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GLOBAL REPORT ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 2022

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Global Report on Trafficking in Persons
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Generation 30
Generation 30 is an initiative of the UNODC RAB featuring contributions from young and early-career researchers collected through an open call and selected on the basis of the quality of the empirical research and relevance of the topic. Two contributions were selected for this edition of the Report: "The social suffering of trafficked men" by P. Smiragina-Ingelstrom and "Can multisector approaches improve victim identification?" by B. Young and M. Chua.

We are also grateful to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for providing the text box on page 70, to OHCHR for comments on the section on the forms of exploitation, and the University Institute for Migration Studies of the Comillas Pontifical University for the text box at page 40. We are grateful to Daria Mendola from the University of Palermo for preparing the analyses on the level of violence against the victims (page 25), on the organization of the traffickers according to type of trafficking flows (page 46) and to the type of exploitation (page 50).

Cover drawing and artwork © Yasser Rezahi; Photo of artwork Lea Sophia Mair.

Preface

This 7th edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons captures our world at a fragile tipping point.

For the first time in the 20 years that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has collected data on trafficking in persons, we registered a decrease in 2020 in the number of victims detected globally. Pandemic-related restrictions on movement and business operations may have at least temporarily reduced some forms of trafficking, including trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and cross-border trafficking. Nonetheless, the decreases in detected victims have largely been registered in low- and middle-income countries – countries with justice, social and health systems that have struggled to cope with Covid and its fallout and may not have the resources to respond to trafficking challenges.

As law enforcement and public services were under increasing strain, pandemic restrictions may have also driven some forms of trafficking to more hidden locations, potentially increasing the dangers to victims and making it less likely they could come to the attention of the authorities. Overall, there is little evidence to suggest that the threat of this crime has diminished with the drop in detected victims, and many reasons to fear that Covid, crises, conflicts and the climate emergency are escalating trafficking risks.

Moreover, the findings suggest that our institutions are too often failing to detect and protect trafficking victims, and to give them justice. The global slowdown in the number of convictions for trafficking in persons – decreasing since 2017 – further accelerated during the pandemic, falling in 2020 by an alarming 27 per cent over the previous year.

More concerning still, a review of adjudicated trafficking cases in this Report found that most victims rescue themselves – instead of being proactively identified, they escaped exploitation by coming forward on their own. The analysis also found girls and women are three times more likely to suffer explicit or extreme violence during trafficking compared to boys and men, and children overall are two times more likely to be subjected to violence than adults.

Traffickers prey upon the most vulnerable. Many millions of people have been left behind as crises have reversed hard-won development gains and resulted in record displacement. Deprived of opportunity, social protection and other support, women, children and men in every part of the world are being left at the mercy of traffickers.

We must do better. The UN Trafficking Protocol entered into force twenty years ago. The year 2023 also marks half-time for the 2030 Agenda, and the world has fallen far behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including multiple targets to eradicate trafficking, notably under SDGs 5, 8 and 16 on gender equality, decent work and justice.

The UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons aims to shed light on a shared problem and drive action against this crime by providing policymakers and practitioners with the information and analysis they need to sharpen responses and improve prevention. For the first time, the Report also features contributions from young academics as part of UNODC's efforts to support the next generation of researchers and build new connections to support effective solutions.

We cannot allow this immoral crime to be met with indifference and impunity. Let us take this opportunity to redouble our commitment and bring together concerned communities with governments, law enforcement, health and social services, schools, civil society, academia, the UN and all partners to strengthen resilience against exploitation and end trafficking in persons once and for all.



Ghada Waly

Executive Director,
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



GLOBAL REPORT ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 2022

Special points of interest

Finding 1 *Number of detected victims falls for the first time in 20 years as pandemic limits opportunities and potentially pushes trafficking further underground, while constraining law enforcement capacities to target the crime*

Finding 2 *Trafficking for sexual exploitation less detected during the pandemic*

Finding 3 *Victims rely on "self-rescue" as anti-trafficking responses fall short*

Finding 4 *Global slowdown in convictions accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic*

Finding 5 *Increased impunity in home countries resulting in more victims trafficked to more destinations*

Finding 6 *War and conflict offer hunting grounds for traffickers*

Finding 7 *Climate change is multiplying trafficking risks*

Finding 8 *Boys and men account for a greater share of detected victims as new forms of exploitation emerge*

Finding 9 *Woman and children suffer greater violence at the hands of traffickers*

Finding 10 *More highly organized traffickers exploit more victims, more violently and for longer periods of time*

Finding 11 *Women: more likely than men to be traffickers or more likely than men to be convicted?*

Finding 1 *Number of detected victims falls for the first time in 20 years as pandemic limits opportunities and potentially pushes trafficking further underground, while constraining law enforcement capacities to target the crime*

11% reduction in the number of victims detected compared to 2019, largely driven by low- and medium-income countries.

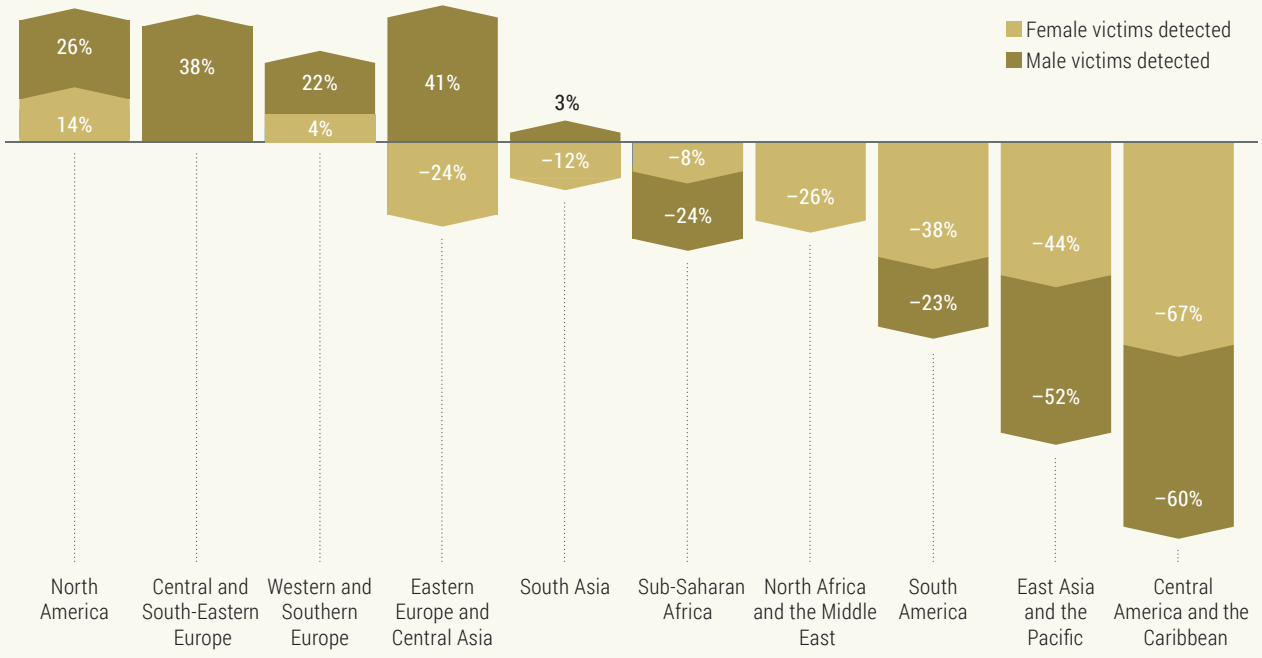
59% reduction in East Asia and the Pacific
40% reduction in North Africa and the Middle East
36% reduction in Central America and the Caribbean
32% reduction in South America
12% reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2020, for the first time, the number of victims detected globally decreased. This change in trends could be the result of three different factors affecting especially low- and medium- income countries during the pandemic: **lower institutional capacity to detect victims, fewer opportunities for traffickers to operate due to Covid-19 preventive restrictions, and some trafficking forms moving to more hidden and less likely to be detected locations.**

Possible responses

- Member States to develop and strengthen national frameworks for the identification and protection of victims of trafficking (national referral mechanisms - NRMs), especially during states of emergency.
- Donor community and international organizations to enhance support for national authorities in identifying and protecting victims of trafficking, especially in low- and middle-income countries.
- Member States to increase efforts to assess and identify more hidden forms of trafficking in persons.

Trends in the number of detected victims per 100,000 population, comparison from 2019 to 2020 by sex

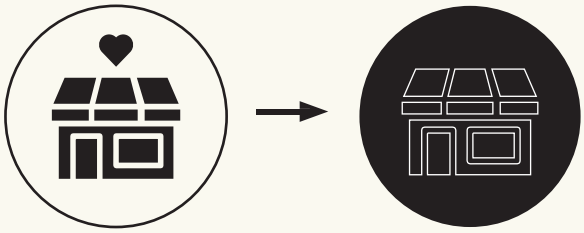


Finding 2 *Trafficking for sexual exploitation less detected during the pandemic*

24% reduction compared to 2019 in the detection of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation.



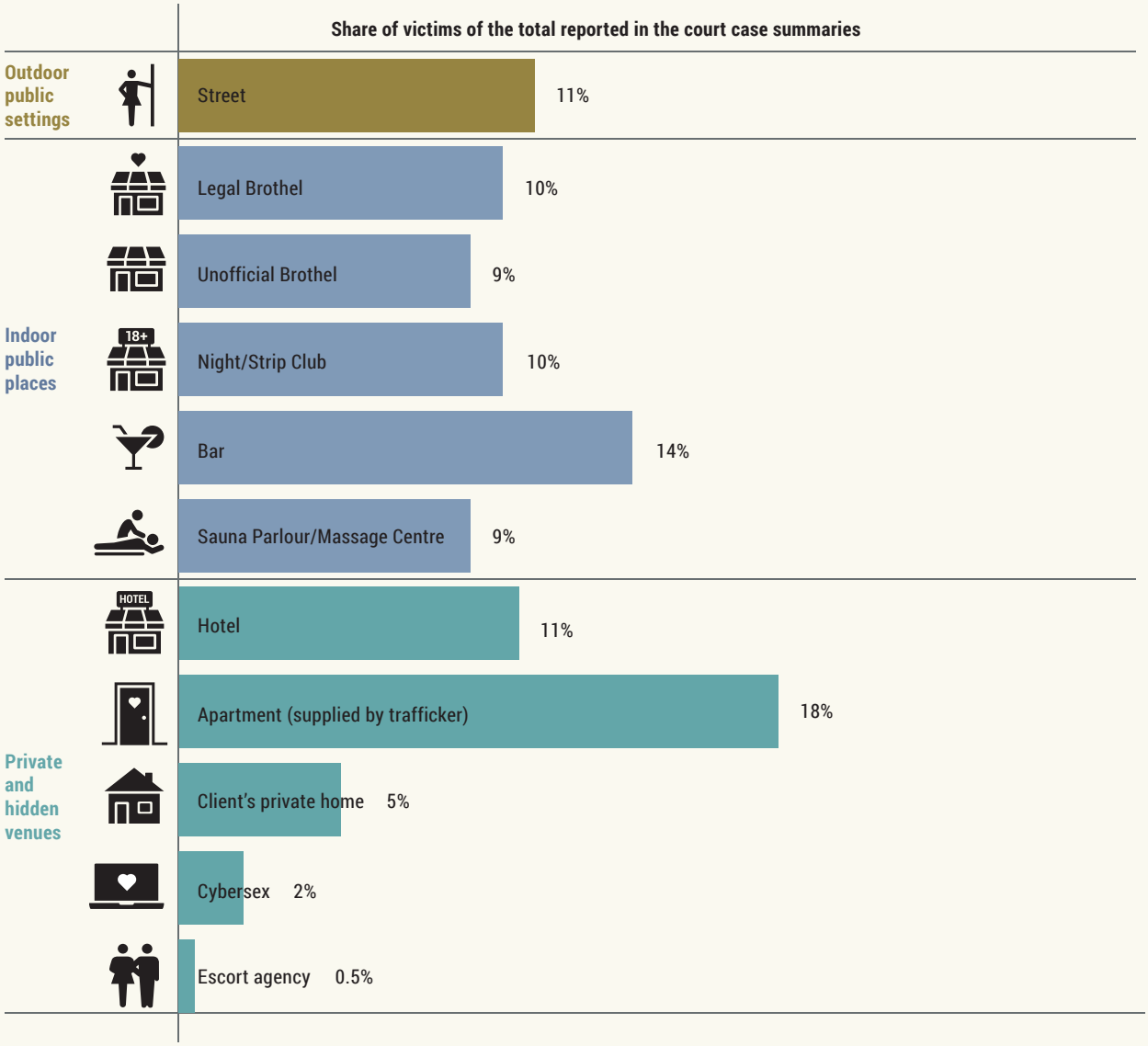
Many identified victims of sexual exploitation are exploited in public venues, such as bars and clubs or outdoors. During the protective measures applied in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, sexual exploitation may have reduced due to the closure of public spaces and it may have also been pushed **into less visible and less safe locations**, making this form of trafficking more concealed and harder to be detected.



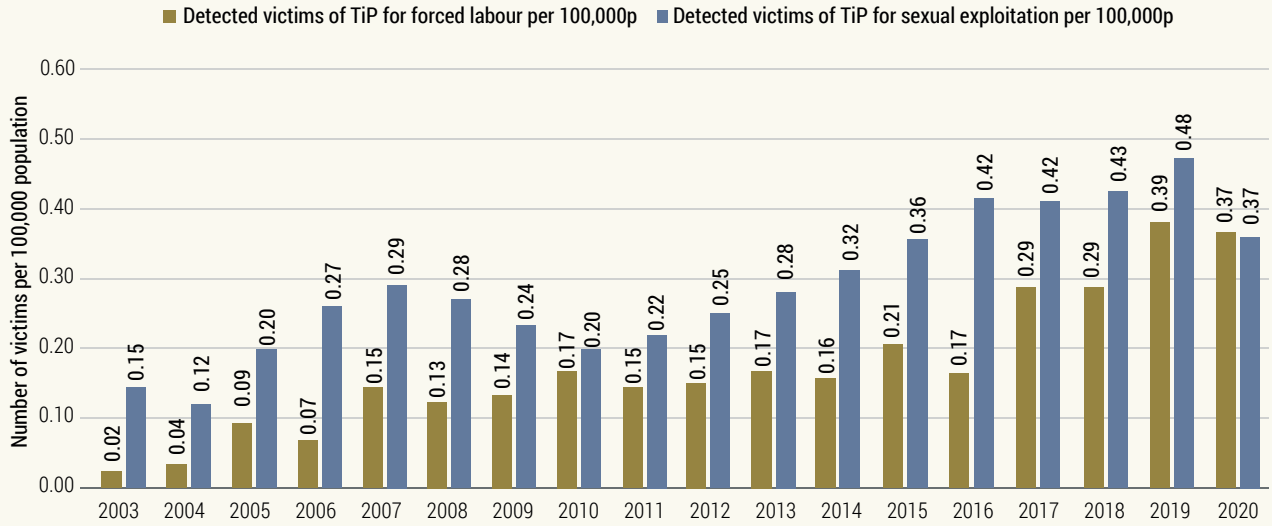
Possible responses

- Member States to promote joint interventions bringing together law enforcement, social protection services, civil society organizations and the private sector to identify and protect victims exploited in private apartments, hotels and other concealed locations.
- Member States and private sector to promote government regulation of online platforms, including robust obligations for online service providers to maintain the core responsibility to prevent and stop trafficking in persons. Further collaboration between governments, the technology industry and anti-trafficking stakeholders is critical for the deployment of technology tools and the design of state policies and legislation.
- Countries should also require online platforms to:
  - Implement prevention measures such as age and consent verification and high visibility content removal request mechanisms;
  - Conduct regular due diligence of operations and systems based on concrete standards to identify risks of misuse of their platforms and resources by traffickers and to mitigate any risks that are found; and
  - Conduct proactive monitoring for exploitative materials and misuse of platforms while establishing mechanisms that allow direct reporting by the public to companies.
- Member States to invest in capacity building in the areas of Internet monitoring and undercover online investigations.
- Member States to promote international cooperation of law enforcement to proactively infiltrate online markets and networks and collect human rights-compliant digital forensic evidence.
- International organizations to develop specific training programmes for workers in economic sectors at high risk of trafficking to report on potential victims of trafficking in persons.
- Academia and international organizations to study patterns of sexual exploitation in order to inform more effective responses.

Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation by intermediaries or by venues where exploitation took place (2012-2022), as reported in UNODC court case summaries.



Total victims detected per 100,000 population by form of exploitation, victims trafficked for forced labour vs. victims of sexual exploitation, 2003–2020

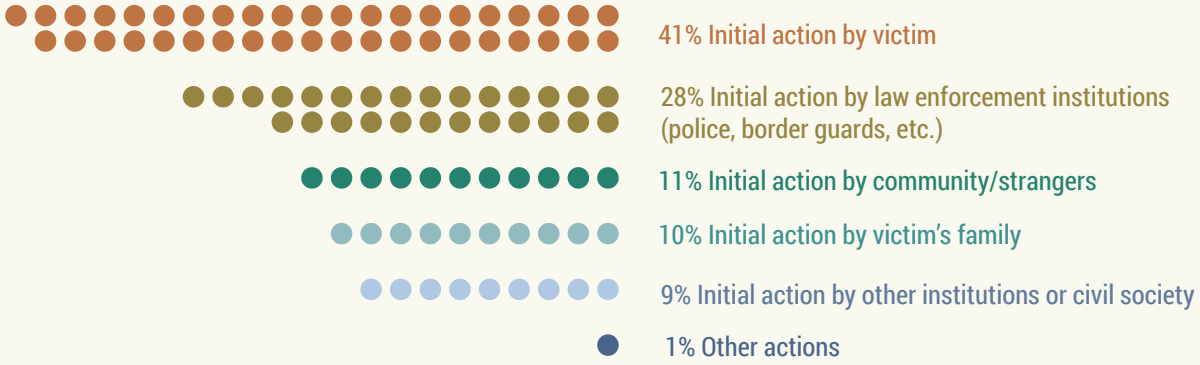


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Finding 3 *Victims rely on "self-rescue" as anti-trafficking responses fall short*

Most victims are self-rescued – they manage to escape and reach out to the authorities on their own initiative. Fewer cases are initiated by law enforcement, members of the community and civil society. This constitutes an alarming result considering many victims of trafficking may not identify themselves as victims.

Discovery patterns for trafficking in persons cases (2012-2022)



Possible responses

- Member States to invest in proactive identification of victims, through investigations that are human rights-based and mindful of victims' trauma, providing protection as soon as basic trafficking indicators are met.
- Member States and international organizations to promote community and public health approaches to advance victims' identification outside of the criminal justice system.
- Member States to promote the role of communities to combat trafficking in persons, i.e., *if you see something, say something* approach.
- Member States to enhance online confidential reporting mechanisms, allowing anonymous reporting of trafficking in persons cases.
- Private companies to increase social advertising to prevent victimisation and improve the detection of technology-facilitated trafficking in persons.
- Member States to promote social service providers and civil society as safe spaces for victim self-identification.

Finding 4 *Global slowdown in convictions accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic*

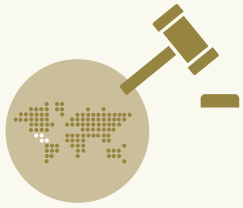
In the year 2020, a **27%** reduction in the number of convictions was recorded globally compared to 2019; the number of convictions has been decreasing since 2017.



27%
reduction
globally



56%
reduction
South Asia



54%
reduction
Central America and the Caribbean

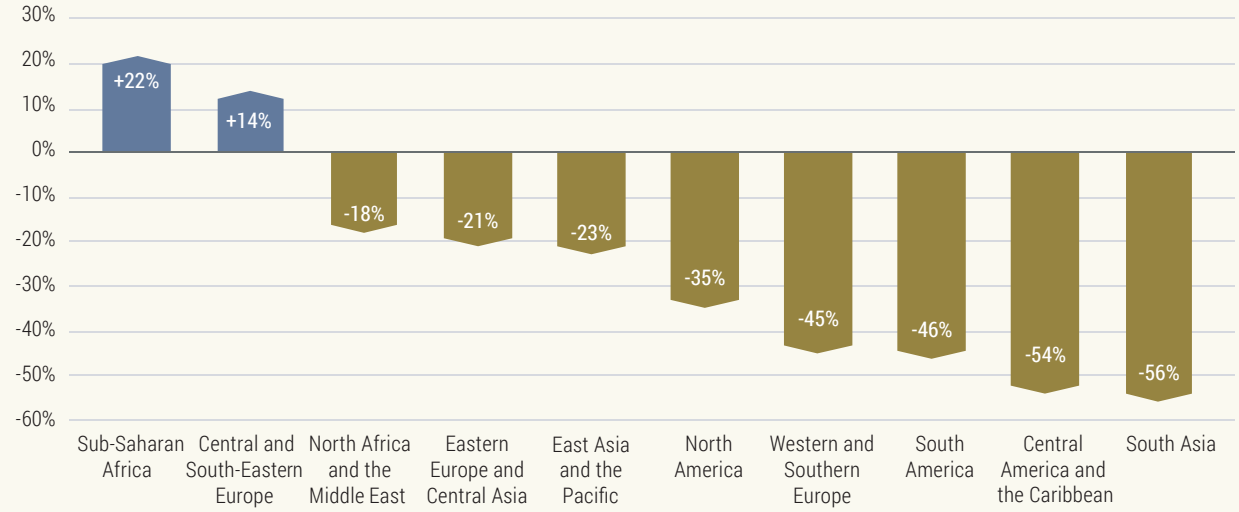


46%
reduction
South America

Possible responses

- Member States to invest in capacity building on digital investigative capabilities, including in collecting and handling electronic evidence.
- International organizations to facilitate joint training activities for countries affected by the same trafficking flows. Further, international organizations should promote the sharing of best practices, technologies and dissemination of practical information about national dedicated units on trafficking in persons.
- Member States to ensure that access to victim assistance is not conditional on a victim's participation in criminal proceedings.
- Member States and international organizations to promote judicial education on trafficking in persons, including on technology-facilitated trafficking.
- Member States to include trafficking in persons among their top three crime priorities when funding is allocated.
- Donor community and international organizations to support efforts to improve human rights-based counter-trafficking actions in low- and medium-income countries.

Conviction trends by region, 2019-2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Finding 5 *Increased impunity in home countries resulting in more victims trafficked to more destinations*

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia are convicting fewer traffickers and detecting fewer victims when compared to the rest of the world. At the same time, **victims from these regions are increasingly identified** in a wider range of destination countries compared to victims from other regions.

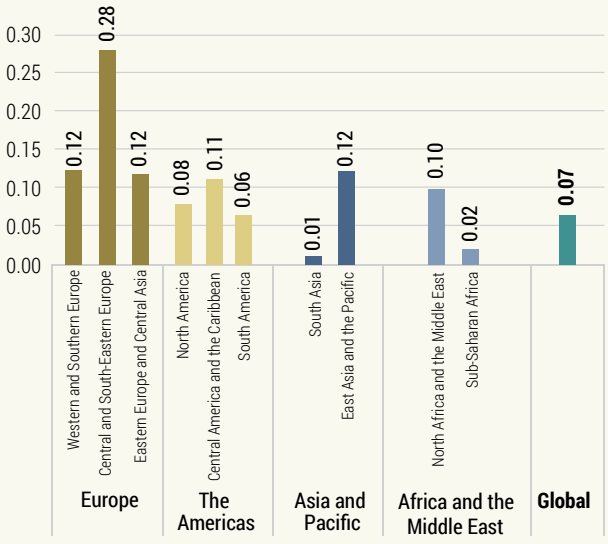
Number of destination countries detecting victims originating within and outside of the region, 2017-2020



Possible responses

- Member States to promote human rights-based and trauma-informed proactive investigations on cases of trafficking in persons.
- Member States to scale up proactive identification of victims and provide protection as soon as basic trafficking indicators are met (reasonable grounds).
- Member States to enhance measures for safe and orderly migration from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- Member States to strengthen intelligence sharing mechanisms between law enforcement and immigration officials to counter cross-border trafficking in persons.
- Member States target specific efforts to dismantle high-level transnational organized crime groups active in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- Member States to consider adopting a coordinated and regional approach and response mechanisms to deter cross-border trafficking.
- International organizations and academia to identify good practices and weaknesses of the criminal justice system in counter-trafficking activities.

Conviction rates per 100,000 population, by region (2020 or most recent)

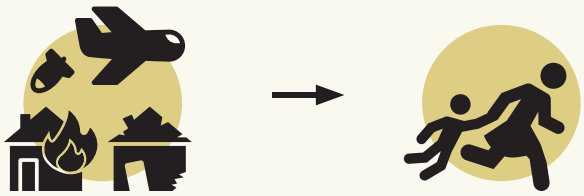


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

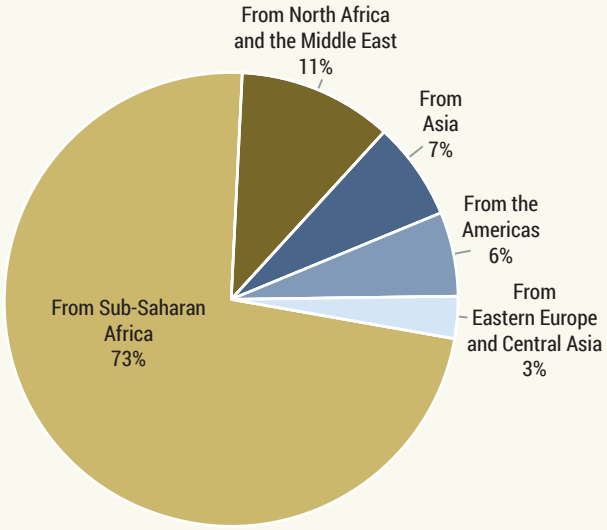
Finding 6 War and conflict offer hunting grounds for traffickers

Conflicts increase the number of victims of trafficking exploited within and outside crisis areas. The refugee emergency in Ukraine is elevating risks of trafficking for the Ukrainian displaced population. The 2014 conflict in Ukraine quadrupled the number of Ukrainian victims detected in Western Europe in 2016.

At the same time, most conflicts today are in Africa and the Middle East. As a consequence, most of the victims resulting from conflicts are originating from and trafficked to countries in Africa and the Middle East.



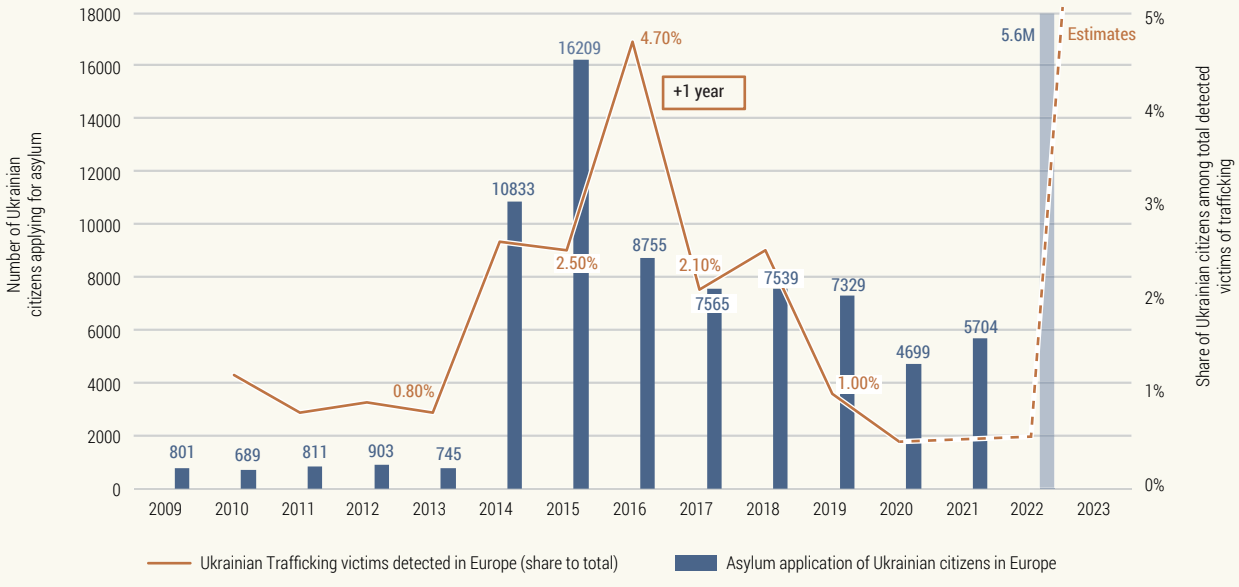
Detected victims of trafficking originating from a country in conflict, by region of citizenship, 2020



Possible responses

- Member States and international organizations to reduce vulnerability to trafficking within conflict areas by ensuring safe access to essential services and humanitarian support for affected populations.
- Member States and international organizations to systematically integrate counter-trafficking measures in emergency humanitarian assistance for displaced populations.
- Member States to extend humanitarian support and durable protection measures to all populations fleeing from countries in conflict.
- International organizations and donor community to enhance action for the demobilization and reintegration of children recruited by armed forces.
- Member States and international organizations to enhance counter-trafficking training for military personnel, UN and peacekeeping personnel.
- International organizations to monitor evolving patterns and flows of trafficking in persons in crisis situations.

Relationship between Ukrainian asylum applications and detection of Ukrainian trafficking victims, in Western and Central Europe, 2009-2022

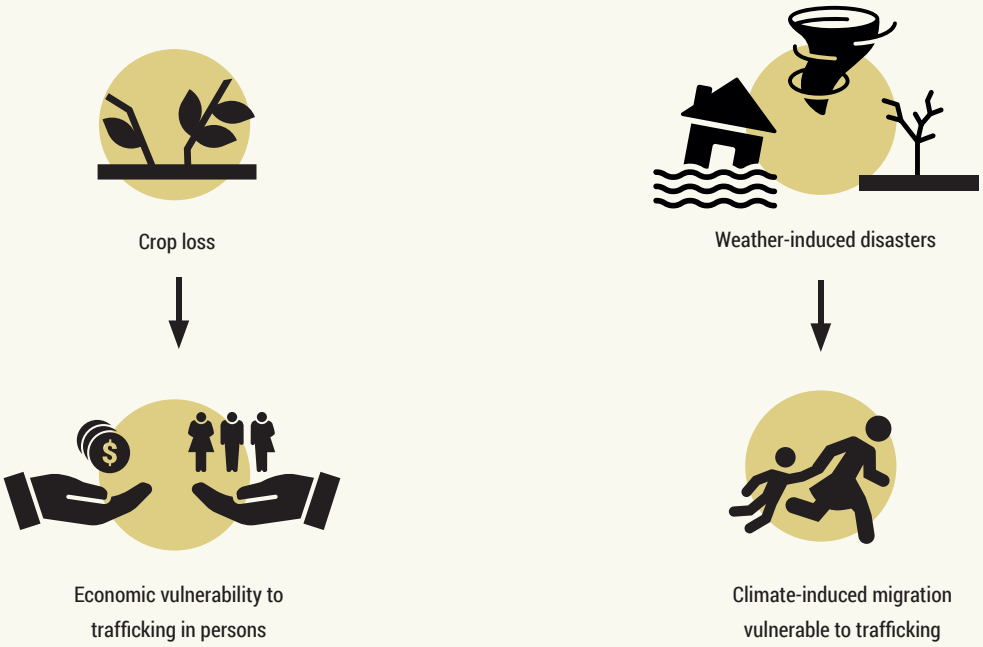


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNHCR data.

Finding 7 *Climate change is multiplying trafficking risks*

Climate change is increasing vulnerability to trafficking in persons by acting as a stress multiplier.

In 2021, 23.7 million people were internally displaced by weather-induced natural disasters while many others crossed borders to escape climate-induced poverty.



Possible responses

- Member States to ensure that those affected by climate change, particularly those in vulnerable situations, have access to effective remedies and means of adaptation to enjoy lives of human dignity.
- Member States to systematically integrate counter-trafficking measures in emergency humanitarian assistance for climate-induced migrants.
- Donor community to invest in increasing the resilience of livelihoods and opportunities for communities vulnerable to climate change.
- International organizations and academia to monitor the impact of climate change as a potential driver of trafficking in persons through targeted data collection and research.

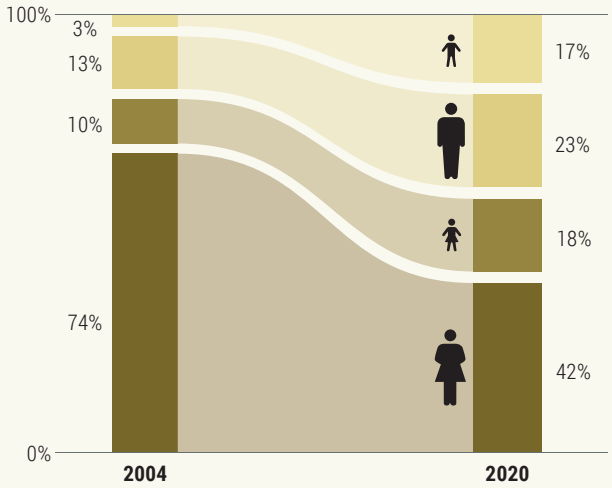
Finding 8 *Boys and men account for a greater share of detected victims, as new forms of exploitation emerge*

More male victims – both boys and men – have been detected in greater numbers over the past decade.

Increasing proportions of identified victims have been trafficked for the purpose of **forced criminality and mixed forms** of exploitation.

Notwithstanding the global reduction in detection, male victims make up the single profile to be increasingly detected, about a three per cent rise from 2019.
At the same time, the share of detected victims in criminal activities and in mixed forms of trafficking has increased rapidly over the last five years.

Trends in the profile of victims detected, 2004–2020





Male victims is the only profile that has increased of about **+3%** from 2019.

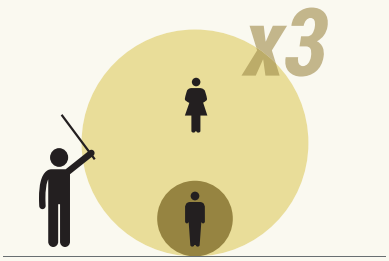
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Possible responses

- Member States to enhance and tailor protections and services for all victims and for all forms of exploitation, including male victims.
- Member States to give effect to the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking, including for criminal, civil, administrative and immigration offences and ensure that trafficked persons are not subject to prosecution or punished for illegal conduct that they committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked.
- Member States to systematically address gender biases in victim identification by ensuring that protection efforts also target men as potential victims.
- Donor community, international organizations and academia to invest in research into patterns of diverse forms of trafficking, including mixed forms, criminal activity, forced marriage and others.
- Donor community, international organizations and academia to invest in prevalence studies to unveil potential misperceptions and bias in the detection of victims and target the response towards the most in need.

Finding 9 *Woman and children suffer greater violence at the hands of traffickers*

Analysis of court cases shows that **female victims are subjected to physical or extreme violence at the hands of traffickers at a rate three times higher than males**, while while children are subjected to physical or extreme violence at a rate almost two times higher than adults.

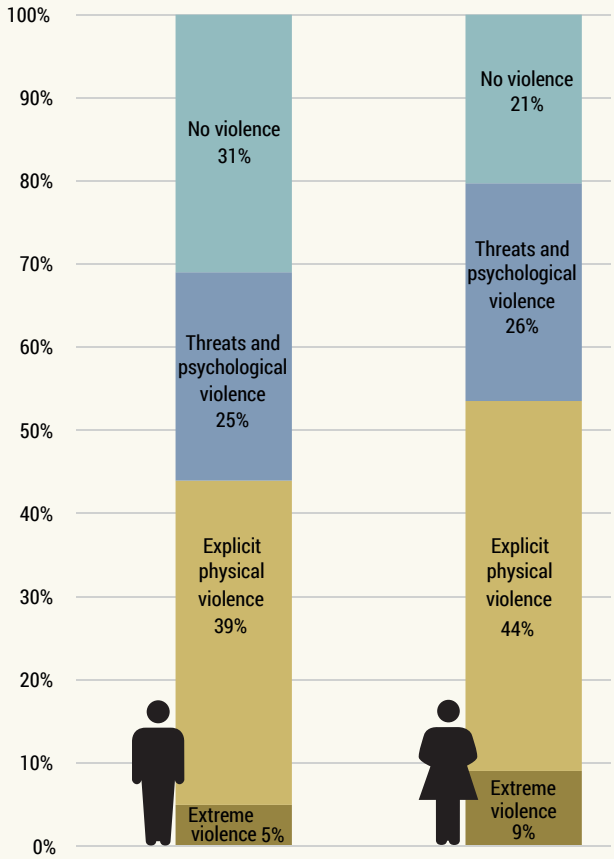


Physical or extreme violence rate



Physical or extreme violence rate

Level of violence suffered by trafficking victims, by sex, 2012-2021, as reported in UNODC court case summaries*



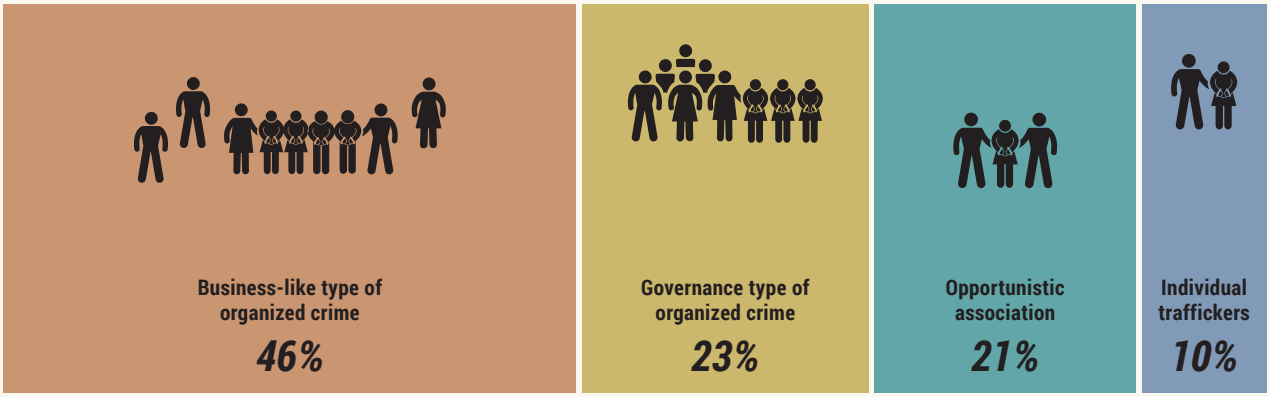
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on 1,790 female victims and 327 male victims reported in 622 cases of trafficking that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

Possible responses

- Member States to increase access to specialized care and services for victims who have suffered extreme violence.
- Member States to integrate gender-based violence interventions into anti-trafficking strategies.
- Member States to consider including the use of explicit and extreme violence as an aggravating circumstance for the offence of trafficking in persons in national legislation.
- Donor community, international organizations and academia to invest in research into patterns and root causes of all forms of gender-based violence and reporting bias by gender at investigation and prosecution stages.
- Member States to enhance cooperation between law enforcement and social services for the identification and protection of child victims of trafficking.

Finding 10 More organized traffickers exploit more victims, with more violence and for longer periods of time

Traffickers' structure and level of organization differ profoundly. Court case summaries reveal that organized criminal groups account for most detected victims and convicted offenders. Individual traffickers operating on their own may traffic a few victims each, but globally they may account for a significant number of victims. When larger, more structured criminal organizations get involved, they manage to traffic more people in a more violent manner and for longer periods of time.



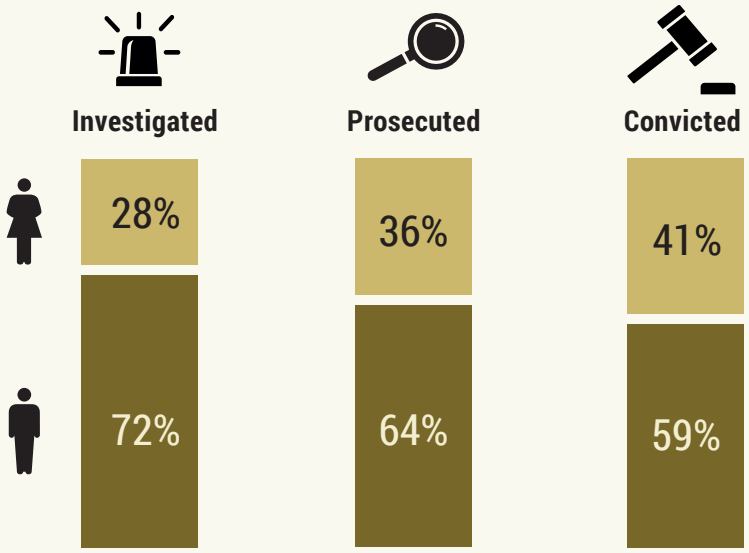
Possible responses

- Member States to fully implement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including the provisions on international cooperation regarding measures to identify, trace and freeze or seize proceeds of crime, on measures to combat money-laundering and measure to combat corruption.
- Member States to harmonize legislation with international standards to adequately punish offences of trafficking in persons aggravated by the organized crime element.
- International organizations to monitor and support Member States in implementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- Member States to adapt investigative tools according to the traffickers' structure.
- Financial institutions to establish financial information sharing systems to monitor illicit transactions, particularly among remittance transfer services and banks.

Finding 11 *Women: More likely than men to be traffickers or more likely than men to be convicted?*

Women investigated for trafficking in persons are significantly more likely to be convicted than men.

Persons investigated, prosecuted, convicted (1st instance) for trafficking in persons, by sex, 2020 (or most recent)



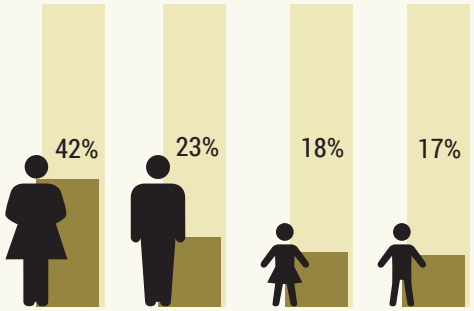
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Possible responses

- Member States to ensure access to justice to women and girls investigated for trafficking in persons and related offences.
- Member States to integrate training of the judiciary to examine trafficking in persons as a form of gender-based violence within the context of international women's rights frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW).
- International organizations and academia to better analyse the gender dimension of the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons.

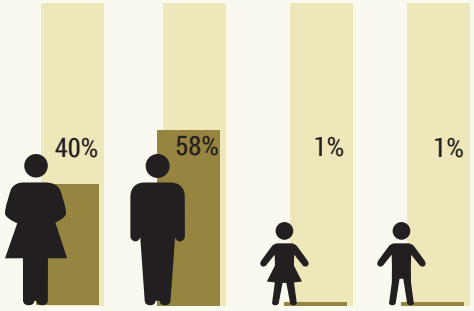
Key Indicators

Detected victims of trafficking, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



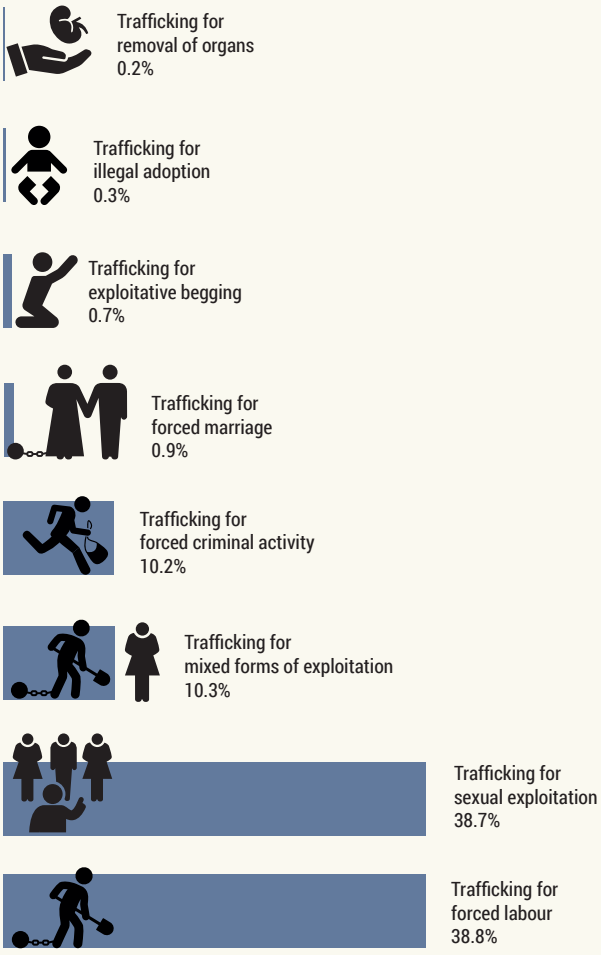
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
*Based on a total of 51,675 victims detected in 166 countries in 2020 (or most recent).

Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
*Based on 1,234 people convicted of trafficking in persons in 2020 (or most recent) whose age and sex were reported in 128 countries.

Detected victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

REGION-BY-REGION KEY DEVELOPMENTS

CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	› 60% decrease in male victims detected; 67% decrease in female victims detected. › A large number of girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation. › More than 10% of detected victims of sexual exploitation are males.
CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE	› Continued increase in the detection of victims of trafficking in persons. › The region recorded an increase in convictions in 2020.
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	› 59% decrease in the number of victims of trafficking detected in 2020. › 81% decrease in the number of victims of cross-border trafficking detected in 2020. › Men and boys trafficked for sexual exploitation are more frequently reported than in other subregions. › East Asian trafficking outflows remain of a global dimension as most regions detect victims from this part of the world.
EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	› 41% increase in male victims detected; 24% decrease in female victims detected. › Limited impact of the pandemic on the detection of trafficking victims. › Severe slowdown of the criminal justice response to trafficking recorded in 2020.
NORTH AMERICA	› 26% increase in male victims detected; 14% increase in female victims detected. › 35% drop in the number of convictions during 2020.
SOUTH AMERICA	› 23% decrease in male victims detected; 38% decrease in female victims detected. › The number of people convicted in the region was 46% lower than that seen in 2019.
SOUTH ASIA	› 31% decrease in detected victims trafficked for sexual exploitation. › In 2020, more men were detected as victims of trafficking compared to previous years. › 23% decline in the number of domestic victims detected in 2020. › Fewer victims per 100,000 population are detected than other parts of the world.
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	› The number of foreign victims detected in Sub-Saharan Africa countries fell, especially in comparison to 2018 levels. › Children continue to account for the majority of detected trafficking victims. Between 2019 and 2020, the rate of child victims per 100,000 population increased by 43%. › Fewer victims per 100,000 population are detected than other parts of the world. › Compared to other regions of origins of cross-border trafficking, victims from Sub-Saharan Africa are detected in a growing number of countries, both within and outside the region of origin.

REGION-BY-REGION KEY DEVELOPMENTS

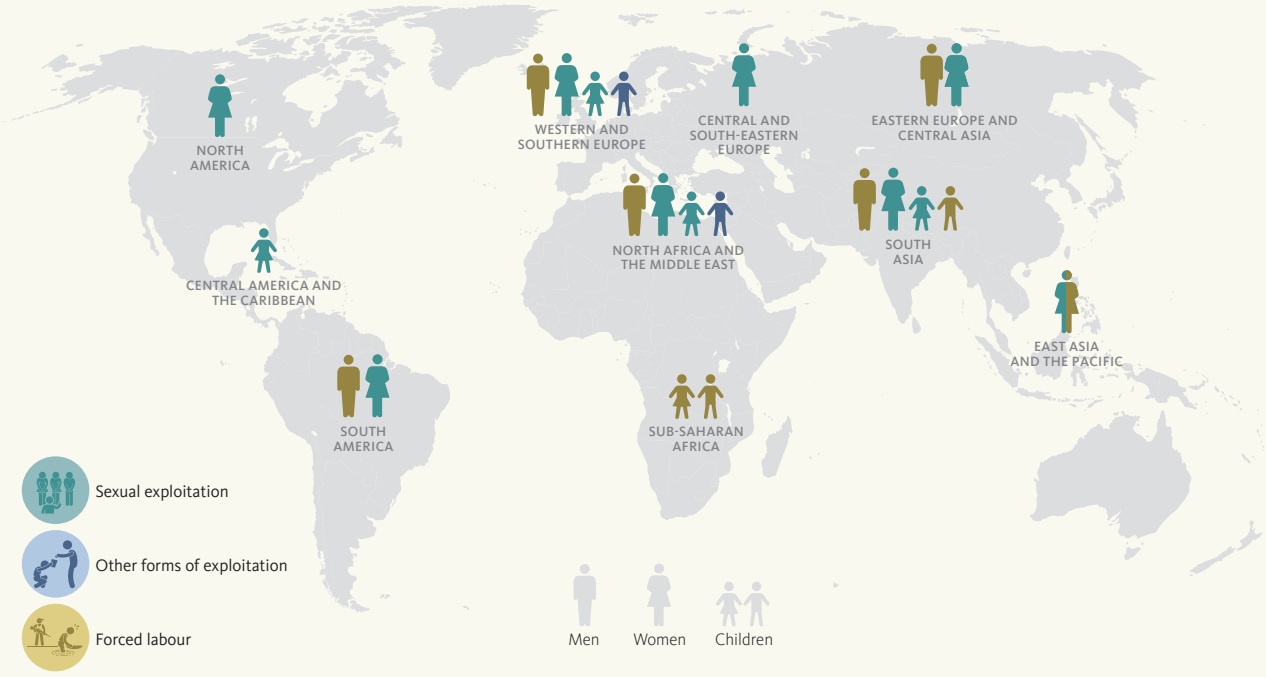
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

- 70% decrease in the number of victims of cross-border trafficking detected in 2020 compared to 2019.
- 68% decrease in the detected child victims of trafficking in 2020 compared to 2019.
- Children were reported to have been trafficked for exploitative begging.

WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

- In 2020, 22% increase in male victims detected compared to 2019.
- A proportion of detected victims are trafficked to be exploited in criminal activity or mixed forms of trafficking.
- Increased detection of domestic trafficking.
- Decrease in prosecutions and convictions.

Main forms of exploitation and profile of detected victims, by regions, 2020 (or more recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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Introduction – Trafficking in Persons in a changing world

The 7th edition of the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, which has been published since 2009, arrives to a world in turmoil. The Covid-19 pandemic, economic crises, conflict, forced displacement and climate change have altered and continue to shape the life of the human community. These stressors and drivers of insecurity have left more people vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking in persons, even as efforts to detect victims and criminal justice responses are falling short.

This edition of the Global Report provides a snapshot of the trafficking patterns and flows detected during the Covid-19 pandemic.
The data informing the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons series represent the largest existing dataset on trafficking in persons, with information on more than 450,000 victims and 300,000 (suspected) offenders detected worldwide between 2003 and 2021. A major focus of this edition of the Report is on trends of detections and convictions that show important changes compared to historical trends since UNODC started to collect data in 2003.

The findings are further informed and enriched through analysis of 800 court case summaries to gain closer insights into trafficking in persons, its victims and perpetrators, and how crimes come to the attention of authorities.

Chapter I describes the profile of the victims detected globally, the profile of the offenders apprehended, as well as the major global trafficking flows. In addition, the chapter provides an overview of the global trends in the detection of trafficking victims and in the number of convictions for trafficking in persons in the last decade.
Chapter II presents a detailed analysis of the patterns and flows of detected trafficking for each of the regions and subregions considered.

The Report further examines human trafficking in communities affected by natural disasters and elaborates on how trafficking in persons is affected by conflict. The Report features contributions from partners such as the OSCE, which addresses the use of internet technologies by traffickers as well as by national institutions to counter criminals' activities, as well as an innovative analysis applying the Multiple System Estimation (MSE) method to measure prevalence of trafficking in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, by researchers at the Comillas Pontifical University.
For the first time this edition of the Report presents contributions from early career and young academic researchers, as part of UNODC's Generation 30 initiative, aimed at building new connections between the UN and academia, while expanding research opportunities for young people. The contributions featured in the Report, submitted in response to a call for proposals issued on the UNODC website in 2022, look at trafficking of men and the possible impact of international standards on the detection of victims of trafficking.

The first annex includes the country profiles describing the individual country trafficking situation in terms of national legislation, number of trafficking cases investigated, offenders and their profiles, as well as the profile of the victims detected.

The dataset including the data collected by UNODC since the first edition of the Global Report in 2009 will be published in the UNODC data portal.[1] The dataset contains information on detected cases of trafficking in persons, number of victims and offenders detected, their age, sex and citizenship as well as the forms of exploitation.

Data, information and geographical coverage

For this edition of the Report, official statistics on the detected cases of trafficking in persons were collected from 141 countries. The countries covered encompass more than 95 per cent of the world's population.

The latest time period covered by the data collection for this edition of the Global Report is 2017-2020. A limited number of countries provided information for the year 2021. The data analysis and presentation often employ data collected since 2003 in order to discern longer-term data trends.

Most countries reported data for the year 2020. Annual patterns and flows at the regional and global levels were derived by using "2020 (or most recent)" as reference year, meaning that, for the countries where 2020 data were not available, the most recent available data were used (2021, 2019, 2018 or 2017).

1 https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-trafficking-persons

Summary of core data and indicators used in this edition of the Report

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 (or most recent)	Total 2017-2020
Number of detected victims reported	44,989	46,384	49,692	46,850	53,800	187,915
Number of detected victims for which age and sex was reported by Member States	40,004	39,544	41,402	41,461	51,580	162,411
Number of detected victims for which a form of exploitation was reported by Member States	36,218	39,112	40,527	36,628	45,258	152,485
Number of detected victims for which citizenship was reported by Member States	26,111	29,899	39,599	34,968	38,709	130,577
Number of persons investigated/ suspected or arrested reported by Member States	18,472	18,283	18,294	15,488	17,635	70,537
Number of persons prosecuted reported by Member States	13,463	12,605	11,267	8,769	10,257	46,104
Number of persons convicted reported by Member States	7,310	6,667	3,247	2,271	2,858	19,495
Number of persons convicted for which citizenship was reported by Member States	3,038	2,197	1,488	2,894	3,409	9,617

Data were disaggregated by sex and gender everywhere where data availability allowed it.

In addition, the analysis made use of the narratives of court case summaries collected by UNODC over the years. A total of 800 cases of trafficking in persons were shared by 85 Member States. These cases involved more than 4,000 victims and 3,000 offenders. Analyses based on this data are referred to as "GLOTIP collection of court case summaries." These cases can be found in more detail in a dedicated document published in the UNODC Global Report webpage[2] and in the UNODC Knowledge Portal on Trafficking in Persons and its dedicated Case-law Database, Sherloc.[3]

2 https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html

3 https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/en/v3/htms/index.html

The 141 countries covered by the data collection were grouped into four main regions and 10 subregions. The four regions are: Africa and the Middle East; South, East Asia and the Pacific; the Americas; and Europe and Central Asia.

Countries in Africa and the Middle East are grouped into two subregions: Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa and the Middle East. Similarly, Asian countries are grouped into two subregions: South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific. Countries in the Americas are aggregated in three subregions: North America, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America. Countries in Europe and Central Asia are grouped into the three subregions of Western and Southern Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

When the data allowed for more detailed analysis, countries were organized into more specific subgroups, such as West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, or countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, and countries in Central Asia. Specific footnotes explain the exact composition of the different geographical aggregations used in the text.

Central America and the Caribbean
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Jamaica
Nicaragua
St. Lucia
Panama
The Bahamas
Trinidad and Tobago

Central and South-Eastern Europe
Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Czechia
Croatia
Estonia
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Montenegro
North Macedonia
Poland
Romania
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia

East Asia and the Pacific
Australia
Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
China
Fiji
Indonesia
Japan
Malaysia
Micronesia (Federated States of)
Mongolia
Myanmar
New Zealand
Palau
The Philippines
Singapore
Solomon Islands
Thailand
Tonga
Vanuatu

Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Afghanistan
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Republic of Moldova
The Russian Federation
Tajikistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan

North Africa and the Middle East
Algeria
Bahrain
Egypt
Iraq
Israel
Jordan
Lebanon
Morocco
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Sudan
Syria
Tunisia
United Arab Emirates
Yemen



Sources: UNODC.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

North America
Canada
Mexico
The United States of America

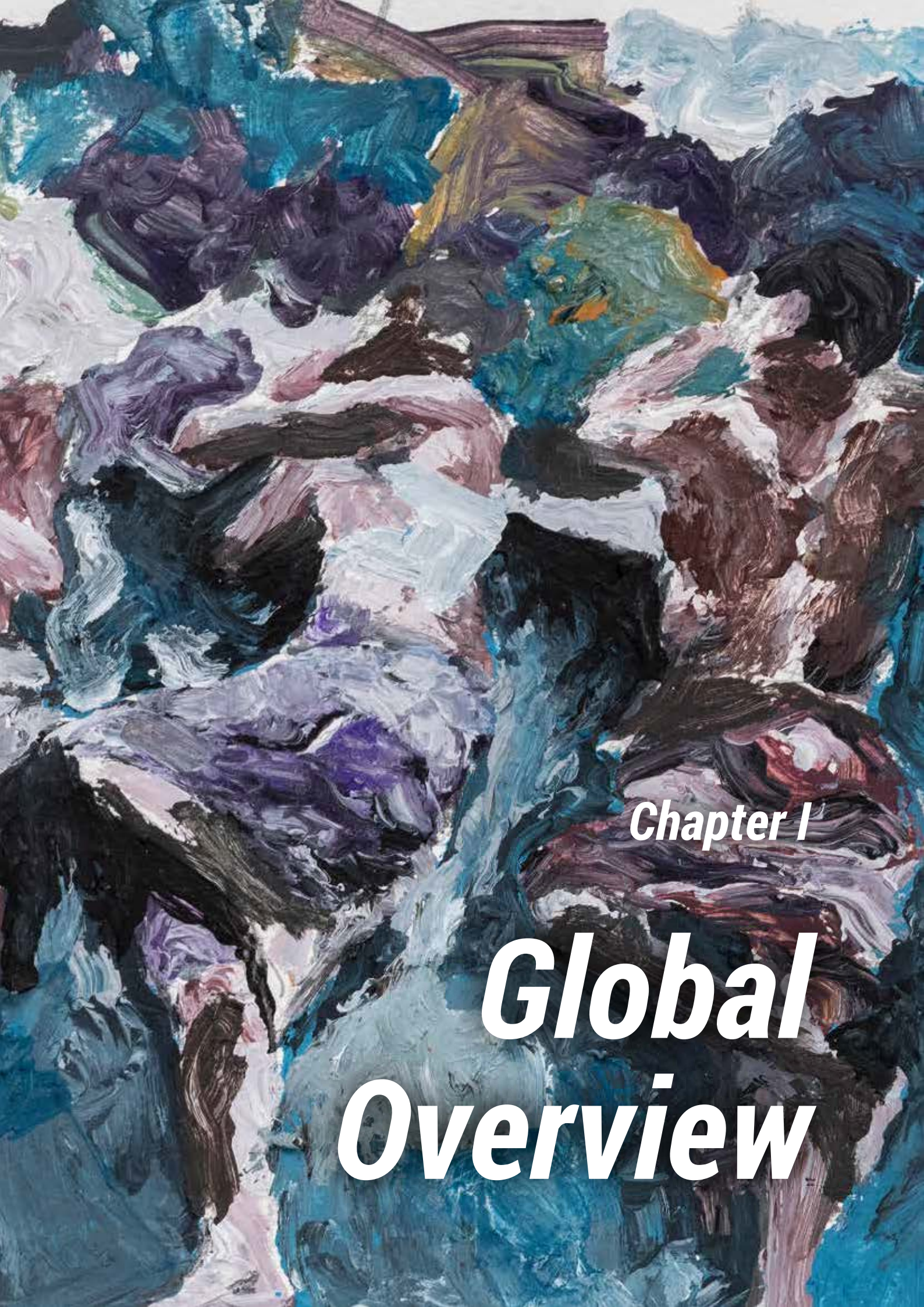
South America
Argentina
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Guyana
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay

South Asia
Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

Sub-Saharan Africa
Angola
Benin
Botswana
Cabo Verde
Central African Republic
Chad
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Eswatini
Gambia
Kenya
Lesotho
Liberia
Malawi
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
Somalia
South Africa
United Republic of Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Western and Southern Europe
Andorra
Austria
Belgium
Cyprus
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Lichtenstein
Luxembourg
Malta
The Netherlands
Norway
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Türkiye
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland





Chapter I

Global Overview

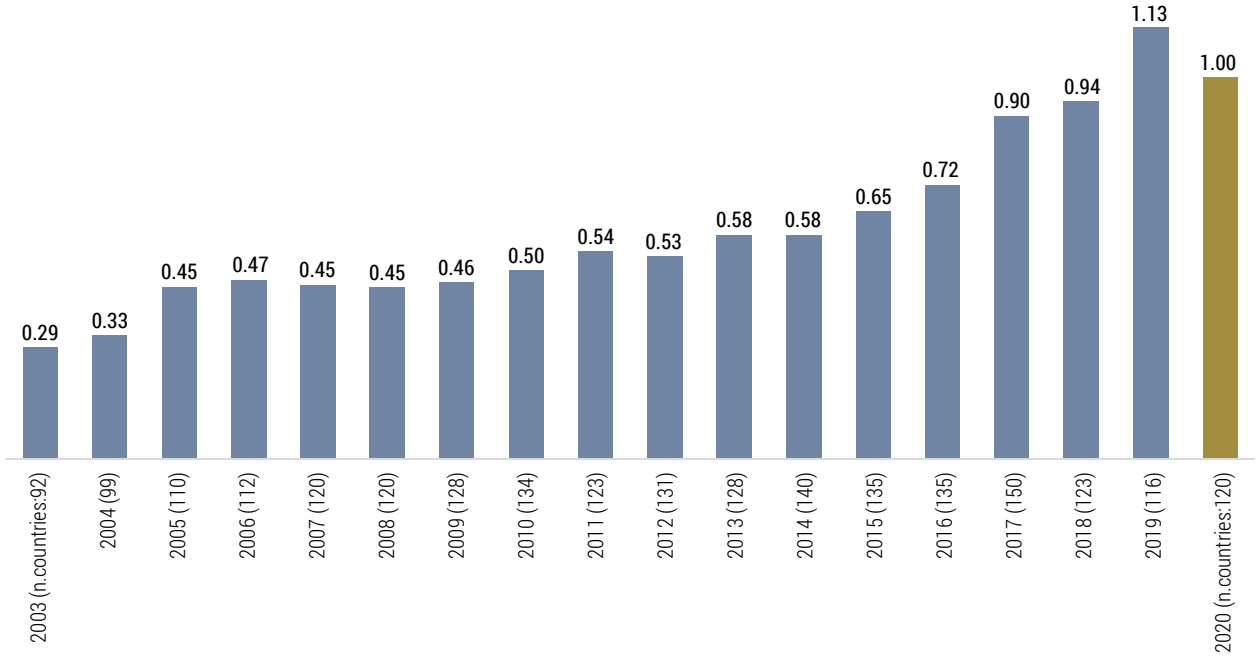
Dramatic shifts and accelerated trends

*The **COVID-19 pandemic** has had far-reaching implications for trafficking in persons and the efforts to counter it. It appears to have affected not only the level of detection but the characteristics of trafficking. This overview seeks to give a comprehensive picture of trafficking and counter-trafficking trends during the volatile first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will highlight key shifts in the trafficking patterns that appeared in 2020. Further, it provides insights into those who were convicted for such crimes, as well as into their organized criminal groups. Finally, this section will turn attention to the global slowdown in the criminal justice response to trafficking, a trend that worsened in 2020.*

In 2020, for the first time since UNODC has been collecting data, the **number of victims detected globally decreased by 11 per cent compared to 2019**. This shift takes place after a steady increase in the number of victims detected globally. This decline in detection of trafficking victims is most evident in low- and medium-income countries. The most significant drops in detection were recorded in **trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (down by 24 per cent) and in cross-border trafficking (down by 21 per cent)**.

For the first time since UNODC started collecting data on trafficking in persons, detection of trafficking for forced labour in 2020 was equal to that of trafficking for sexual exploitation, at just under 40 per cent each.

Fig. 1 Total victims detected per 100,000 population, 2003-2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

The profile of detected victims is changing. In 2020, along with the drastically fewer victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation identified by authorities, the share of women as detected victims of all forms of trafficking continues to fall. The number of victims trafficked for criminal activity detected continues to rise, though. And while there is general decline of detected cross-border trafficking, victims from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia continue to be increasingly detected throughout the rest of the world.

Criminal justice responses are falling short. The global decrease in the number of victims identified is largely driven by the fall in numbers reported by low- and medium-income countries. Further, the capacity to adjudicate trafficking cases seems to have deteriorated globally over the last few years and has worsened during the pandemic.

More impunity, more victims: Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are convicting fewer traffickers and detecting fewer victims than rest of the world. At the same time, victims from these regions are identified in more destination countries than people from elsewhere, suggesting a weak criminal justice response may be incentivizing traffickers to operate nationally and transnationally from these regions.

Conflicts have increased vulnerability to trafficking in and outside of conflict areas. Forced to flee and often in economic need, displaced populations are easily targeted by traffickers. Analysis shows a relationship between the people forced to flee Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 as a result of the conflict in the eastern part of the country, and increased detection of trafficking in persons from Ukraine to Western and Central Europe in the following years. With the regular migration scheme offered by the EU to Ukrainian citizens in the current conflict, the vulnerability to trafficking may be reduced as compared to 2014. Nonetheless the risk that the current conflict in Ukraine could generate an unprecedented number of victims remains, if mitigation measures are not put in place (see box, War: An opportunity for traffickers). Other on-going conflicts, for example in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, have also placed people at higher risk of trafficking. Convicted traffickers often operate in small groups, loosely connected through business-type arrangements, as well as acting individually or in pairs. However, an analysis of convictions in recent years shows that, **when large criminal organizations with territorial control engage in trafficking in persons, they are more violent and traffic more victims**, for longer periods of time and farther distances compared to less organized criminals.

Climate change is increasing the vulnerability of some people to trafficking. In 2021, 23.7 million people were internally displaced by disasters, while many crossed borders to escape climate-induced poverty. While a systematic global analysis of the impact of climate change on trafficking in persons is missing, community level studies in different parts of the world point at weather induced disasters as root causes for trafficking in persons (see box Climate change: Affecting communities and increasing risks for trafficking in persons).

One noteworthy finding of the Report is that **most victims identified in adjudicated cases are "self-rescued"** suggesting that proactive identification remans limited in scope and effectiveness – a review of court cases found that the majority of cases are brought to authorities by victims who manage to exit exploitation and come forward on their own.

The Report also found **that female and children victims are at higher risk of experiencing physical violence during trafficking as compared to men**, respectively. Girls and women are three times more likely to suffer explicit or extreme violence compared to boys and men, while for children this risk is about two times higher than adults. On the other hand, when investigated and brought to trial, women are more frequently convicted compared to men who have been investigated and prosecuted.

Global trends emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic

Infographic 1 Trafficking in persons emerging trends in 2020

	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total [4]	Total victims of trafficking in persons detected (per 100,000p) **– 11%**	
Types of trafficking flows [5]	Cross-border trafficking victims detected (per 100,000p) **– 21%**	
Forms of exploitation [6]	Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p) **– 24%** Victims trafficked for "other" [7] forms of exploitation detected (per 100,000p) **– 15%**	
Victims' profiles [8]	Female trafficking victims detected (per 100,000 females) **– 11%**	Male trafficking victims detected (per 100,000 males) **+ 3%**
Criminal justice response [9]	Persons convicted for trafficking in persons: **– 27%**	

4 Based on information on total victims detected in 2019 and in 2020, collected from 105 countries: 60 countries reporting a decreasing trend in the detection of victims; 33 countries reporting an increasing trend; and 12 countries reporting a stable number of detections over these two years.

5 Based on information on total victims detected in 2019 and in 2020, collected from 73 countries.

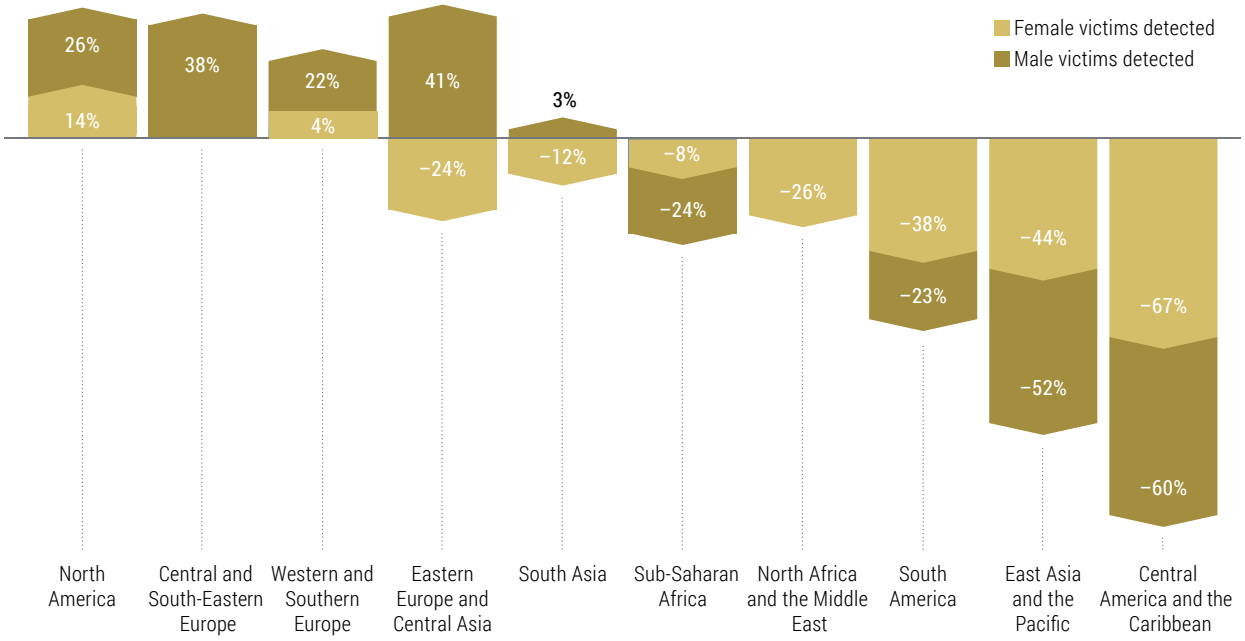
6 Based on information on total victims detected in 2019 and in 2020, collected from 89 countries.

7 "Other forms" of exploitation refers to those forms not falling within the "sexual exploitation", "forced labour" or "organ removal" categories.

8 Based on information on total victims detected in 2019 and in 2020, collected from 99 countries.

9 Based on information on total number of individuals convicted in 2019 and in 2020, collected from 85 countries.

Fig. 2 Change in the number of detected victims, by sex, per 100,000 population, comparison from 2019 to 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
*Based on information collected from 96 countries: 21 in Western and Southern Europe; 14 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; 14 in East Asia and the Pacific; 12 in Sub-Saharan Africa; 10 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; nine in the Middle East and North Africa; eight in South America; seven in Central America and the Caribbean; four in South Asia; and two in North America.

The global decline in detection of trafficking victims, in 2020 compared to 2019, was largely driven by smaller victim counts in **low- and medium-income countries**. Countries in Central and South America reported a significant reduction in the number of identified victims in 2020. Sub-Saharan Africa and the East Asia and Pacific regions also saw a decline. Member States in these regions have attributed these lower detections to reduced law enforcement engagement in anti-trafficking activities, as pandemic preventive measures absorbed most of each state's capacity. Countries in Europe and North America still recorded a small increase in the number of victims detected in 2020.

Data for 2021 is still very limited, but on the basis of information from 20 countries, it appears that some countries in South-East Asia, and Central America and the Caribbean, **have reported a further reduction in 2021**. Some others, mainly in Europe and the Americas, **have reported higher numbers compared to 2020** (see figure 6 below).

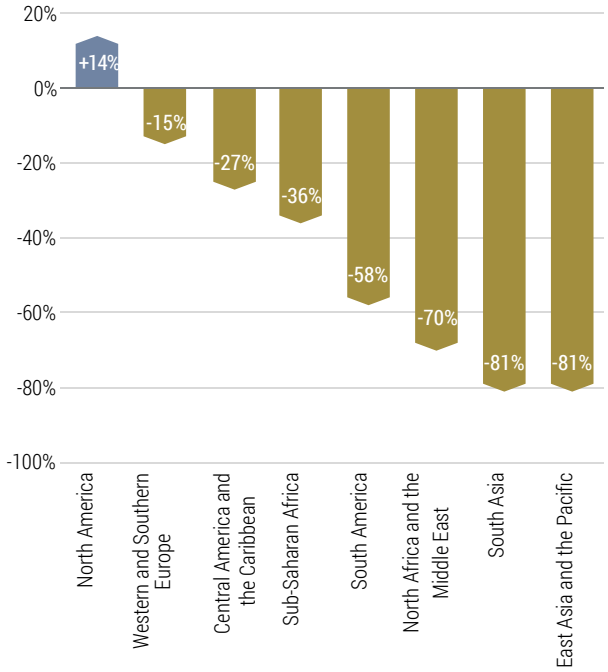
Globally, detected forms of cross-border trafficking also fell considerably in 2020, as most regions identified over **20 percent fewer victims from abroad than the year before**. Some national reports suggest **mobility restrictions resulting from COVID-19** containment measures may have contributed to this trend.[10] For example, Uganda Police forces reported that the downward trend in the number of trafficking cases was the results of, "restriction of cross-border movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of transport within and outside the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic". The number of transnational cases reported by the police in Uganda fell from 233 in 2019 to 93 in 2020. At the same time, the recorded number of Ugandan nationals trafficked within Uganda rose from 19 in 2019 to 118 in 2020.[11] Similarly, authorities in the Netherlands reported a drastic decline in the number of victims of cross-border sexual exploitation and forced criminality, from 668 victims in 2019 to 289 in 2020. This aligned with the restriction on travel put in place because of COVID-19 pandemic.[12] Similar statements were reported by a number of national authorities in different parts of the world.

10 National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Violence against Children, Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report 2016–2020; Management Summary, p. 4; and the Royal Thai Government Country's Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts (1 January-31 December 2020), pp. 2 and 9.

11 Uganda Police, Annual Crime Report 2020, page 70.

12 National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Violence against Children, "Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report 2016–2020", Management Summary, p.4.

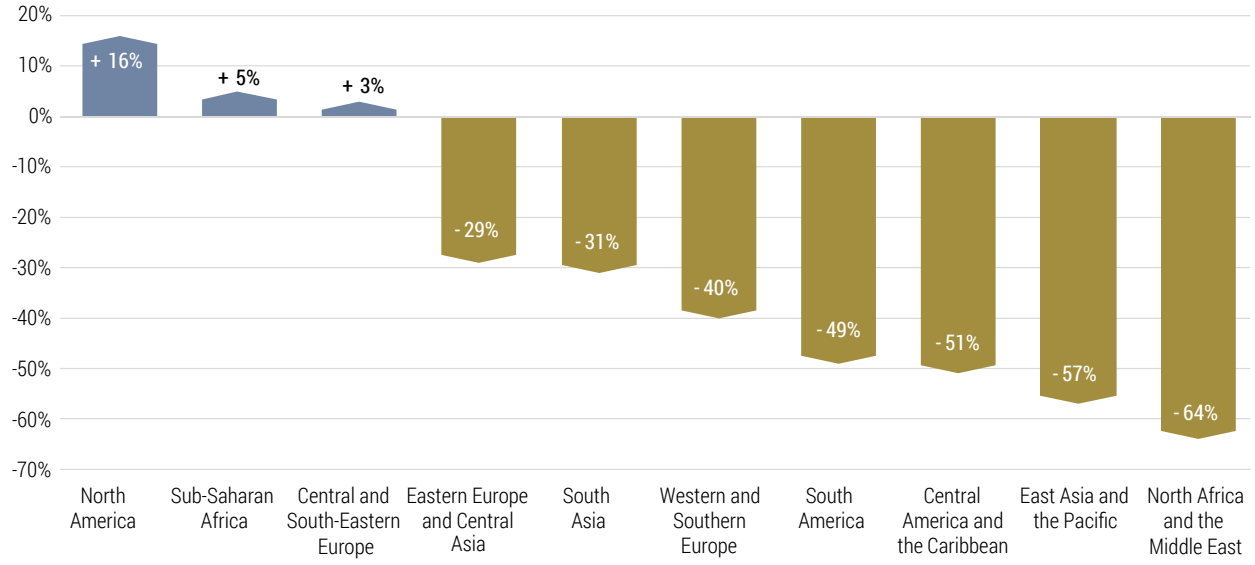
Fig. 3 Percentage change in the number of detected foreign victims of trafficking in persons from 2019 to 2020, by region*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on information collected from 73 countries: 18 in Western and Southern Europe; 12 in East Asia and the Pacific; 10 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; eight in South America; seven in the Middle East and North Africa; six in Sub-Saharan Africa; four in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; five in Central America and Caribbean; two in South Asia; and one in North America.

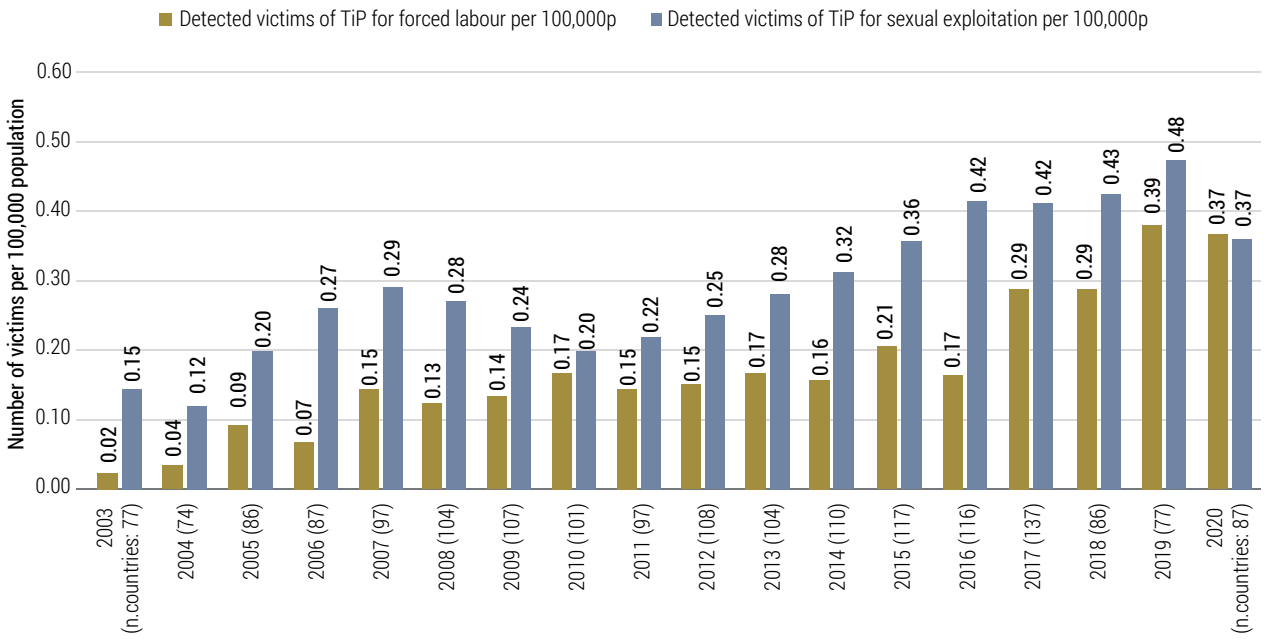
In 2020, **a drastic drop in the detection of trafficking for sexual exploitation** was recorded in most of the world. The only exception was North America, where the detection of victims of this form of trafficking continued to increase in 2020 at the same growth rate recorded in previous years.

Fig. 4 Percentage change in the number of detected victims of sexual exploitation from 2019 to 2020, by region*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on information collected from 100 countries: 19 in Western and Southern Europe; 14 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; 14 in East Asia; 10 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; nine in the Middle East and North Africa; seven in South America; seven in Central America and the Caribbean; six in Sub-Saharan Africa; three in South Asia; and one in North America.

Fig. 5 Trend: Detected victims trafficked for forced labour vs. sexual exploitation, per 100,000 population, 2003-2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

After a decade of consistent increases, in 2020 the detection of trafficking for sexual exploitation fell by some 24 per cent, decreasing in one year the increase recorded in the previous five. As reported above, important reductions were recorded in Asia, Central and South America, in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in Western and Southern Europe.

Research worldwide suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has either resulted in a reduction of trafficking for sexual exploitation and/or in a reduction of the capacity to detect this form of crime.[13] One hypothesis behind the **reduced detection of victims facing sexual exploitation is that lockdown measures pushed exploitation into less visible locations**. This likely hindered authorities' identification of victims and made protection and support by community members and social services even more difficult to reach. Some countries did report victims of domestic trafficking for sexual exploitation becoming "less visible", going "unnoticed" by authorities. Dutch authorities, for example, reported an emerging concern that these victims have "not been able to find their way to support", as anonymous calls **on behalf of victims of sexual exploitation increased compared to 2019**.[14] Along the same lines, a 2021 annual report published by the German Federal Police highlights that sexual exploitation **is continuing to move from streets and brothels to private apartments**.[15]

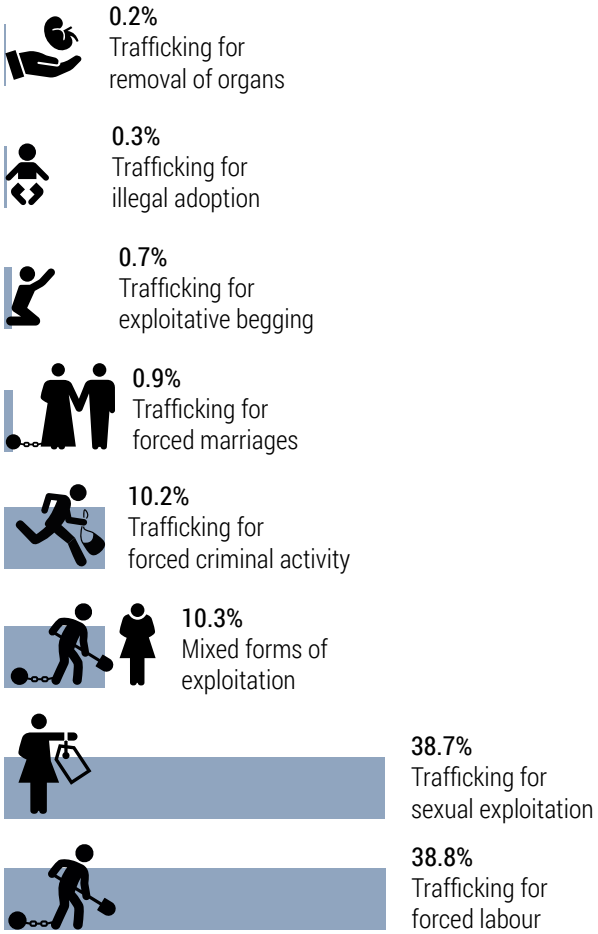
For the first time since UNODC started collecting data on trafficking in persons, **detection of trafficking for forced labour in 2020 was equal to that of trafficking for sexual exploitation**, at just under 40 per cent each.

13 See: Cora Recio Burgos, Fernando Jesús Plaza Del Pino, "'Business can't stop.' Women engaged in prostitution during the COVID-19 pandemic in southern Spain: A qualitative study", Women's Studies International Forum, Volume 86, 2021, 102477, ISSN 0277-5395; Anahita Azam, Stef Adriaenssens & Jef Hendrickx, "How Covid-19 affects prostitution markets in the Netherlands and Belgium: dynamics and vulnerabilities under a lockdown", European Societies, 2021,23:sup1, S478-S494, DOI: 10.1080/14616696.2020.1828978; Cabras, F., & Ingrascì, O., "Female Migrant Street Prostitution during COVID-19 in Milan: A Qualitative Study on How Sex Workers Coped with the Challenges of the Pandemic", Sociologica, 2022, vol.16(1), 95–122, https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/13344; Joshua Kimani, Joyce Adhiambo, Rosemary Kasiba, et. al., "The effects of COVID-19 on the health and socio-economic security of sex workers in Nairobi, Kenya: Emerging intersections with HIV", Global Public Health, 2020, vol. 15:7, 1073-1082, DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2020.1770831; UNFPA, "A Rapid Scoping Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Sex Worker Programmes in East an Southern Africa", 2021; Tan RKJ, Ho V, Sherqueshaa S, et. al., "The Impact of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) on the Health and Social Needs of Sex Workers in Singapore," Arch Sex Behavior, 2021 Jul; 50(5):2017-2029, doi: 10.1007/s10508-021-01951-8, Epub 2021 Jun 30. PMID: 34191194; PMCID: PMC8244454; and National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Violence against Children, "Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report 2016–2020", Management Summary, p.4.

14 National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Violence against Children, "Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report 2016–2020", Management Summary, p.4.

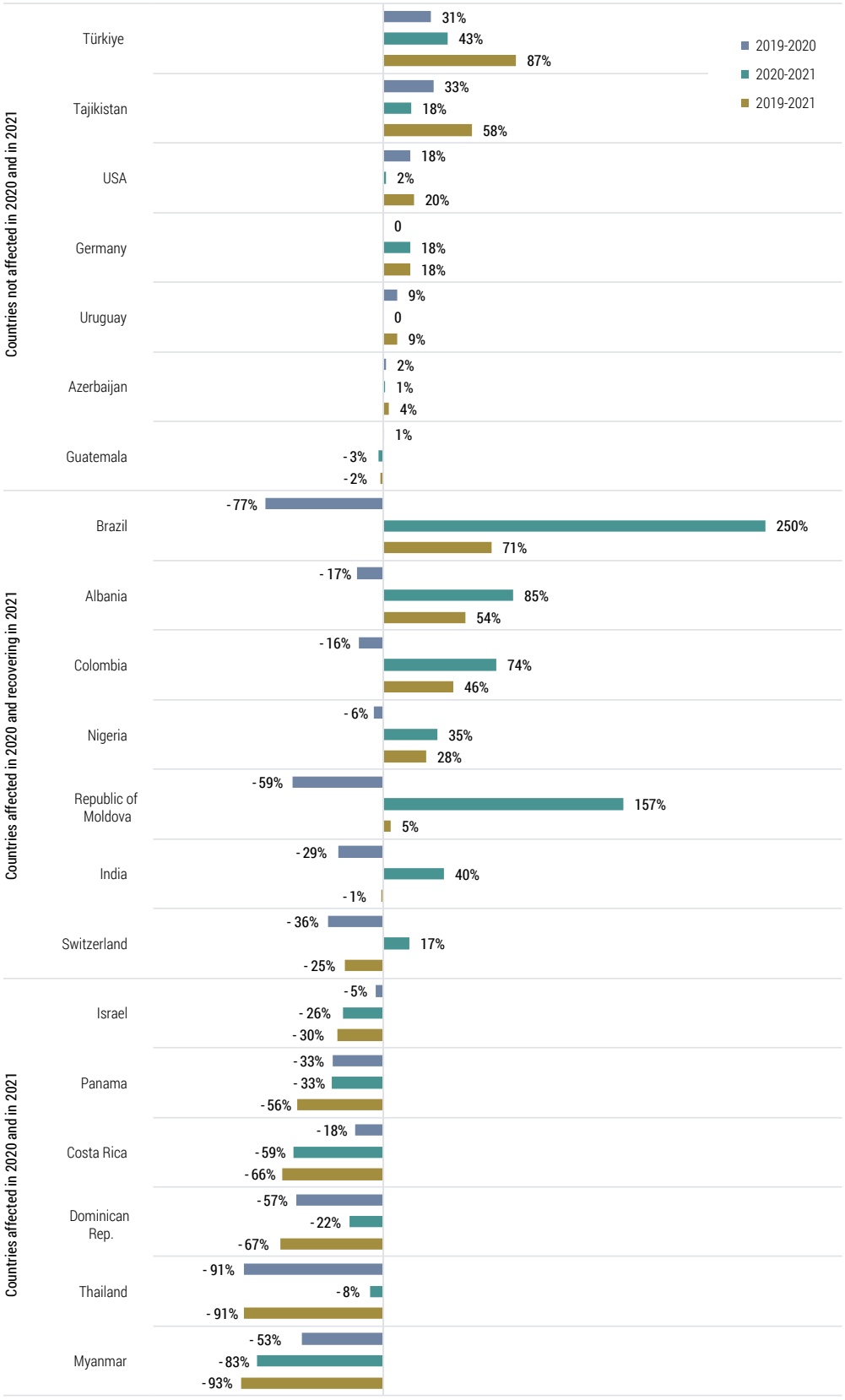
15 German Federal Criminal Police Office, Human Trafficking and Exploitation National Situation Report [Menschenhandel und Ausbeutung Bundeslagebild], 2021, available at: https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Menschenhandel/menschenhandel_node.html.

