

Limited research focused on the provision of social services for those who have been sex trafficked

Possible implications for prevention, identification, and intervention efforts



# QUALITATIVE STUDY

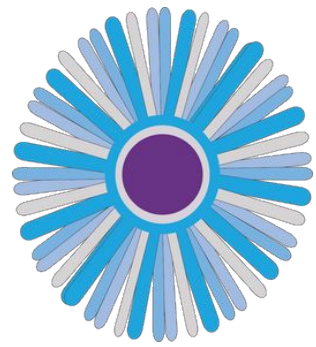
**Purpose: to better understand how social service providers recognize domestic sex trafficked persons in Canada**

**Fifteen semi-structured interviews with diverse social service providers in Ontario**

- **Guided by critical social paradigm and intersectional framework**

**Sub-analysis focused on identification practices**

- **Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)**
- **How do social service providers identify domestic sex trafficked persons?**



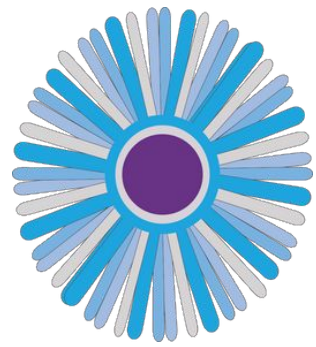
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# Preliminary Themes

## 1) Potential indicators of sex trafficking

- Presentation
- Restricted communication and movement
- Lack of or changing information related to ID/address
- Unusual material goods or financial circumstances

**“I’m just thinking of one incident where there were some large deposits into the bank account. And then, some large withdrawals. And they couldn’t be accounted for... And the story maybe doesn’t make sense ... We can sometimes get a little bit of a picture.”**



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# Preliminary Themes

## 2) Processes of identifying sex trafficked persons

- Standard intake/assessment tools
- Conversing with clients

**“We always take kind of a year long history of where they’ve been residing, you know, what they’ve been doing for income, how they have been supporting themselves. And so, each of those little pieces, short of them declaring it, each of those little pieces are just like a piece of a puzzle, right?”**

# NEXT STEPS

- Continue analytic writing
- Submit to journal for publication by end of August
- Inform and strengthen identification and intervention practices of social service providers

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