

# Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2023

*Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in The Daily, Friday, November 1, 2024*

---

In 2023, 570 human trafficking incidents were reported to police, a slight decrease from the 597 reported in 2022. There was also a decrease in the rate of human trafficking (1.4 incidents per 100,000 population in 2023 compared with 1.5 in 2022).

Human trafficking, also referred to as trafficking in persons, is a serious human rights violation that can occur domestically and transnationally with the crossing of international borders. It is a gendered crime, with most detected victims being women and girls and the majority of accused persons being men and boys. Human trafficking offences involve the recruitment, transportation or harbouring of a person, and they include controlling and influencing movements with the goal of exploiting, or facilitating the exploitation of, a person. Human trafficking can take on many forms, most often sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Official statistics, while important, provide only a partial picture of human trafficking in Canada due to its hidden and underreported nature. Identifying incidents of human trafficking depends in part on police resources and expertise, as well as victims' ability to recognize and report their experiences with trafficking.

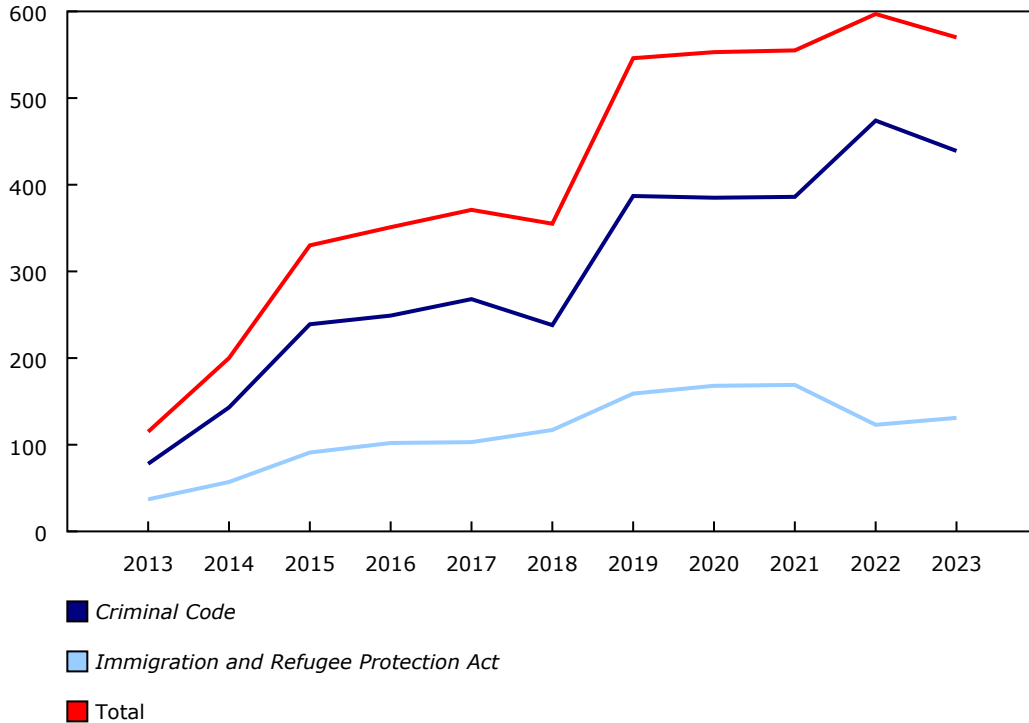
## **General increase in number of police-reported human trafficking incidents since 2013**

Just over 4,500 incidents of human trafficking were reported by police services in Canada from 2013 to 2023. These incidents accounted for 0.02% of all police-reported crime during this period and represented an average annual rate of 1.1 incidents per 100,000 population. Overall, there has been a general year-over-year increase in the number of police-reported incidents of human trafficking from 2013 to 2023, with the biggest jump occurring from 2018 to 2019.



**Chart 1**  
**Police-reported incidents of human trafficking, by statute, Canada, 2013 to 2023**

number of incidents



**Note(s):** This chart is based on aggregate data, and counts are based on the most serious violation in a criminal incident. The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey was amended partway through 2011 to allow police services to report the specific offence of human trafficking under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. Once the specific violation code was introduced, a small number of incidents that took place prior to this amendment were reported.  
**Source(s):** Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (3302).