Infographic 2 Detected victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2020 (or most recent)



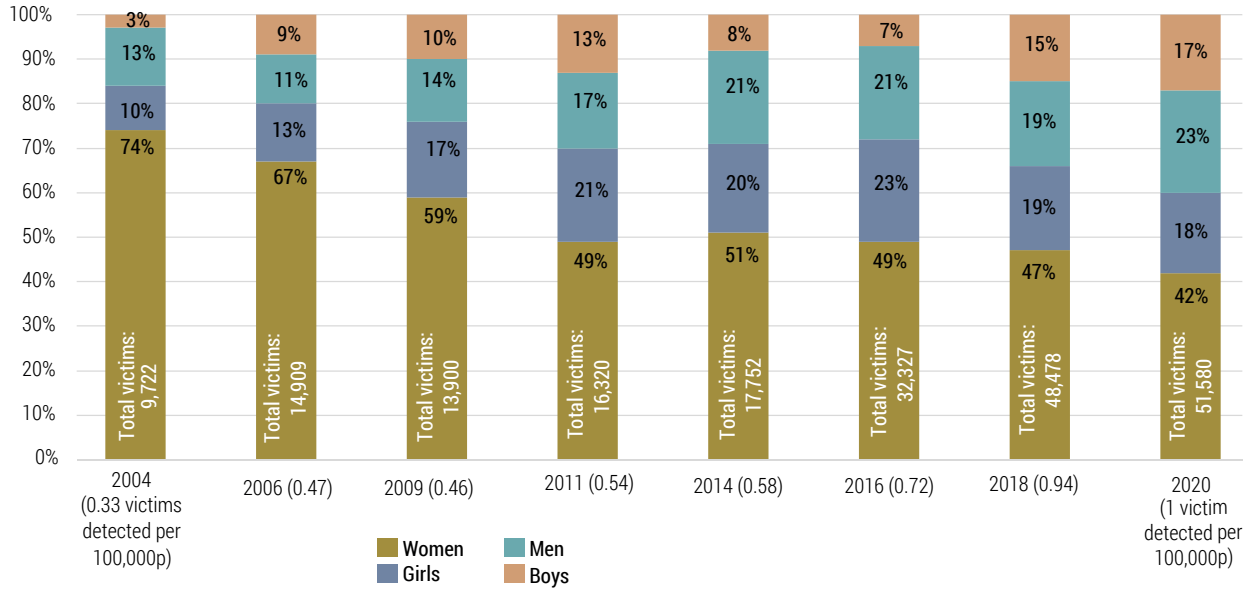
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
*Based on a total of 36,488 victims detected in 86 countries in 2020.

Fig. 6 Change in the number of detected victims, per 100,000 population, comparison from 2019 to 2020, from 2020 to 2021 and from 2019 to 2021 in selected countries



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data

Fig. 7 Trend: Detected victims of trafficking, by age group and sex 2004-2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

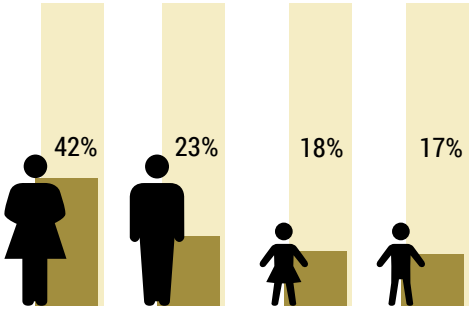
Victims

Women and children face more violent exploitation

Female victims (women and girls) **account for 60** per cent of the total number of detected victims in 2020. The marked reduction in the detection of sexual exploitation drives the reduction in the number of female victims detected per 100,000 population (a decline of 11 per cent in one year). Despite this drop, women and girls remain more detected as victims of trafficking than men and boys. But a longer historical trend towards identifying more male victims seems to have accelerated in 2020.

Analysis of the case summaries collected by UNODC suggests that **traffickers use more violence with women and child victims, especially girls.**[16] Female victims, of any age described in these cases, are three-times more likely to suffer physical or extreme violence (including sexual violence) during trafficking than males. The same dataset shows that children (girls and boys) are 1.7 times more likely to suffer physical or extreme violence than adults (men and women), and girls are 1.5 times more likely to suffer violence than women. This holds true in all regions of origin, regardless of the type of criminality involved or form of exploitation.[17]

Infographic 3 Detected victims of trafficking, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*

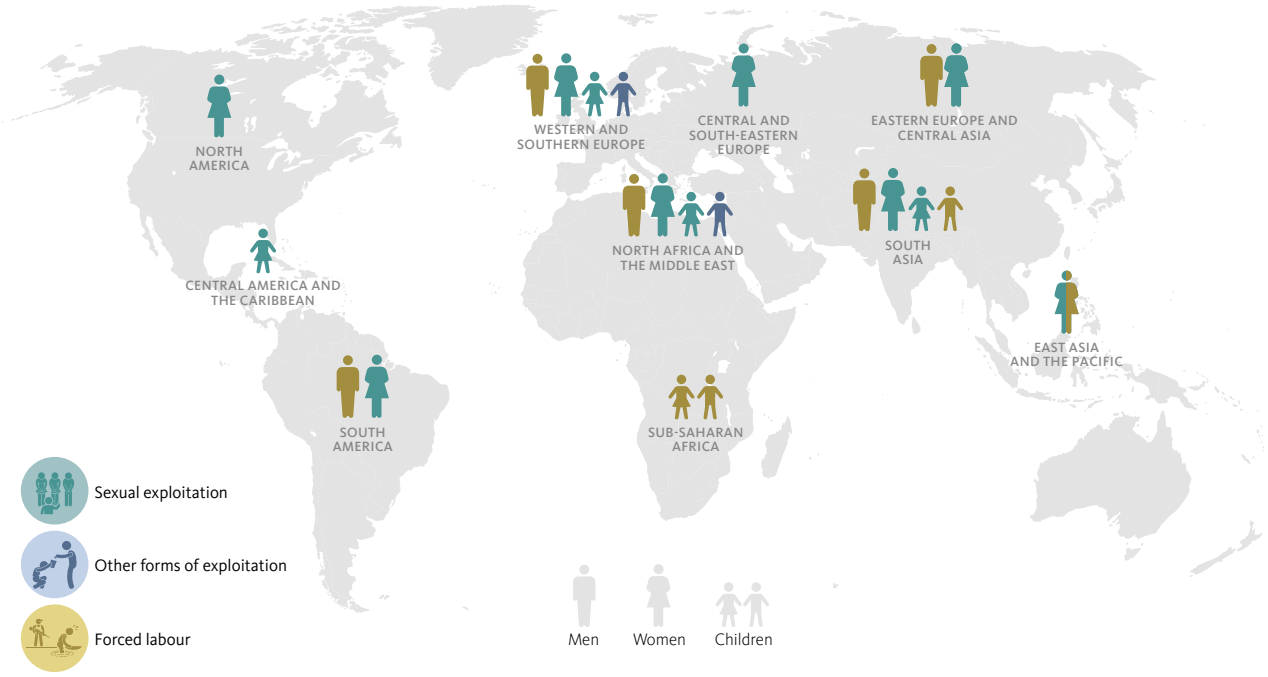


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
*Based on a total of 51,675 victims detected in 166 countries in 2020 (or most recent).

16 UNODC conducted content analysis of all the supplied court case summaries and elaborated a four-level scale of violence reported in the cases: 1. When the narrative explicitly mentioned that no violence was perpetrated against the victim, it was labelled "no violence"; 2. When the case reported the use of threats, retainment of passport and/or other forms of psychological violence to install fear in the victims, but not physical violence, it was labelled "threats or psychological violence"; 3. When the narrative reported physical segregation, beating or slapping the victim, it was labelled "explicit physical violence"; and 4. When the case reported sadistic or systemic violence, rape and sexual violence, it was labelled "extreme violence."

17 As found in a logit model analysis of 1,516 victims of trafficking in persons as reported by the court case summaries collected by UNODC. The analysis considered a dependent binary variable defining 0 as the aggregation of those victims who suffered no violence or threats and psychological violence (No-Physical Violence) and 1 as those victims who suffered explicit violence and extreme violence (Yes-Physical Violence). The independent variables considered in the model included the victim's sex, age (adult/child) and region of origin, the forms of exploitation (sexual/forced labour) and involvement of organized crime. The model had significant results (LR test 371,59; P-value 0.000), although with a low overall goodness of fit (pseudo R-squared 0.18), pointing out the need to collect, in the future, new information for explaining violence against victims. The estimated odds of suffering violence for women is 3.01 times higher than for men (p-value 0.000), and the same odds are 1.71 times higher for minors than for adult victims (p-value 0.000). A further model, introducing the interaction between sex and age of the victims, showed that the odds of minor female victims of suffering violence was 1.50 times higher when compared with adult female ones (p-value 0.012), and adult women victims had an odds of violence 4.86 times higher than adult men (p-value 0.000). The analysis was carried by Prof. Daria Mendola from the University of Palermo in cooperation with UNODC Researchers.

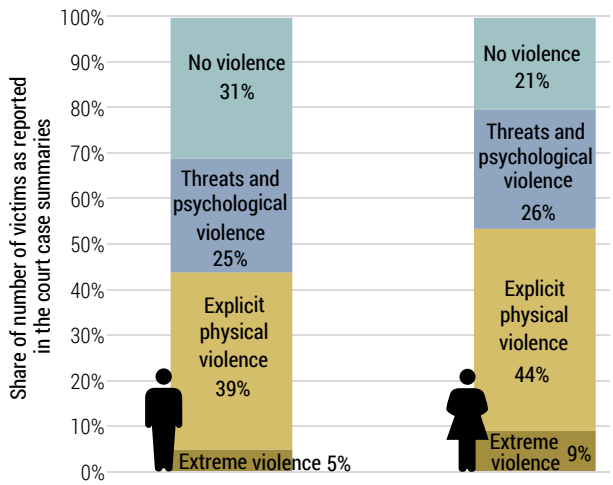
Map. 1 Main detected profiles and forms of exploitation, by region, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Within these global trends, there are **wide regional differences in the profiles of detected victims**. While countries in North, Central America and the Caribbean, most often detect women and girl victims trafficked for sexual exploitation, countries in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa detect more males, especially men, trafficked for forced labour, and boys for forced criminal activity.

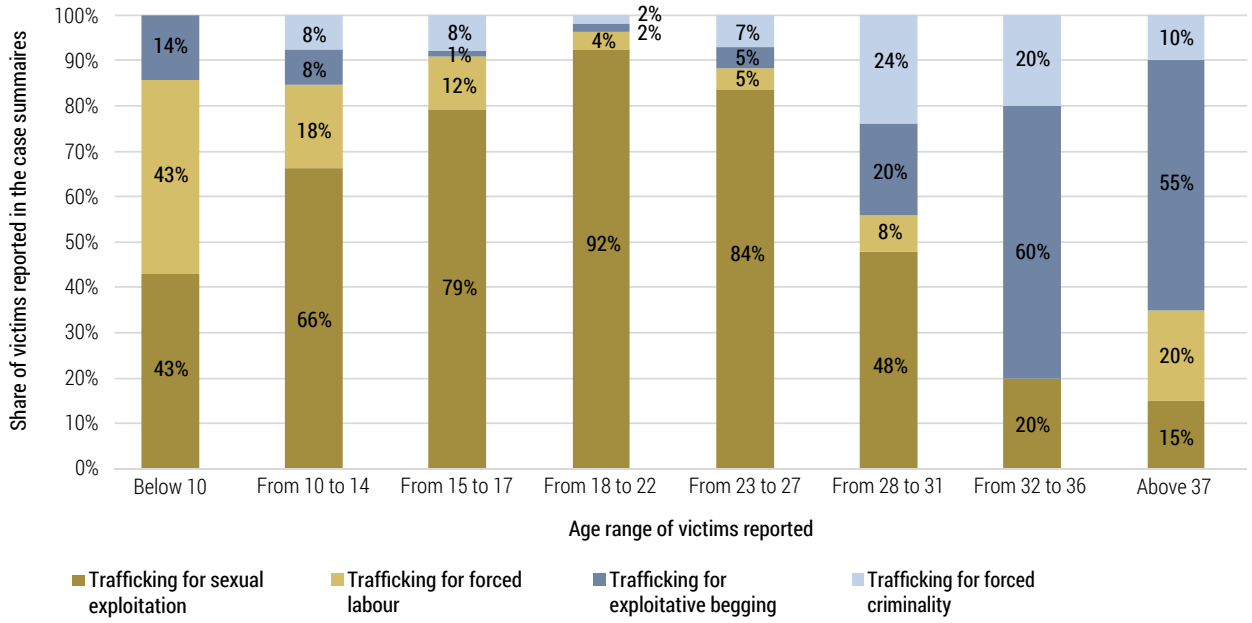
Fig. 8 Level of violence suffered by trafficking victims, by sex, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on 1,790 female victims and 327 male victims reported in 622 cases of trafficking that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

Other regional variations exist in the most common victim profiles detected. In **Sub-Saharan Africa child trafficking is most prevalent**, mainly for the purpose of forced labour. **South Asian countries** detect female and male victims about equally. They are trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation, and to a lesser degree, for forced marriage. In **Western and Southern Europe**, a large proportion of detected victims are trafficked and exploited in **criminal activity or mixed forms of trafficking**. Finally, countries in **Central America and the Caribbean** detect a large number of **girls trafficked for sexual exploitation**.

Fig. 9 Detected victims of trafficking, by age group and form of exploitation, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on 335 reported cases of trafficking involving 343 child victims and 222 adult victims that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

The court case summaries involving children suggest that the average age of detected child victims ranges around 14-15 years of age, for all forms of exploitation.[18] In general, adult victims of trafficking for forced labour[19] are older than those who are trafficked for sexual exploitation.[20] The limited number of cases involving trafficking for the purpose of forced begging suggests that victims of this form of exploitation might be much older than other trafficked victims, as some victims reported in these cases were above 50 years old.

18 For child victims of trafficking for forced labour reported in the collection of case summaries, the median age is 17, average age is 15. For those in sexual exploitation, median age is 16 and average is 15. Based on 335 reported cases of trafficking involving 343 child victims and 222 adult victims that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

19 For victims of trafficking for forced labour reported in the collection of case summaries, the median age is 21, average age is 31. Based on 335 reported cases of trafficking involving 343 child victims and 222 adult victims that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

20 For victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation reported in the collection of case summaries, the median age is 18, average age is 22.

Generation 30 Research on Trafficking in Persons

Generation 30 is an initiative of the UNODC Research and Analysis Branch featuring contributions from young and early-career researchers who want to make a global difference with their research on trafficking in persons. Contributions were collected through an open call and selected on the basis of the quality of the empirical research and relevance of the topic.

The social suffering of trafficked men[21]

*Author: **P. Smiragina-Ingelstrom,** University of Stockholm.*

An increasing number of male victims of trafficking in persons has been detected globally since 2003. In 2020, men accounted for some 20 per cent of the detected victims. However, men seem to be disproportionally underreported, as few studies conducted at local level have shown.[22] In the city of Madrid, for example, an estimated 9.2 men go undetected for each detected adult male victim, compared with 2.5 women for each woman victim detected and 5.7 children for each child victim.[23]

While more attention is being given to the trafficking of men, social and health services as well as legal and advocacy frameworks still predominantly focus on female victims of sexual exploitation. The misperceptions around the vulnerability and possible victimhood of men leave many unidentified and unassisted.[24]

This study is based on participant observations (28 days), interviews with anti-trafficking actors (n=36), and individual in-depth interviews with potential men victims of trafficking in persons (n=22).[25] The interviews were examined alongside a documentary analysis (national and international legislation) including the analysis of two video-interviews with men identified as potential victims of trafficking and conducted by NGO staff. The focus of this excerpt is the story of Aleksandr. The analysis of his story is based on a video interview, where he conveys his experience to a representative from an NGO operating in Eastern Europe. Its purpose is not to inform about the size of the problem related to the trafficking of men but rather to delve into the lived experiences of trafficked men and provide an account of how the invisibility of trafficked men is experienced.

Aleksandr's story

Aleksandr came from a town in Eastern Europe. His exploitation was preceded by the death of his wife, his recent release from prison and unemployment. These three factors resulted in economic instability and pushed him to travel to his capital in search of work. According to NGO representatives interviewed as part of this study, Aleksandr's recruitment was typical for men victims; Aleksandr was recruited at a train station, where he was looking for a job and place to stay. After having his documents and money stolen, Aleksandr was approached by a recruiter who offered him a meal. The trafficker gained Aleksandr's trust through friendly conversation, empathy and promises to fix his problems. Aleksandr recollected, *"I didn't have a place to live or a job, he [recruiter] started promising me mountains of gold."*

After eating, Aleksandr felt disoriented, and he later suspected that his food was likely laced with sedatives. He was transported, unconscious, by car to a distant region with three others who had also been promised work. One of the NGO representatives interviewed for this study explained, *"for every such person they receive approximately […] 200-250 US dol-*

21 This box is a condensed summary of one chapter of the thesis: Smiragina-Ingelstrom, P., "Human Trafficking of Men: A Gendered Perspective on Victimhood", doctoral dissertation, The University of Sydney, 2020; available at: https://hdl.handle.net/2123/24671.

22 Gauci, Jean-Pierre and Noemi Magugliani "Determinants of Anti-Trafficking Efforts; Final Report". British Institute of International and Comparative Law. June 2022.

23 See more in box: Estimating the dark figure of trafficking in persons in the Autonomous Community of Madrid using MSE on p. XX of this report

24 See studies that have a focus on the invisible victimhood of trafficked men, such as: Surtees, R., Trafficking of Men — A Trend Less Considered. The Case of Belarus and Ukraine, 2008; IOM, "Global Database of Thematic Research Series", Geneva: IOM.; Surtees, R., "Trafficked Men as Unwilling Victims", St Antony's International Review, 2008, vol. 4(1), pp. 16-36; Rosenberg, R., "Trafficking in adult men in the Europe and Eurasia region: Final Report", The Social Transition Series, 2008 USAID; and Hebert, L. A., "Always victimizers, never victims: Engaging men and boys in human trafficking scholarship", Journal of Human Trafficking, 2016, vol. 2(4), pp. 281-296.

25 The participants of this study were selected using purposive sampling, where the selection was strategic to ensure the sample's relevance to the aim of the study. This was followed by snowball sampling. Two groups of participants were selected: anti-trafficking actors and potential (men) victims of human trafficking. The data was collected using multi-sited ethnography, where the behavior of potential victims and anti-trafficking actors was observed across different locations.

lars, this is how much an average male labour slave costs."

Upon arrival, Aleksandr was told that they owed the recruiters for transportation and, having no money, his only option was to work. One month after working without pay, Aleksandr was told that he had accumulated more debt by eating the traffickers' food and smoking their cigarettes. Aleksandr was never able to work off his debt and suffered five years in exploitation. During this period, he attempted several escapes, but was intercepted and resold to perform different forms of forced labour, from brick production to tending cattle. He worked 16-hour shifts, lived in very poor conditions, suffered violence, sleep deprivation and malnutrition.

During his final escape, he avoided big roads and moved at night. One night he slipped into a pond and this accident caused a serious injury that left him unable to move his legs. He crawled to a train station, where some strangers found him and called an ambulance. Both his legs were amputated. An NGO helped him return home, but he did not survive post-surgery complications and died soon after.

Like Aleksandr, according to key informants, many trafficking victims suffer some form of hardship preceding a decision to move. Many experts and victims interviewed in this research reported recruitment at transport hubs in large cities where the victims had voluntarily come to look for jobs. Most often, victims had experienced illness, substance abuse, a family death, unemployment and/or recent release from prison. This social *suffering*[26] prior to exploitation made the men easy targets, allowing traffickers to abuse their vulnerability and lure them into exploitative labour.

Gendering of exploitation

Gender norms and masculine stereotypes hinder identification of male trafficking victims.[27] Men tend to perceive themselves, and to be perceived by others, as victims of unfortunate circumstances rather than trafficking. The assumed breadwinner role and socially ascribed masculine qualities of strength and control contradict the victim status.[28] Those who possess characteristics incongruent with victimhood may struggle to access justice, as they may never be identified as victims. While at the same time men are often targeted precisely because they are perceived to poses certain physical qualities that are often associated with masculinity. One NGO representative interviewed for this study said:

> *"They [traffickers] are interested in able-bodied [people]. [People] who are capable to work because the work […] that they are forced to do, […] requires […] adequate health, adequate […] strength."*

Another significant means mentioned by key informants is the abuse of a position of vulnerability linked to substance abuse. Alcohol, for example, was used as a mean to facilitate recruitment, and dependence on alcohol kept trafficked men in exploitative situations. As one victim said,

> *"…They will pour you some booze. You will drink it. Your consciousness will become foggy… you will start thinking at night, that you are all alone so you will go and drink some more booze, and it seems better. And then it happens all over again the next day."*

Physical and psychological violence, including sexual violence, can accompany various forms of exploitation.[29] However, experiences of violence were rarely discussed by the male victims directly. Culturally rooted gender expectations may shape the

26 The hardships that the men experienced prior to exploitation are consistent with the notion of social suffering, which entails the various social aspects that affect the socially marginalized groups. For more, see, Bourdieu, P., Accardo, A., at. al., The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

27 See, Butler, J., "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory", Theatre journal, 1988, vol. 40(4), pp.519-531; and Hearn, J., Nordberg, M., Andersson, K., et. al.), "Hegemonic masculinity and beyond: 40 years of research in Sweden", Men and masculinities, 2012, vol.15(1), pp.31-55.

28 See, Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W., "Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept", Gender & society, 2005, vol. 19(6), pp.829-859.

29 See for example, Oram, S., Stöckl, H., et. al., "Prevalence and risk of violence and the physical, mental, and sexual health problems associated with human trafficking: systematic review", PLoS medicine, 2012, 9(5).

social suffering of trafficked men and contribute to their exploitation. Many men interviewed for this study showed resistance in disclosing their experience of victimization. Most interviewed victims preferred to either take a neutral stance toward their experience or expressed success in overcoming hardship.[30]

Comparative studies of men's, women's and children's trafficking experiences would make a significant contribution to understanding the gendering of exploitation, as well as fostering deeper awareness of the post-trafficking needs of all victims.

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Can multisector approaches improve victim identification? [31]

Authors:
***B.R. Young**, Department of Health Behavior, Gillings School of Global Public Health, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and UNC Injury Prevention Research Center.*
***M. Chua.**, Injury and Violence Prevention, UNC Injury Prevention Research Center.*

It has been twenty years since the entry into force of the UN Trafficking Protocol, and new generations of researchers are investigating which policies and practices may contribute to increasing detection of trafficking victims.

By focusing on the anti-trafficking efforts of the international community, this study looks at the international instruments and commitments that are shaping the social and normative environments where most victims are identified worldwide. First, a mapping of the international instruments that are driving global efforts against trafficking in persons is provided and discussed, on the basis of existing literature. Second, a structural equation modeling (Latent Class Analysis – LCA) is used to analyze the relations between higher levels of detection and progress made toward these international commitments.[32] It concludes that victims' identification is higher in normative environments where anti-trafficking strategies are implemented along with migration policies and labour rights.[33]

30 The interviews were semi-structured. All participants were asked if and how they experienced difficulties. Some men were explicitly asked about experiences of verbal and/or physical violence others were not. This was conditional to whether the potential victims felt discomfort or distress during the interviews.

31 Based on work by: Young B., Department of Health Behavior, Gillings School of Global Public Health, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and M. Meghan Chua, Injury Prevention Research Center, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

32 LCA is an empirical method for identifying similar subgroups based on categorical indicators. See, Bauer D, Steinley D. Latent, "Class/cluster analysis and mixture modeling workshop", oral presentation at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; June 1-5, 2020; Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Muthen B, Muthen LK. Integrating Person-Centered and Variable-Centered Analyses: Growth Mixture Modeling With Latent Trajectory Classes. Alcoholism, clinical and experimental research. 2000;24:882-891. doi: 10.1111/j.1530-0277.2000.tb02070. Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and significance testing were used to select the best fitting class solution. After running the LCA, the best-fitting class solution with a distal outcome (trafficking in persons detection rates) we modelled using the Bolck, Croon, and Hagennar (BCH) (2004) 3-step approach. The BCH approach is robust against the presence of additional variables in a model; thus, the addition of an outcome variable will not alter the classes found in the LCA. Victim detection counts were transformed into rates by dividing detection count by state population size. Modelling the distal outcome allows us to understand the relationship between the UN Member States classes (i.e., subgroups) of structural determinants and trafficking victim detection rates. See Bolck A, Croon M, & Hagenaars J, "Estimating latent structure models with categorical variables: One-step versus three-step estimators", Political Analysis, 2004, 12(1), pp. 3–27. Through iterative analyses, the research identified the optimal number of classes for the population by comparing model information criteria (e.g., BIC, p-value) across different numbers of classes. A three-class solution was deemed to best fit the data based on smaller BIC, smaller adjusted BIC, and a significant p-value (p=0.030). After selecting the optimal unconditional latent class model, the model was rerun including trafficking victimization rates as an auxiliary (i.e., outcome) variable using the BCH approach.

33 Two main limitations were identified within the framework for this study: first, the identification of State policies and practices was informed by the most recent literature, and even if saturation was reached, it is possible that peer-reviewed articles or UN reports describing additional State policies and practices may have been missed; Second, the trafficking detection data may not reflect the actual number of detected victims in all Member States due to different capacity to report. Using the Wald test of the equality of means, it was found that the distal outcome (trafficking in persons victim detection) means were significantly different (p=0.05) across all classes. See, Goździak, E. M., Goździak, E. M., & Bump, M. N., New immigrants, changing communities: Best practices for a better America, (The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group: 2008). See, World Health Organization "A conceptual framework for action on the social determinants of health". 2010; Massey."Chapter 1: How stratification works". In: Massey DS. Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System. (Russell Sage Foundation; 2007). United Nations on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020. Chapter 2: Socio-economic factors and risks of COVID-19 recession. In: UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.3).

Mapping international counter-trafficking instruments

The anti-trafficking literature identifies a number of structural factors,[34] including legislation, policies and practices, that affect the capacity to detect trafficking in persons.[35] They extend over different domains, including migration and refugee law, criminal law, labour standards, and measures aiming at preventing gender-based violence and child protection, among many others. These structural factors relate to five main international instruments and commitments, which have been driving international efforts in those areas.

International instruments and commitments shaping global efforts against trafficking in persons

(1) the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and four targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted;
(2) the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees;
(3) the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
(4) SDG Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies; and
(5) SDG Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

Assessing progress in the fight against trafficking

Few studies within the anti-trafficking field have explored the impact of these instruments, especially in terms of the actual capacity to detect trafficking victims.[36] In recent years, however, the Agenda 2030 has led to an unprecedented wealth of information on states' policies and practices promoting the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). SDG data was used to assess Member States' progress toward the implementation of these international instruments.[37]

Among the instruments analysed, the UN Trafficking Protocol presented the highest level of endorsement, both at the level of ratification/accession and alignment of the national legislation. With 172 parties and 131 Member States presenting fully compliant legislation (72 percent of the sample) the UN Trafficking Protocol emerged as the key instrument driving international efforts against this crime. On the other hand, progress toward SDG Target 8.8 entails 76 Member States (59 percent of the sample) presenting a good level of national compliance with labour rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining.[38]

Drivers of victims' identification

The LCA analysis also provided an indication of the characteristics of those countries that identify and report a higher number of victims. According to UNODC data for 2020, the countries that reported the highest number of victims detected in their population (two victims detected per 100,000 people in the population in 2020) were those self-reporting higher levels of adherence to all five international instruments, with criminalization of trafficking in

34 See, Goździak, E. M., Goździak, E. M., & Bump, M. N., New immigrants, changing communities: Best practices for a better America, (The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group: 2008).

35 See, World Health Organization "A conceptual framework for action on the social determinants of health". 2010; Massey."Chapter 1: How stratification works". In: Massey DS. Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System. (Russell Sage Foundation; 2007). United Nations on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020. Chapter 2: Socio-economic factors and risks of COVID-19 recession. In: UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20. IV.3).

36 See, Sarrica, F., "The use of human trafficking detection data for modelling static and dynamic determinants of human trafficking flows", European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 2020.

37 The following three datasets and repositories were used to map and assess compliance to international commitments: (1) United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division and International Organization for Migration (UNDESA and IOM) (2019). SDG indicator 10.7.2. Number of countries with migration policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, Country data; (2) United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, SDG Indicators Database, Target 8.8.2. Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status. 2018 data; and (3) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020, Country Profiles. The outcome variable – trafficking victim detection was derived from a UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTiP) dataset.

38 As reported in United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, SDG Indicators Database, Target 8.8.2. Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status. 2018 data

persons accompanied by compliance with labour rights, fair recruitment policies for foreign workers, and refugee protection schemes.

This group included 167 Member States (accounting for 87 percent of the sample), all compliant with all international instruments and reporting 2 victims detected per 100,000 people in the population in 2020.[39]

Normative environments in Member States detecting most victims of trafficking

- ✓ National legislation criminalising all forms of trafficking in persons foreseen by the UN Trafficking Protocol;
- ✓ Formal strategies to address trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants;
- ✓ Compliance with labour rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- ✓ Policies aimed at promoting fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers;
- ✓ System for receiving, processing and identifying those forced to flee across international borders;
- ✓ Measures that grant permission for temporary stay or protection for refugees and asylum seekers;
- ✓ An inter-ministerial coordination mechanism on migration;

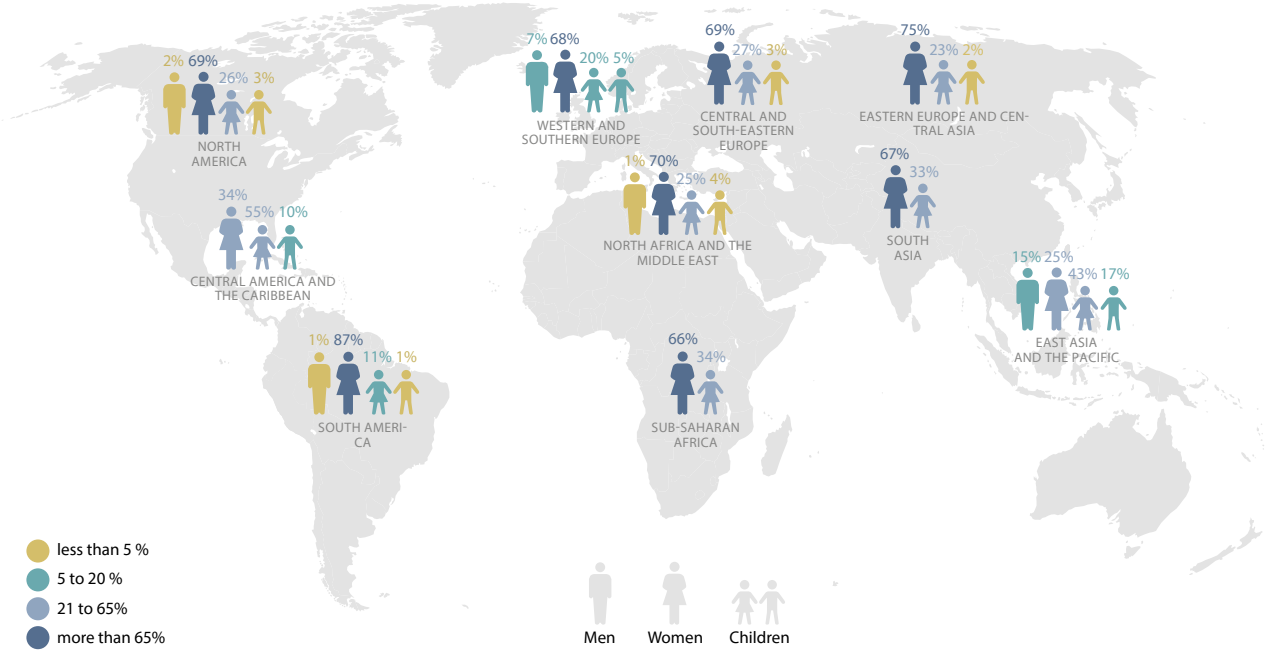
The LCA analysis shows that Member States who have adopted the UN Trafficking Protocol and established formal strategies to address trafficking in persons but do not have a mechanism for refugee protection or a national law on temporary stay and are not fully compliant with international commitments on labour rights have a more limited capacity to identify and protect victims. These 12 UN Member States (accounting for 6 per cent of the sample) identified only one victim per 100,000 people in the population on average in 2020.

The lowest level of detection capacity was recorded by those countries that are not a party to the UN Trafficking Protocol and do not have legislation or policies promoting fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers (as per SDG 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies). This included 12 UN Member States (seven percent of the sample) that detected less than one person per 100,000 people in the population in 2020.[40]

39 These included: (1) the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; (2) the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention against Trasnational Organized Crime; and (3) SDG Target 10.7 "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies". Of note, classes 2 and 3 only overlap in their compliance with State inter-ministerial coordination for orderly and safe migration.

40 These included (1) the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, (2) SDG Target 8.2 "Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment", and (3) SDG Target 10.7 "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies".

Map. 2 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, by region, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 14,201 detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation whose age and sex were reported in 104 countries. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Forms of exploitation

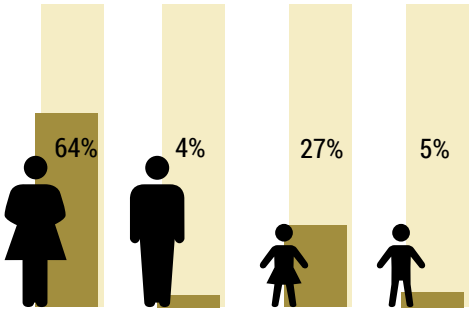
Targets, types and venues for sexual exploitation

Female victims continue to be the most detected among those trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Nearly two-thirds of detected **victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are women** and another 27 per cent are girls.

Around 10 per cent of the detected victims of sexual exploitation are males, either boys or men. Men and boys trafficked for sexual exploitation are more frequently reported in South-East Asia. They account for a full third of victims who experience sexual exploitation detected in that region.

Transgender persons (including transgender women, girls, men, boys and non- binary persons) accounted for two per cent of detected victims who endure trafficking for sexual exploitation, in the nine countries in the Americas and Western and Southern Europe that reported data to UNODC for 2020 or most recent.

Infographic 4 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*

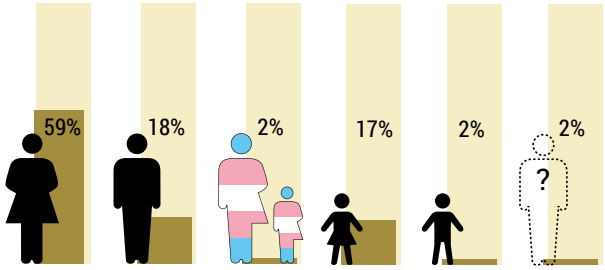


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 14,055 detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation whose age and sex were reported in 104 countries.

Not all countries record information concerning transgender and/or non-binary persons. Globally, 12 Member States have provided data to UNODC that included numbers of transgender victims of trafficking in persons detected.[41]

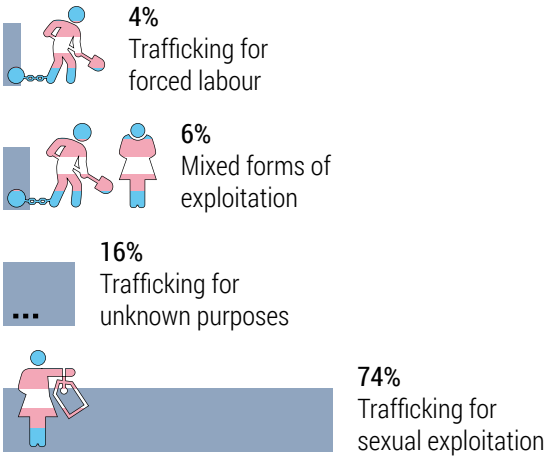
41 Of the reporting countries, six countries are in Western and Southern Europe, three in Central America, two in South America and one in North America. Ninety-five per cent of these non-binary victims ("other" gender category) were reported as "transgender" by the national authorities of the United States of America, Argentina and Honduras.

Infographic 4.1 Detected victims of trafficking, by age group and gender, in the countries reporting transgender victims, 2020 (or most recent)*



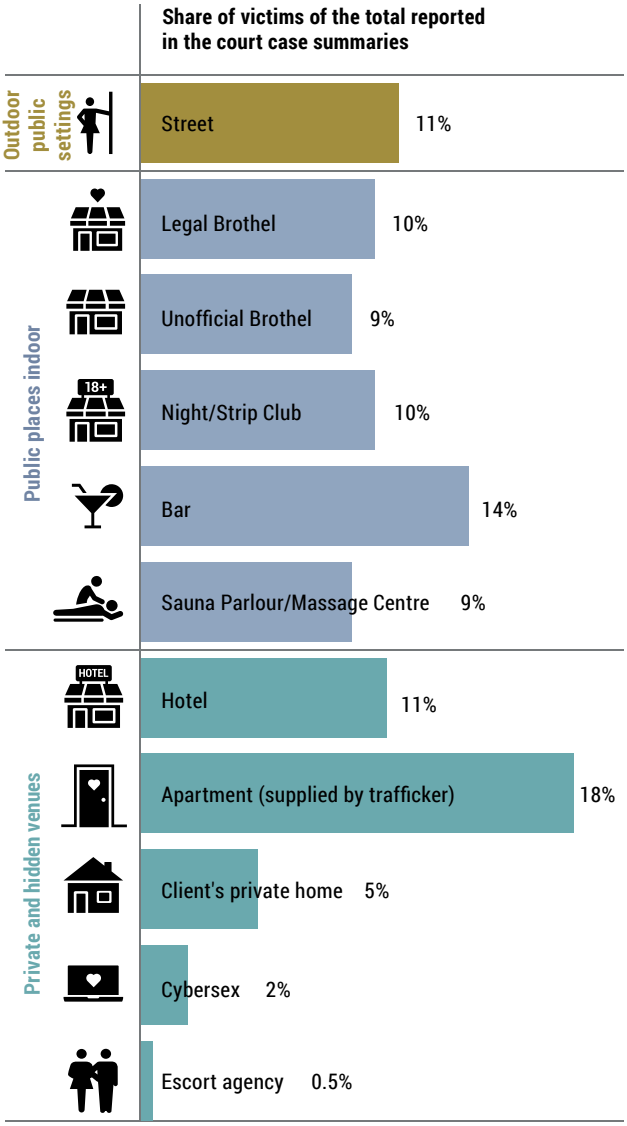
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on a total of 7638 victims detected in 9 countries in the Americas and Western and Southern Europe in 2020 (or most recent).

Infographic 5 Detected transgender victims of trafficking in persons, by form of exploitation, 2017-2020*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 675 transgender adult and 120 transgender child victims reported in 12 countries in the Americas and Western and Southern Europe between 2017 and 2020.

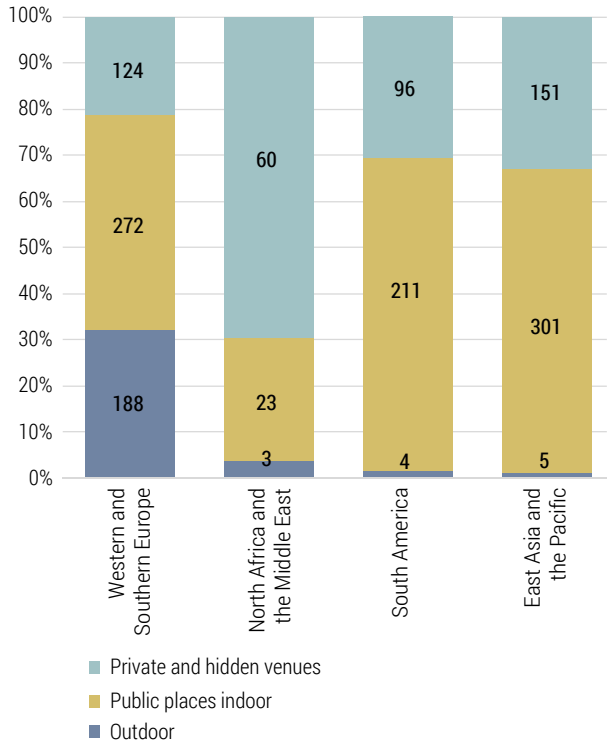
Infographic 6 Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation by intermediaries or by venues where exploitation took place, as reported in case narrative, (2012-2020)*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on information involving 2,127 victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation reported in 351 cases that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

The court case summaries collected and analysed by UNODC show **victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are detected in many venues**: outdoor and indoor; public places and hidden locations; from night clubs to private homes; and from street corners to brothels.
Notably, a bit more than half of the victims reported in these court cases were exploited in public venues, such as bars and clubs or outdoors. The other half of the victims were exploited in locations that are typically out of sight, such as apartments or hotels. In these places, however, trafficking is certainly more difficult to detect, and victims exploited behind closed doors are probably more underreported than those exploited in visible locations.

Fig. 10 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, by region



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on court cases involving: 584 victims reported in Western and Southern Europe; 86 victims reported in the Middle East and North Africa; 457 victims reported in East Asia and the Pacific; and 311 victims reported in South America.

Analysis of the cases disaggregated according to regions unveils wide differences in the venues where victims are sexually exploited. Cases collected from **Western and Southern Europe**, for instance, show that detected victims are typically exploited **in visible venues**, such as street prostitution or brothels. The pandemic, however, may have contributed to a shift in sexual exploitation from indoor public venues to outdoor and private venues, as reported by authorities in Germany and the Netherlands.[42]

Countries **in the Middle East and North Africa region** report cases where victims are sexually exploited **in private apartments**. In **South America and in East Asia**, victims are exploited in public locations. In South America, most victims seem to be exploited in **bars and night clubs**, while in East Asia more cases report victims having been exploited in tourist locations, such as **karaoke bars, hotels or sauna/massage parlours**.

42 German Federal Criminal Police Office, Human Trafficking and Exploitation National Situation Report [Menschenhandel und Ausbeutung Bundeslagebild], 2021, available at: https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/Statistiken-Lagebilder/Lagebilder/Menschenhandel/menschenhandel_node.html; and National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Violence against Children, "Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report 2016–2020", Management Summary, p. 4.

Evolving forms of detected trafficking

Trafficking in persons for forced labour has been increasingly detected over the last decade. In 2020, about the same number of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour per 100,000 population was recorded globally. However, since the overall number of victims detected decreased, in terms of share, trafficking for forced labour accounted for 39 per cent of total victims detected in 2020, a bigger share than ever before seen.

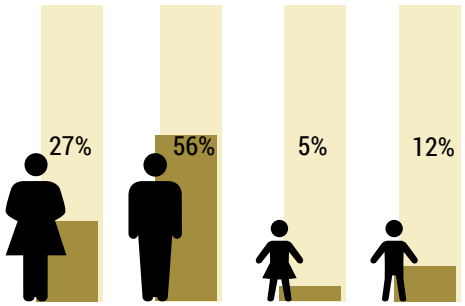
Victims of trafficking for forced labour are found to be **exploited in a wide variety of economic activities**. UNODC's analysis of the collected court case summaries shows that large numbers are detected in the food supply chain, including agriculture and the fishing industry, which presumably did not stop working during the pandemic.

The **majority of victims exploited for forced labour are men. Women and girls make up one** third of victims trafficked for forced labour. The type of industry where victims are exploited is directly related to victim profiles, where gender plays a role.

As far as the sex of victims trafficked into forced labour, according to the cases collected by UNODC, female victims seem to be largely trafficked for domestic servitude. Females are also trafficked for street selling, as well as to work in catering and in agriculture. Men are typically trafficked into the fishing industry, agriculture and the construction sector. Boys are trafficked for street selling and domestic servitude. In the **Middle East and North Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, North and Central America between 40 and 50 per cent of the detected trafficking victims in forced labour are females**.

