



# COVID-19 and Commercial Sex Trafficking - the Amplified Impact on Vulnerable Youth



# INTRODUCTIONS

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# Project iRISE

## About:

- iRISE is a survivor-led, community-based, non-for-profit organization.
- We provide innovative, skills & leadership development programs & opportunities for survivors of human trafficking and those at risk.



## Follow Us:



@projectirise

**Email:** [info@projectirise.org](mailto:info@projectirise.org)  
**Website:** [www.projectirise.org](http://www.projectirise.org)

# How Trafficking Happens?



# SEX TRAFFICKING

- The use of **force, fraud, or coercion** to make an someone engage in commercial sex acts.
- Any commercial sexual activity with **a minor**, even without the use force, fraud, or coercion, is considered trafficking.

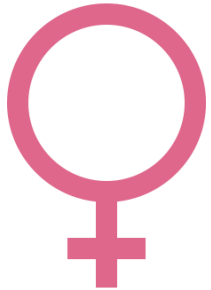
# Canadian Statistics



**93%** of victims of sex trafficking are Canadian citizens or permanent residences.



Ontario is considered "the Hub" of human trafficking in Canada, with **2/3** of cases reported from Ontario.



Women and girls make up **97%** of all reported cases of sex trafficking.



Despite being only 4% of the population, Indigenous women and girls account for over **50%** of victims in Canada.



Over **74%** of victims are under the age of 25 when first trafficked



**92%** of victims knew the person accused of trafficking them. Most commonly, victims were trafficked by a friend or acquaintance.

**Video**



# Risk Factors for trafficking

## Youth at High Risk of Being Trafficked:

- Female
- Indigenous
- LGBTQ+2
- Black or racialized
- Migrants and New Immigrants
- Marginalized

## History of:





# Recognizing the signs

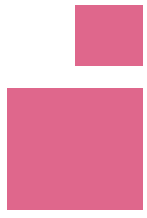


- **Appearance:**
  - Dressed inappropriate for weather
  - Branded & Bruising
  - Signs of self-harm
- **Demeanor:**
  - Hostile or Angry
  - Anxious & Nervous
  - Fearful or submissive
- **Language:**
  - Speaks openly about sex
  - John, trick, “the life or game”
  - Boyfriend “daddy” or “My man”

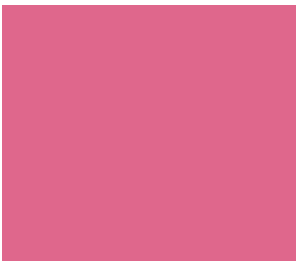
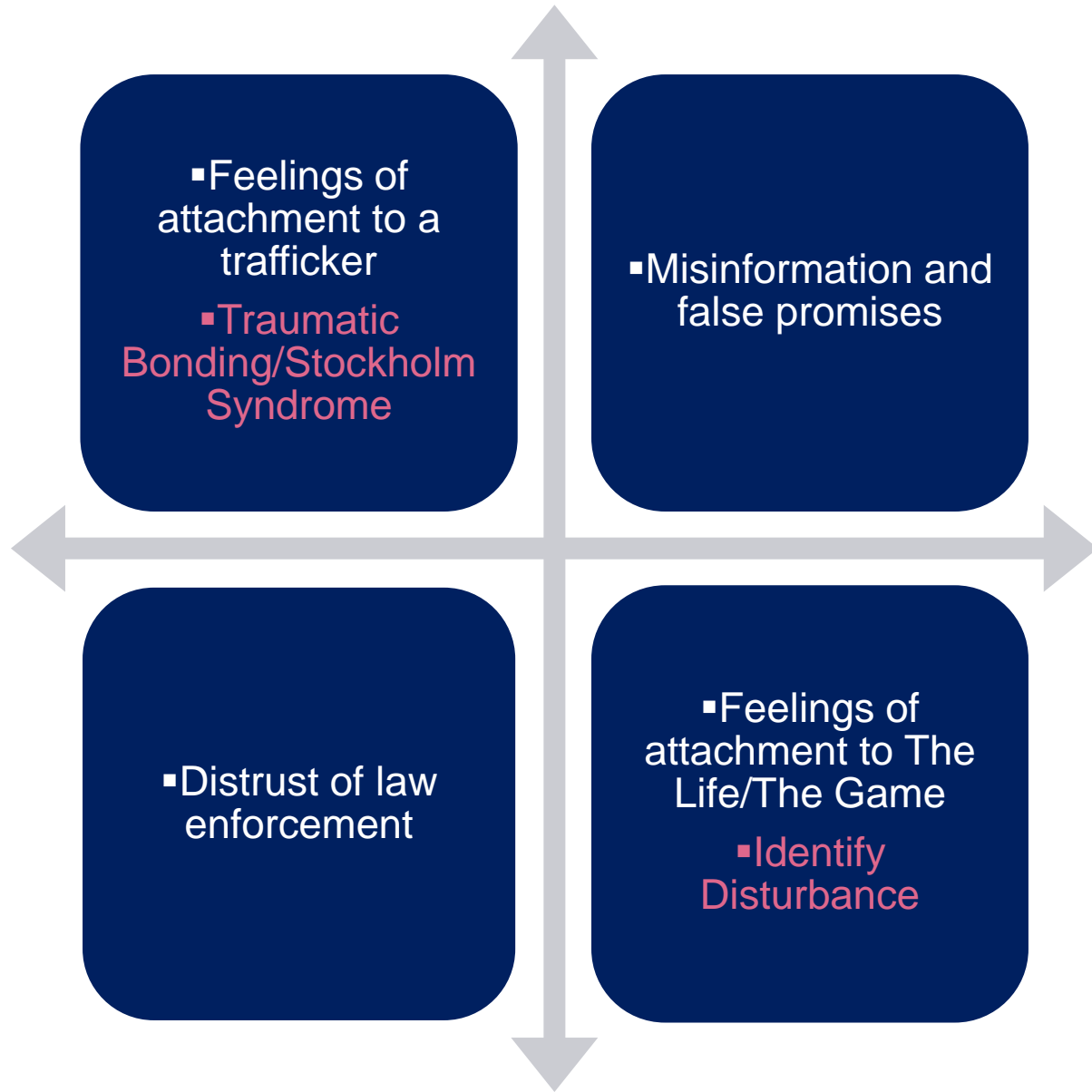
# Dynamics of Trafficking