### Rates of human trafficking in Nova Scotia and Ontario higher than national average

Since 2013, the highest average annual rates of police-reported human trafficking among the provinces generally have been documented in Nova Scotia and Ontario. In 2023, Nova Scotia recorded 6.3 incidents per 100,000 population and Ontario recorded 2.1 incidents, both well above the national average (1.4 incidents).

The high concentration of urban areas and the accessibility and large number of land border crossings in Ontario may explain the higher rates of human trafficking in the province. In Nova Scotia, the rate of human trafficking may be better explained by geographic location. Previous research from advocates and police investigations suggests that Nova Scotia in general, and Halifax in particular, are part of a trafficking corridor frequently used to move victims from Atlantic Canada to the rest of the country.

### Large majority of police-reported human trafficking incidents reported in urban centres

In 2023, the large majority (85%) of human trafficking incidents were reported in census metropolitan areas (CMAs). Similarly, from 2013 to 2023, more than 8 in 10 incidents of human trafficking (86%) were reported to police in CMAs.

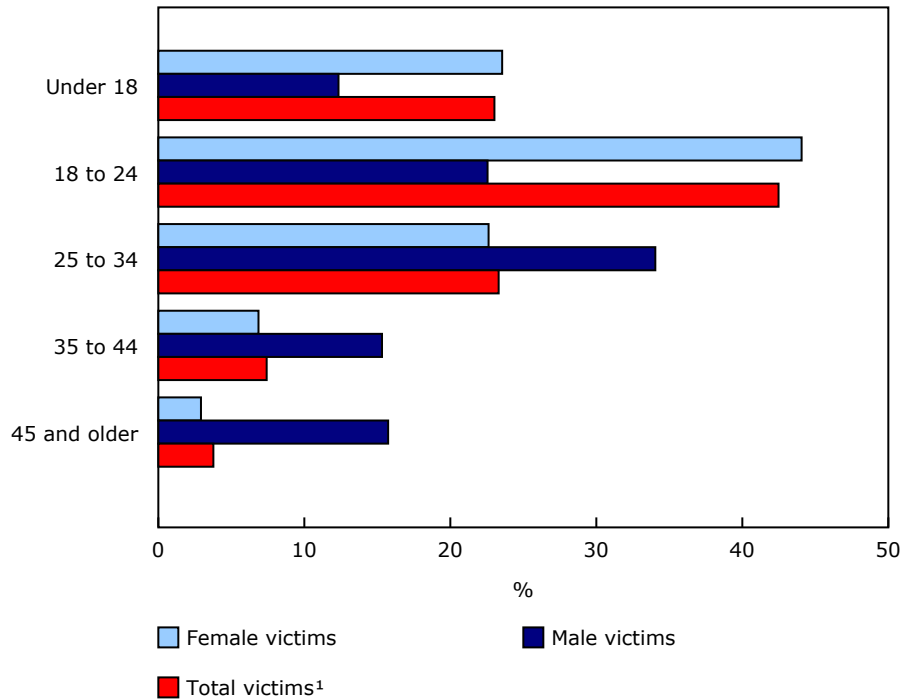
From 2013 to 2023, five CMAs accounted for almost half (45%) of all police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada: Toronto (902 incidents; 20% of all incidents in Canada), Ottawa (388; 9%), Halifax (287; 6%), Montréal (264; 6%) and London (202; 4%).

It is important to note that police-reported data do not capture victim mobility—that is, victims may have been trafficked from one area to another. In addition, the data could reflect police practices and resources aimed at better identifying human trafficking incidents, which can vary from one jurisdiction to another.

### Vast majority of police-reported victims of human trafficking are women and girls and one quarter of victims are minors

Of the 3,558 victims of police-reported human trafficking nationwide from 2013 to 2023, the vast majority (93%) were women and girls, and about one-quarter (23%) were children and youth younger than 18 years. A small number of victims (7%) were men and boys.

**Chart 2**  
Victims in police-reported incidents of human trafficking, by gender and age group, Canada, 2013 to 2023



1. Includes victims whose gender was unknown.

**Note(s):** Excludes those with unknown age and those where age was greater than 110 due to possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Given that small counts of victims identified as "gender diverse" may exist, the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either "female" or "male" in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy.