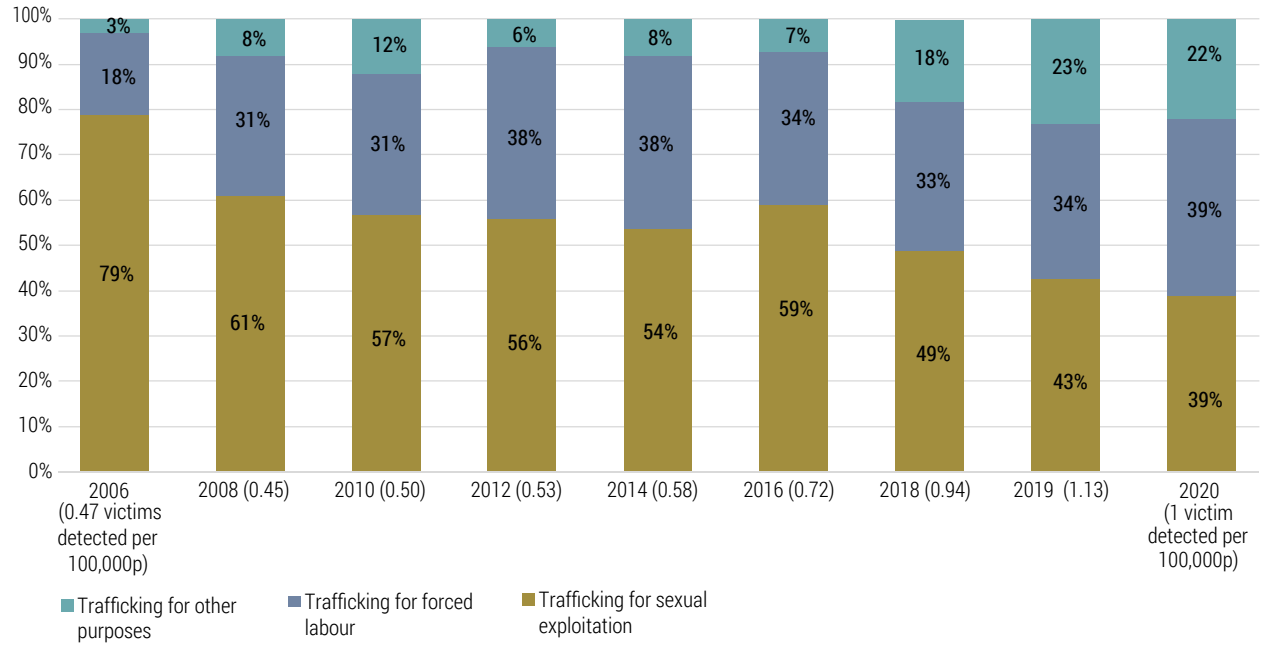
Concerning the age profile of the victims, **South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean detect more children trafficked into forced labour.** In both regions, more girls than boys are detected.

Infographic 7 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



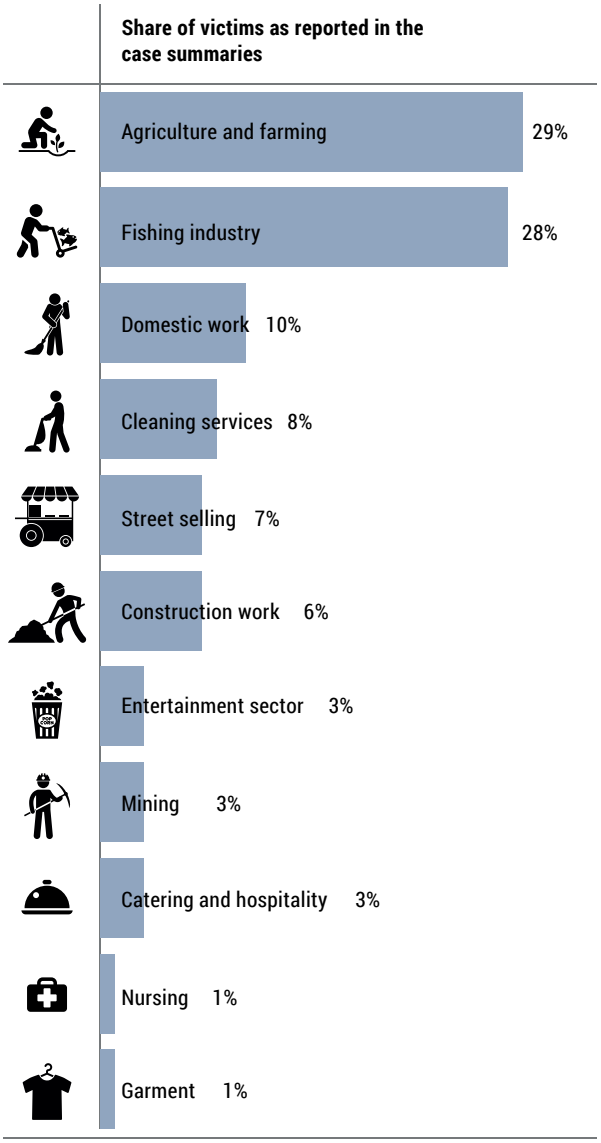
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 8,931 detected victims of trafficking for forced labour whose age and sex were reported in 104 countries.

Fig. 11 Trend: Detected victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2004-2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 12 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, by industry of exploitation, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020 *

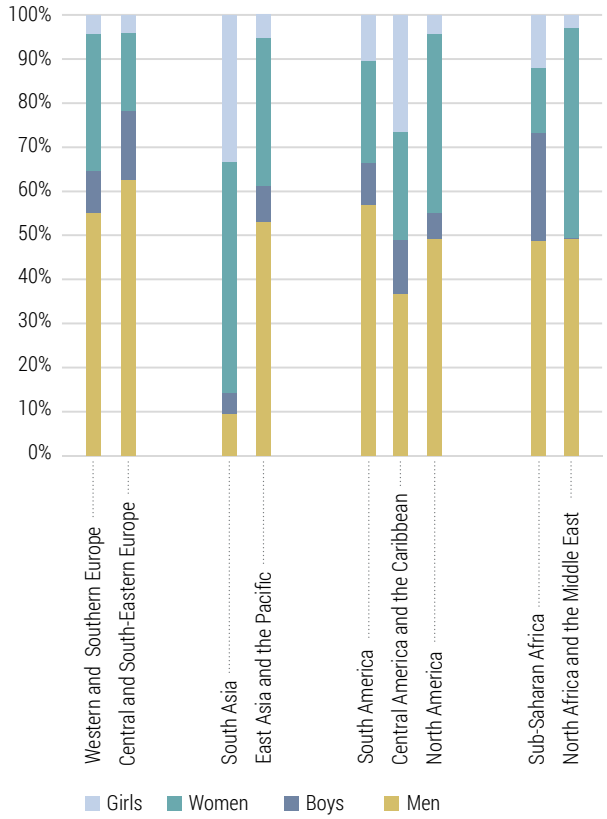


Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on 890 victims of trafficking for forced labour reported in 89 cases that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

Victims trafficked who face other forms of exploitation are mainly detected in mixed labour and sexual exploitation situations. This subset of victims is increasing in share worldwide. Whereas two per cent of all detected victims underwent mixed forced labour and sexual exploitation in 2018, ten per cent did in 2020.

For example, more than 21 per cent of the total trafficking victims detected in the United Kingdom are victims of forced labour and sexual exploitation, two-thirds of whom were females and one-third male. More than eight

Fig. 13 Detected victims of trafficking for forced labour, by age group, sex and region, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

per cent of total victims detected in the United States of America underwent this type of mixed exploitation with **most victims being females**.

In some of the court case summaries shared with UNODC that ended in conviction for mixed forms of trafficking, women were trafficked into domestic servitude and then sexually exploited by the men of the household.[43] Other cases involved women exploited to serve in bars and forced to have sexual relations with clients.[44] Finally, a third group of mixed exploitation concerned women exploited in forced labour, often agriculture, and forced to have sex with their employers or third parties after working hours.[45]

43 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 9, case 73, case 323, case 344, case 488 and case 606, and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case UGA003.

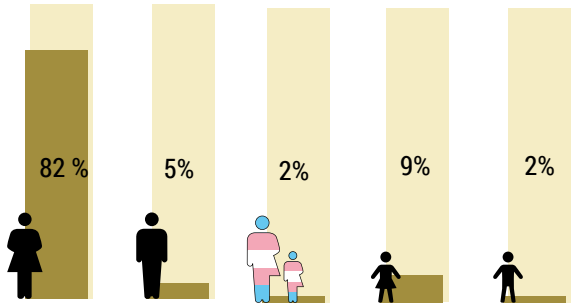
44 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 5, case 287 and case 289.

45 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, and case 262. See also Giammarinaro M.G., Palumbo, 2022, Le condizioni di lavoro e di vita delle lavoratrici agricole, VI Rapporto Agromafie e Caporalato, Ediesse, Futura.

The profile of victims of trafficking facing mixed forms of exploitation typically shifts according to the type of mixed exploitation. Other examples of mixed forms include victims exploited in forced labour and also forced criminal activity. In these cases, according to data from the United Kingdom, victims are mostly males. Victims facing mixed sexual and forced criminality, in that same data, are mostly children.

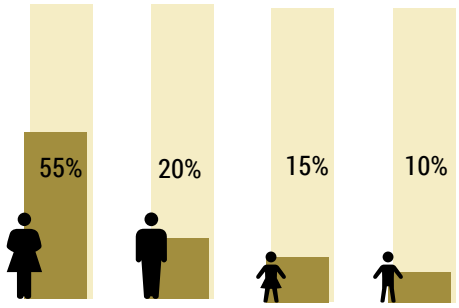
The share of detected victims trafficked to be exploited for forced criminal activity has been increasing, too – what was one per cent in 2016 and six per cent in 2018 was 10 per cent of the total detected victims in 2020. Between 2017 and 2020, this form of exploitation was reported by countries in almost every region: in Western Europe, in South-Eastern Europe, in Eastern Europe, in South Asia and North Africa and the Middle East. Cases were also reported in East Asia and the Pacific, as well as Central and North America.

Fig. 14 Detected victims trafficked for the purpose of mixed forced labour and sexual exploitation in the United States of America, by age group and gender, 2020*



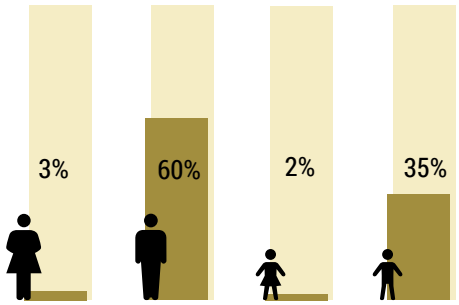
Source: USA response to UNODC GLOTIP Questionnaire.
*n=704 victims.

Fig. 15 Figure 14. Detected victims trafficked for the purpose of mixed forced labour and sexual exploitation in the United Kingdom, by age group and sex, 2020*



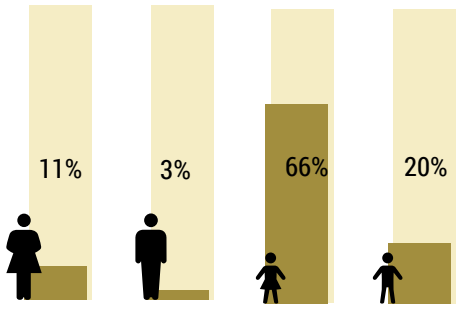
Source: United Kingdom Home Office.
*n=425 victims.

Fig. 16 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of mixed forced labour and forced criminality in the United Kingdom, by age group and sex, 2020*



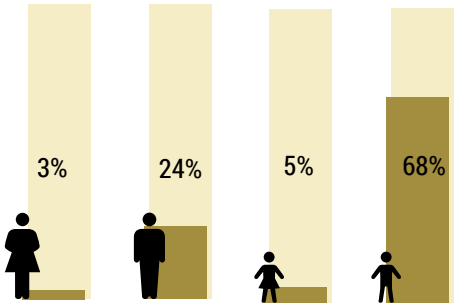
Source: United Kingdom Home Office.
*n=1154 victims.

Fig. 17 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of mixed sexual exploitation and forced criminality in the United Kingdom, by age group and sex, 2020*



Source: United Kingdom Home Office.
*n=237 victims.

Fig. 18 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 3,711 detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality whose age and sex were reported in 14 countries.

Detected victims who experience this form of trafficking are overwhelmingly males, especially boys at 68 per cent. The case summaries analysed by UNODC involving trafficking for forced criminality included **shoplifting**[46], **pickpocketing**[47] and **other theft**[48] of cars, petrol or jewellery, as well as **drug trafficking** and **fraud in different forms**[49].

Among the other forms of exploitation, **exploitative begging accounts for about one per cent** of the victims globally detected in 2020. According to the case summaries collected by UNODC since 2012, victims forced into begging can be adults with physical disabilities,[50] children exploited by their own parents in connection with harmful social practices,[51] homeless children with no parental care,[52] or families in extreme poverty.[53]

Another one per cent of detected trafficking victims in 2020 were **trafficked for the purpose of forced marriage**. This crime takes different forms, as described in court case summaries reported to UNODC. One type exploits women trafficked and forced to marry foreign men who can then gain legal rights to enter and stay in the victim's country – so called **sham marriages**. This type of trafficking has been detected in European Union countries.[54] Other forms of trafficking for forced marriage concerns **girls** forced to marry in the context of harmful social practices. This has been reported in South-Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East.[55] Finally, another form of trafficking for forced marriages involves **young women traded to men for marriage**, which mainly has been reported in South-East Asia.[56]

46 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 60, case 61, case 136, case 341, case 481, case 560 and case 588.

47 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 267, case 311, case 404, case 415 and case 518.

48 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 308, case 439, case 470, case 541 and case 589.

49 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 222, case 265, case 268, case 588 and case 621.

50 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 187, case 205, case 227, case 402, case 425, case 614, case 652, case 659 and case 685.

51 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 61, case 471, case 175, case 267, case 595, case 661, case 670, and Sherloc Case Law Database, case ITA004.

52 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 219, case 261, case 564 and case 605.

53 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 259, case 298, case 300, case 557, case 623, and Sherloc Case Law Database, case LBN001.

54 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 411, case 412, case 414, case 480, case 585 and case 665.

55 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 120, case 147, case 613, case 681, and Sherloc Case Law Database, case MWIx14 and ZAF011.

56 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 155, case 157, case 207, case 447, case 448, case 450, case 596, case 597 and case 598.

Estimating the dark figure of Trafficking in Persons in the Autonomous Community of Madrid using Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE)

Despite many efforts by government institutions to collect information on trafficking in persons, global data on this topic is still scarce and often of poor quality. National data systems to record and disseminate data on detected victims are slowly improving worldwide, but data on numbers and profiles of non-detected victims remain largely unknown. This hampers the development of effective and sustainable policies for preventing and protecting victims of trafficking in persons. Untold numbers of individuals who have not been detected and, thus, are not included in official statistics, are part of what is known as the "dark figure of trafficking in persons".
Over the last decade, the research community has implemented and experimented with a practicable method for estimating how many victims of trafficking in persons there are at local and international levels.[57] The Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) is a method applied to lists of victims detected and recorded by different local authorities. The analysis conducted on the combination of these different lists is used to estimate those victims that are never detected and extrapolate a number for the entire victim population in that country.

In 2016, UNODC conducted a first MSE in the Netherlands, followed by other estimates in other countries in the following years. In 2022, with the support of the best experts on this method, UNODC published a United Nations manual on measuring trafficking in persons prevalence through MSE[58]. The manual provides practical guidance on how to apply this statistical technique to generate better estimates of the levels of human trafficking through extrapolation from administrative data of recorded cases. It is meant for a mixed audience of policymakers and practitioners in the field of anti-trafficking committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.2.

The implementation of the MSE methodology in the Autonomous Community of Madrid provides an example of how this methodology can be successfully implemented, The University Institute for Migration Studies (Comillas Pontifical University), with the support of UNICEF Spanish Committee, undertook a project Data Culture in Human Trafficking. One of the objectives of this project was to estimate how many victims of trafficking in persons remained invisible to the authorities in the Autonomous Community of Madrid between 2015 and 2019. A multidisciplinary team applied the MSE to estimate the prevalence of trafficking in persons there.[59]

There are two preconditions to apply MSE successfully. One is to have a confined and homogeneous population and the second is to have at least three independent lists of recorded victims of trafficking in persons. When these preconditions exist, a dark figure can be estimated through a tested statistical methodology.

Assembling the data required to apply MSE is never an easy task as it requires researchers to collect and integrate data on detected victims from different sources and stakeholders. Notwithstanding this challenge, the team collected eight lists from non-governmental organizations, government entities and national authorities, which made it possible to conduct a MSE using robust and reliable data.

The results revealed that the undetected or "dark figure" of victims of trafficking in persons within the Autonomous Community of Madrid from 2015 to 2019 was 2,805 persons while the number of detected victims was only 975. Thus, the total number of victims of trafficking in persons in the city for that period was 3,780.

57 See Kangaspunta, K. "Special issue Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons" 2015.and Van der Heijden, P. G., de Vries, I., Böhning, D., & Cruyff, M. Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons" 2015.

58 UNODC, Monitoring human trafficking prevalence through multiple system estimation, 2022.

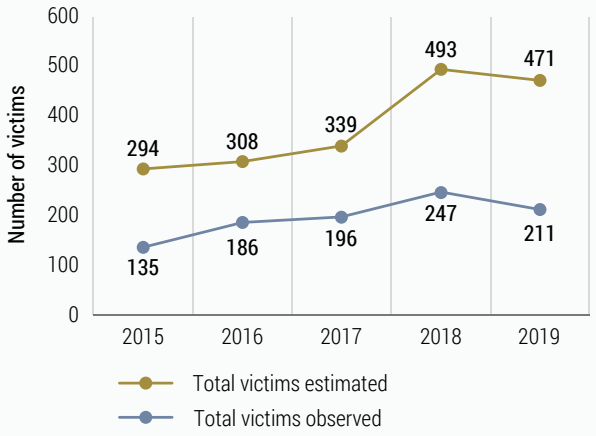
59 Izquierdo, J, "Análisis de Modelos Estadísticos para la Estimación de Víctimas de Trata. Caso de Estudio: Comunidad de Madrid" Master's thesis, Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid, 2020; and Colmenar Calvo, N. Análisis de los métodos de recopilación de datos de trata de seres humanos. Una oportunidad para mejorar la lucha contra la trata en la Comunidad de Madrid, Master's thesis, Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid, 2020.

In other words, only 26 per cent of victims were being detected. For each victim identified, three others remain hidden or invisible to organizations, authorities, and society at large. As for the estimated detection ratios for different population groups, the teams observed that:

- For each detected female victim, there are 2.5 undetected.
- For each detected boy or girl victim, that there are 5.7 undetected.
- For every detected male victim, that there are 9.20 undetected.

The following graph shows the annual trends of detected (blue) and estimated (orange) victims of trafficking in persons in the Autonomous Community of Madrid between 2015 and 2019. Between 2017 and 2019 as more victims were detected, it also shows a widening gap between the number of identified victims and the estimated total number of victims, detected and non-detected.

Trends of victims estimated for each year



Source: Elaboration of estimations on the basis of the MSE methodology

Bringing to light Trafficking in Persons through statistics

These results are similar to the results of MSE applied in Australia (2016/2017) and[60] , The Netherlands (2014/2015)[61] both resulting in four victims estimated for one detected. Likewise, results in Romania (2015), Ireland (2016) and Slovakia (2016) resulting in two victims for every one detected.[62]

While available data on detected victims of trafficking in persons is only the tip of the iceberg, these statistics can be useful to measure the dark figure of victims of trafficking in persons. However, assembling available data on detected victims can be challenging as there are often no common concepts, variables and methodologies that are applied across national data systems on trafficking in persons. Typically, each institution or organization collects information for different purposes and uses different methods to do so.[63] For instance, in Spain, data on trafficking in persons can be found in different institutions but in different formats. the Spanish Intelligence Center for Counterterrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO) collects data from a set of specific indicators for purely statistical purposes, while the Public Prosecutor Office collects data to follow-up proceedings and for prosecution purposes, while non-government organizations collect data about the support that they provide to victims.

Applying MSE to the number of victims of trafficking in persons in the Autonomous Community of Madrid supported the creation of standardized definitions and data collection methods across different sources and institutions that can be maintained in the future.

60 Lyneham, S, C. Dowling & S. Bricknell, "Estimating the dark figure of human trafficking and slavery victimisation in Australia", Australian Institute of Criminology: Statistical Bulletin 16, February 2019.

61 UNODC/National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children (Netherlands), "Monitoring Target 16.2 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals; a multiple systems estimation of the numbers of presumed human trafficking victims in the Netherlands in 2010-2015 by year, age,gender, form of exploitation and nationality", 2017.

62 UNODC, in collaboration with Walk Free Foundation, "Research Briefs: Monitoring Target 16.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: multiple systems estimations of the numbers of presumed victims of trafficking in persons, Ireland, Romania and Serbia", 2018.

63 Surtees, R., Brunovskis, A., Johnson, L., "The Science (and Art) of Understanding Trafficking in Persons: Good Practice in TIP Data Collection", NEXUS Institute,2019.

Trafficking flows

Sub-Saharan African victims increasingly detected in transnational trafficking flows

Cross-border trafficking has been increasingly detected since 2017, particularly as part of the longest-distance flows. In 2020, however, **a reduction in cross border trafficking** by over a fifth **was recorded globally**.

Compared to other regions of origin of cross-border trafficking, **victims from Sub-Saharan Africa are detected in a growing number of countries**, both within that region and further afield. Trafficking of African victims represents the most substantial transregional flow detected in 2020 at the global level.

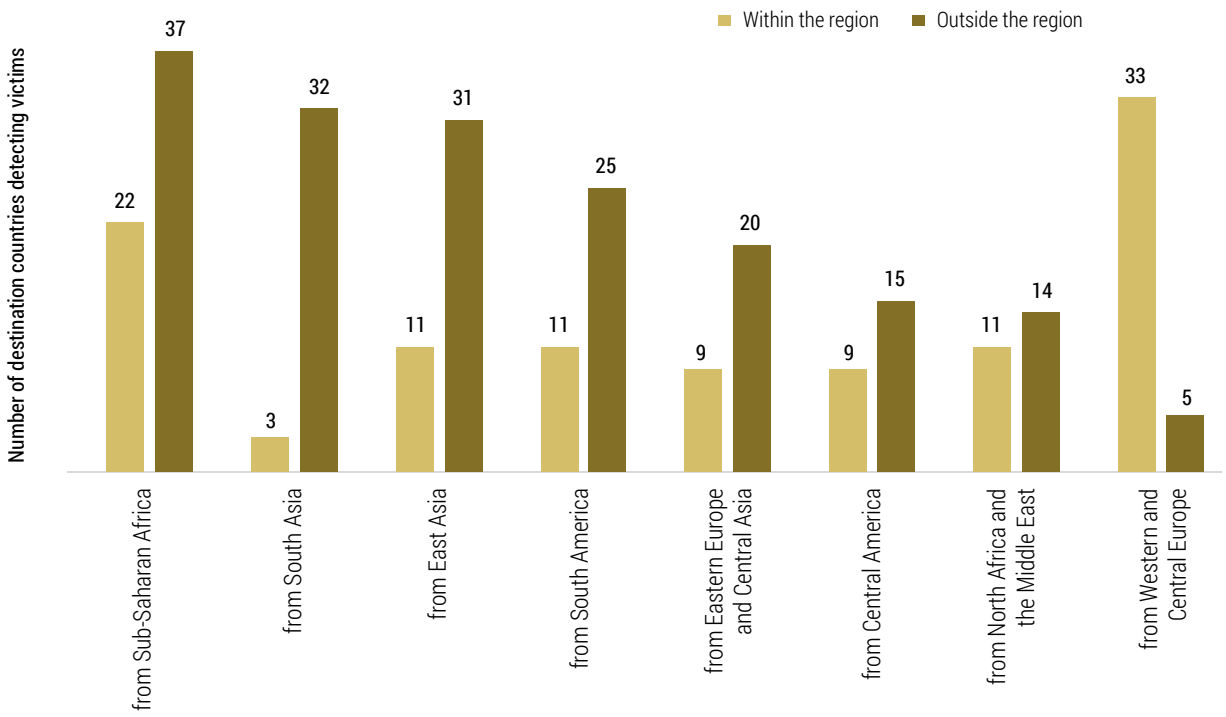
Trafficking of Asian victims, out of both South and East Asia, also represents a large flow with a global dimension, while European victims are mainly detected in the European sub-regions.

Fig. 19 Detected victims, by region of detection, 2017-2020*



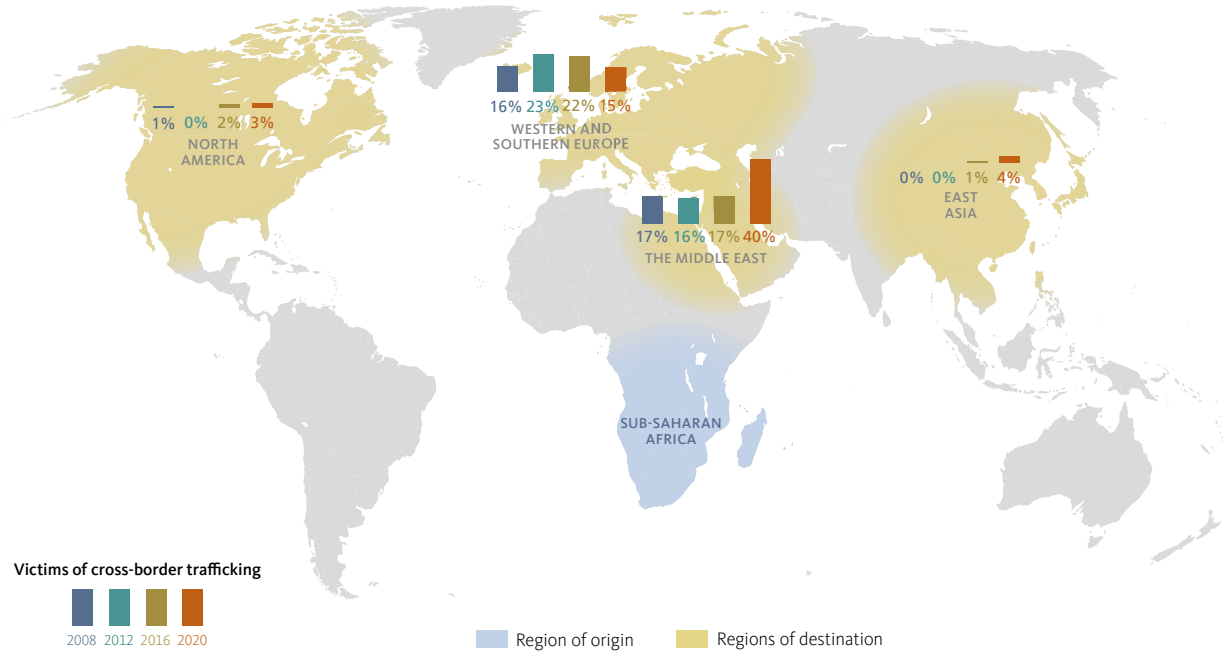
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 34,667 victims of trafficking in persons detected in 2020; 38,042 of trafficking in persons detected in 2019; 29,525 victims of trafficking in persons detected in 2018; and 49,201 victims of trafficking in persons detected in 2017 whose citizenship was reported.

Fig. 20 Number of destination countries where victims originating within and outside of the region were detected, 2017-2020



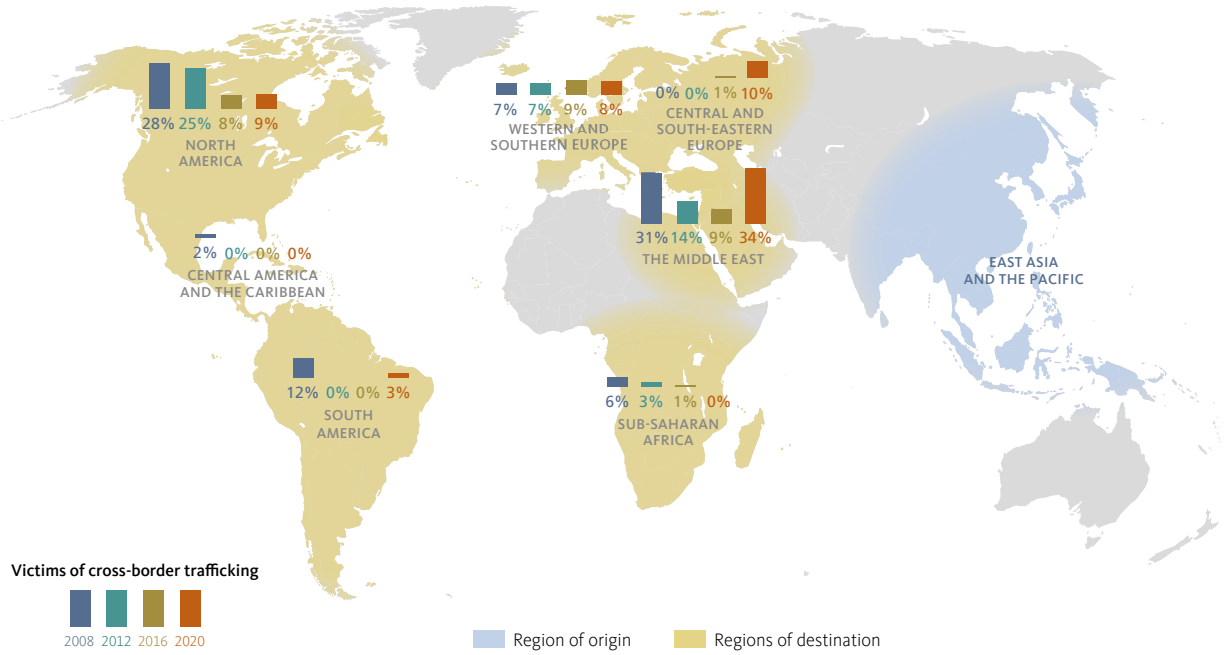
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Map. 3 Share of Sub-Saharan African victims among total victims detected in destination regions, 2008-2020



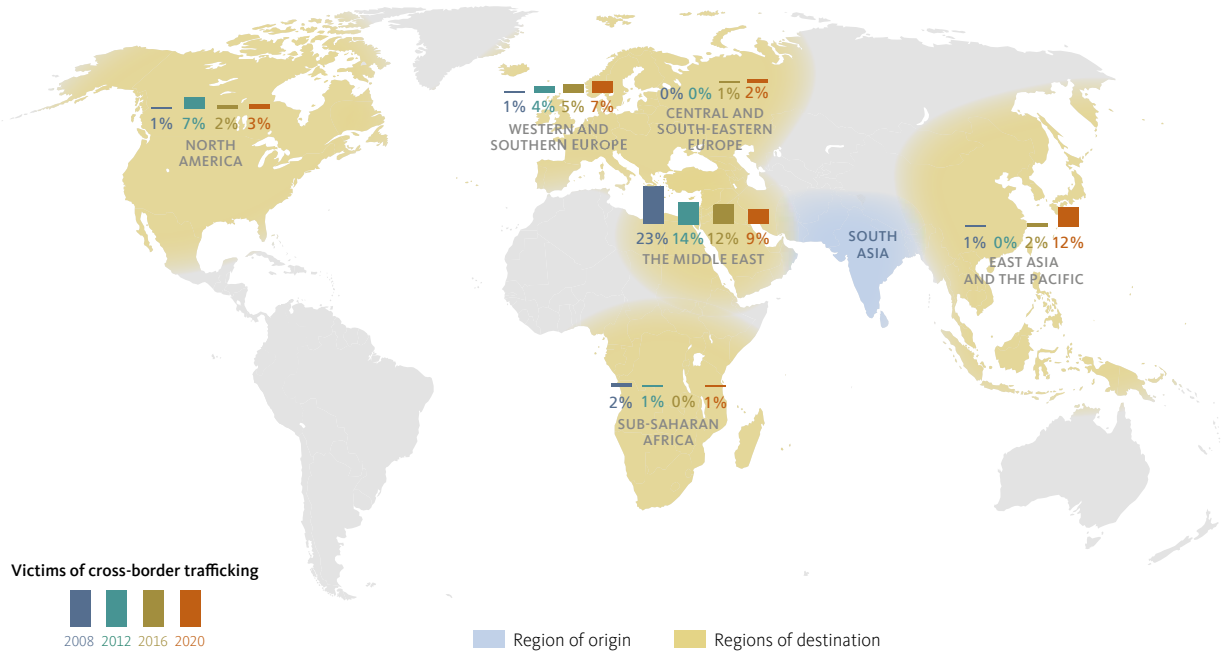
Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map. 4 Share of East Asian victims among total victims detected in destination regions, 2008-2020



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map. 5 Share of South Asian victims among total victims detected in destination regions, 2008-2020



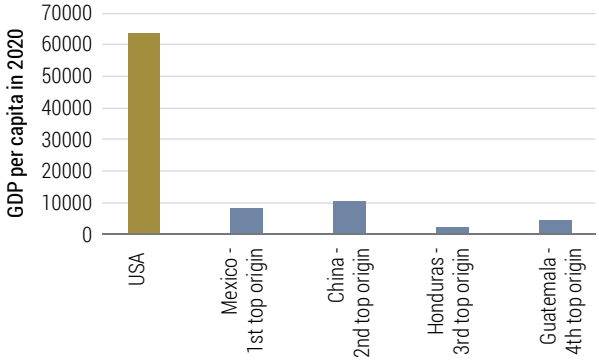
Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Outflows of East Asian victims remain a global concern as well, as most regions detect victims from this part of the world. This flow, however, appears to be decreasing in many parts of the world, except in the Middle East, where victims from different countries in South-East Asia are being increasingly detected.
Another sizable global trafficking flow involves **victims trafficked out of South Asia**. This flow appears to increasingly find a destination in Western Europe and East Asia and the Pacific, while fewer victims are detected in the Middle East and in the Americas.

While flows of Asian and African victims seem to have a global dimension, most trafficking in person flows remain regional. **Most victims of cross-border trafficking are detected in neighbouring countries within the region of origin or nearby.** Regional flows continue to show **victims move from lower income to higher income countries,** even when destination countries are low-income countries, victims are most often trafficked from neighbouring countries with lower GDP.

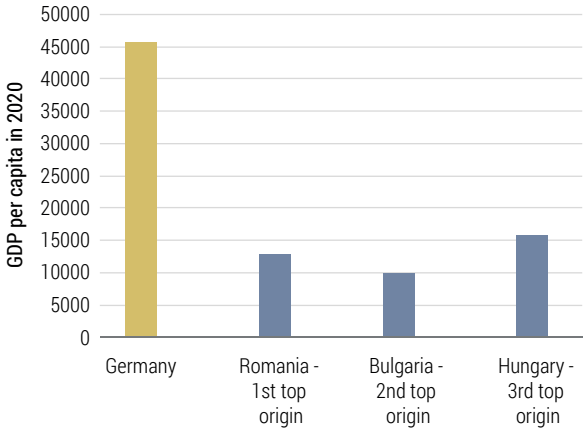
- About a quarter of victims detected in Western and Southern Europe are citizens of countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe or Eastern Europe and 35 per cent are victims of domestic trafficking.
- About 82 per cent of victims detected in East Asia are East Asian citizens, either victims of cross border trafficking or they are trafficked domestically.
- About 15 per cent of victims detected in South America are trafficked across borders within South America and 75 per cent are victims of domestic trafficking.
- About 15 per cent of victims detected in Sub-Saharan Africa are trafficked across borders from another Sub-Saharan Africa country, while the other full 85 per cent of victims are domestically trafficked.

Fig. 21 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in the United States and in the main countries of origin of detected foreign victims, 2020



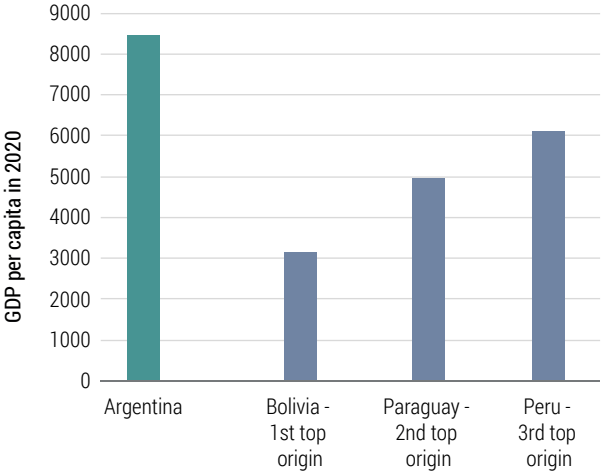
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

Fig. 22 GDP per capita in Germany and in the main countries of origin of detected foreign victims, 2020



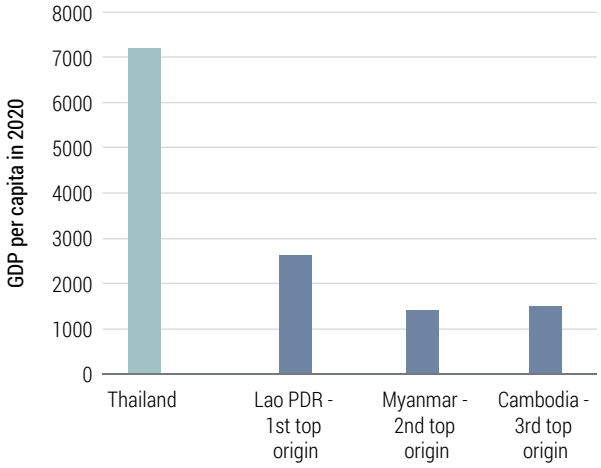
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

Fig. 23 GDP per capita in Argentina and in the main countries of origin of detected foreign victims, 2020



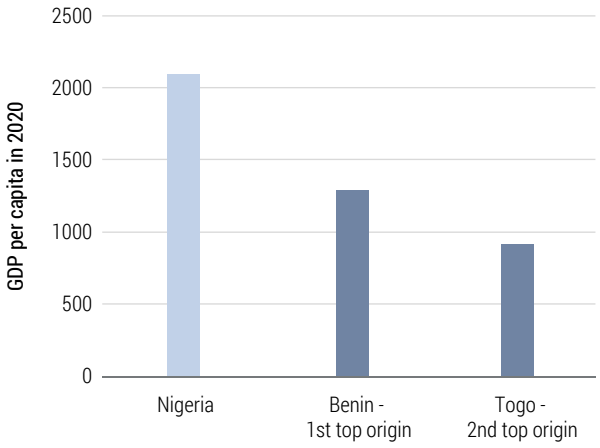
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

Fig. 24 GDP per capita in Thailand and in the main countries of origin of detected foreign victims, 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

Fig. 25 GDP per capita in Nigeria and in the main countries of origin of detected foreign victims, 2020



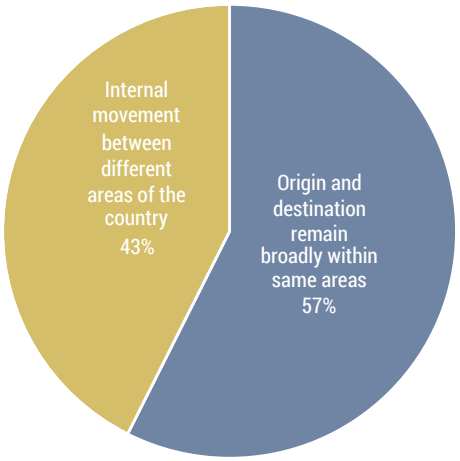
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

This same principle holds true with domestic trafficking, as well. Victims who are trafficked within their home countries often travel from low-income areas of the country, such as rural areas or small villages, to the main towns or economic centres. Analysis of the narrative of the trafficking cases collected by UNODC suggests that exploitation patterns of victims of domestic trafficking may overlap with internal migration. This applies to all forms of trafficking flows considered.

Victims can also be recruited and exploited within the same geographical areas, within the same city or community. In these cases, no significant geographical movement happens but the crime of trafficking still takes place.

Trafficking flows are clearly connected with the level of organization of trafficking networks. The longer the distance victims travel, more likely is the involvement of organized crime in the trafficking.[64]

Fig. 26 Share of victims of domestic trafficking, by geographical reach, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*

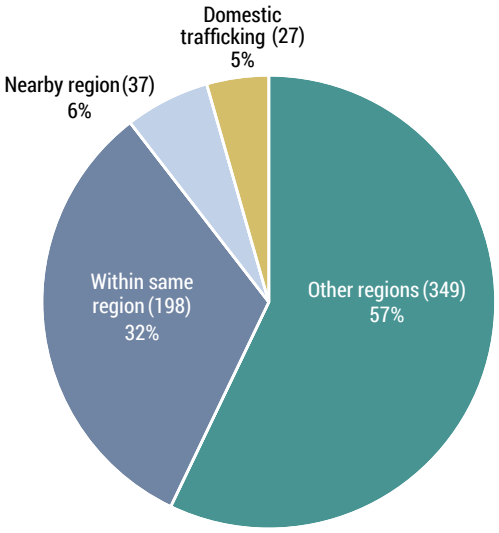


Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
*Based on information about 364 victims of domestic trafficking reported in 115 cases that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

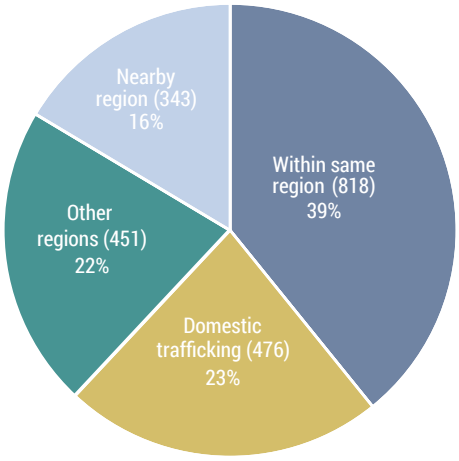
64 According to the court cases reported to UNODC, increasing flows distance record higher odds of engagement of criminal organizations, while domestic and short-range trafficking flows are less likely to involve criminal organizations. A logistic regression analysis on 3,249 victims of trafficking in persons, as reported by the court case summaries collected by UNODC, was performed. The analysis considered a dependent 0-1 binary variable defining 0 when there was no involvement of Business type of Organized Crime and 1 when there was. The independent variables considered in the model were the region of origin and destination of the victims, the forms of exploitation (sexual or forced labour), the number of offenders, and the distance between origin and destination countries (domestic/short/medium/long distance). The model result was significant (LR test 3472.61, p-value 0.000) and the goodness of fit index satisfactory pseudo R-squared 0.887). The analysis was carried by Prof. Daria Mendola from the University of Palermo in cooperation with UNODC Researchers.

Fig. 27 Share of victims of trafficking, by geographical reach and traffickers' structure, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*

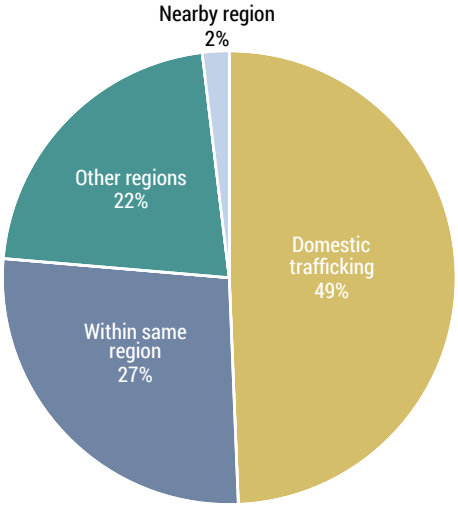
… by governance type of organized criminal groups



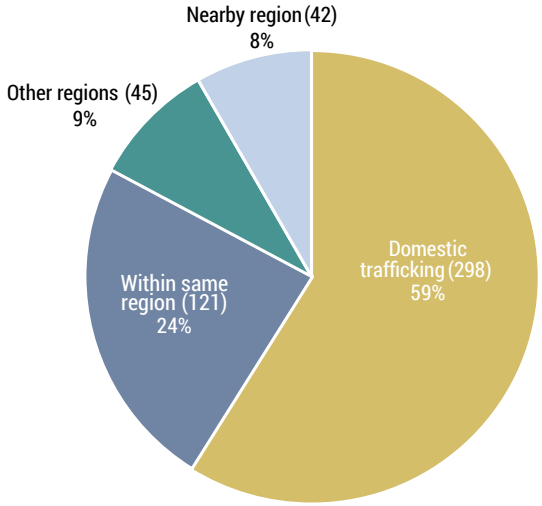
…by business-type of organized criminal groups



...by opportunistic association, not organized crime



… by individual traffickers



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on cases concluding with a conviction between 2012 and 2020. They involved: 618 victims trafficked by governance-type traffickers reported in 55 cases; 1,963 victims trafficked by business-type traffickers reported in 228 cases; 520 victims trafficked by lone traffickers reported in 207 cases; and 677 victims trafficked by opportunistic associations of traffickers reported in 196 cases.

Definitions of trafficking structures

Trafficking in persons is perpetrated by actors with different levels of sophistication within their organizational structures. According to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) "Organized criminal group" shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit;" (Article 2).

