

# Colonial Violence Fact Sheet

Safe Passage  
An Initiative of:




Native Women's  
Association of Canada  
L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

## Violence Against Indigenous Women & Girls

Indigenous women and girls who live in Canada are **six times more likely** than non-Indigenous women to be victims of homicide (*Global Indigenous Council, 2020*).

They are **three times more likely** to experience violence than non-Indigenous women (*Newfoundland & Labrador, 2020*), and **three times more likely** to experience sexual assault (*Department of Justice, 2017*).

Additionally, data indicates that **51% of trafficked women in Canada are Indigenous**, despite making up less than 5% of Canada's overall population (*Canadian Women's Foundation, 2014*).




These alarming rates of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls are rooted in colonialism (the practice of taking over parts or all of another land or country in order to exploit the land, resources, and people). While many people think of colonialism as a thing of the past, it is actually a complex system that continues to influence the lives of Indigenous Peoples today.



## Colonial Roots of Violence & Trafficking

Colonialism is a system that perpetuates the idea that settlers are superior to, and have the right to take from and rule over Indigenous Peoples.

Until 1834, settlers even bought and sold Indigenous people as slaves (*Sikka, 2010*). Because Indigenous women were seen as 'unhuman,' sexual violence against them became normal and was never punished. This colonial hierarchy persists today and influences how Canada's governments and systems operate, including laws, policies and practices.



As a result, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people often face racism and indifference when they most need support and protection.

## Trafficking Indigenous Women and Girls

Across the country there are predators seeking to exercise and reproduce settler dominance by acting violently against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (Kingsley & Mark 2000).

Without support from systems that are supposed to protect them, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are often susceptible to experience high rates of extreme violence.

For example, it is well-known and documented that poverty, histories of abuse, involvement in the child welfare complex and criminalization, all increase Indigenous women and girls' vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking (NWAC 2014).

However, there are very few suitable supports to address these circumstances that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people experience at disproportionate rates.

**Traffickers know this and target individuals with these experiences, as they often have harmful and isolating effects.**

Unfortunately, the root causes that allow trafficking and exploitation to continue are often ignored and violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is simply seen as a natural consequence of their choices.

**By learning more about how colonial violence operates and by challenging the idea that violence against Indigenous Peoples is normal, you can be an ally to promote the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.**



**50%**

**50% of victims** were "recruited between the ages of **9 and 14**"

**87.5%**

**87.5%** had been **sexually abused** before being trafficked

**51%**

**51%** of trafficking victims had been in the **child welfare system**

(Canadian Women's Foundation 2014: 31)