**Source(s):** Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database (3302).

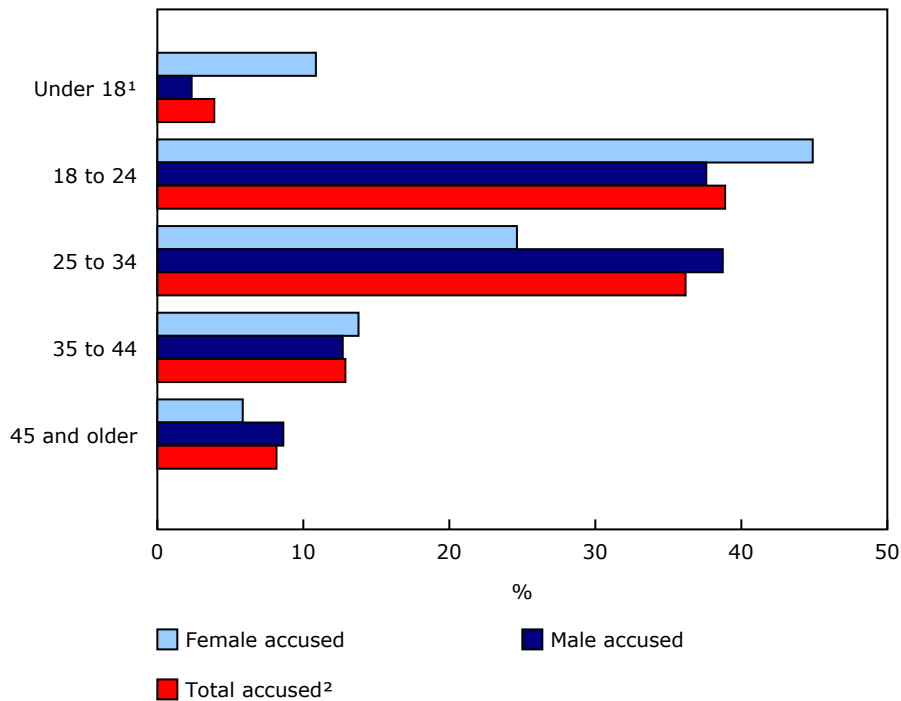
During this time, the largest proportion of victims were aged 18 to 24 years (42%), while over one in five victims (23%) were aged 25 to 34 years. Of the 3,223 women and girl victims of human trafficking, two-thirds (68%) were aged 24 years and younger. Almost 9 in 10 men and boy victims (88%) were 18 years and older.

Since 2013, a large majority (91%) of victims of police-reported human trafficking have known their accused trafficker, while a small proportion (9%) of victims have been trafficked by a stranger. Victims were most often trafficked by an intimate partner (34%) or a casual acquaintance (22%). A tactic employed by some traffickers involves drawing a potential victim into a romantic relationship with promises of love and affection, with the end goal of exploitation.

## Men make up majority of accused adults, while an equal proportion of girls and boys are among youth accused

Overall, 2,697 persons were accused of police-reported human trafficking in Canada from 2013 to 2023. The majority of accused persons were aged 18 to 24 years (39%) and 25 to 34 years (36%). Smaller proportions of accused were aged 35 to 44 years (13%) and 45 years and older (8%), while youth aged 12 to 17 years accounted for 4% of all accused persons.

**Chart 3**  
**Accused persons in police-reported incidents of human trafficking, by gender and age group, Canada, 2013 to 2023**



1. Includes accused persons aged 12 to 17.

2. Includes accused persons whose gender was unknown.

**Note(s):** Excludes those with unknown age and those where age was greater than 110 due to possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Given that small counts of accused persons identified as "gender diverse" may exist, the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either "female" or "male" in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy.

**Source(s):** Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database (3302).

Just over 8 in 10 accused persons (82%) were men and boys. Men accounted for a larger proportion of accused persons across all adult age groups. In contrast, of the 105 youth accused, equal proportions were girls (50%) and boys (50%).