Within this Report, some categories of traffickers have been defined. Two broad categories include groups that meet the definition of organized criminal group, as well as opportunistic traffickers, who operate alone or enter in ad-hoc cooperation with others for a single criminal act.

Organized criminal groups include:
"Governance type of organized criminal groups" who wield security governance in a community or territory by means of fear and violence and may be involved in multiple illicit markets .[65]

"Business-like type organized criminal groups", involving three or more traffickers systematically working together to traffic persons as a core component of their criminal activities.

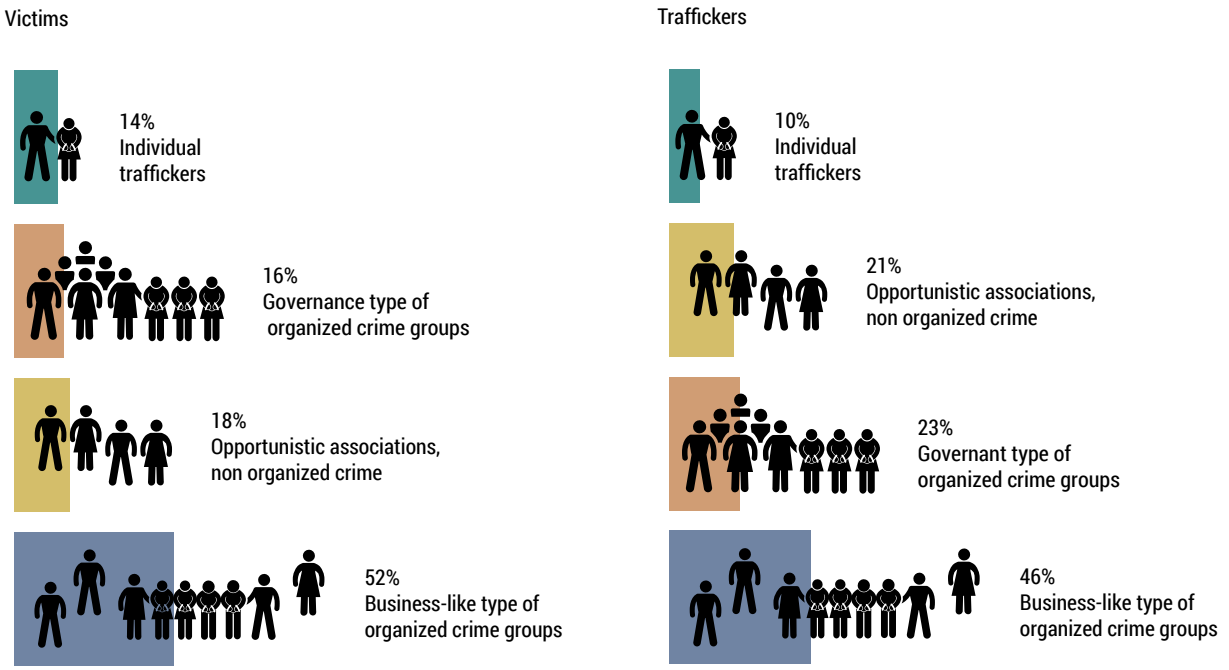
Opportunistic traffickers include:

"Opportunistic associations of traffickers" working together, where two traffickers operate together, or more than two traffickers do not systematically work together beyond a single criminal act; and

"Individual traffickers" who typically operate on their own.

65 When the narrative of the court cases referred to criminal groups making use of violence, intimidation and fear to ensure social control over a community or a territory, these were categorized as governance-type organized criminal group. For more on this see Varese, F. "What is Organized Crime?" In Varese, F. (ed.0, Organized Crime: Critical Concepts in Criminology. London: Routledge, 2010 pp.1-33.

Fig. 28 Shares of victims and traffickers, by type of trafficking structure, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on information about 3,778 victims and 2,253 traffickers reported in 686 cases that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

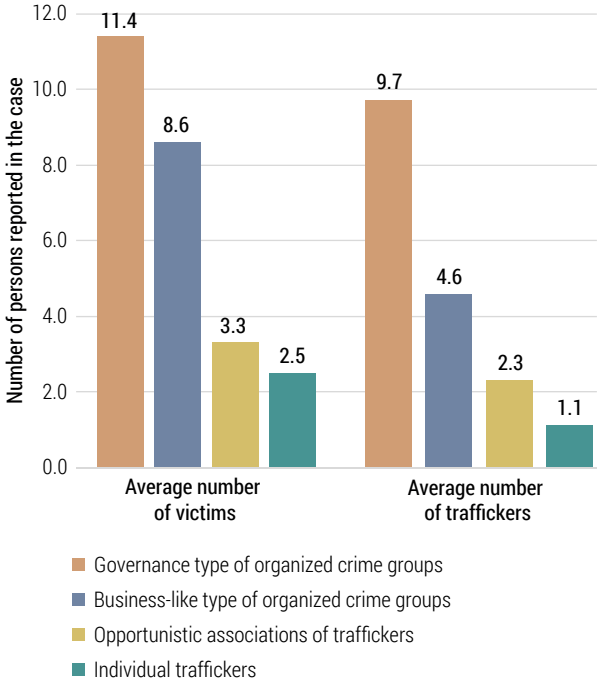
Trafficking organizations

Trafficking in persons is mostly organized

In court cases collected by UNODC, the business-like type of organized crime seems to account for the majority of convicted offenders and detected victims of trafficking in persons.

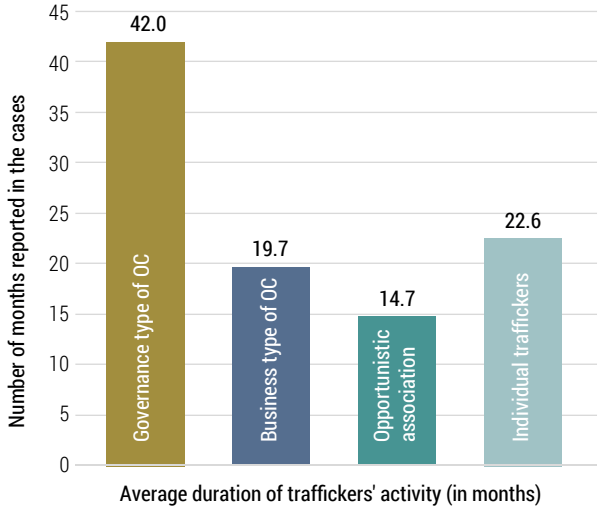
Confirming the findings of the previous report, with double the number of case summaries collected and analysed by UNODC, analysis of the court case summaries collected by UNODC shows **criminal organizations traffic more people, for longer periods of time and in more violent manners than non-organized crime traffickers**. They are generally able to operate with more people in multiple locations compared to less structured and organized traffickers.

Fig. 29 Average number of victims and average number of traffickers, by type of trafficking structure, as reported in UNODC court case summaries, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
*Based on the number of victims that was reported in 713 court cases of a total of 800 collected by UNODC that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020. In detail, 54 cases involved governance-type organized crime, 228 involved business-like type organized crime, 224 involved opportunistic associations of two or three traffickers, and 207 lone traffickers. Likewise, the number of traffickers was reported in 708 court cases of a total 800: 54 cases involved governance-type organized crime, 226 business-like type organized crime, 223 opportunistic associations and 205 lone traffickers.

Fig. 30 Average duration of traffickers' activity, by type of trafficking structure, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



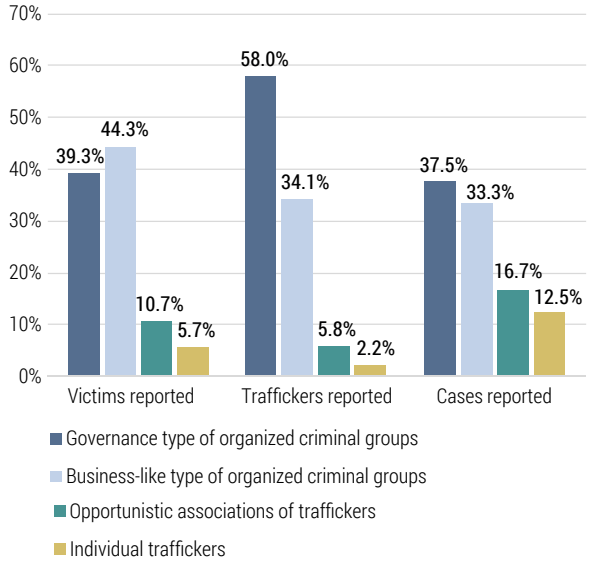
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.

* The estimated number of months criminal groups had been active was reported in 279 court cases of a total of 800 collected by UNODC that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020. In detail, 24 cases involved governance-type organized crime, 100 cases involved business-like type organized crime, 74 cases involved opportunistic associations and 81 involved lone traffickers.

All trafficking organization types are found behind all forms of exploitation in the court case summaries collected by UNODC. There are some differences, however. **Trafficking for forced labour is more likely to be carried out by organized crime groups** compared to trafficking for sexual exploitation.[66] Business-like type trafficking networks mostly engaged in forced labour, with traffickers operating as different actors in business relationships with each other or even operating under the façade of legal recruitment agencies.[67] Finally, the case summaries showed that, more than other actors, individual traffickers are convicted for the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 14, including the production of child sexual abuse material.[68]

The limited sample of reported cases of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality suggests that organized crime traffickers are relatively more involved in this type of trafficking crime compared to less organized traffickers. The analyzed court case summaries show that these organized actors are almost exclusively convicted for perpetrating this form of trafficking.

Fig. 31 Type of trafficking structure in cases of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, by number of traffickers involved and victims detected, as reported in case narratives, 2012 - 2020



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database

66 An analysis of the case summaries collected by UNODC on the presence or absence of organized crime in the trafficking cases suggests that trafficking for forced labour has higher odds of being carried out by organized crime groups compared to trafficking for sexual exploitation. A logistic regression analysis was performed on 3,249 victims of trafficking in persons reported by the court case summaries collected by UNODC considered a dependent 0-1 binary variable defining 0 the victims reported in the cases where there was no involvement of organized crime (No- OC) and 1 the victims reported in the cases where there was involvement of organized crime (Yes- OC). The independent variables considered in the model are the region of origins and destinations of the victims, the forms of exploitation (sexual exploitation or forced labour), the number of offenders, and the distance between origin and destination. The model result was significant (LR test 3472.61, p-value 0.000) and the goodness of fit index satisfactory (pseudo R-squared 0.887). The analysis was carried by Prof. Daria Mendola from the University of Palermo in cooperation with UNODC Researchers.

67 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 285, case 116, case 93, case 236 and case 307; and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case THA011 and IRBx037.

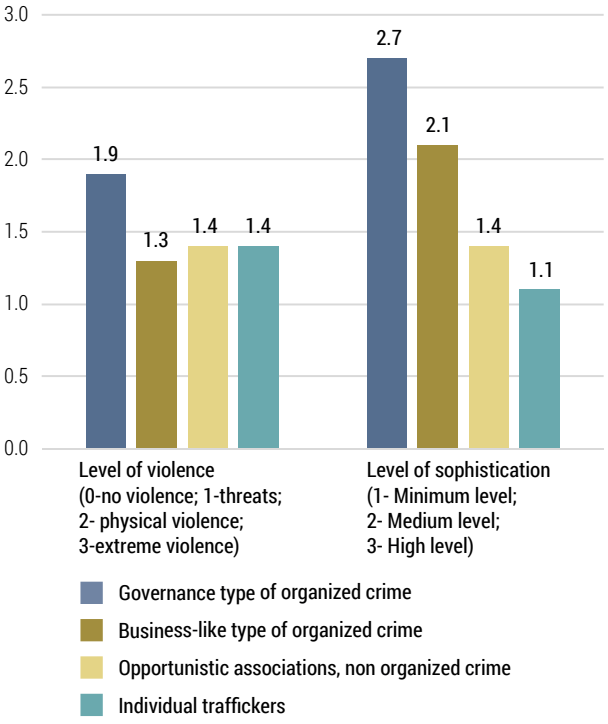
68 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 37, case 174, case 436, case 540, case 164, case 288, case 438, case 576 and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case PHL058.

Fig. 32 Type of trafficking structure, by form of exploitation, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on 1,207 traffickers reported in 537 court cases of a total of 800 collected by UNODC that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

Fig. 33 Level of violence and level of sophistication of the criminal organization, by type of trafficking structure, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* The level of violence suffered by the victims was reported in 601 court cases of a total of 800 collected by UNODC that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020. Some 51 cases involved governance- type of organized crime, 185 cases involved business-like type of organized crime, 188 cases involved opportunistic associations of two and/or three traffickers and 177 to loner traffickers.

The results related to the level of sophistication of criminal organizations are based on the elaboration of a three-level scale of traffickers: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

This information was reported in 570 court cases of a total of 800 collected by UNODC that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020: 47 cases involved governance type of organized crime; 175 cases involved business-like type of organized crime; 174 cases involved opportunistic associations of two or three traffickers;and 174 to lone traffickers.

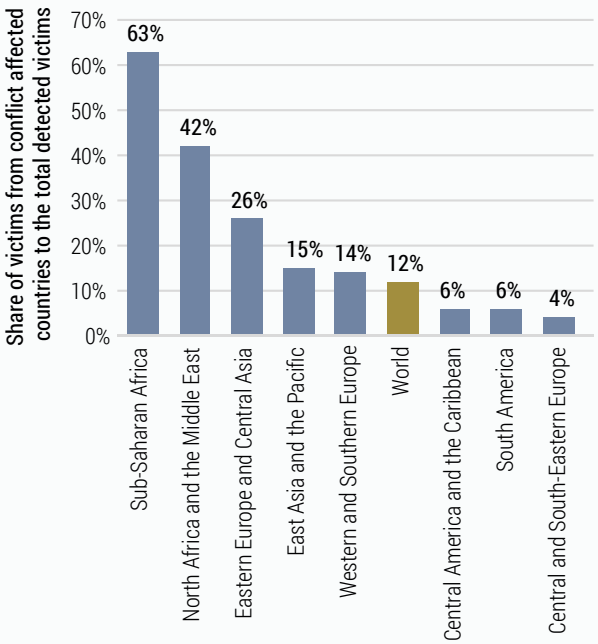
War: An Opportunity for Traffickers

In 2020, 56 state-based conflicts took place around the globe, bringing about an increasing number of fatalities. The UN estimates about two billion people live in conflict-affected countries and 274 million in need of humanitarian assistance.[69] According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, most of the active armed conflicts occurring between 2020 and 2022 are happening in Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by North Africa and the Middle East, Asia, the Americas and Europe.[70]

In March 2022, the United Nations Secretary-General stated, "for predators and human traffickers, war is not a tragedy – it is an opportunity". Previous UNODC research has shown that conflict settings increase the vulnerability of people to become victims of trafficking in persons.[71] This vulnerability is also evident in the profile of victims detected globally. In 2020, before the escalation of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine, about 12 per cent of the total victims of trafficking in persons detected globally originated from a country affected by conflict.[72] Not all these victims were trafficked as a direct result of an armed conflict but understanding how and where conflict plays a role on trafficking in persons globally is critical.

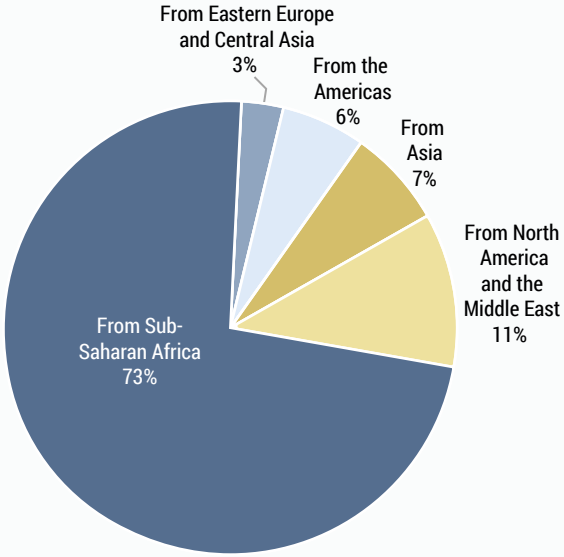
Most detected victims of trafficking originating from countries affected by ongoing conflict are African nationals and they are mostly detected within Africa and in the Middle East.

Regions of destination for detected victims originating from a country affected by conflict, as a share of these victims to total victims detected, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Detected victims of trafficking originating from a country in conflict, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

69 Security Council Report to the Secretary General, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, 28 January 2022, A/76/668-S/2022/66.

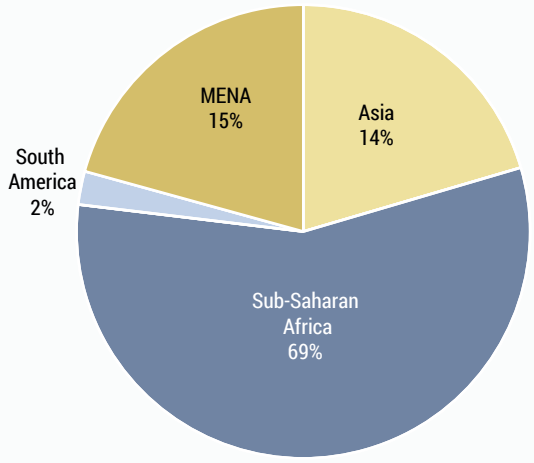
70 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Sipri Yearbook 2022, Armament, Disarmament and International Security, SIPRI, 2022.

71 UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018, Booklet 2: Trafficking in persons in the context of armed conflict (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.IV.2).

72 Victims of trafficking from Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen. It can be assumed that not all these victims originated from an area of the country directly affected by the conflict.

Additionally in 2020, the UN documented that about 5,000 children were recruited by armed groups.[73] Most of these children were recorded in countries affected by conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa (including Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Mali), in North Africa and the Middle East (including Libya, Syria and Yemen) and in Asia (including Afghanistan and Myanmar).

Children recruited by armed groups in conflict areas, as documented by the United Nations, by region of detection, 2020.



Source: Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict.

Traffickers find new opportunities to operate in conflicts in different ways. Two broad categories can be defined: (1) trafficking operated by armed groups within conflict areas; and (2) traffickers taking advantage of people fleeing conflict areas.

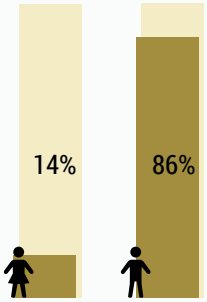
Children recruited and exploited during conflict

Children recruited by armed groups account for many of the victims of trafficking that have been documented in conflict areas. The recruitment of children leads to their involvement in armed violence, including acts of terrorism and war crimes[74] and for this, may not always be recognised as victims of trafficking.[75]

Most documented victims are boys, but girls can also be recruited by armed groups. Children are typically used as combatants, to carry explosives or other material in support of troops.[76]

Older children are typically recruited into armed units to take active part in hostilities, while younger children are used for other tasks.[77] For instance, in Yemen in 2019 and 2020, two-thirds of the documented children recruited by armed groups were trained, armed and used in active combat. About 19 per cent of these children were between 10 and 15 years old. The remaining children, often younger, were assigned to guard military checkpoints and handle mines or used in other roles. Girls were used as spies, to carry out intelligence gathering in their communities or to attract other combatants.[78] Similarly, in 2020 the UN documented the recruitment of 232 children to be used as combatants in the Central African Republic, 578 children were used in support roles such as bodyguards, manning checkpoints, spies, messengers, porters and carrying out domestic tasks.[79] Similar patterns are documented in the Middle East, East Asia and in other conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa[80].

Sex of children recruited by armed groups in conflict areas, as documented by the United Nations, 2020



Source: Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict.

73 According to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, the recruitment and use of children associated with armed groups nearly always constitutes trafficking in persons; United Nations Human Rights Council, Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, A/HRC/37/47, paras 15-16.

74 See A/70/836-S/2016/360, A/69/926-S/2015/409 and A/HRC/30/67.

75 Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (Paris Principles), February 2007, https://www. unicef.org/emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf para.3.6.

76 United Nations Human Rights Council, Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, A/HRC/37/47, page 2-3.

77 International Criminal Court, Trial Chamber I, Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Case of the Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, case no.: ICC-01/04-01/06. paras 759-760, 851.

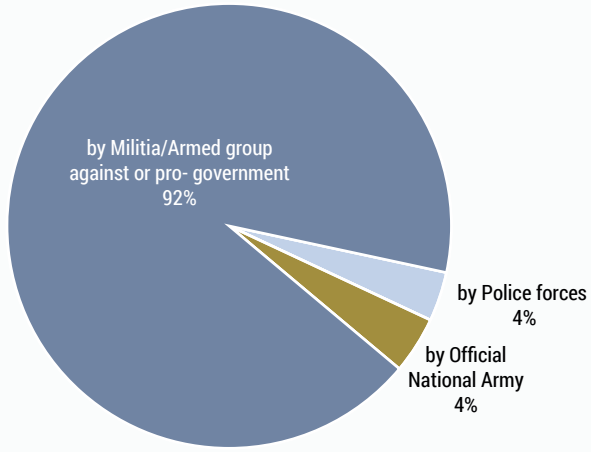
78 Security Council, Children and armed conflict in Yemen Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/761.

79 Security Council, Children and armed conflict in Central African Republic Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/882.

80 United Nations Human Rights Council, Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, A/HRC/37/47, page 2-3.

According to UN data, about eight per cent of children recruited in conflict areas in the year 2020 were trafficked by governmental official forces, such as national armies or police forces. The majority, however, were recruited by non-official militias or armed groups who either oppose or support government forces[81].

Groups recruiting children in conflict areas, as documented by the United Nations,2020



Source: Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict.

Children are not only exploited to increase the military power of armed groups. They are also victims of sexual exploitation, as a part of diffused gender-based violence exacerbated in conflict areas. In 2020, the United Nations documented sexual assaults on more than 1,200 children worldwide in direct connection with conflicts. Most of these victims are girls, but boys are raped and assaulted as well. Women and girls who live in conflict environments are at risk of gender-based violence of many forms, including trafficking for sexual exploitation.[82]

Forced marriages and sexual slavery of children perpetrated by people in the armed forces operating in conflict zones, both governmental and non-governmental, have also been documented by the UN.[83] The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, is often part of the systematic sexual violence perpetrated against civilians during and after conflicts.

Traffiking by armed groups



Armed groups recruit or abduct children to use them as combatants.
Children are found in villages, urban areas and in refugee camps. Thousands of victims have been documented in different conflicts, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

In conflict zones, **armed groups** recruit or abduct women and girls **for forced marriages, domestic work and sexual slavery**. Similarly, they recruit or abduct men and boys **for forced labour**, for instance, in the exploitation of natural resources, as soldiers or **for slavery**.

Traffiking driven by conflicts



Refugees escaping wars and persecution are **easily targeted** by traffickers who leverage their desperation to deceive them into exploitation.

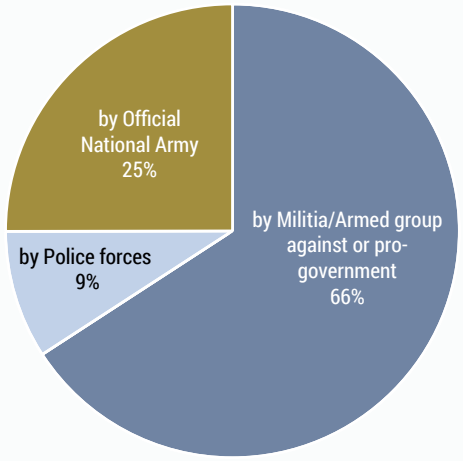
The presence of large numbers of **troops creates demand for labour and sexual services**. In connection with degraded rule of law and weak institutions, this demand generates trafficking flows into the conflict or post-conflict zones.

81 Security Council, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, A/76/871-S/2022/493.

82 United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, A/71/303, paras 18-19.

83 Security Council, Children and armed conflict in Central African Republic Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/882.

Groups recruiting children to be sexually assaulted by armed groups in conflict areas, as documented by the United Nations,2020



Source: Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict.

International troops have also in the past been involved in sexual violence against civilian populations[84].

In addition, exploitation of migrant workers trafficked into countries in conflict for the purpose of forced labour in military bases has been documented. This often happens with the engagement of recruitment agents and their intermediaries in countries of origin. Victims are deceived about their country of destination, the nature of the work and/or their working and living conditions.[85]

84 Charles A. Smith and Brandon Miller-de la Cuesta, "Human Trafficking in Conflict Zones: The Role of Peacekeepers in the Formation of Networks", Human Rights Review, vol. 12, No. 3, 2011; See E/CN.4/2006/62/Add.2; Human Rights Watch, "Bosnia and Herzegovina — Hopes Betrayed: Trafficking of Women and Girls to Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina for Forced Prostitution", 2002; Keith Allred, "Combating human trafficking", NATO Review (2006); and Elisabeth Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peacebuilding", United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), New York, 2002. See Sarah E. Mendelson, Barracks and Brothels, "Peacekeepers and Human Trafficking in the Balkans", Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2005; Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Thakur, eds., Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations University Press, 2007; Keith J. Allred, "Peacekeepers and Prostitutes: How Deployed Forces Fuel the Demand for Trafficked Women and New Hope for Stopping It," in Cornelius Friesendorf, ed., Strategies against Human Trafficking: The Role of the Security Sector, Vienna, 2009; Heather M. Smith and Charles A. Smith, "Human Trafficking: The Unintended Effects of United Nations Intervention", International Political Science Review, vol. 32, 2011. Charles A. Smith and Brandon Miller-de la Cuesta, "Human Trafficking in Conflict Zones: The Role of Peacekeepers in the Formation of Networks", Human Rights Review, vol. 12, No. 3, 2011; See E/CN.4/2006/62/Add.2; Human Rights Watch, "Bosnia and Herzegovina — Hopes Betrayed: Trafficking of Women and Girls to Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina for Forced Prostitution", 2002; Keith Allred, "Combating human trafficking", NATO Review (2006); and Elisabeth Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peacebuilding", United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), New York, 2002.

85 United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, A/71/303, paras 36, 37 and 38.

Victims Displaced and trafficked outside conflict but as result of conflict

People forced to flee leave homes, families and friends can quickly turn into easy targets for traffickers. A typical modus operandi for a trafficker operating in conflict settings is to exploit refugees' urgent need to move to safe countries. Refugees often have no better option than to trust offers of passage across borders and some may eventually be coerced into exploitative conditions at their destination or during travel.

UNHCR has estimated 89.3 million people had been forcibly displaced at the end 2021. This includes people fleeing from conflicts, persecution and human rights violations. In 2021 alone, about 900,000 new displacements were recorded due to conflict in Afghanistan, nearly three-million individuals were displaced from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (most returned home within the year), a half-million people from Central African Republic, several million people were displaced from Ethiopia (most returned home), and about 400,000 from Myanmar, as well as many others in other parts of the world facing conflict, from Asia to the Middle East, from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Americas.[86] At the moment of the writing, UNCHR reported about 5.6 million individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe since 24 February and 7.1 million internally displaced in Ukraine[87].

The vulnerability to trafficking in persons of people fleeing conflicts is exacerbated when movement of people is sudden and leaves them off-guard. Civilians are usually forced to leave everything they have behind. In North-East Nigeria, for example, during one week in August 2022, more than 1,500 individuals were recorded as newly displaced because of military operations in Adamawa and Borno States.[88] In one day only, IOM recorded 435 displaced individuals as a result of an armed attack in Liwa (Central African Republic). They may flee in foot, lacking food, water and shelter, as documented in Chad. [89]

Massive movements of people also provide opportunities to traffickers, as seen for example in the

86 UNHCR, Global Trends; Forced Displacement 2021, page 6.

87 See https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-emergency.html, accessed 14/09/2022.

88 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix – Nigeria Emergency Tracking Tool (ETT), 1-7 August 2022.

89 IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix – Chad Emergency Tracking Tool (ETT), displacement in the Lac provinces, 4-8 August 2022.

number of Afghan migrants and refugees recorded moving towards Europe following the intensification of the conflict and regime change in Afghanistan in 2021. Already in 2020, Afghan victims of trafficking in persons were detected in many parts of the world, including Australia and Western and Southern Europe.

Another example of a massive movement of people feeling conflict that has increased the risk of trafficking in persons relates to the conflict in Ukraine. In 2022 through August, the conflict in Ukraine has resulted in more than seven million people displaced within the country and over 5.6 million refugees outside the country. Of the internal displaced population in Ukraine, as of July 2022, 64 per cent are females and 32 per cent between the age 18 and 35. Seventy-eight per cent of the internally displaced population reports being in immediate need of cash or financial support, an indicator that has rapidly escalated since March 2022 (49 per cent at that time).[90] Economic need is also recorded as prevalent among Ukrainian refugees hosted in Central European countries.[91] Being in economic need is the first risk factor for people to be targeted by traffickers.[92]

Prior to the escalation of conflict in 2022, Ukraine was already a significant origin of human trafficking. Between 2017 and 2021 victims trafficked outside Ukraine were detected in 40 countries in Central Europe, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe. Victims are also trafficked to the Middle East and to a minor extent, to the Americas and East Asia.

Analysis based on data emerging from the 2014 conflict that took place in the Eastern part of the country suggests that trafficking as result of the broader 2022 conflict is likely to increase. Trafficking victims out of Ukraine increased in the aftermath of the beginning of the armed conflict in certain districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014. A first wave of displaced population from Ukraine to Western and Central Europe was recorded in the second half of the decade. This wave eventually resulted in an uptick in Ukrainian trafficking victims detected in Western and Central Europe in 2015 suggesting a clear relationship between the displacement of the Ukrainian population and the detection of Ukrainian trafficking victims in Western and Central Europe a year later (see figure below).[93]

As a much larger number of Ukrainian people were displaced in 2022 – about 5.6 million in temporary protection across Europe, compared to the peak of 16,000 recorded in 2015. The statistical model inferred on the base of the numbers recorded between 2007 and 2020 would suggest such a number of displaced populations would theoretically result into more than 100,000 victims from Ukraine to Europe only[94]. There are some differences compared to the past, however, as many countries receiving refugees from Ukraine have put in place measures to mitigate individual vulnerabilities, such as temporary protection and residence permits in EU States, coupled with a number of benefits.

On the other hand, the large number of people displaced should keep the international community on alert, as an unprecedented number of Ukrainians could fall victims of trafficking if specific counter trafficking measures are not quickly considered in the emergency response.

90 IOM, Ukraine Internal Displacement Report, General Population Survey, Round 7, 23 July 2022.

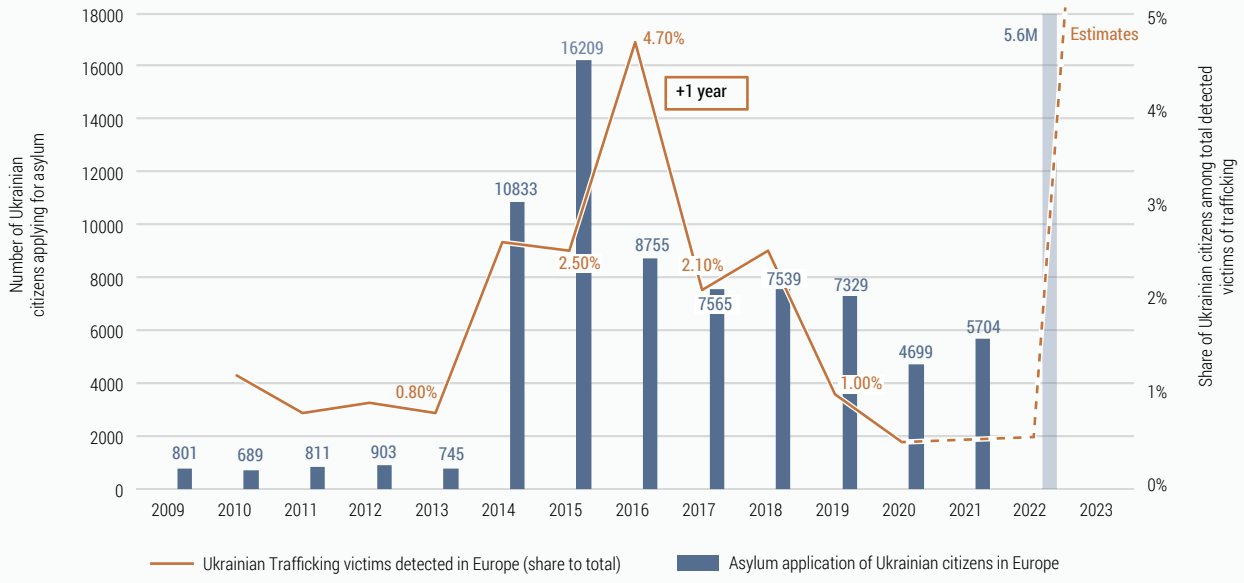
91 UNCHR, Regional Bureau for Europe, Lives on Hold: Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine, July 2022.

92 UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020 – Chapter 2, page 69 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.3).

93 Linear Regression independent variable the number of Ukrainian asylum applications recorded in countries in Western and Central Europe recorded between 2007 and 2021; Dependent variable is the share of Ukrainian victims of trafficking to total detected victims in Western and Central Europe between 2007 and 2020. Results: R-Square 0.578, Adj. R-Squared 0.54 (Sig. 0.0026). Standardized Coeff. Beta 0.760 (Sig. 003)

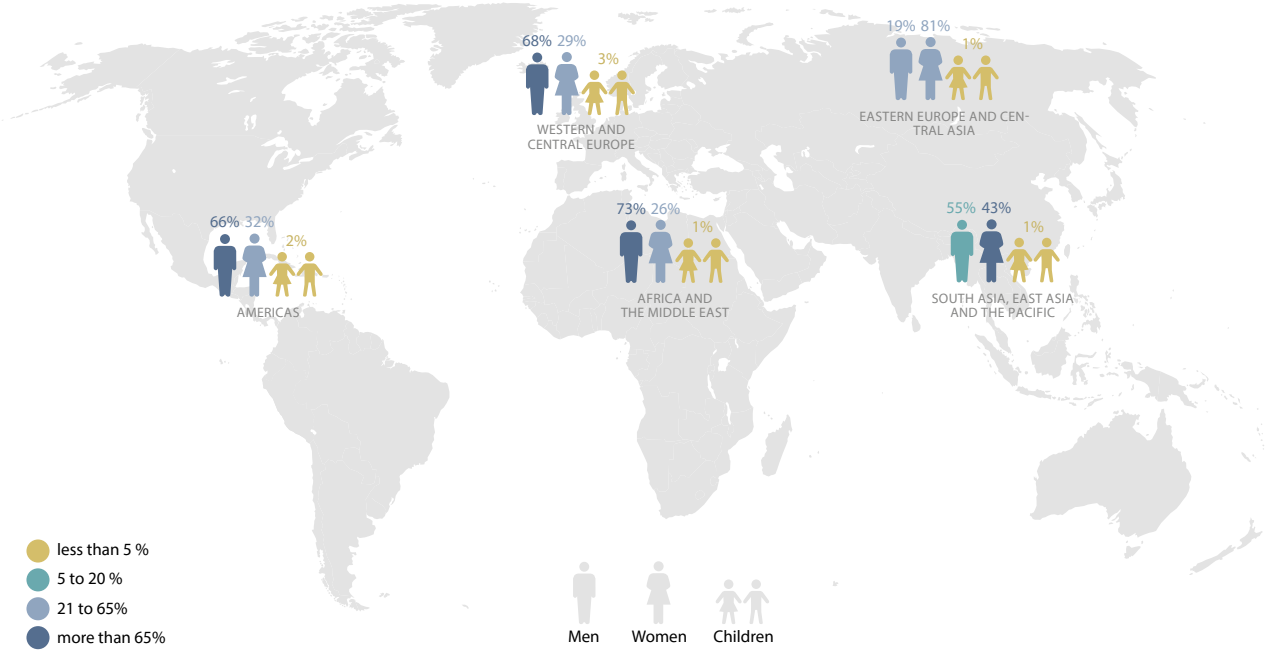
94 This number is calculated by applying the ratio of 5 victims trafficked for every 1 victim detected that is broadly the ratio resulting from Multiple System Estimates method in European countries. See UNODC, Monitoring human trafficking prevalence through multiple system estimation 2022.

Relationship between Ukrainian asylum applications and detection of Ukrainian trafficking victims, in Western and Central Europe, 2009-2021



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNHCR data.

Map. 6 Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by age group, sex and region, 2020 (or most recent)*



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

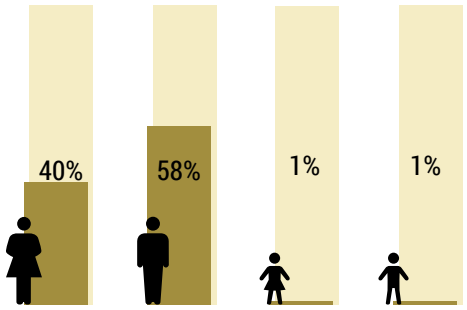
Traffickers

Different profiles for different forms of trafficking

Most convicted traffickers globally are men, while **women account for a significant 40 per cent of the people convicted** of trafficking in persons in 2020.

The typical sex profile of convicted traffickers also differs by region. **Countries of origin tend to convict more females**, both women and girls, **than countries of destination**. A possible explanation for this disparity is the role females play in the recruitment phase of trafficking as well as in specific activities at high risk of detection (such as collecting money) during the exploitation phase of trafficking for sexual exploitation.[95]

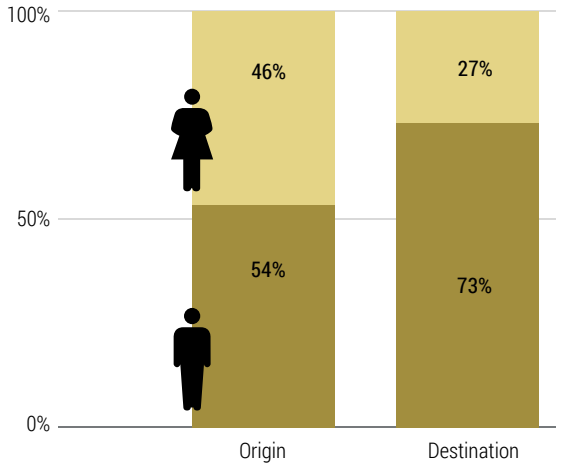
Fig. 34 Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 1,234 people convicted of trafficking in persons in 2020 (or most recent) whose age and sex were reported in 128 countries.

95 See, UNODC, "Female Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation as Defendants: A case law analysis", United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, pp 25-45; International Organization for Migration, "Deceived Migrants from Tajikistan: A Study of Trafficking in Women and Children", (Dushanbe, 2001); T. Denisova, "Trafficking in Women and Children for Purposes of Sexual Exploitation", from Prediction and Control of Organized Crime: The Experience of Post-Soviet Ukraine, p. 43-51, 2004; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "An Assessment of Referral Practices to Assist and Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons in Moldova", 2007; R. Surtees, "Traffickers and trafficking in Southern and Eastern Europe", European Journal of Criminology, volume 5 (1): 39-68 (2008); United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, "Trafficking inWomen from Romania into Germany: Comprehensive Report"; and Lo Iacono, E., "Victims, Sex Workers and Perpetrators: Grey Areas in the Trafficking of Nigerian Women", Trends in Organized Crime, 2014, 17:110.

Fig. 35 Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by sex and country of origin or destination, 2020 (or most recent)*



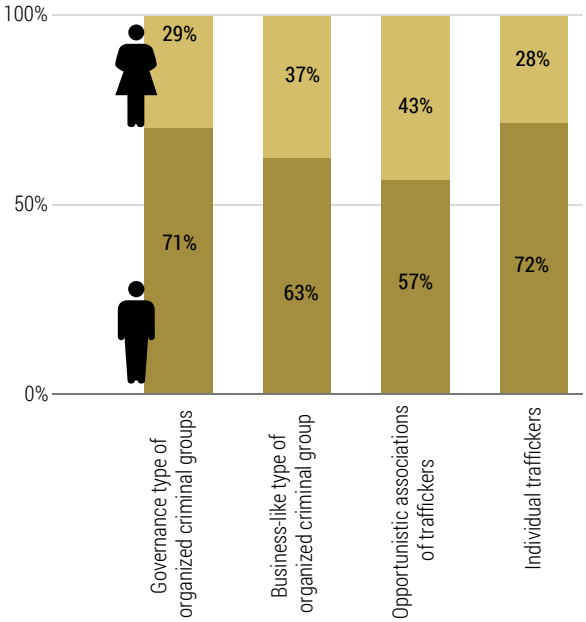
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
*Based on 564 females and 1,011 males convicted in 92 countries of origin and 70 countries of destination for cross-border trafficking.

Looking at the court cases collected by UNODC, **the sex profile of traffickers changes according to the type of criminal organization involved in the crime**. Female traffickers account for 43 per cent of the traffickers operating in pairs (typically with intimate partners), and 37 per cent of traffickers involved in cases operated by business-like type organizations are women. The participation of women in structured criminal organizations involved in trafficking crime seems less frequent – these are run predominantly by men, and less than 30 per cent of convicted traffickers of this type are women. The most reported profile of convicted individual traffickers involves young men exploiting their female partners (women and girls).

In the court cases collected, there was **no noted difference in the sex profile of offenders whether they engaged in sexual exploitation or forced labour** (about 38 per cent of offenders convicted were female in both categories). People convicted for trafficking for the purpose of crime and/or begging were more frequently males (only a quarter of offenders were female) compared to other forms of exploitation.

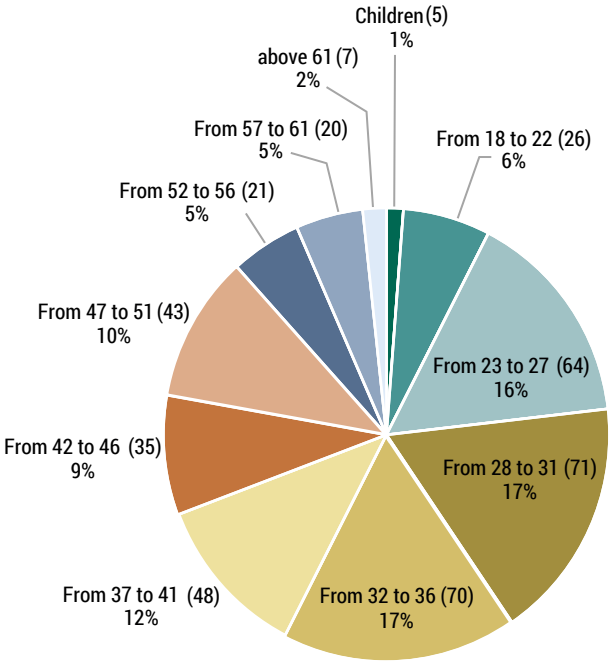
According to the information reported in the case summaries collected, there is a wide span in **traffickers' ages** from below 18 to above 70 years old. **Most traffickers reported in analysed cases were aged between 23 and 36 when convicted** (median 28, average 37). Children are rarely found to be involved in trafficking in persons as offenders. Very few of those convicted worldwide are under the age of 18 (boys and girls).

Fig. 36 Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by sex and type of trafficking structure, as reported in case narratives, 2012 – 2020 *



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
*Based on 1,207 traffickers reported in 537 court cases of the 800 collected by UNODC.