\*(Source: Polaris Project)



# Why do victims go back?

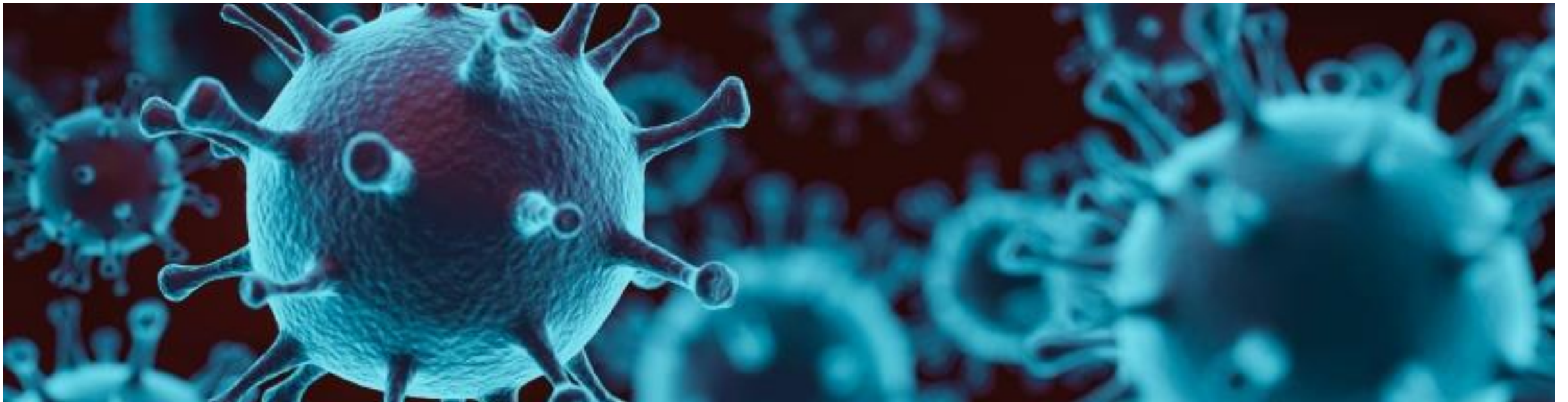


# How COVID-19 Has Amplified Vulnerability?

# The Impact of COVID-19

“Already-vulnerable populations are bearing the brunt of the health impacts of COVID-19. This amplified impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations has important implications for individuals at risk of or exploited in human trafficking.”

*(JAMA Pediatric)*



# Emerging Issues

**Isolation:** Isolation from social networks and support systems put vulnerable youth at greater risk of:

- Child abuse
- Domestic/Intimate partner violence
- Sexual violence

**Financial insecurity:** Due to business shutdowns, and mass lay-offs, many youth and their families will be financially impacted:

- Low-wage workers
- Contract workers
- Seasonal workers

**Access to services:** Due to mass closures and reduced hours, youth face a lack of resources that they have relied on:

- Housing
- Education
- Transportation

**Social barriers:** Due to stay-at-home orders youth will increasingly use online resources for social interaction.

- Social media
- Gaming
- Remote sex work

# Online Activity

## Luring

It can start with a simple message like “Hello Beautiful.”

## Grooming

Showering attention, compliments, and online engagement.

## Manipulation and Control

Pressure or threats for victims to send sexually explicit imagery and videos.

## Exploitation

Blackmail victims with the threat of sharing or selling photos or videos to keep victims under their control.







# Sex Trafficking Intersectionality

## Factors of Increased Vulnerability:

- Race
- Gender
- Identity
- Sexuality
- Nationality
- Ability
- Class
- Economics
- Religion

## How Intersectionality Increases Vulnerability:

### More likely to face:

- Systemic racism and oppression
- Homophobia and transphobia

### More likely to be:

- Lower socioeconomic status, i.e. wealth gap
- Unemployed or underemployed


### Less likely:

- To be identified or seen as victims
- To access services and programs

# Maintaining support for vulnerable youth

- Help youth create a **safety plan** that includes tools to manage physical/mental health, well being, and financial security.
- Build **resiliency**. Help youth by sharing tools and resources that strengthen resilience.
- Help youth **access services** such as housing and food banks.
- **Collaborate** with agencies to maximize supports and resources.





*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”*

– Margaret Mead



# Resources



NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

**1-833- 900-1010**

CONFIDENTIAL | TOLL-FREE | 24/7



**Thank You!**

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