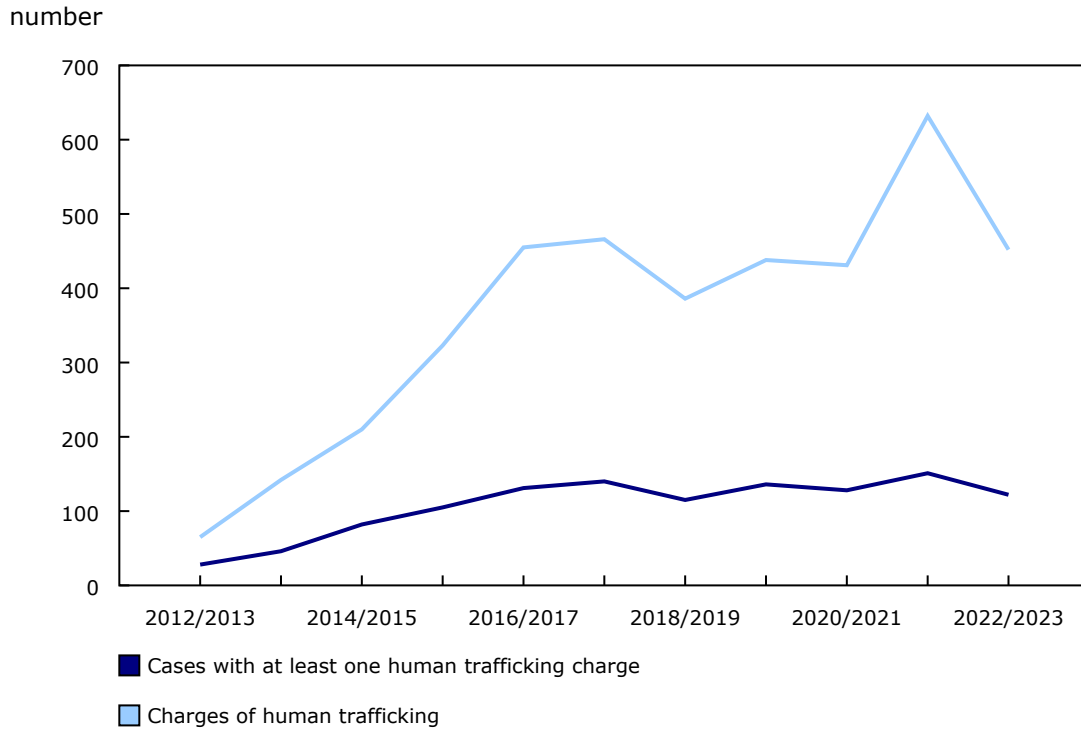
## Over half of human trafficking incidents are unsolved

Since 2013, almost 4 in 10 incidents (38%) of police-reported human trafficking have resulted in the laying or recommendation of charges. Over half (58%) of human trafficking incidents were not solved (i.e., cleared) by police. This could be due to several factors, including the incident still being under investigation, having insufficient evidence to proceed, and no accused person having been identified.

## Overall increase in charges and cases of human trafficking completed in court

From 2012/2013 to 2022/2023, 1,184 cases involving 4,000 human trafficking charges were completed in adult criminal court in Canada. In general, the number of human trafficking cases seen in court has increased over this time.

**Chart 4**  
**Completed charges and cases related to human trafficking in adult criminal courts, Canada, 2012/2013 to 2022/2023**



**Note(s):** Data are based on the adult criminal court portion of the survey where accused were aged 18 years and older at the time of offence. Includes *Criminal Code* charges and cases only, excluding *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* offences. A case involves one or more charges against an accused person or company that were processed by the courts at the same time and received a final decision. Data exclude information from superior courts in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as municipal courts in Quebec, due to data availability. Data for Quebec were not available for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Superior court data for Prince Edward Island were included as of 2018/2019.