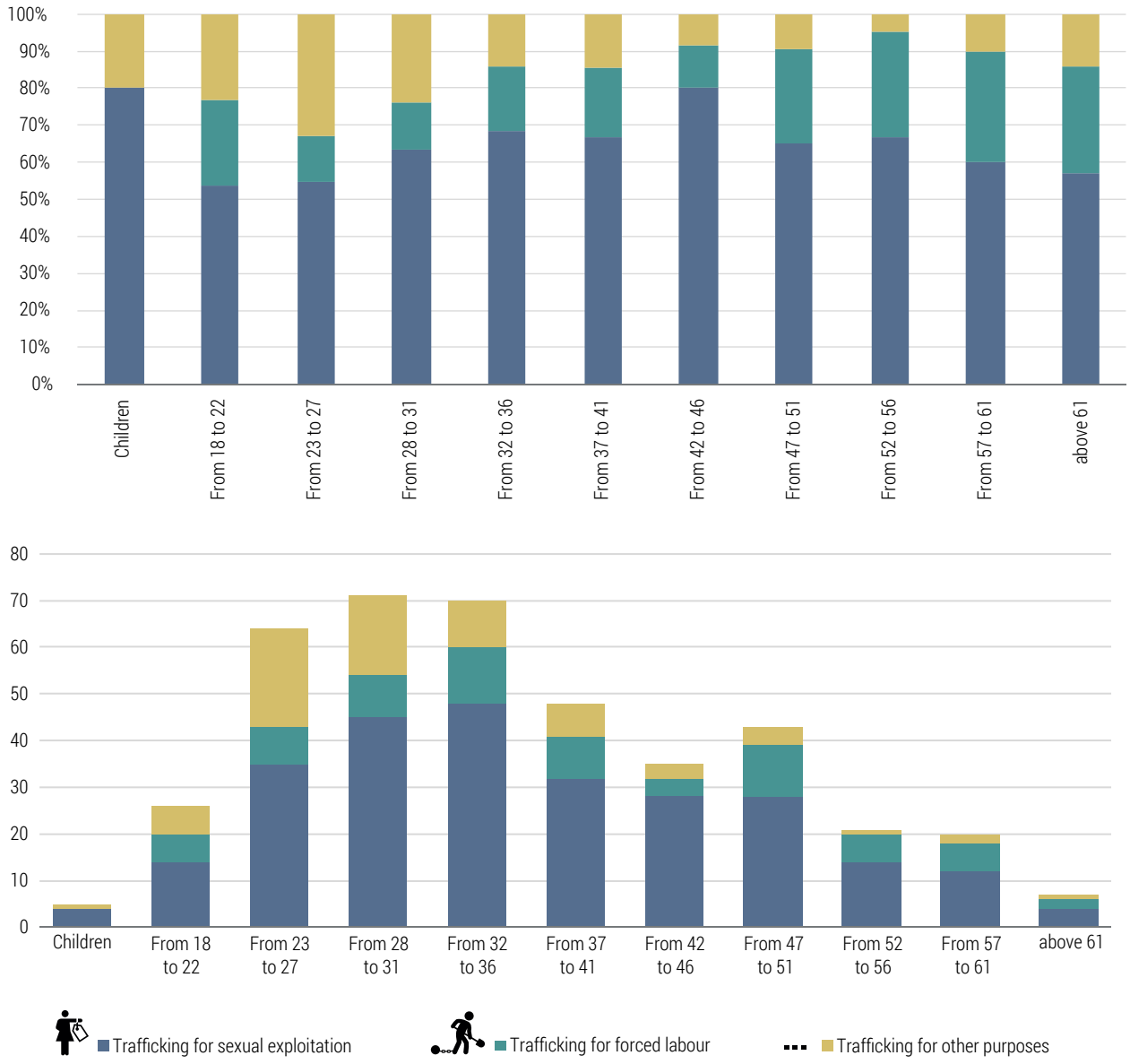
Fig. 37 Persons convicted, by age group, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.

In the analysed court cases, traffickers engaged in sexual exploitation and forced labour tend to be about the same age, in their mid-thirties. Interestingly, though, traffickers involved in other forms of exploitation, from crime to begging and mixed forms tend to be younger than other traffickers.[96]

Fig. 38 Persons convicted, by age group and form of exploitation, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on 399 traffickers reported in 179 cases that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

96 The recorded median age for traffickers convicted and reported in the court case summaries was age 35 for traffickers in sexual exploitation, 36 for those in forced labour, 28 for those in other forms of exploitation. The recorded average age was 37 for sexual exploitation, 39 for forced labour and 32 for other forms of exploitation.

Climate change: Affecting communities and increasing risks for Trafficking in Persons

The widespread and intensifying impacts of climate change are heightening vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons.[97] Rising and shifting temperatures and weather patterns are disproportionally affecting poor communities relying on the primary economic sector, including agriculture and the extraction of natural resources.[98] Economic hardship and other challenges put more people at direct risk of being trafficked while increasing the incentives for others to engage in trafficking activities.[99]

Over the last two decades, climate-related disasters have doubled in frequency, leading to loss of livelihoods and increasing displacement. In 2021 alone, more than 23.7 million people were displaced by such disasters.[100] As regions of the world become increasingly uninhabitable, people on the move will face high risk of exploitation along migration routes.[101] "Slow-onset climate change impacts" could force an estimated 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050.[102]

While understanding the impact of climate change on trafficking in persons still requires comprehensive research, some examples show how weather-induced natural disasters can expose communities reliant on fishing, farming and agriculture to higher risk of trafficking.[103] This box provides an overview of emerging trends in a selected number of countries for which information was available.

Typhoons in the Philippines

Cases of trafficking in persons increased in 2013, after Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, causing approximately 6,300 deaths and displacing 4.4 million people.[104] The Eastern Visayas region was particularly affected. At the time, one in four migrant workers employed in the area were already living at the poverty line. Many of the agricultural and fishing industries, which employ the most vulnerable segments of society in the Visayas, were destroyed. An estimated 21,000 families lost their livelihoods due to the damage. Between 2013 and 2015, national authorities recorded about 670 cases of trafficking in persons in the regions affected by the typhoon alone, and key informants in government and NGOs reported that these cases increased after the disaster.[105]

More recently, Typhoon Rai in 2021 caused displacement of more than 590,000 people in the Philippines.[106] The International Labour Organization estimates that 2.2 million workers were directly affected and became at immediate risk of exploitation.[107]

Cyclones and storms in Bangladesh

Trafficking in persons has been commonly detected in the Sundarbans – the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest. Situated at the border between In-

97 Climate change refers to a change in the state of the climate that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. It may be due to natural internal processes, external forces, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use. It includes both sudden-onset events as well as slow-onset processes, such as changes in global temperatures, "intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity"; from United Nations, "What Is Climate Change?", available at: https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change.

98 ILO and IOM, "Impact of Livelihood Recovery Initiatives on Reducing Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Illegal Recruitment: Lessons from Typhoon Haiyan", 2015, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms_522321.pdf.

99 See GLOTIP 2020, as well as Johannes Koettl, "Human trafficking, modern day slavery, and economic exploitation", The World Bank, 2009, p. 17, available at https://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01536/WEB/IMAGES/0911.PDF; and Islam, M. R., Shamsuddoha, M., "Socioeconomic consequences of climate induced human displacement and migration in Bangladesh", International Sociology, 2017, 32(3), pp. 277- 298, p. 278, available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0268580917693173.

100 International Displacement Monitoring Center (2022) Global Report on Internal Displacement.

101 Campbell-Staton, Shane & Walker, Reena & Rogers, Savannah & León, Jason & Landecker, Hannah & Porter, Warren & Mathewson, Paul & Long, Ryan. (2021). Physiological costs of undocumented human migration across the southern United States border. Science. 374. 1496-1500. 10.1126/science.abh1924.

102 "Clement, Viviane; Rigaud, Kanta Kumari; de Sherbinin, Alex; Jones, Bryan; Adamo, Susana; Schewe, Jacob; Sadiq, Nian; Shabahat, Elham. 2021. Groundswell Part 2 : Acting on Internal Climate Migration. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

103 FAO, "The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security", 2021, p. 5; 147; IPCC, 2014, Fifth Assessment Report, p. 503; IPCC, 2022, Sixth Assessment Report, p. 1178.

104 ILO and IOM,"Impact of Livelihood Recovery Initiatives on Reducing Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Illegal Recruitment: Lessons from Typhoon Haiyan", 2015, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms_522321.pdf

105 Ibid.

106 International Displacement Monitoring Center (2022) and Center for research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (2022).

107 ILO, "2.2 million workers affected by Typhoon Odette in the Philippines", 2022, available at: https://www.ilo.org/manila/public/pr/WCMS_834116/lang--en/index.htm.

dia and Bangladesh, it is considered a hotspot for climate change-related catastrophes.[108]

In the Bangladesh Sundarbans, damage to property and crop failures during frequent floods and cyclones has pushed a large section of the population (43 per cent) below the national poverty line in 2014.[109] Forced and debt-bonded labour has been documented in fisheries and factories in the region, which often employ children as part of their workforce. The prevalence of these exploitative practices show that traffickers take advantage of the economic need of the population who struggle to cope with reduced access to income-generating activities.[110]

The significant number of vulnerable individuals in this disaster-prone region allows traffickers to organize large recruitment campaigns. They operate as both private businesses and more complex criminal networks that traffic people internationally.[111] Furthermore, those who migrate from disaster-affected areas to Dhaka or Kolkata in search of better living conditions can find themselves with no resources or social networks, making them vulnerable to be targeted by recruitment agents who trap them in exploitative bonded labour schemes.[112]

Droughts and floods in Ghana

Droughts and floods in Ghana are forcing many to migrate,[113] with cases of trafficking of children for forced marriage or labour exploitation being increasingly documented. Reports of trafficking have also been associated with the migratory movements of men and boys who relocate from north to central and southern parts of Ghana to find employment on farms or in mines in combination with labour intensive and unregulated industries.[114]

Women and children leaving farming communities devastated by droughts and floods in northern Ghana also become vulnerable to trafficking when they move to urban areas in the south. There, they may end up working as kayayie (porters), becoming fully dependent on their low-paid and commission-based jobs to meet basic needs such as food and accommodation. Intermediaries, or so-called "agents", who recruited them may never pay them, meanwhile only increasing their debt. They are instead forced to work in difficult conditions as manual labourers or porters, becoming easy targets for traffickers who take advantage of their basic needs for food and shelter.[115]

Hurricanes and rising sea levels in the Caribbean Islands

The geographical location of the Caribbean islands en route from South to North America, together with loss of employment opportunities due to intense tropical storms and cyclones, rising sea levels and biodiversity degradation, expose coast communities to the risk of being trafficked or engaging in trafficking activities.[116]

Those who have lost or experienced greatly diminishing returns on their fishing livelihoods and are unable or unwilling to leave have greater incentives to turn to trafficking and smuggling to generate income.[117] Some of those who had worked in the fishing industry have resorted to using their boats to transport smuggled migrants and victims of trafficking for organized criminal groups, a phenomenon also observed in other similar settings. [118]

With their livelihoods, homes and health negatively affected, many in the region migrate to North America and Europe for better economic opportunities and may fall into the hands of traffickers on these dangerous journeys.[119]

108 Susmita Dasgupta, et al., Coping with Climate Change in the Sundarbans: Lessons from Multidisciplinary Studies, The World Bank, 2020, p. xi; available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34770/9781464815874.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

109 Ritu Bharadwaj et al. "Climate-induced migration and modern slavery. A toolkit for policy-makers", Anti-Slavery International, September 2021, p. 25, https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021_low_res.pdf.

110 Ibid.

111 IOM, The Climate Change-Human Trafficking Nexus, 2016, p. 6; available at: https://publications.iom.int/books/climate-change-human-trafficking-nexus.

112 Ibid.

113 Ritu Bharadwaj, et al., p. 23; and The World Bank, "Climate Risk Profile: Ghana", 2021, p. 13; available at: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/15857-WB_Ghana%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf.

114 Bharadwaj et al., p. 23.

115 Ibid, p. 24.

116 Kehinde Bolaji, "Climate-related security risks and violent crime in Caribbean "frontier" coastal communities: issues, challenges and policy options", UNDP Oslo Governance Centre and the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Issue 15 (2020), p. 6.

117 Iris Monnereau and Hazel A. Oxenford, "Impacts of Climate Change on Fisheries in the Coastal and Marine Environments of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)", Caribbean Marine Climate Change Report Card: Science Review, 2017, p. 124; and Bolaji, p.7.

118 Bolaji, p. 7.

119 Ibid., p. 6.

Criminal Justice Response

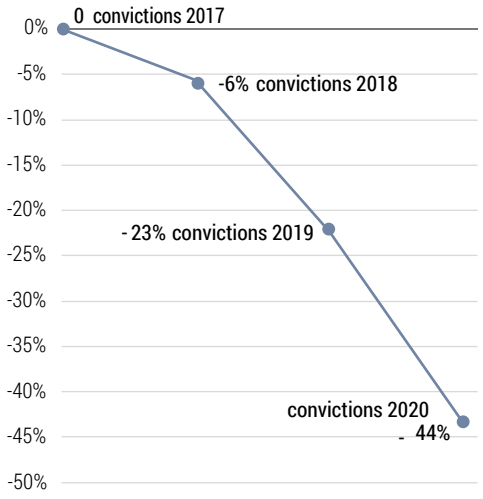
Most countries record fewer convictions

In 2020, **a drop of 27 per cent in the number of individuals convicted** was recorded globally from 2019.[120] At the same time, a five per cent decrease in the number of people brought to court for prosecutions was recorded, while the number of individuals investigated remained more stable (only a two per cent decrease). It appears the first year of the pandemic had a greater impact on the trial phase than the investigative phase of combatting trafficking crime. Some regions, i.e., South Asia, Latin America and Western and Southern Europe, seem to have suffered more than others.

Globally, there was a greater slowdown in the conviction phase compared to prosecutions or investigations. This, however, may have been part of a phenomenon only accelerated by the pandemic. In 2019, a similar drop of 23 per cent compared to 2017 was recorded. Overall, the **number of convictions recorded globally has declined by about 44 per cent since 2017**.

This drop in convictions for trafficking in persons, though, seems to be part of a broader phenomenon in all criminal justice efforts. **Convictions for homicide and drug trafficking seem to follow the same trends** (see Figure 42 below).

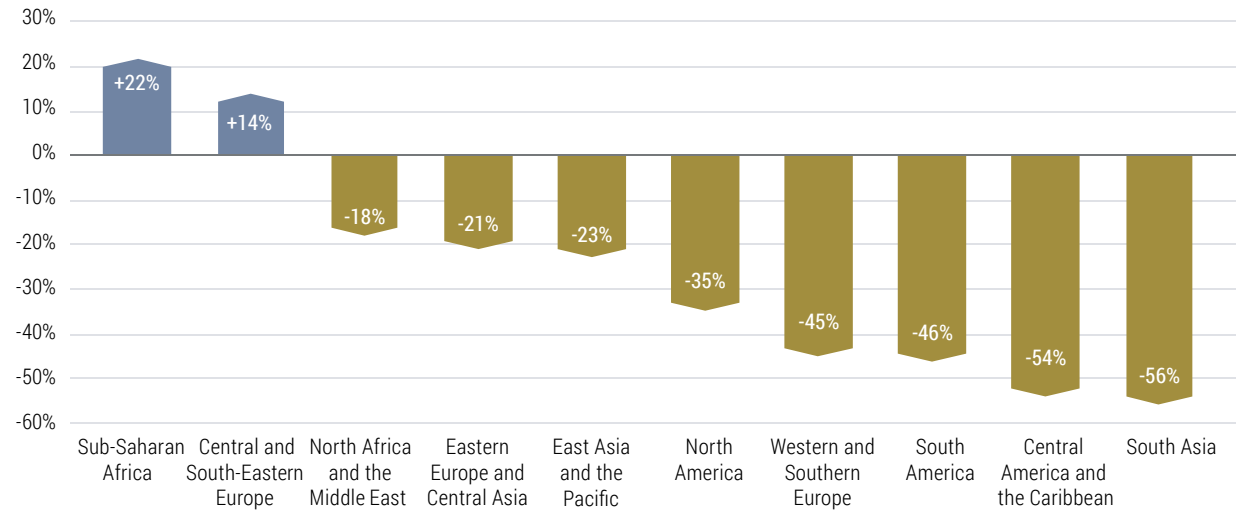
Fig. 39 Global trend in convictions for trafficking in persons, 2017-2020 (2017 base year)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Likewise, conviction trends by region show that most countries recorded an accelerated fall in convictions from 2019 to 2020.

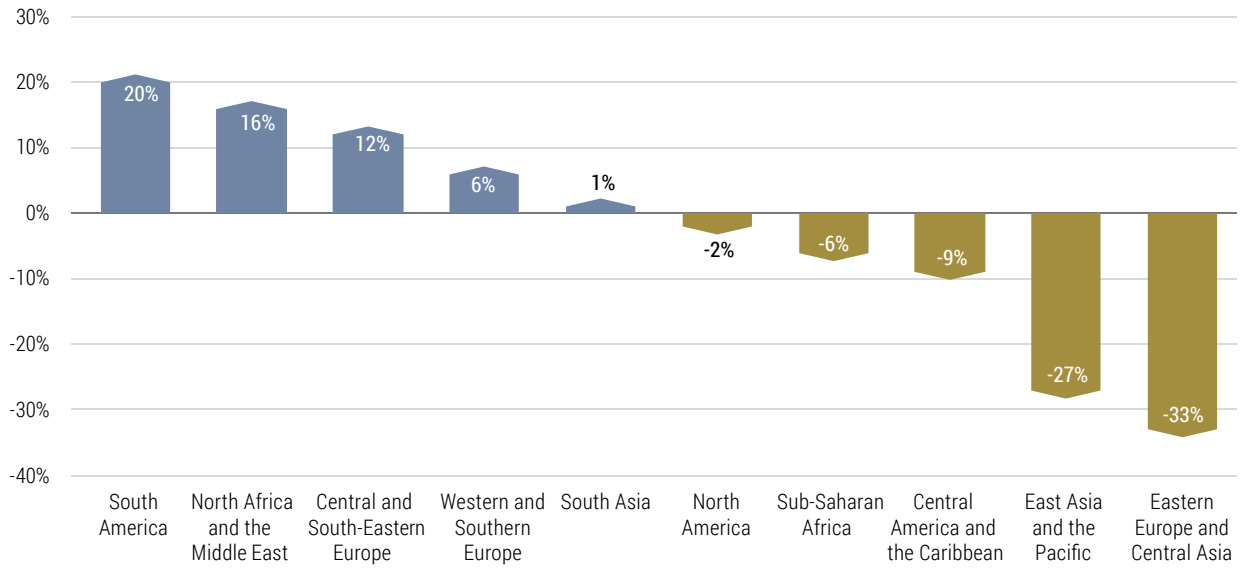
Fig. 40 Conviction trends, by region, comparison from 2019 to 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

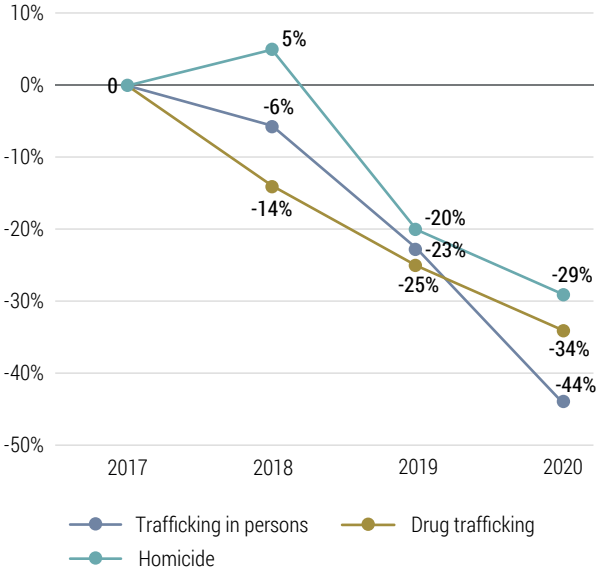
120 Based on the total number of individuals convicted in 2019 and in 2020 in data collected from 85 countries.

Fig. 41 Prosecution trends, by region, comparison from 2019 to 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 42 Global trends in convictions for different crimes, 2017-2020 (2017 base year)*

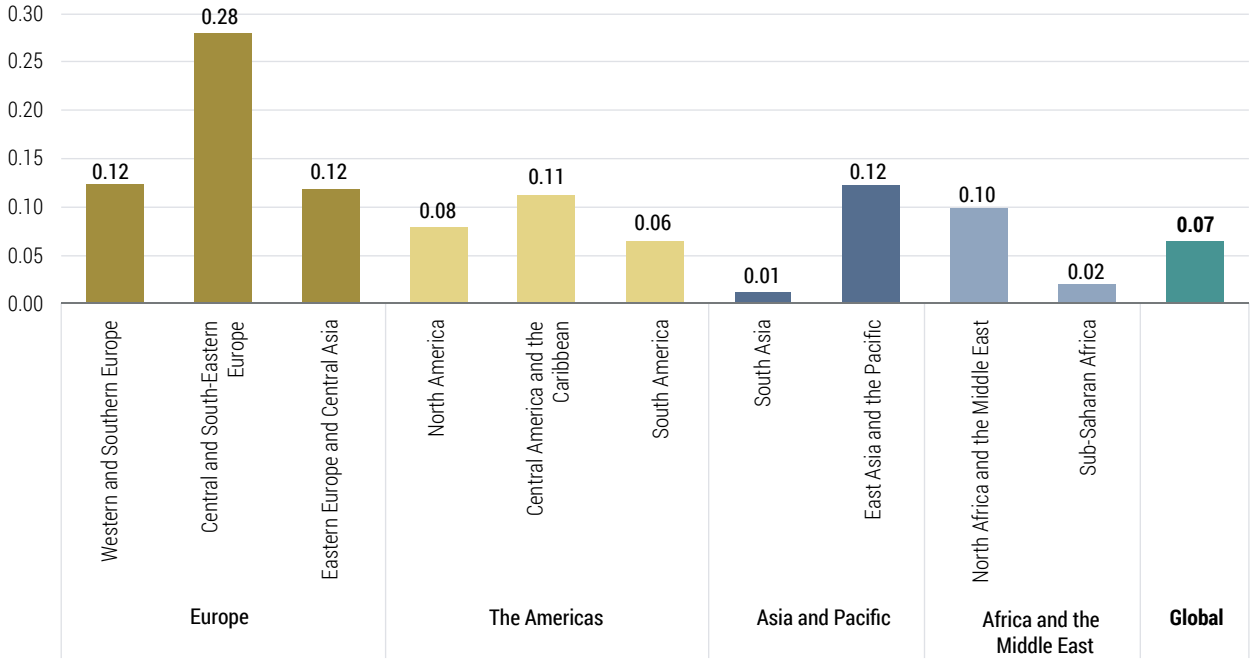


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNODC Crime Trends Survey.

Europe recorded the highest number of convictions for trafficking in persons per 100,000 population. This is particularly true of countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the only region that recorded an increase in convictions in 2020. South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are the regions where the fewest convictions took place.

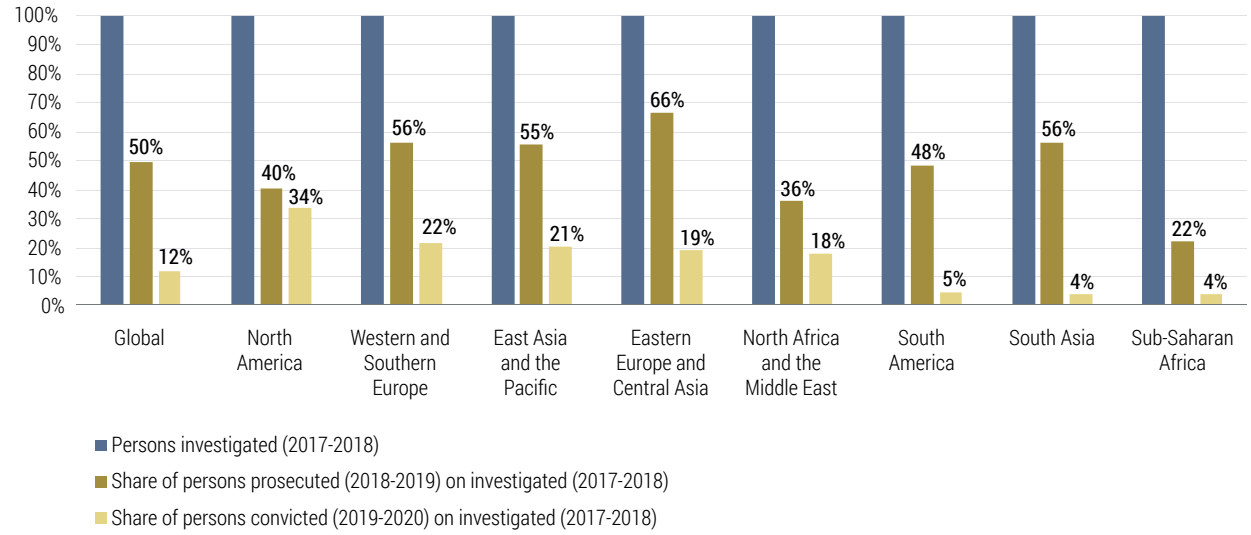
When convictions rates are considered with victim detection, two opposite situations emerge. While countries in Europe and in the Americas detect more victims and convict more traffickers compared to the global average, countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East are found on the other side of the spectrum compared to the rest of the World, as they detect fewer victims and convict fewer traffickers compared to the global average.

Fig. 43 Conviction rates per 100,000 population, by region, 2020 (or most recent)*



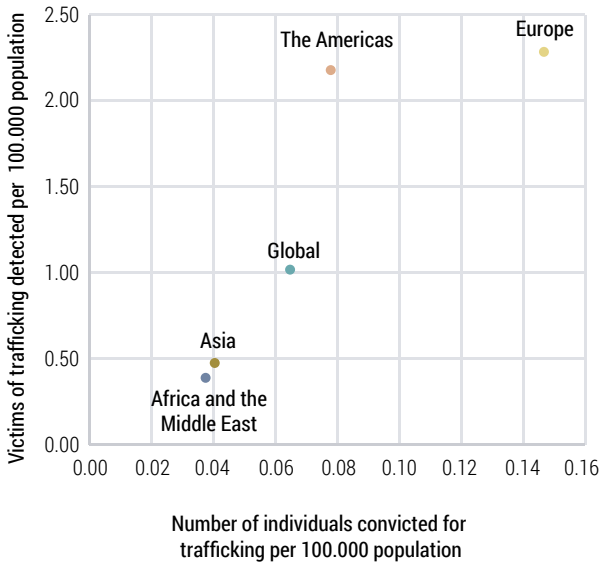
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.
* Based on 105 countries where information on convictions was available, including: 18 countries in Western and Southern Europe; 18 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; 15 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; 15 countries in East Asia and the Pacific; nine in North Africa and the Middle East; eight in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, eight in Central America and the Caribbean; eight in South America; three in North America; and three in South Asia.

Fig. 44 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated, by region, average from 2017 to 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 45 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.
* Based on the 104 countries where number of victims detected was available and the 105 countries where number of convictions was available.[121]

The likelihood that a trafficking investigation results in a conviction seems to have deteriorated over the last decade. On average, between 2017 and 2020, the number of people prosecuted is 50 per cent of the number of people investigated for trafficking in persons during the previous two years.[122] The number of people convicted, however, is only 24 per cent of the number of people prosecuted for trafficking in persons during the previous two years.[123] So, between 2017 and 2020, the number of people convicted for trafficking accounts for 12 per cent of individuals who are investigated for trafficking. This is a lower level of conviction than a similar analysis carried for the period between 2008 and 2012 when the share of convictions among investigations was 24 per cent.

A detailed analysis of this data disaggregated by sex shows that **females investigated for trafficking in persons are more likely to be convicted than males who are investigated.**[124] This may be the result of several factors, including reduced access to justice for women compared to men during trafficking in persons prosecutions.[125] Also, the role that women may play in the trafficking business could impact their likelihood of conviction. The rate of prosecution compared to investigation for trafficking is about 49 per cent for men, while for women it is about 56 per cent. **The share of people convicted among those investigated for trafficking is 13 per cent for men, but about 17 per cent for women.** As a consequence, the share of females involved in criminal proceedings increases throughout the criminal justice process from investigations (28 per cent of which focus on women) to convictions (41 per cent).

A similar pattern is found regarding convictions for drug offences; According to UNODC research, the proportion of women sentenced for drug-related offences is higher than that of men.[126]

121 The 104 countries with detected victim data includes: 21 countries in Western and Southern Europe; 16 countries in East Asia and the Pacific; 14 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; 12 in Sub-Saharan Africa; 11 in North Africa and the Middle East; 10 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; eight in South America; seven in Central America and the Caribbean; four countries in South Asia; and two countries in North America. The 105 countries where number of convictions was available includes: 18 countries in Western and Southern Europe, 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa; 15 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; 15 in East Asia and the Pacific; nine in North Africa and the Middle East; eight in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; eight in Central America and the Caribbean; eight in South America; three in South Asia; and three in North America.

122 Based on information from 76 countries reporting convictions in 2020 and 2019 and prosecutions in 2017 and 2018.

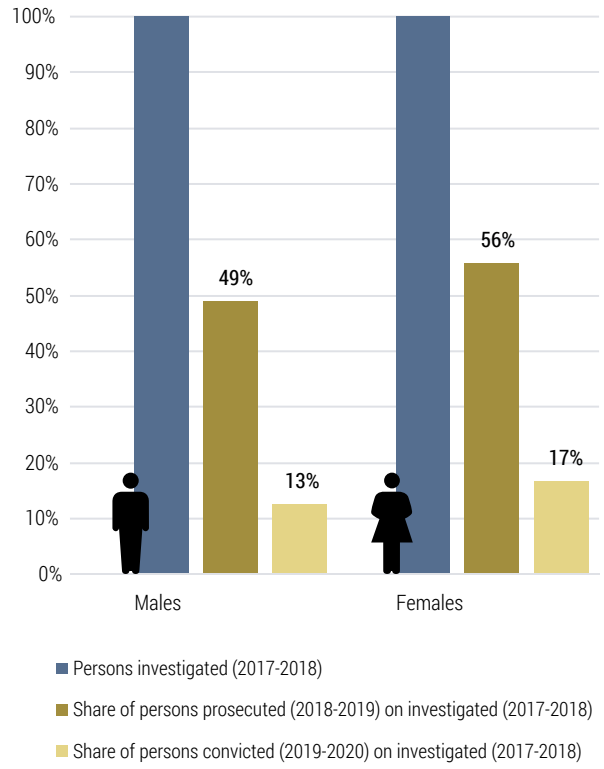
123 Based on information from 61 countries reporting prosecutions in 2020-2019 and investigations in 2017-2018.

124 Based on information from 26 countries reporting on 2,643 males and 2,124 females investigated in 2017 and 2018; 1,295 males and 1,184 females prosecuted in 2018 and 2019; 330 males and 352 females convicted in 2019 and 2020.

125 ILO, "Women in Business and Management: The business case for change" ILO (Geneva, 2019), p. 68. Also see, Erica Koegler, et. al., 'Traffickers' Use of Substances to Recruit and Control Victims of Domestic Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in the American Midwest', 18 Anti Trafficking Review 103, 113 (2022); Armand King, et. al., 'Interview: Raised in Pimp City: Urban insights on traffickers, trafficking, and the counter-trafficking industry', 18 Anti Trafficking Review 195, 199 (2022). UNODC, Handbook on Women and Imprisonment 2nd edition, with reference to the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (The Bangkok Rules) (2014), p. 8; According to UNSECO, the literacy rate of males is 90 per cent in comparison with 83.3 per cent for females; see, UNESCO, Institute for Statistics (UIS), available at http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx. Miriam Wijkman and Edward Kleemans, 'Female offenders of human trafficking and sexual exploitation' 72 Crime, Law and Social Change, vol. 53 (2019). UNODC, "Female Victims of Trafficking in Persons for sexual exploitation as Defendants (2020) p. 28 and UNODC, "Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems" (2013).

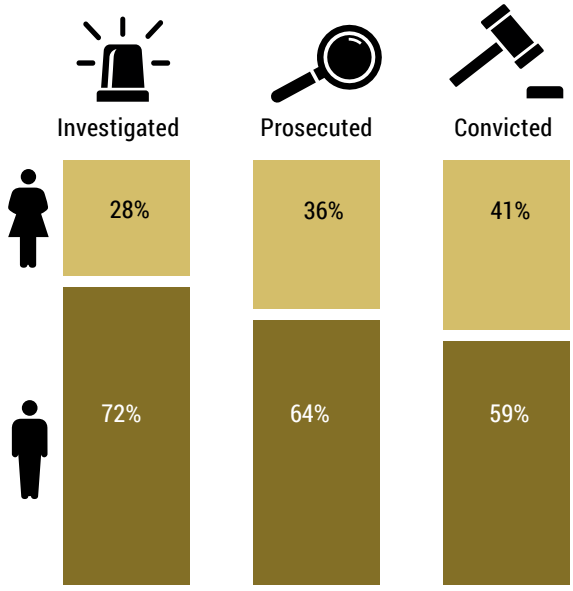
126 World Drug Report 2018 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.XI.9), Booklet 5, page 7.

Fig. 46 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated, by sex, between 2017 and 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 47 Persons investigated, prosecuted and convicted (1st instance), by criminal justice stage and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on 9,803 individuals investigated in 96 countries; 5,714 individuals prosecuted in 97 countries; and 1,575 individuals convicted in 90 countries.

Victims get too little help from institutions and communities

Analysis of the court case summaries collected by UNODC shows that most cases come to authorities' attention as a result of the victim's action. **In most cases, the investigation started when the victim managed to exit exploitation** and self-reported to authorities. Less than one case in three is solved **by proactive police activity**, including operations targeting trafficking in persons, but also related to other offences, such as drug trafficking or irregular migration. Academic literature has showed that trafficking victims rarely identify as such, as a consequence of psychological mechanisms such as denial or repression, narrow definitions of victimization, limited awareness of their rights and acceptance of the situation of exploitation as a consequence of their irregular migration status.[127]

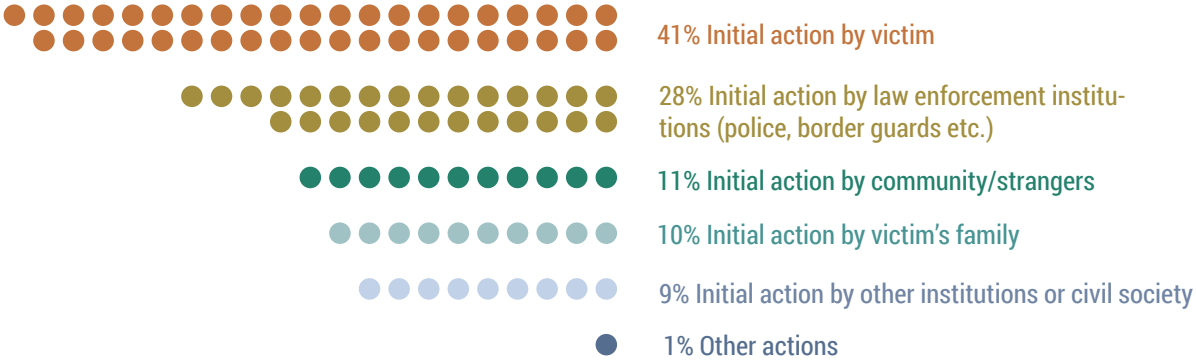
In a smaller group of cases, the **victim's family**, such as parents or siblings, took action and reported the disappearance of their relative. Finally, a limited number of cases emerge because of **actions by other non-law enforcement institutions**, such as hospitals, schools, labour inspectorates or NGOs; or as a result of **actions taken by the community**, such as neighbours, clients of the trafficked victim or ordinary people noticing something strange and reporting it to the authorities.

These results are comparable to findings of a study carried out by national authorities in Panama on 23 convictions for trafficking in persons recorded between 2013-2021. This research found that 56 per cent of the cases started with a report by the victim, a quarter started with the proactive police work and less than 10 per cent were based initially on anonymous calls. Similarly, according to studies in the United States[128], 31 per cent of the trafficking cases referred to law enforcement in 2021 involved a victim reporting and 19 per cent were initiated by a family member.

127 See among others Alice Bloch and Sonia Mckay, "Hidden dishes – how food gets on to our plates: Undocumented migrants and the restaurant sector", Journal of Workplace Rights, vol. 17(1) (January 2012), p. 69.. Brenda Breuil et al, "Human trafficking Revisited: Legal, Enforcement, and Ethnographic Narratives on Sex Trafficking to Western Europe", Trends in Organized Crime, vol. 14 (February 2011), p. 30.. Dina Siegel and Frank Bovenkerk, "Crime and Manipulation of Identity among Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the Netherlands", Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, vol. 16(4) (November 2000), p. 424. Dina Siegel and Yucel Yesilgoz, "Natashas and Turkish men: New trends in women trafficking and prostitution", in Global Organized Crime: Trends and Developments, Dina Siegel, Henk vande Bunt, Damian Zaitch, eds. (Dordrecht, the Netherlands, Kluwer, 2003). Masja van Meeteren and Jing Hiah, "Self-Identification of Victimization of Labor Trafficking", in The Palgrave International Handbook of Human Trafficking, John Winterdyk and Leslie Jones, eds. (Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan; Cham, 2009).

128 Lane, et al., 2021 Federal Human Trafficking Report, Human Trafficking Institute (2022).

Fig. 48 Discovery patterns, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherloc Case Law Database.
* Based on information reported in 387 court cases (involving 2,497 victims) out of a total of 800 collected by UNODC that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2020.

Cyberspace: The Frontier for Trafficking and Counter trafficking efforts

Contribution by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)[129]

Traffickers misuse technology during all the stages of trafficking in persons and for all forms of exploitation: sexual exploitation; forced labour; and organ removal, among others. In 2017 in the United States, for example, the primary business model in 84.3 per cent of active trafficking for sexual exploitation cases was, "Internet-based commercial sex".[130] In Austria, in the same year, the Internet was used as the most common criminal infrastructure by perpetrators in 74 per cent of human trafficking cases.[131] In its report on Criminal Networks Involved in the Trafficking and Exploitation of Underage Victims in the EU, Europol concludes that, "the online advertisement of sexual services is an increasing phenomenon relating to trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, with children being advertised as adults".[132]

The COVID-19 pandemic recently provided a grim case study in how traffickers misuse technology at great scale and adapt strategies based on societal developments. Online recruitment, child grooming and exploitation were widely used by traffickers during the pandemic. According to OSCE and UN Women, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation online, including sexual exploitation material, live streaming and Child Sexual Abuse Material, increased significantly during the pandemic as lockdown measures and economic instability resulted in increased vulnerability among women and children.[133]

There are potentially many benefits for criminals in using technology to exploit people but the most important ones are the increase in criminal proceeds, as well as lowering the risks of being identified and prosecuted.[134] Moreover, advancement toward encryption, strengthening online anonymity, and increasing use of virtual assets are likely to provide further incentives to traffickers to invest in misusing technology, while creating more challenges for anti-trafficking and cybercrime stakeholders.

Digital tools to prevent and combat trafficking in persons

While human traffickers are becoming more tech-savvy and are able to use technology successfully to their advantage, technology can also become an enhancing tool for the criminal justice system to detect, investigate and prosecute traffickers and child sexual abuse producers.
The landscape of innovation related to the development of tech tools to prevent and combat trafficking in persons has seen dynamic development in recent years. The report, "Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of technology tools", published in 2020 by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Tech Against Trafficking[135] (TAT), identified 305 technology tools and initiatives currently being used worldwide to support the fight against trafficking. The identified tools vary in the scale of their applicability, as well as complexity of their design and functionality.

The publication classifies the 305 tech tools identified by the OSCE and TAT according to their primary goals, namely: Victim/trafficker identification (26 per cent); awareness-raising, education, collabora-

129 To respond to the problem of technology-facilitated trafficking, the OSCE has adopted a number of commitments with the aim of raising political interest and engagement within OSCE participating States and incentivize action at the national and regional levels in this area. For example, the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings recommends, "[t]aking measures, where appropriate, to enhance capacities for monitoring, detecting, investigating and disrupting all forms of trafficking in human beings facilitated by ICTs, in particular by the Internet, including trafficking for sexual exploitation". Moreover, the 2017 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/17, "[e]ncourages participating States to call on information and communication technologies and social media companies to prevent the distribution of and take down child sexual abuse content online, and to protect children by combating grooming by human traffickers online for all forms of child trafficking, as well as other sexual exploitation of children, including through the development of new tools and technologies".

130 See, Kyleigh E. Feehs and John Cotton Richmond, "Federal Human Trafficking Report", Human Trafficking Institute, 2018, p. 12.

131 See, OSCE, Meeting of the 19th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, "Using Technology to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: Turning a Liability into an Asset", (Vienna: OSCE, 8-9 April 2019), start at min. 19:20. Complete video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXWuspTbg4o.

132 See, Europol, "Criminal networks involved in the trafficking and exploitation of underage victims in the European Union", (The Hague: Europol, 18 October 2018), p. 7.

133 See, OSCE/ODIHR and UN Women, "GUIDANCE Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic", (30 July 2020), p. 29.

134 See, OSCE and Tech Against Trafficking, "Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of technology tools", (Vienna: OSCE and TAT, May 2020), p. 12 and p.17.

135 Tech Against Trafficking member companies include Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft and Salesforce.org.

tion (16 per cent); supply chain management (14 per cent); data trends and mapping (13 per cent); corporate risk identification (10 per cent); worker engagement and empowerment (nine per cent); victim case management and support (six per cent); and other (six per cent). In terms of user groups and beneficiaries of the tools, businesses account for a fifth of the total target users, as a quarter of the identified tools address supply chain management and corporate risk identification. This also highlights the important role that the private sector plays in the fight against trafficking in persons, especially when exploitation occurs either in business supply chains, impacting operations and leading to reputational or legal risks, or "through" the private sector by using business services or products as facilitators. NGOs and law enforcement make up another quarter of users, as do victims and potential victims, which shows that there is fairly even distribution among different categories of tools.

Analysis of the organizations that are behind the development of these tech tools to combat trafficking in persons shows that the private sector was the most active, developing 40 per cent of identified tools. NGOs also play an important role in the development of technological tools to combat trafficking in persons, developing 33 per cent of the those identified. Governments are behind the development of only nine per cent of the tech tools and initiatives identified in the study.

Three quarters of these are aimed at countering trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation, whereas only a fifth of the tools are aimed at other types of trafficking, such as trafficking for the purpose of organ removal, conducting illicit activity and petty crimes, begging, or child soldiers.

The OSCE and TAT research concluded that a wide range of tech tools are already available to anti-trafficking stakeholders and, looking forward, the main priority should be investing in the implementation and evaluation of existing tools in day-to-day work, rather than development of new tools.[136]

The role of online platforms in policy context

Experience and research indicate that policies and legislation can be improved to better address the misuse of technology by criminals. Policy and law can also ensure that technology companies take the necessary measures to enhance the online safety of users, as well as enabling anti-trafficking stakeholders to use technology more efficiently in their work to amplify national responses.[137]

A major role in contrasting on-line facilitation of trafficking is played by online platforms that - knowingly or unknowingly – facilitate the misuse of their IT infrastructure and services for the exploitation of people. Online platforms in most countries do not have legal liability if their services are misused for the exploitation of victims.[138] Yet, it is precisely these services that are being abused by traffickers at every stage of the crime.

According to the OSCE,[139] across the globe, policymakers and lawmakers have intentionally adopted approaches to incentivize the development of Internet and technology innovation by allowing

136 There are several promising partnership initiatives in this field at the international level. For example, as noted above, the OSCE has partnered with TAT, a private sector initiative established in early 2018 to "work with civil society, law enforcement, academia, and survivors to identify and create technology solutions that disrupt and reduce human trafficking and that support survivors through innovation, collaboration, guidance and shared resources." Within this partnership, the OSCE contributes with advice and expertise to TAT's strategic direction, as well as its flagship accelerator project that focuses on improving and scaling-up promising technology tools to combat human trafficking. The OSCE and TAT also conducted research into mainstreaming innovation in anti-trafficking work in the abovementioned joint report. In parallel, the OSCE cooperates with technology companies on other research projects. For example, some of the biggest technology companies have contributed to the development of the OSCE report, "Policy Responses to Technology-Facilitated Trafficking in Human Beings: Analysis of Current Approaches and Considerations for Moving Forward". The OSCE greatly values its cooperation with the technology industry, as without its expertise and knowledge there cannot be a systemic response to technology-facilitated human trafficking.

137 See OSCE, "Policy Responses to Technology-Facilitated Trafficking in Human Beings: Analysis of Current Approaches and Considerations for Moving Forward", (Vienna: OSCE, March 2022), p. 53.

138 OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Policy Responses to Technology-Facilitated Trafficking in Human Beings: Analysis of Current Approaches and Considerations for Moving Forward (Vienna, OSCE, March 2022).