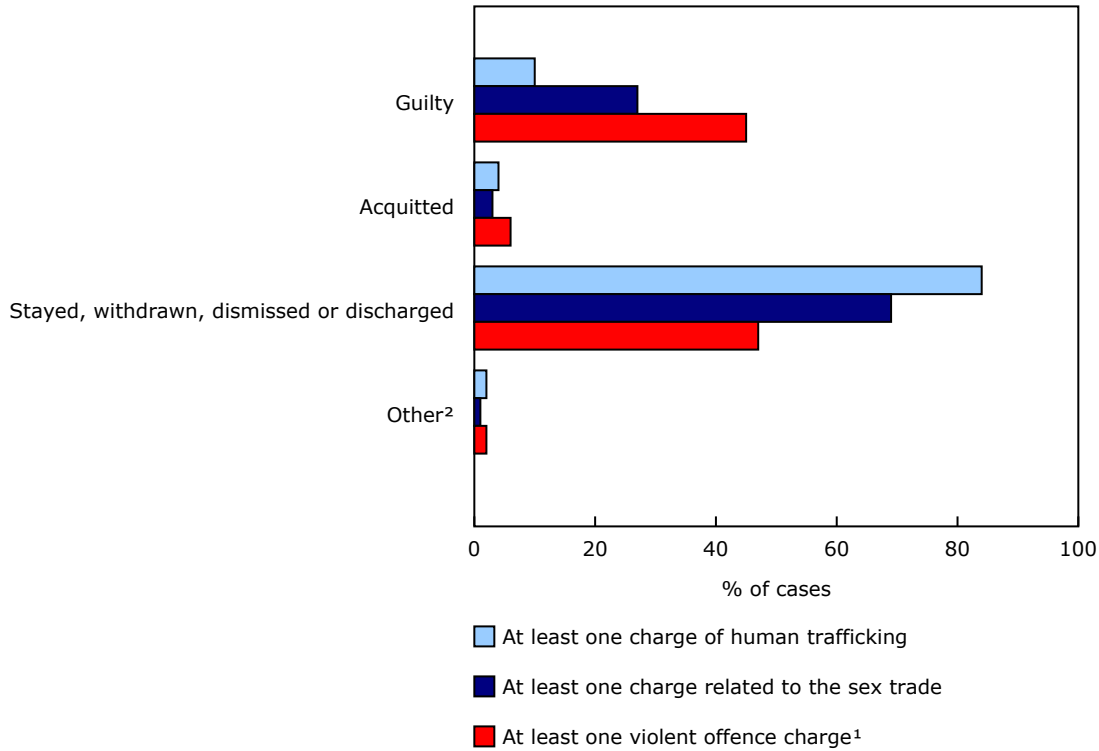
**Source(s):** Integrated Criminal Court Survey (3312).

## Overall, 1 in 10 completed human trafficking cases results in a finding of guilt

Since 2012/2013, the large majority (84%) of completed adult criminal court cases involving at least one human trafficking charge have resulted in either a stay, a withdrawal, a dismissal or a discharge. A small proportion of human trafficking cases resulted in a guilty decision (10%), an acquittal (4%) or another type of decision (2%), such as being found unfit to stand trial or not criminally responsible.

**Chart 5**

**Type of decision in completed adult criminal court cases, by selected offence, Canada, 2012/2013 to 2022/2023**



1. Excludes cases with at least one charge of human trafficking and cases with at least one charge related to the sex trade.  
 2. Other decisions include being found unfit to stand trial or not criminally responsible and the case being waived out of province or territory. Includes any order where a guilty decision was not recorded, the court accepted a special plea or arguments related to the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were raised.  
**Note(s):** Data are based on the adult criminal court portion of the survey, where accused were aged 18 years and older at the time of offence. Includes *Criminal Code* charges and cases only, excluding *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* offences. A decision is a judgment made by the court. A case involves one or more charges against an accused person or company that were processed by the courts at the same time and received a final decision. Data exclude information from superior courts in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as municipal courts in Quebec, due to data availability. Data for Quebec were not available for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Superior court data for Prince Edward Island were included as of 2018/2019.  
**Source(s):** Integrated Criminal Court Survey (3312).

**Did you know we have a mobile app?**

Download our mobile app and get timely access to data at your fingertips! The [StatsCAN](#) app is available for free on the [App Store](#) and on [Google Play](#).

### Note to readers

Police-reported data come from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, and the category of human trafficking offences includes six provisions under the Criminal Code and one offence under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that targets international cross-border trafficking. Police services can report up to four violations for each criminal incident.

- Criminal Code offences: trafficking in persons; trafficking in persons under 18 years; material benefit from trafficking in persons; material benefit from trafficking of persons under 18 years; withholding or destroying documents; and withholding or destroying documents to facilitate trafficking of persons under 18 years.
- Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act: trafficking in persons into Canada.

In the UCR Survey, victim information is reported by police for Criminal Code incidents of human trafficking, but not for Immigration and Refugee Protection Act violations. As a result, there are fewer victims of police-reported human trafficking than there are incidents, and analysis of victim characteristics is based on Criminal Code human trafficking incidents only. Given that small counts of accused persons identified as "gender diverse" may exist, the UCR Survey data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either "female" or "male" to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy. Percent calculation excludes accused persons whose gender was unknown.

Data on human trafficking in courts come from the Integrated Criminal Court Survey, which collects statistical information on adult criminal and youth court cases involving Criminal Code and other federal statute offences. A case is defined as one or more charges against an accused person or company that were processed by the courts at the same time and received a final decision. A case combines all charges against the same person having one or more key overlapping dates (date of offence, date of initiation, date of first appearance, date of decision, or date of sentencing) into a single case. The "guilty findings" category includes guilty of the charged offence, of an included offence, of an attempt of the charged offence, or of an attempt of an included offence. This category also includes guilty pleas, and cases where an absolute or conditional discharge has been imposed. Some evidence about geographic location can be found in [Mulligan, 2018](#), and [Luck, 2019](#).

**Table 1**  
**Police-reported incidents of human trafficking, by statute and province or territory, 2013 to 2023**

	Human trafficking incidents reported in 2023				Human trafficking incidents reported from 2013 to 2023				average annual rate <sup>1</sup>
	<i>Criminal Code</i>	<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i>	Total	Total	<i>Criminal Code</i>	<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i>	Total	Total	
	number		rate		number				
<b>Canada</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>3,286</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>4,543</b>	<b>1.1</b>	
Newfoundland and Labrador	6	2	8	1.5	14	6	20	0.3	
Prince Edward Island	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	
Nova Scotia	55	12	67	6.3	292	112	404	3.7	
New Brunswick	11	0	11	1.3	42	5	47	0.5	
Quebec	34	4	38	0.4	386	31	417	0.5	
Ontario	240	91	331	2.1	1,934	980	2,914	1.8	
Manitoba	1	0	1	0.1	40	3	43	0.3	
Saskatchewan	10	12	22	1.8	94	35	129	1.0	
Alberta	39	9	48	1.0	234	73	307	0.6	
British Columbia	42	1	43	0.8	238	11	249	0.4	
Yukon	0	0	0	0.0	8	0	8	1.7	
Northwest Territories	1	0	1	2.2	2	0	2	0.4	
Nunavut	0	0	0	0.0	2	0	2	0.5	

1. This rate is the average of the annual rates from 2013 to 2023.

**Note(s):** This table is based on aggregate data, and counts are based on the most serious violation in a criminal incident. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey was amended in 2011 to allow police services to report the specific offence of human trafficking under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. Once the specific violation code was introduced, a small number of incidents that took place prior to this amendment were reported.