139 Ibid.

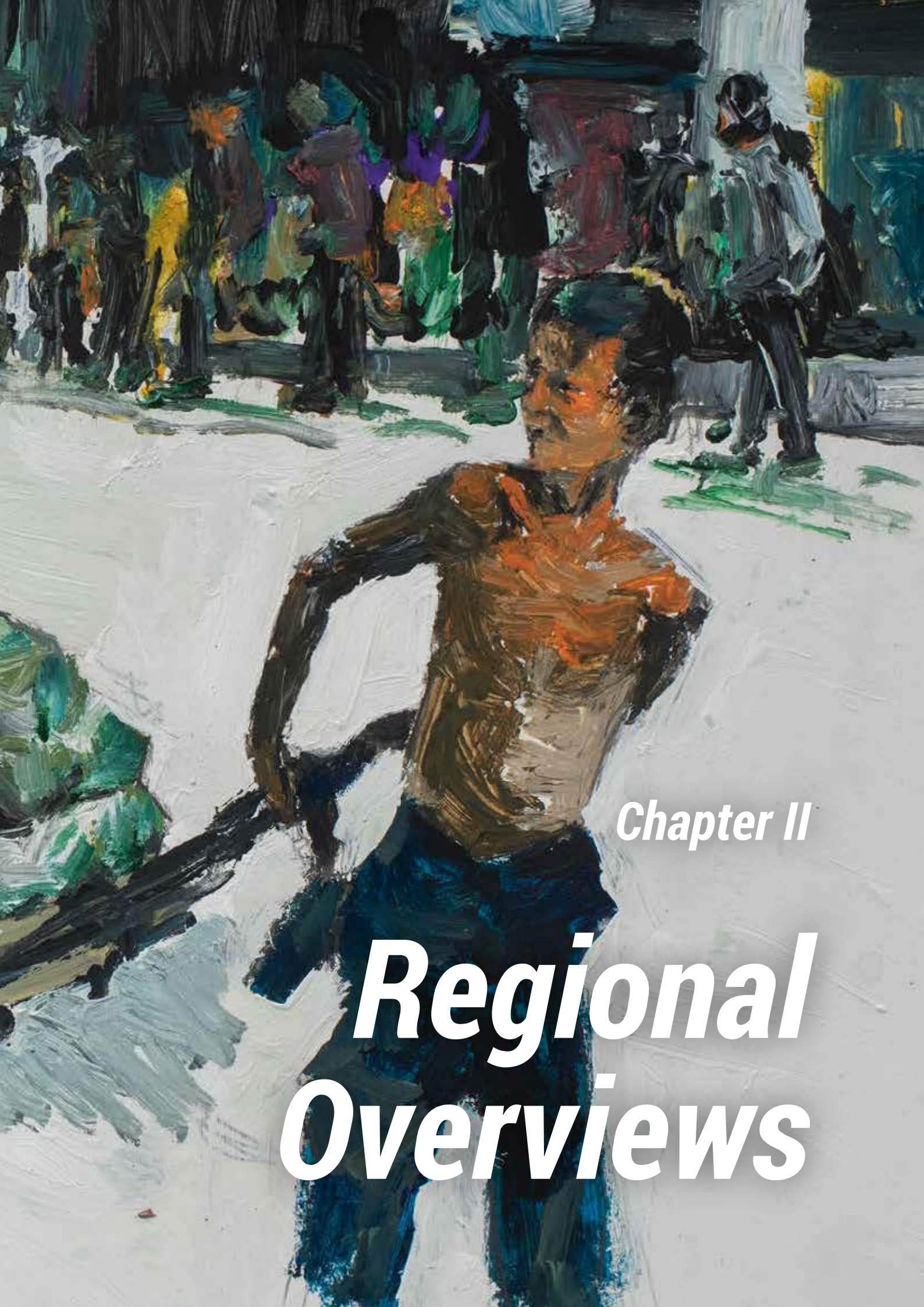
technology companies to self-regulate.[140] Self-regulation has also been encouraged by international instruments and many technology companies have also strongly advocated for self-regulation, as a principle that allows them to better innovate and protect users in the online space. Increasingly, however, negative features of self-regulation vis-a-vis addressing technology-facilitated trafficking in persons have become apparent. These include: limited or non-existent industry standards; inconsistent and inadequate adoption and application of voluntary principles; and slow responses to documented abuse, failure to report abuse, and/or active complicity in facilitating exploitation from certain segments of the industry, particularly higher risk sectors like pornography, sexual services, and short-term job seeking. This has resulted in abuse and exploitation accelerating dramatically, while the industry's response, as a whole, has not kept pace, which is indicated by the growing volume of technology-facilitated exploitation.

Future work to counter online trafficking

New developments in technology, such as enhanced encryption of communications, messaging apps and platforms; mainstreaming of virtual assets; upgrades in infrastructure; and an increase in the number of device users; in combination with lack of prevention, understanding of the digital evidence cycle, adequate legislation and cooperation channels will only incentivize traffickers to invest more in technology to facilitate victims' exploitation.

140 Self-regulation should be understood as the possibility for economic operators to adopt, among themselves and for themselves, common guidelines.



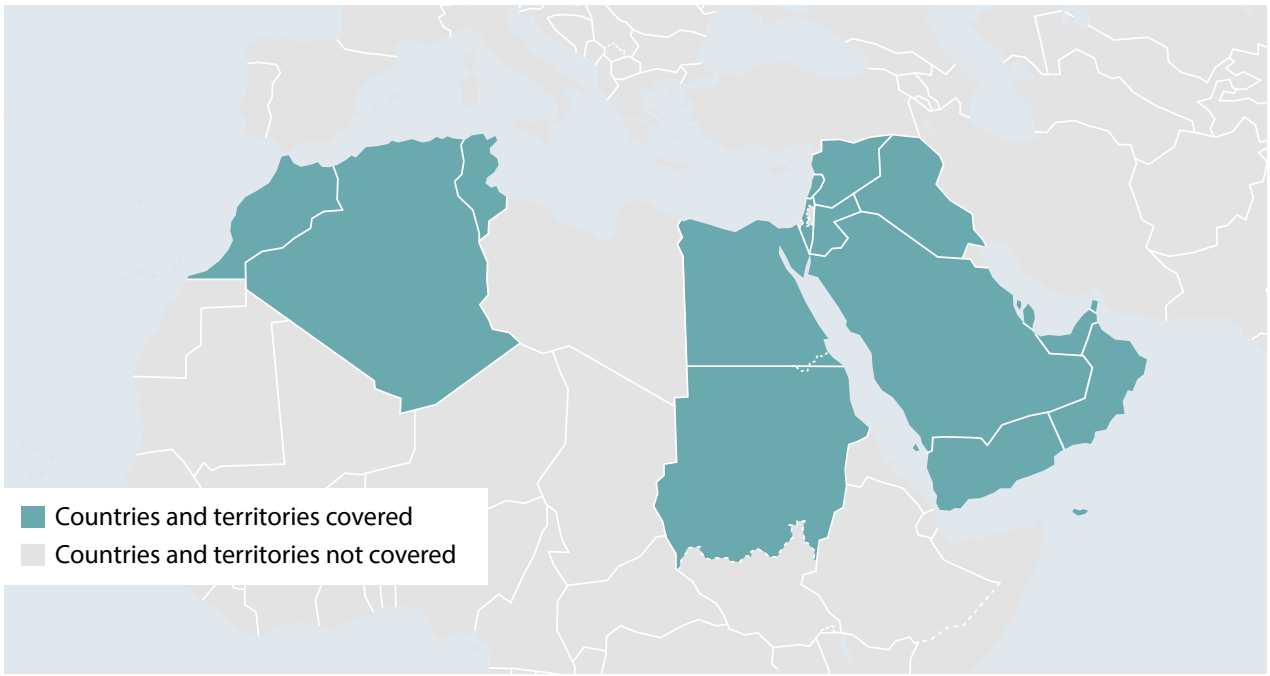


Chapter II

Regional Overviews

North Africa and the Middle East

Map. 7 Countries and territories covered in North Africa and the Middle East*



Source: UNODC

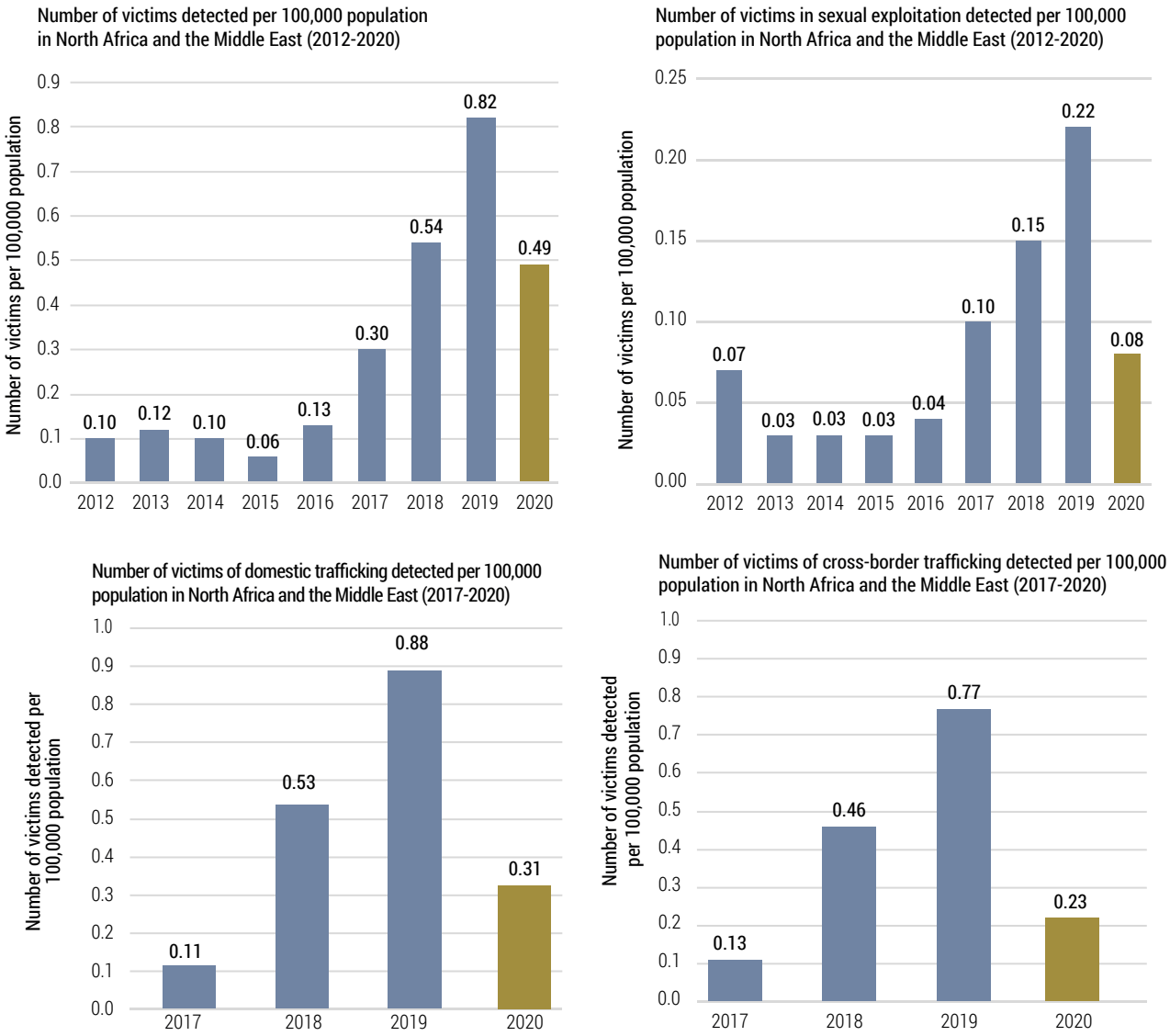
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

* This subregion includes 16 countries and comprises North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) and the other countries of the Middle East (Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen)

Fig. 49 Emerging trends in North Africa and the Middle East in 2020

	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total	Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p): **– 40%**	
Types of trafficking flows	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p): **– 70%** Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p): **– 65%**	
Forms of exploitation	Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p): **– 64%** Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p): **– 73%**	
Victims' profiles	Child victims detected (per 100,000p): **– 68%** Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): **– 26%**	
Criminal justice response	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: **– 18%**	Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons: **+ 16%**

Fig. 50 Emerging trends in North Africa and the Middle East



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Trends

A number of trafficking in persons trends in North Africa and the Middle East in 2020 varied considerably from previous years. In particular, the region recorded drops in victim detection rates – of both domestic and cross-border trafficking – that had been increasing in recent years. In this region, as in many other parts of the world, the pandemic seems to have hindered the detection capacity of national authorities. Most notably, **the overall detection rate of victims fell significantly, despite having increased over the past four consecutive years**. This rate fell by 40 per cent in 2020 in comparison to 2019. Similarly, **the number of detected child victims dropped after registering a steady increase in previous years** by 68 per cent.

In 2020, North Africa and the Middle East recorded a sharp decrease in the detection of victims for sexual exploitation (-64 per cent).

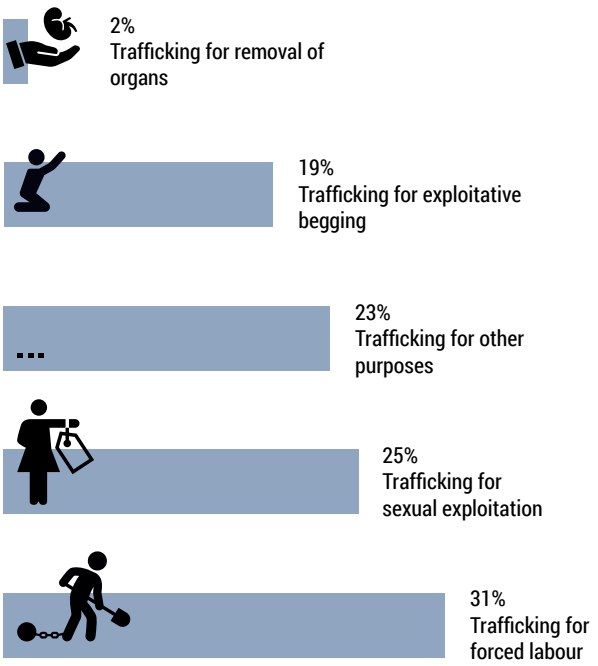
Victims

In 2020, authorities in North Africa detected **more child victims than adults, accounting for over 60 per cent** of the total number of victims detected. In 2020, women victims accounted for 22 per cent of total detected victims. Further, these victims were mainly exploited in begging, forced criminal activity and trafficking for organ removal.

Meanwhile, in other countries in the Middle East, women are detected in much larger shares and comprised the overwhelming majority of detected victims. Along similar lines, **the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council detected a significant increase in the proportion of women victims of trafficking identified**. In these countries, **forced labour is relatively more reported**, with more than 50 per cent of detected victims having been trafficked for that purpose.

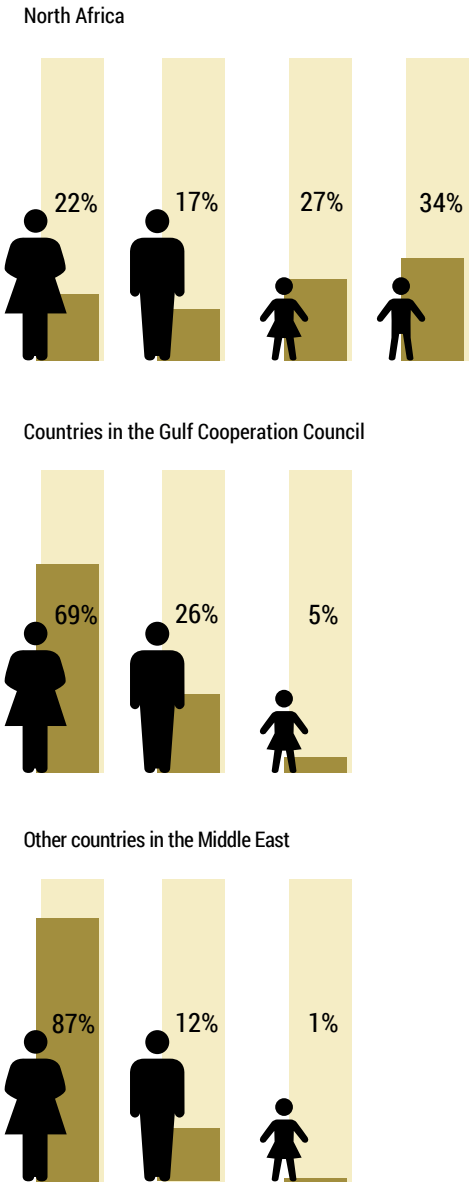
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Fig. 52 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in North Africa and the Middle East, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 1,967 victims detected in 16 countries in North Africa and the Middle East.

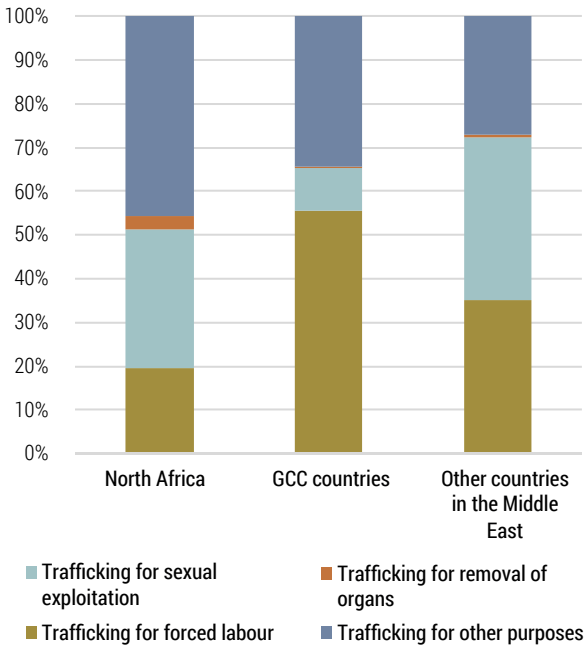
Fig. 51 Detected victims of trafficking in North Africa and the Middle East, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 1,665 victims detected in 15 countries in North Africa and the Middle East.

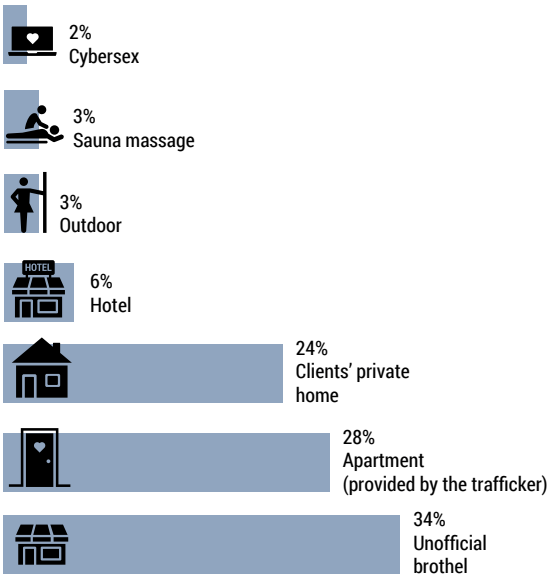
An analysis of the cases involving sexual exploitation reported to UNODC reveals that victims are exploited in venues hidden from public view. The most common location reported in these cases were apartments. Meanwhile, more public settings such as sauna/massage centres were far less commonly reported.

Fig. 53 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in North Africa and the Middle East by subregion, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 1,967 victims detected in 16 countries in North Africa and the Middle East.

Fig. 54 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, North Africa and the Middle East



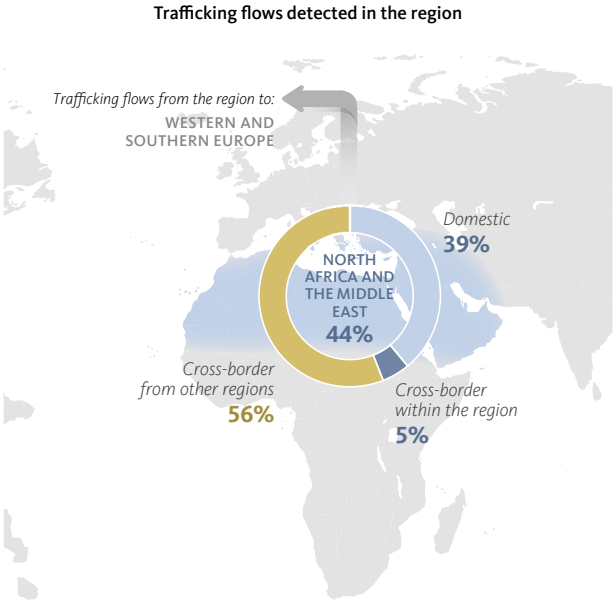
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Trafficking flows

Overall, as a region, North Africa and the Middle East recorded **over 60 per cent of detected victims as citizens of other countries**.

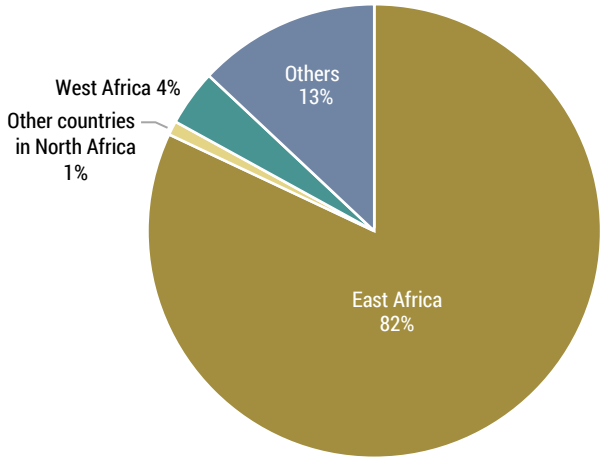
Yet, much like with victim profiles, the subregions reported different flows. In North Africa, East African victims comprised 82 per cent of foreign victims detected, while in the Gulf Cooperation Council, 58 per cent of all foreign victims were from East Asia in 2020. Meanwhile, in the other countries of the Middle East, the flows were of smaller distances, with 63 per cent of foreign victims having originated from other countries in the subregion itself.

Map. 8 Main trafficking flows detected for North Africa and the Middle East, 2020 (or most recent)



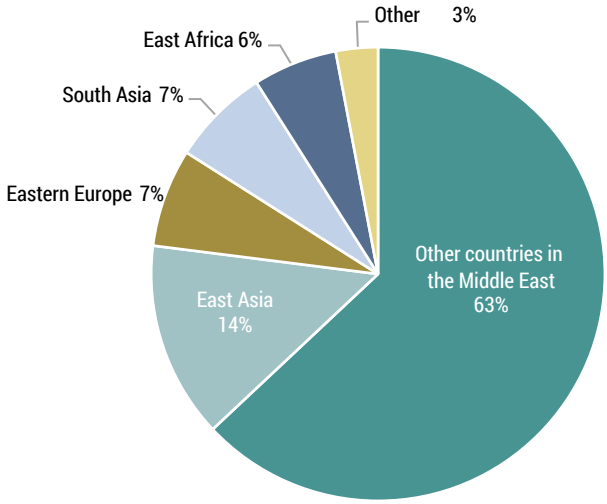
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 9.1 Foreign victims detected in North Africa, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



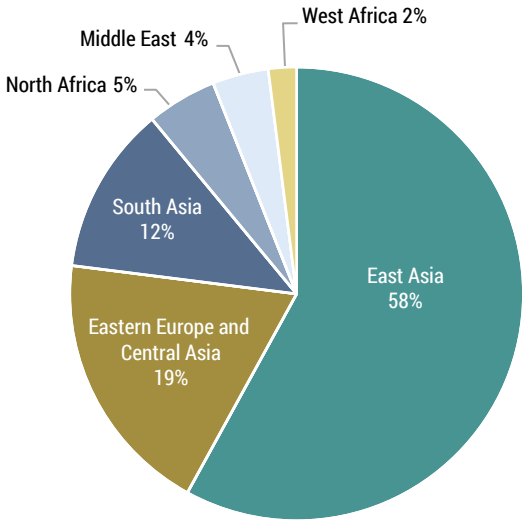
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 9.2 Foreign victims detected in Middle East, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 9.3 Foreign victims detected in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Trafficking in persons from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries

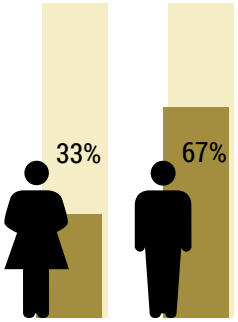
In 2020, the authorities of Zimbabwe initiated prosecution against a local recruiter (man) employed by a registered employment agency. The agency collaborated with many employment agencies operating in countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council. In 2016, the Zimbabwean agency advertised job opportunities as domestic workers through radio channels. The six victims identified within the framework of this case were Zimbabwean women who had contacted the agency following the radio advertisement in order to enquire about job opportunities. The women were recruited as domestic workers and informed that they would work in different countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council. The recruiter took care of the visa application and booked all the travel arrangements. Once at destination, the women were received by the local employment agency, which took their passports and brought them to their respective employers. The working conditions offered by the households were poor, their movements restricted, and the women were forced to work excessive hours. The women escaped independently and reached the Zimbabwean Embassy, where they reported the crime and initiated the procedures for repatriation.

Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, Zimbabwe case number ZWEx008.

Traffickers

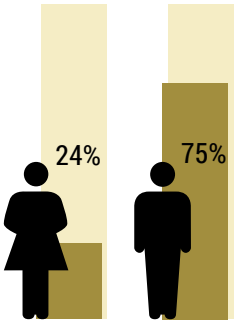
The profile of individuals prosecuted or convicted of trafficking in persons and related offences in North Africa and the Middle East has remained stable in comparison to previous years. **The dominant profile continues to be men, with 65 per cent of those convicted being citizens of the country of conviction.** While the profile has remained stable, the region recorded a 16 per cent increase in individuals prosecuted for trafficking in persons.

Fig. 55 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in the Middle East and North Africa, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



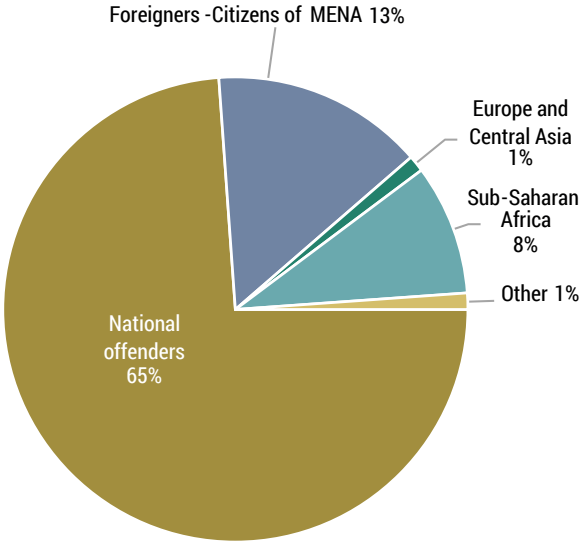
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig.55.1 Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by age and sex, 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

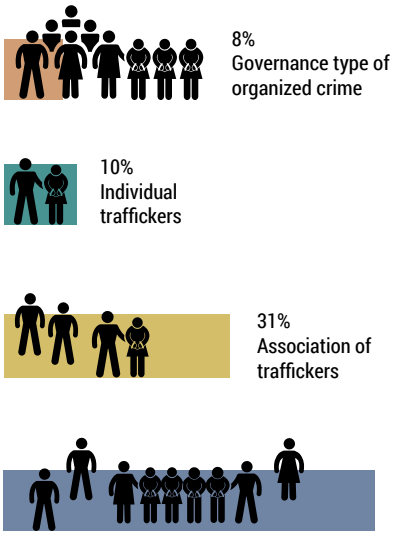
Fig. 55.2 Persons convicted of trafficking in the Middle East and North Africa, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

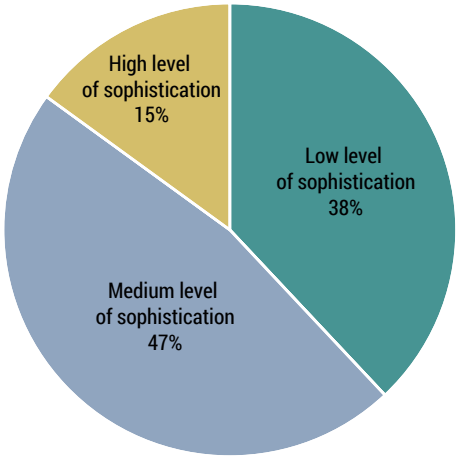
In line with the rest of the world, the majority of cases (51%) reported by in North Africa and the Middle East featured traffickers operating in business-type organized criminal groups. While there was not an overwhelmingly common level of organization used by the traffickers apprehended, 62% of offenders reported in case narratives operated in a group of three or more traffickers in at least two locations.

Fig. 56 Type of criminal organization* reported in North Africa and the Middle East, as reported in case narratives (2009 – 2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* See definitions of organization types on page 48 of this report.

Fig. 57 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization* in the Middle East and North Africa, as reported in case narratives (2009 – 2021)



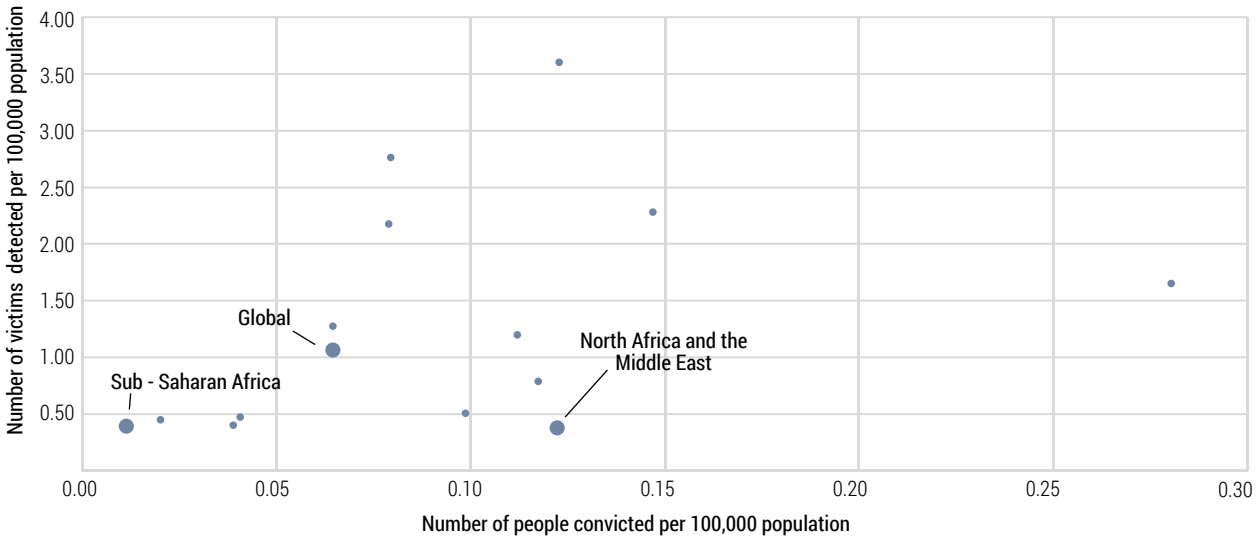
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

Criminal justice response

Compared to other regions of the world, the countries in North Africa and the Middle East detect fewer victims. While the global detection rate is 1 per 100,000 population, this region detected 0.5 per 100,000 population in 2020. Conversely, the region convicts more offenders per population (about 0.1 per 100,000) than most regions of the world. This combination suggests a relatively high criminal justice response compared to the number of victims detected.

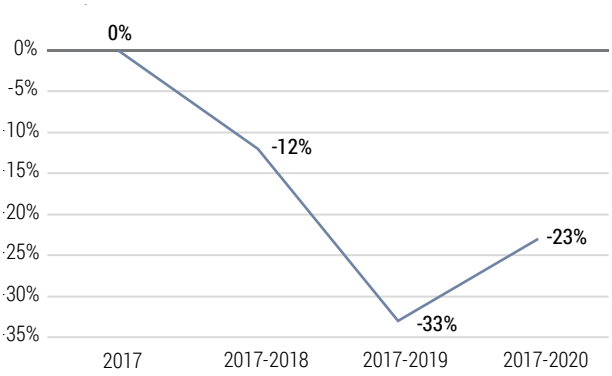
In terms of the differences between the rates of investigation, prosecution and conviction, between 2017 and 2020, the number of **individuals investigated was three times higher than those prosecuted, and five times higher than those convicted of trafficking in persons in North Africa and the Middle East. As a result, around 18% offenders are convicted for every 100 individuals investigated by police authorities**. While the number of persons suspected and prosecuted for trafficking in persons in the region has increased since 2017, the number of convictions sharply decreased in 2019 and 2020.

Fig. 58 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



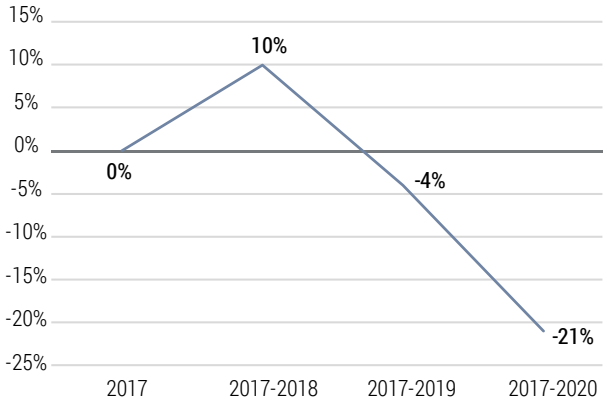
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 59 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in North Africa and the Middle East, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



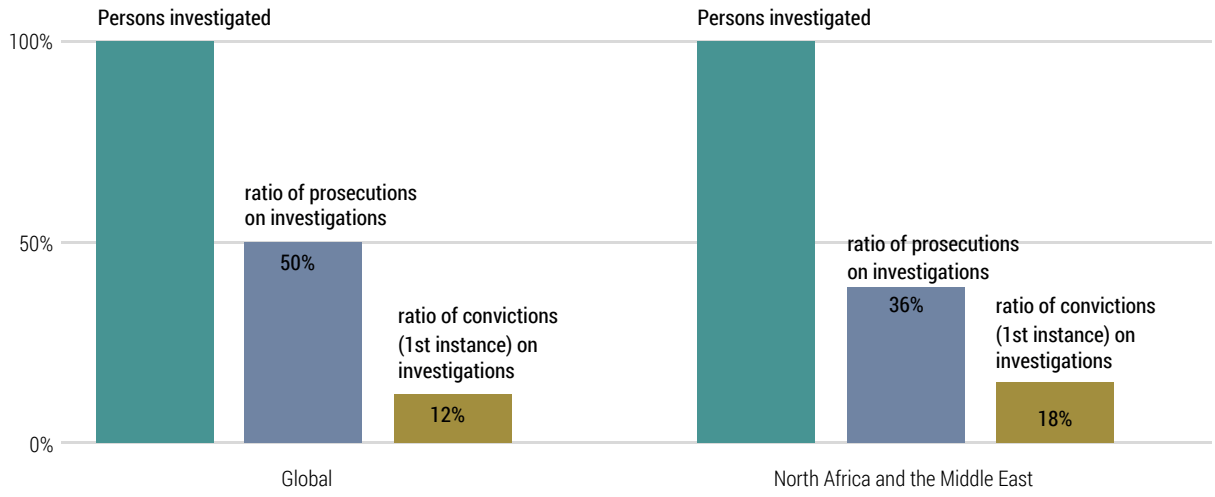
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 60 Change in the number of persons convicted in North Africa and the Middle East, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 61 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in North Africa and the Middle East, 2017-2020

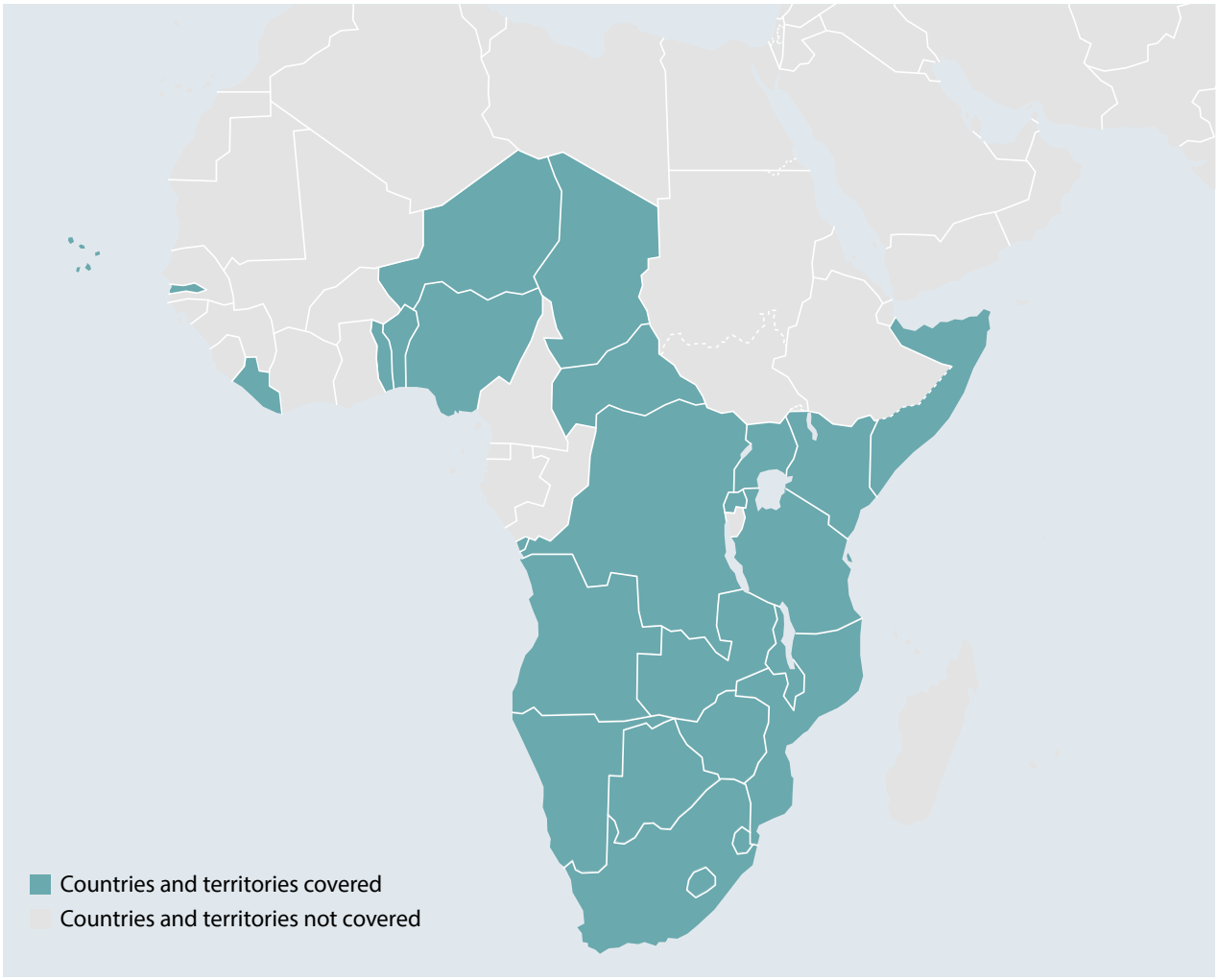


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



Sub-Saharan Africa

Map. 9 Countries and territories covered in Sub-Saharan Africa*



Source: UNODC

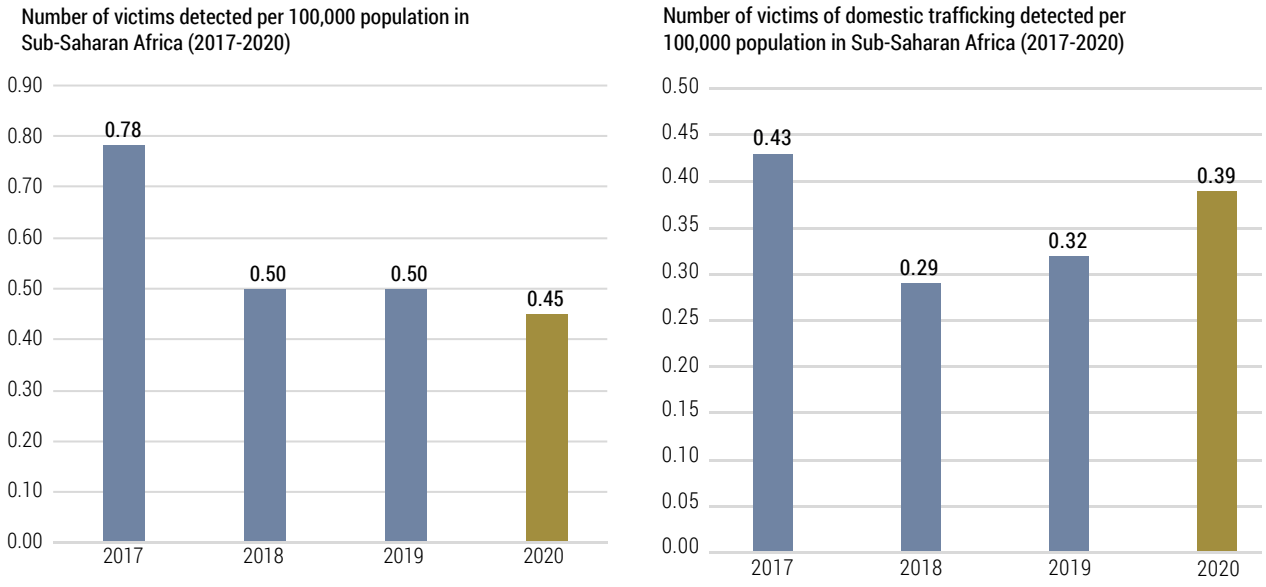
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

* This subregion consists of the following countries, which for analytical purposes can be divided into three areas, namely West Africa (Benin, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic Chad, Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Togo), East Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) and Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia).

Fig. 62 Emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020

	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total	Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p): **– 12%**	
Types of trafficking flows	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p): **– 36%**	Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p). **+ 24%**
Forms of exploitation		Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p): **+ 30%**
Victims' profiles	Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): **– 24%** Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): **– 8%**	Child victims detected (per 100,000p): **+ 43%**
Criminal justice response	Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons (per 100,000p): **– 6%**	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons (per 100,000p): **+ 22%**

Fig. 63 Emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Trends

The main emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa involved the number and profile of victims detected, the forms of exploitation recorded, and the number of persons prosecuted and convicted of trafficking in persons.

In terms of victim detections, there was a slight decrease (-12 per cent) in the number of victims of trafficking detected per year in the region between 2019 and 2020. Yet, it is important to consider that the detection rate registered in this region since 2003 has been volatile and heavily dependent on national reporting capacity.

More significantly, the **number of foreign victims detected in Sub-Saharan Africa countries fell in the same period** (-36 per cent). This could be attributed to numerous causes, particularly involving factors at borders of countries, given the period analysed. For example, authorities in Uganda attributed the decrease to the enhanced deployment of security personnel at entry and exit points and the mobility ban.[141]

Further, while relatively fewer countries in Sub-Saharan Africa implemented lockdown measures in response to COVID-19 between March and June 2020 in comparison to other regions, this also could have played a role in detection rates of both domestic and foreign victims.[142]

Regarding the age and sex of detected victims, children continue to account for the majority. Between 2019 and 2020, the rate of child victims within each 100,000 population increased by 43 per cent.

Further, trafficking for other forms of exploitation, including forced begging, forced criminality and illegal adoption, is also increasingly detected in the region. There is some variation among the geographic areas in forms of exploitation. **While in East and West Africa forced labour comprises the most commonly detected form of trafficking in persons, in Southern Africa, sexual exploitation comprises the largest share** (48 per cent).

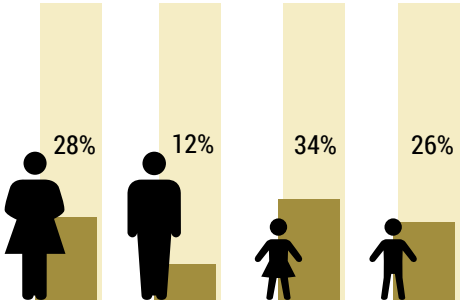
141 Uganda Police, "Annual Crime Report", 2020.

142 See Uganda Police, "Annual Crime Report", 2020; and Joshua Kimani, Joyce Adhiambo, Rosemary Kasiba, Peninah Mwangi,Veronica Were, John Mathenge, Pascal Macharia, Francois Cholette, Samantha Moore, Souradet Shaw, Marissa Becker, Helgar Musyoki, Parinita Bhattacharjee, Stephen Moses, Keith R. Fowke,Lyle R. McKinnon & Robert Lorway, "The effects of COVID-19 on the health and socio-economic security of sex workers in Nairobi, Kenya: Emerging intersections with HIV", Global Public Health, (2020) 15:7, 1073-1082, DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2020.1770831.

Victims

As in previous years, **more children than adults continue to be detected as victims of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa**. In particular, girls were the most detected victims in 2020, though a large number of boys was also detected. Similar to other regions, **girls and women together make up the largest share of victims, accounting for 62 per cent of the total**.