**Source(s):** Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (3302).



**Table 2**

**Police-reported incidents of human trafficking, by statute and census metropolitan area<sup>1</sup>, 2013 to 2023**

	Human trafficking incidents reported in 2023				Human trafficking incidents reported in 2013 to 2023				average annual rate <sup>2</sup>
	<i>Criminal Code</i>	<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i>	Total	Total	<i>Criminal Code</i>	<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i>	Total	Total	
	number	number	number	rate	number	number	number	rate	
<b>Canada</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>3,286</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>4,543</b>	<b>1.1</b>	
<b>Non-CMA total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>0.6</b>	
<b>CMA total<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>362</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2,842</b>	<b>1,048</b>	<b>3,890</b>	<b>1.3</b>	
St. John's	0	2	2	0.9	2	6	8	0.3	
Halifax	32	12	44	8.5	177	110	287	5.8	
Moncton <sup>4</sup>	2	0	2	1.1	..	..	..	..	
Saint John <sup>4</sup>	0	0	0	0.0	..	..	..	..	
Fredericton <sup>5</sup>	3	0	3	2.4	..	..	..	..	
Saguenay	0	0	0	0.0	1	0	1	0.1	
Québec	2	1	3	0.3	54	4	58	0.6	
Sherbrooke	0	0	0	0.0	3	0	3	0.1	
Trois-Rivières	1	0	1	0.6	1	0	1	0.1	
Drummondville <sup>5</sup>	2	0	2	1.8	..	..	..	..	
Montréal	18	1	19	0.4	252	12	264	0.6	
Gatineau <sup>6</sup>	3	0	3	0.8	42	0	42	1.1	
Ottawa <sup>7</sup>	34	0	34	2.7	380	8	388	3.3	
Kingston	0	5	5	2.7	7	26	33	1.7	
Belleville–Quinte West <sup>8</sup>	2	1	3	2.4	..	..	..	..	
Peterborough	0	0	0	0.0	40	14	54	3.8	
Toronto	70	38	108	1.8	573	329	902	1.4	
Hamilton	5	7	12	2.0	56	83	139	2.2	
St. Catharines–Niagara	11	5	16	3.0	47	104	151	2.8	
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	30	1	31	4.6	115	12	127	1.9	
Brantford	3	..	3	1.8	16	5	21	1.2	
Guelph	2	1	3	1.9	16	11	27	1.7	
London	21	3	24	3.9	171	31	202	3.3	
Windsor	6	4	10	2.1	34	66	100	2.5	
Barrie	9	4	13	4.6	59	31	90	3.2	
Greater Sudbury	4	0	4	2.1	35	1	36	1.8	
Thunder Bay	1	14	15	11.6	37	64	101	7.2	
Winnipeg	0	0	0	0.0	25	2	27	0.3	
Regina	1	5	6	2.2	5	18	23	0.8	
Saskatoon	2	5	7	2.0	63	14	77	2.1	
Lethbridge <sup>8</sup>	2	1	3	2.2	..	..	..	..	
Calgary	8	0	8	0.5	72	12	84	0.5	
Red Deer <sup>5</sup>	1	0	1	0.9	..	..	..	..	
Edmonton	20	7	27	1.7	81	54	135	0.8	
Kelowna	1	0	1	0.4	21	0	21	0.9	
Kamloops <sup>5</sup>	2	0	2	1.6	..	..	..	..	
Chilliwack <sup>5</sup>	3	0	3	2.4	..	..	..	..	
Abbotsford–Mission	0	0	0	0.0	8	0	8	0.4	
Vancouver	27	1	28	0.9	130	8	138	0.5	
Victoria	4	0	4	0.9	19	0	19	0.4	
Nanaimo <sup>5</sup>	0	0	0	0.0	..	..	..	..	

.. not available for a specific reference period

1. A census metropolitan area (CMA) consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core. To be included in the CMA, adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census data. A CMA typically comprises more than one police service. CMA populations have been adjusted to follow policing boundaries. The Oshawa CMA is excluded from this table due to the incongruity between the police service jurisdictional boundaries and the CMA boundaries. It is important to note that while official police-reported data on crime from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey use

---

Statistics Canada's standard CMA names, the boundaries for the policing-based CMAs do not always fully align with the standard CMA geographic units used for disseminating information about the Census of Population.

2. This rate is the average of the annual rates from 2013 to 2023.
3. Includes Halton Regional Police Service and Durham Regional Police Service. May include a small number of offences that occurred outside of a CMA, as a small part of the population policed by Durham Regional Police Service falls outside of the boundaries of a CMA.
4. Part way through 2013, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police revised policing boundaries for rural detachments in New Brunswick. This resulted in a change in the census metropolitan area (CMA) boundaries that are determined for the purpose of reporting crime statistics. As such, 2013 data for the New Brunswick CMAs of Saint John and Moncton are not comparable to previous or future years. Further, data from 2014 onward are not comparable to years prior to 2014.
5. Following the 2021 Census of Population, Fredericton, Drummondville, Red Deer, Kamloops, Chilliwack, and Nanaimo were reclassified as census metropolitan areas. As such, data for the 2013-2023 period are not available.
6. Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa–Gatineau census metropolitan area.
7. Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa–Gatineau census metropolitan area.
8. Following the 2016 Census of Population, Belleville–Quinte West (formerly known as Belleville) and Lethbridge were reclassified as census metropolitan areas. As such, data for the 2013-2023 period are not available.

**Note(s):** This table is based on aggregate data, and counts are based on the most serious violation in a criminal incident. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey was amended in 2011 to allow police services to report the specific offence of human trafficking under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. Once the specific violation code was introduced, a small number of incidents that took place prior to this amendment were reported.

**Source(s):** Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (3302).

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers 3302 and 3312.**

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).