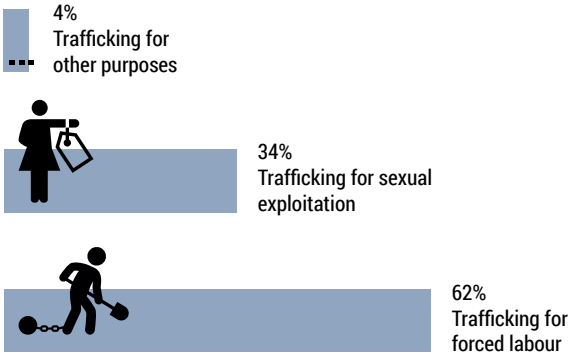
Fig. 64 Detected victims of trafficking in persons in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 4,464 victims detected in 37 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

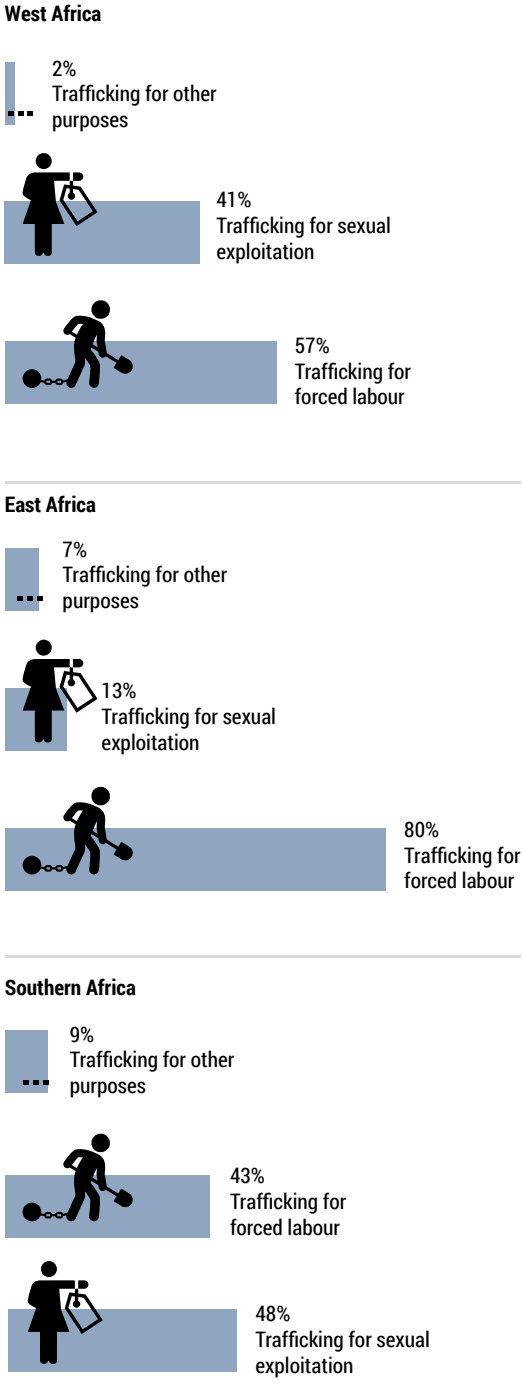
While sexual exploitation is historically a significant form of exploitation in other regions that record majority female victims, **forced labour continues to be the most common form of trafficking detected in Sub-Saharan Africa**. This is particularly true in East African countries, in which trafficking for forced labour accounted for 80 per cent of the form of exploitation for the total victims recorded in 2020.

Fig. 65 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 4,392 victims detected in 38 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Fig. 66 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa by subregion, 2020 (or most recent)*

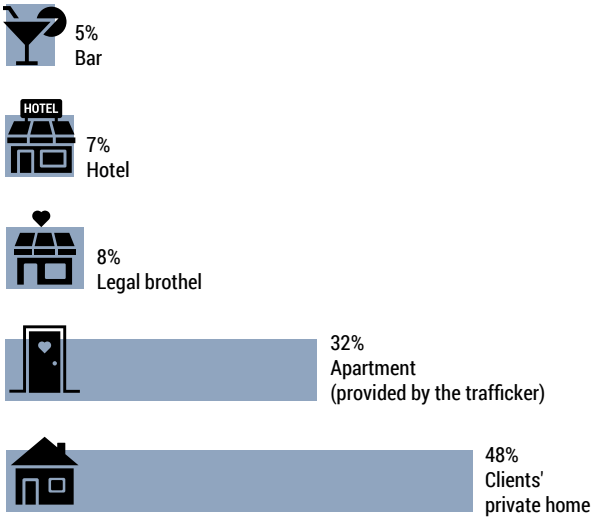


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 4,392 victims detected in 38 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Court case narratives report that detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Sub-Saharan Africa are exploited in private apartments.

According to recent research, people who engage in prostitution in Nairobi consider bars, lodgings and hotels the safest locations, and **apartments as the most dangerous ones**.[143] At the same time, sexual health practitioners report that, as a result of the lockdown and curfews, prostitution moved from public places to apartments.[144] The COVID-19 pandemic may, hence, have increased the level of abuse and isolation for individuals who are in prostitution, including those who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.[145]

Fig. 67 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported by case narratives, Sub-Saharan Africa (2012 - 2020)

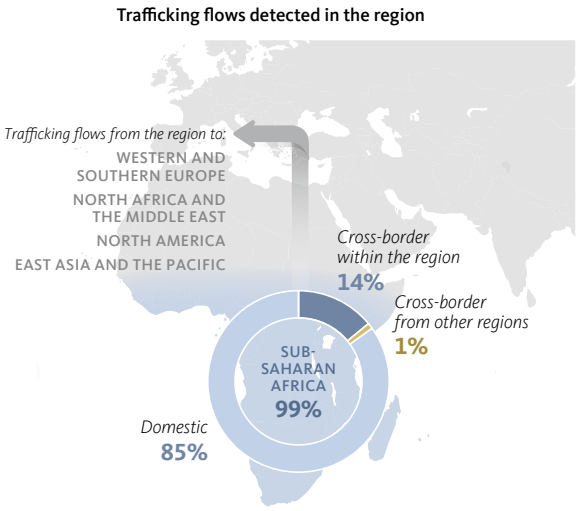


Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Trafficking flows

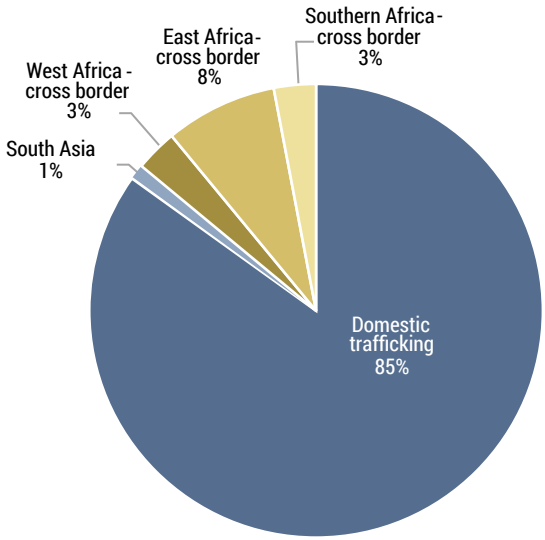
As in previous years, most victims detected in Sub-Saharan Africa are either citizens of the country of detection or citizens of other Sub-Saharan countries. **Indeed, 85 per cent of those detected in 2020 were trafficked domestically.** Where foreign victims were detected, the majority of them were trafficked within the region from other Sub-Saharan African countries, particularly from East and Southern African countries. The relatively few long-distance flows to Sub-Saharan Africa mostly originate from South and East Asia.

Map. 10 Main trafficking flows detected for Sub-Saharan Africa, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Fig. 11.1 Detected victims in Sub-Saharan Africa, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

However, the flows from Sub-Saharan Africa are far more varied and extensive. **Victims from Sub-Saharan Africa are detected in the largest number of countries globally.** Of the flows, most trafficked outside the region are detected in countries in North Africa and the Middle East and in Europe.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 UNFPA, "A Rapid Scoping Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Sex Worker Programmes in East an Southern Africa", 2021.

Cross-border trafficking from West Africa to the Middle East

In 2020, two Sierra Leonean women were convicted of trafficking in persons of 70 Sierra Leonean women for the purpose of mixed sexual and labour exploitation. The two women advertised well-paid jobs in the Middle East, requesting the payment of a recruitment fee. They then arranged the transfer of the women from Sierra Leone to Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. In Ghana, other agents would then transport the women to the Middle East, where they were exploited.

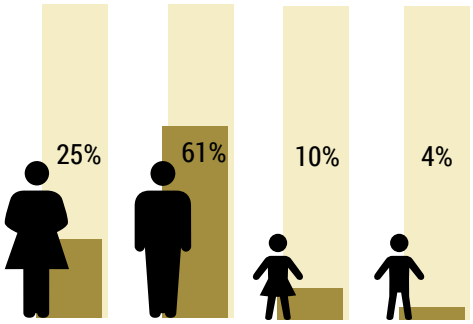
Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, SLE0001 – Sierra Leone.

Traffickers

While men account for the dominant share of prosecuted traffickers in Sub-Saharan Africa, **women are convicted in a large proportion** (44 per cent). In 2020, from every ten persons prosecuted, two were women. Yet, in the same period, from every ten persons convicted, four were women.

The citizenship profile of those convicted is quite isolated to those from the region. 70 per cent of those convicted were citizens of the country of convicted with a further 27 per cent citizens of countries in the region.

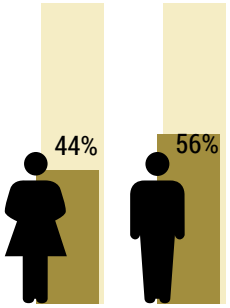
Fig. 68 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

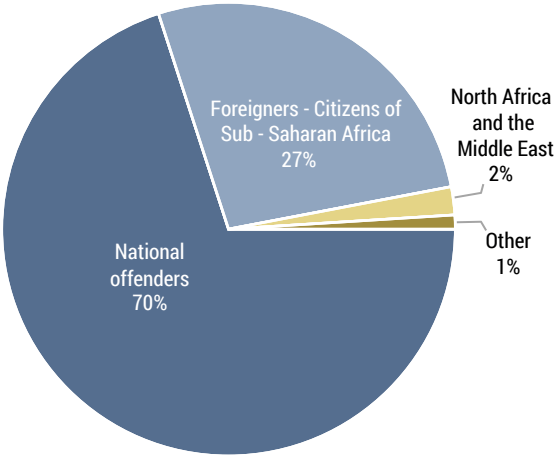
Broadly in line with the global average, apprehended traffickers largely operate within business-type organized criminal groups. Yet, in contrast to other regions, non-organized traffickers operating in lose associations in Sub-Saharan Africa or working alone were also common among those convicted.

Fig. 69 Persons convicted of trafficking, in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



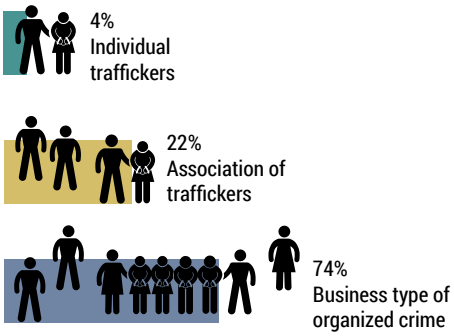
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 70 Persons convicted of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



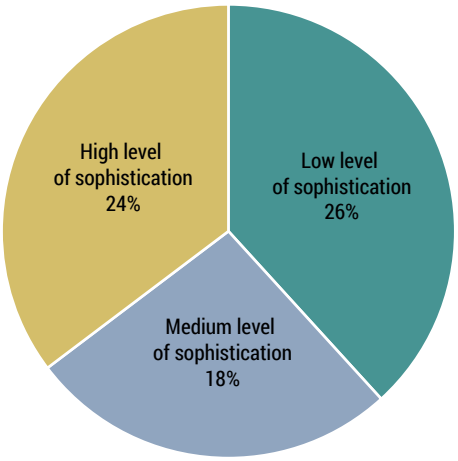
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 71 Type of criminal organization* reported in Sub-Saharan Africa, as reported in case narratives (2009 – 2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* See definitions of criminal organization types on page 48 of this report.

Fig. 72 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization* in Sub-Saharan Africa, as reported in the case narratives (2013 – 2019)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* UNODC conducted a content analysis of the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the level of organization of traffickers: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

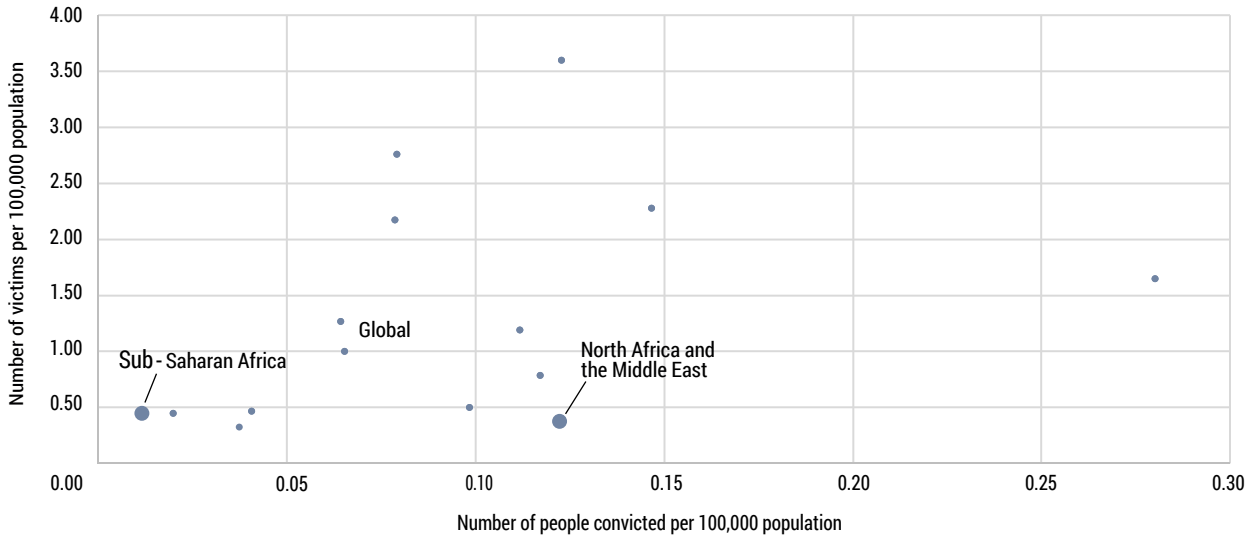
Criminal justice response

When compared to other regions of the world, Sub-Saharan African countries detect fewer victims. The region detects about 0.4 victims per 100,000 people within the population compared to the 2020 global average of 1 per 100,000 population.

At the same time, **countries in Sub-Saharan Africa also convict fewer traffickers than other regions**. Further, between 2017 and 2020, the share of investigations resulting in prosecution and convictions was much lower than the global average. In this period, of ten persons investigated, two were then prosecuted for trafficking in persons offences, while four out of ten persons prosecuted were then convicted.

Yet, while the number of persons suspected and prosecuted for trafficking in persons and related offences in Sub-Saharan countries decreased between 2017 and 2020, the number of convictions increased. Some of the decreases reported may be related to factors caused by COVID-19. In Uganda, national authorities reported that the containment measures implemented to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic affected the general administration of justice in all sectors.[146]

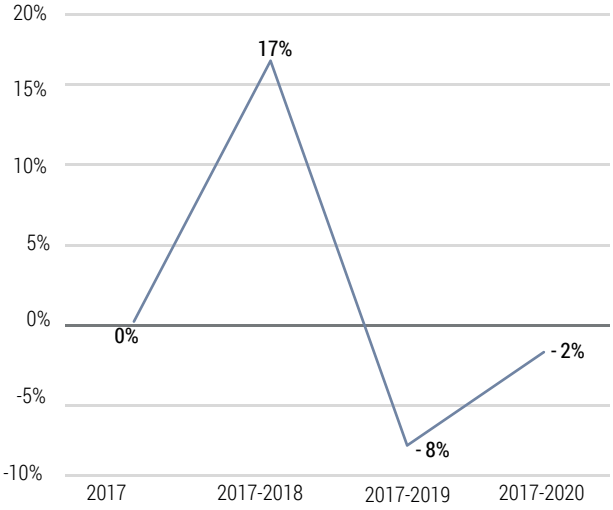
Fig. 73 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

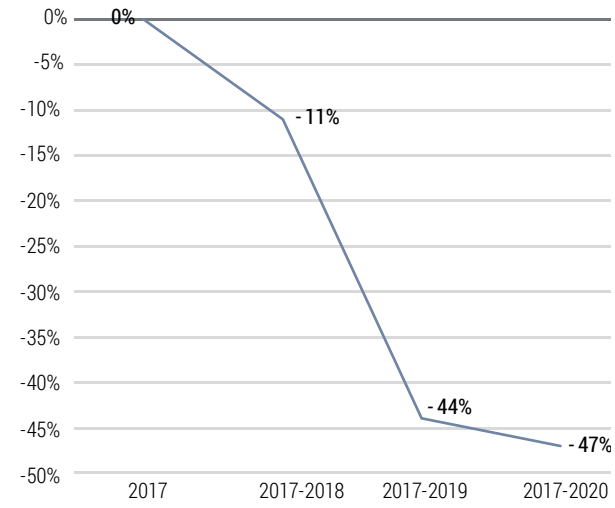
146 Uganda Police, "Annual Crime Report", 2020.

Fig. 74 Change in the number of persons investigated in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



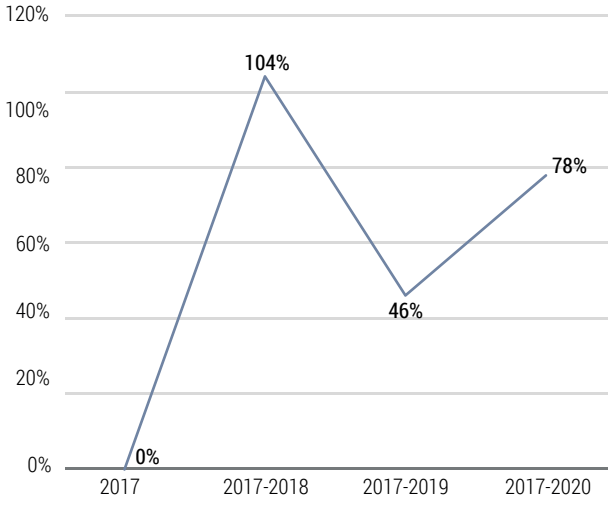
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 75 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



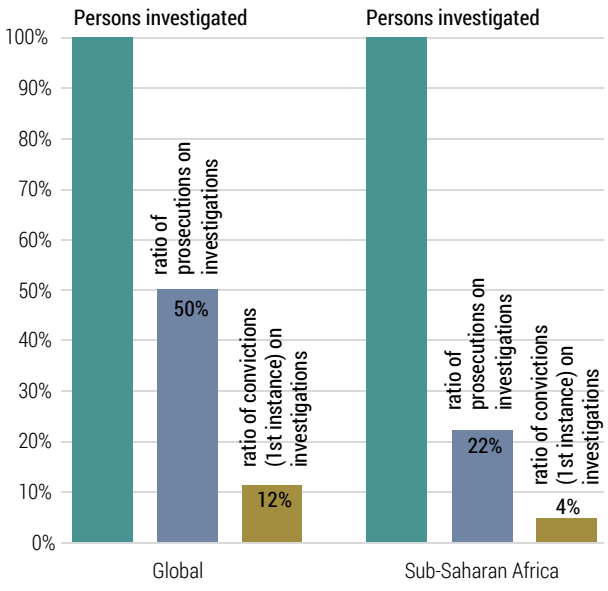
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 76 Change in the number of persons convicted in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 77 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017-2020

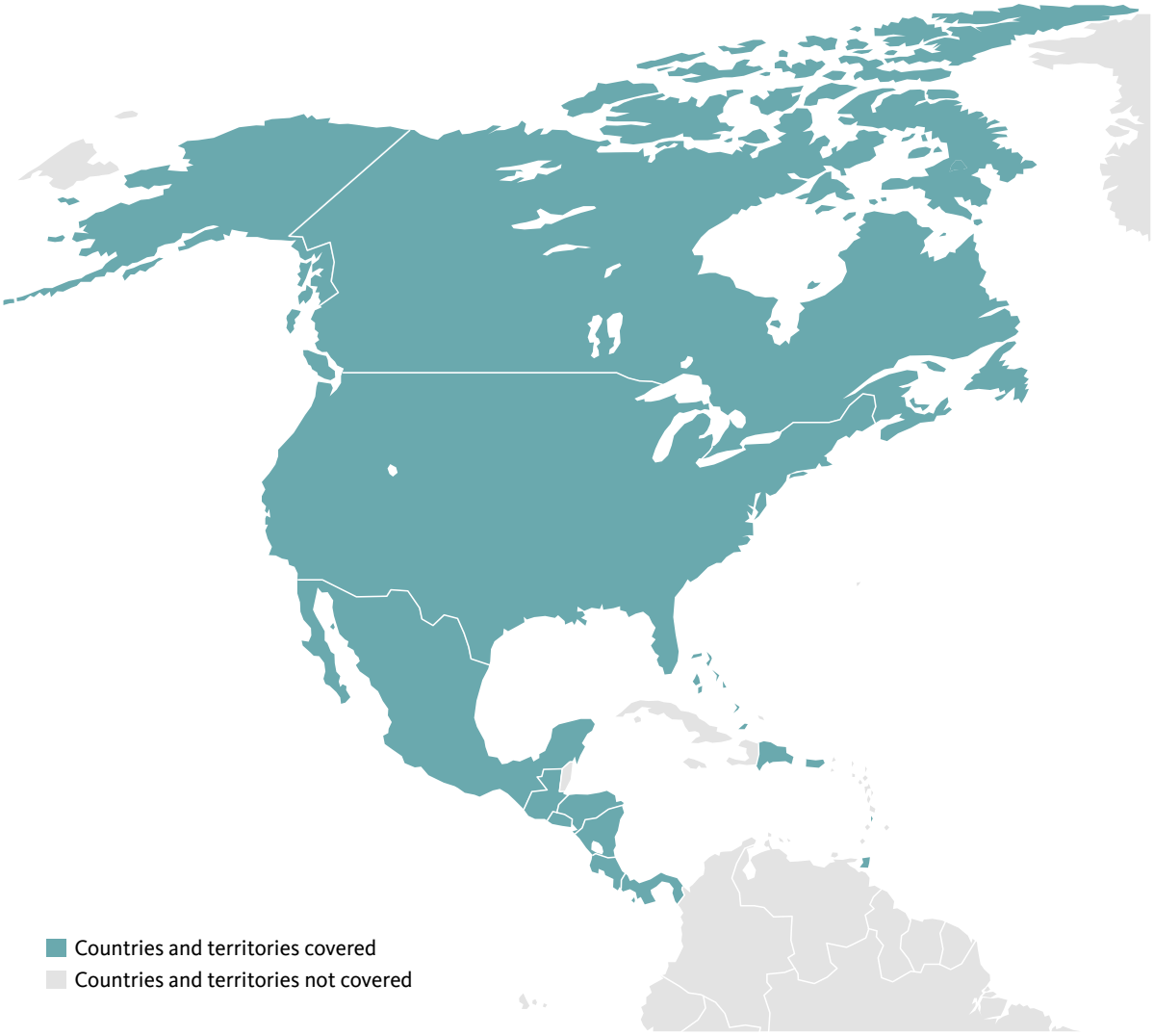


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

The Americas

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

Map. 11 Countries and territories covered in North and Central America and the Caribbean*



Source: UNODC.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

* These two subregions are comprised of three countries in North America and nine countries in Central America and the Caribbean. North America consists of Canada, Mexico and the United States of America. Central America and the Caribbean includes the Bahamas, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

Fig. 78 Emerging trends in North and Central America and the Caribbean in 2020

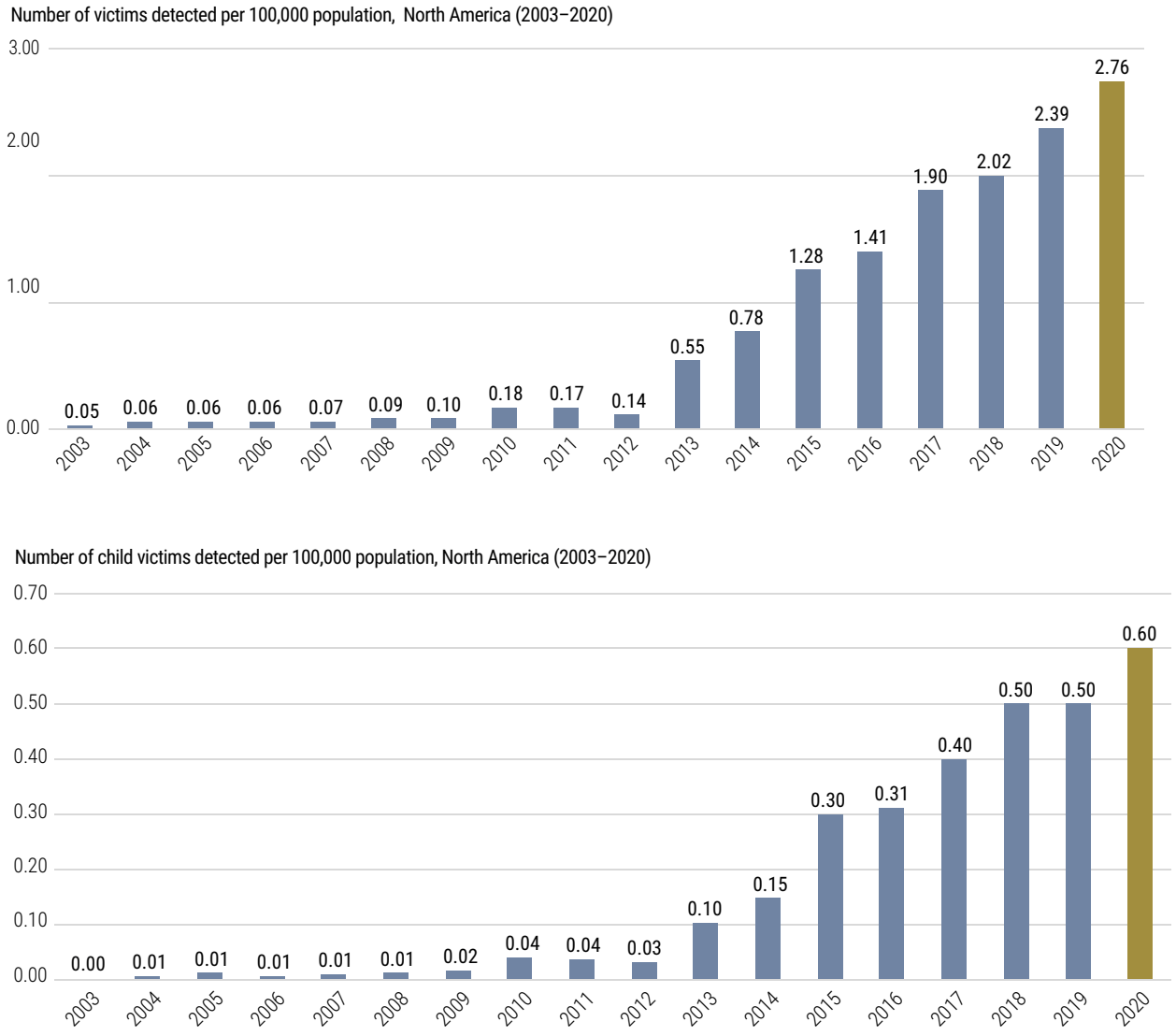
	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total	In Central America and the Caribbean Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): **– 36%**	In North America Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 16%**
Types of trafficking flows	In Central America and the Caribbean Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): **– 41%**	In North America Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 14%** In North America Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 14%**
Forms of exploitation	In Central America and the Caribbean Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000 people): **– 51%** In Central America and the Caribbean Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000 people): **– 48%**	In North America Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 25%** In North America Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 16%**
Victims' profiles	In Central America and the Caribbean Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): **– 67%** In Central America and the Caribbean Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): **– 60%**	In North America Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): **+ 26%** In North America Child victims detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 25%** In North America Female victims detected (per 100,000 people): **+ 14%**
Criminal justice response	In Central America and the Caribbean Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: **– 54%** In North America Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: **– 35%**	

Trends

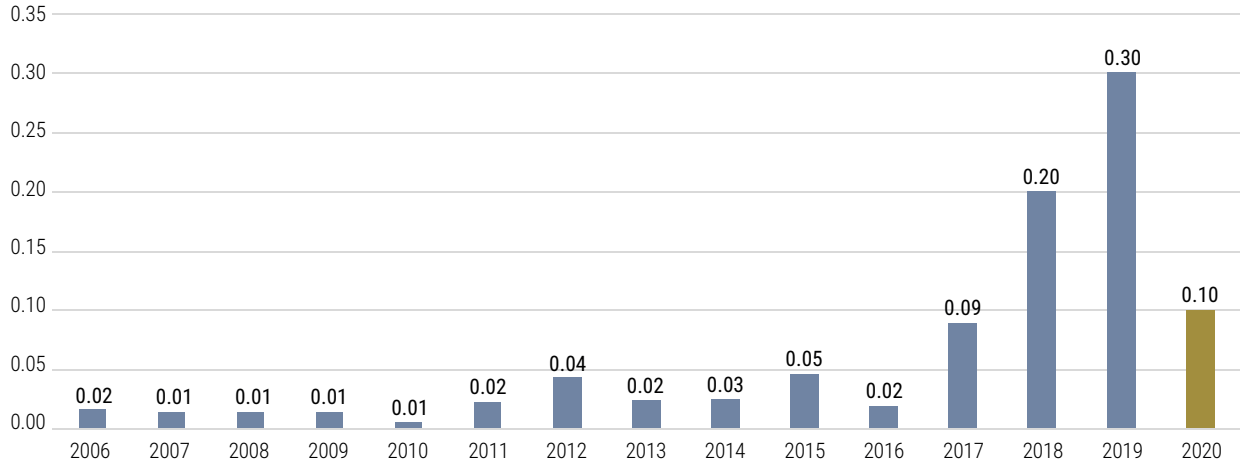
The region of North and Central America and the Caribbean is comprised of two subregions that had distinctly different trends in detecting trafficking in persons during the pandemic. In **North America, detection of trafficking victims seems not to have been impacted by the pandemic response measures**. The detection of adults and children, citizens and foreigners all increased at similar rising rates as those recorded in the previous years (total detection in 2020 was up 16 per cent while in 2019 it had been 18.5 per cent higher than the year before). There was, however, a 35 per cent drop in the number of convictions that took place in North America during 2020.

On the other hand in 2020, **countries in Central America and the Caribbean detected drastically fewer victims of trafficking in persons** (-36 per cent), regardless of profile. Like in North America, there was a significant drop in convictions, too. Fifty-four percent fewer people were convicted in 2020 compared to the previous year.

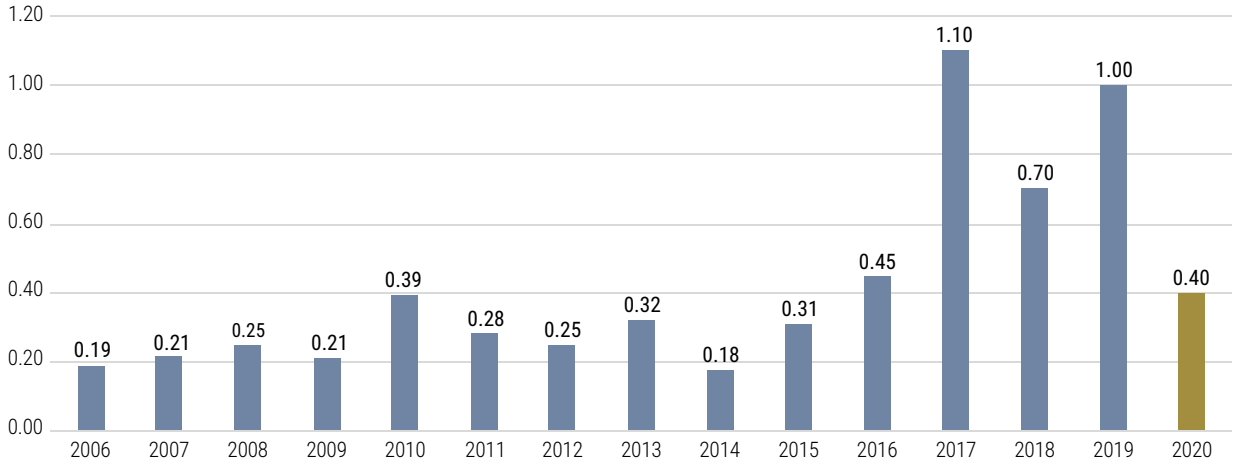
Fig. 79 Emerging trends in North and Central America and the Caribbean



Number of victims of trafficking for forced labour detected per 100,000 population, Central America and the Caribbean (2006–2020)



Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population, Central America and the Caribbean (2006–2020)

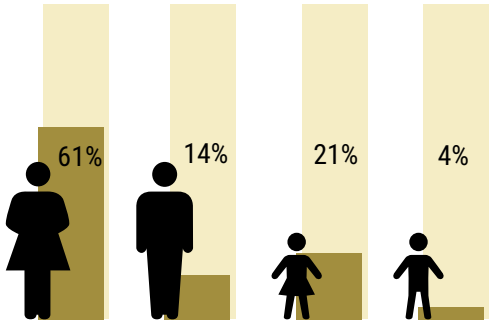


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Victims

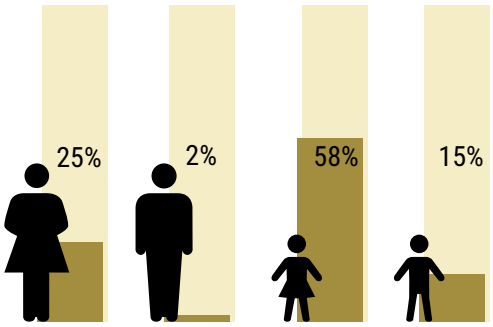
Besides the changes in the total number of victims detected, the typical victim profiles seem not to have shifted compared to the past. In 2020, **women victims continue to represent the majority of victims detected in North America. Girls are the majority of the victims of trafficking in persons detected in Central America and the Caribbean**. Trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the primary form of this crime detected in both subregions.

Fig. 80 Detected victims of trafficking in North America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 81 Detected victims of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



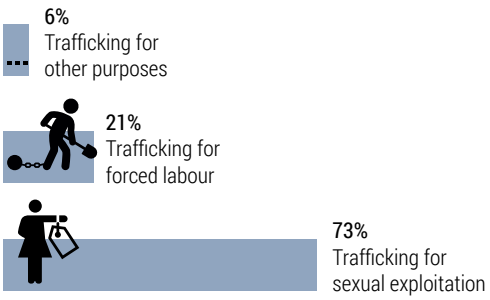
Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data

Online recruitment of a girl trafficked into sexual exploitation in the Caribbean

A 16-year-old girl from South America met a woman from Jamaica online and corresponded with her for some time before travelling to meet her. The cost of airfare and other expenses were underwritten by the woman. The girl arrived in Jamaica and, shortly after, was forced to dance at a club the woman owned, and into child sexual abuse and exploitation. All payments for dancing and sexual exploitation were taken from the girl. The woman told the victim that the money was to cover expenses she had paid up to that point. In September 2010, the girl was assisted by a passer-by who took her to the police station. The woman, along with her husband and daughter, are being prosecuted for trafficking in persons.

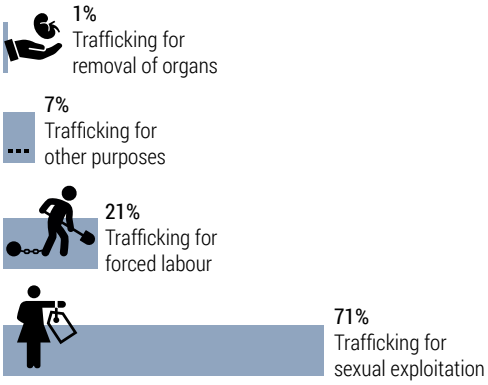
Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, JAM004.

Fig. 82 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in North America, 2020 (or most recent)



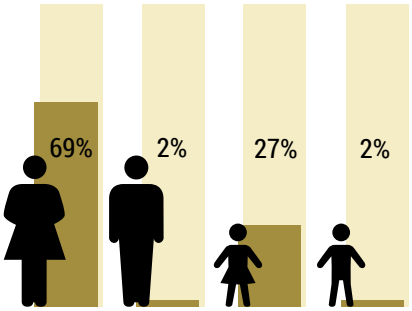
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 83 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

Fig. 84 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in North America, by age group and sex,* 2020 (or most recent)



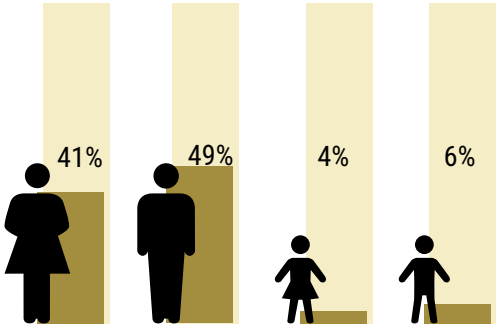
Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

* Based on the sex and age of 6,374 victims detected in three countries in North America.

The two regions appear to have a very similar profiles of the victims detected. The profiles differ only in terms of the ages of most victims detected. **Two-thirds of the detected victims who experience sexually exploitation in North America are women, and 27 per cent are girls**. About two per cent of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected in the United States are transgender persons (including transgender men, boys, women, girls and non-binary persons) and about four per cent are males, boys and men. In North America, women also account for many the detected victims exploited for forced labour.

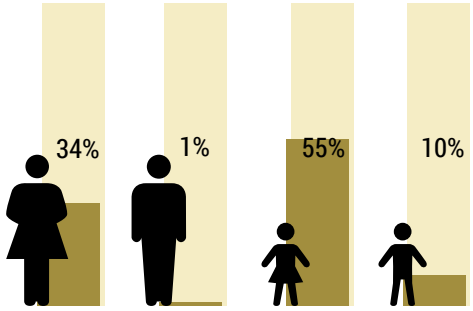
On the other hand, girls account for more than half of the victims who experience trafficking for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean. One-third of the victims in sexual exploitation are women.

Fig. 85 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in North America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

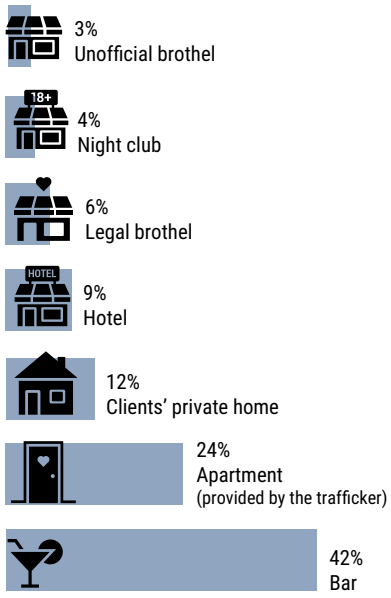
Fig. 86 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

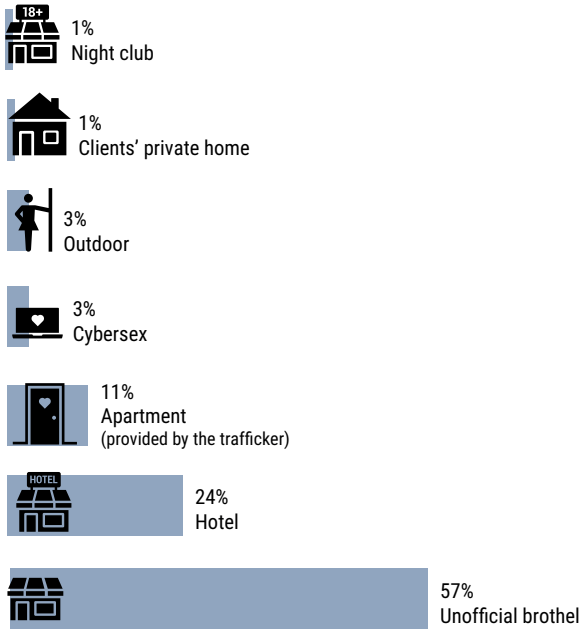
Analysis of the cases provided to UNODC involving trafficking for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean suggests that exploitation of those victims who are detected by law enforcement in the region mostly takes place indoors, either at publicly accessible locations such as bars, or out of sight places such as apartments and hotels. Similar patterns are found in North America, where most of the sexual exploitation takes places in closed settings, such as brothels that are not officially registered, apartments or hotels.

Fig. 87 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, Central America and the Caribbean, 2020 (or most recent)



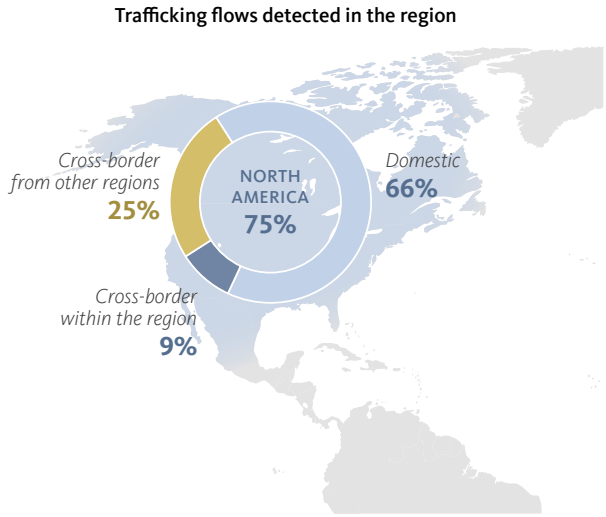
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Fig. 88 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, North America



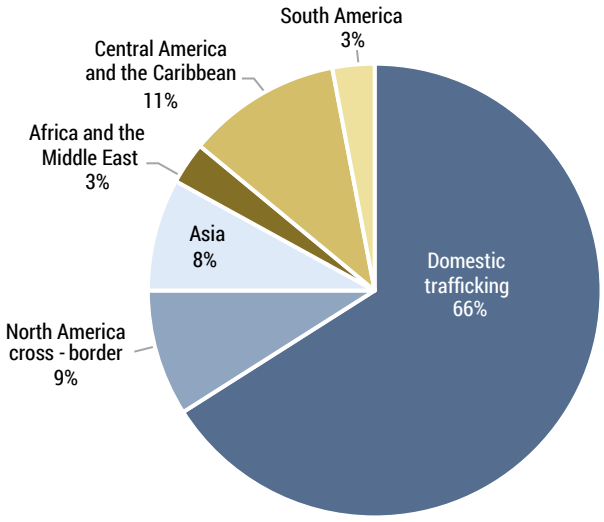
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Map. 12 Main trafficking flows detected for North America, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Fig. 89 Detected victims in North America, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



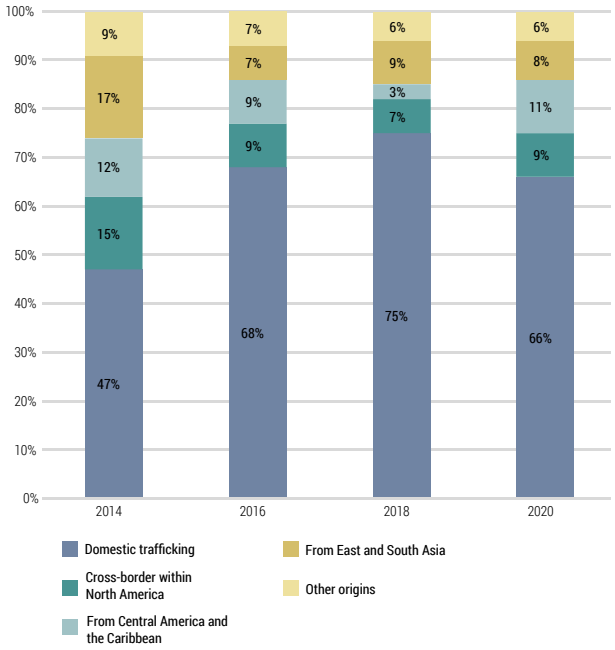
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Trafficking flows

As was stated above, more victims were detected in 2020 in North America than in the past. More victims of domestic trafficking, as well as foreigners. In 2020 in the subregion, the profile of these victims seems to have changed only to a limited extent. The only major change in victims' origins in 2020 was an **increasing number of victims detected from the northern part of Central America**. This group made up only three per cent of detected victims in North America in 2018 but jumped to 11 per cent in 2020. Other flows to North America seem not to have changed significantly over time.

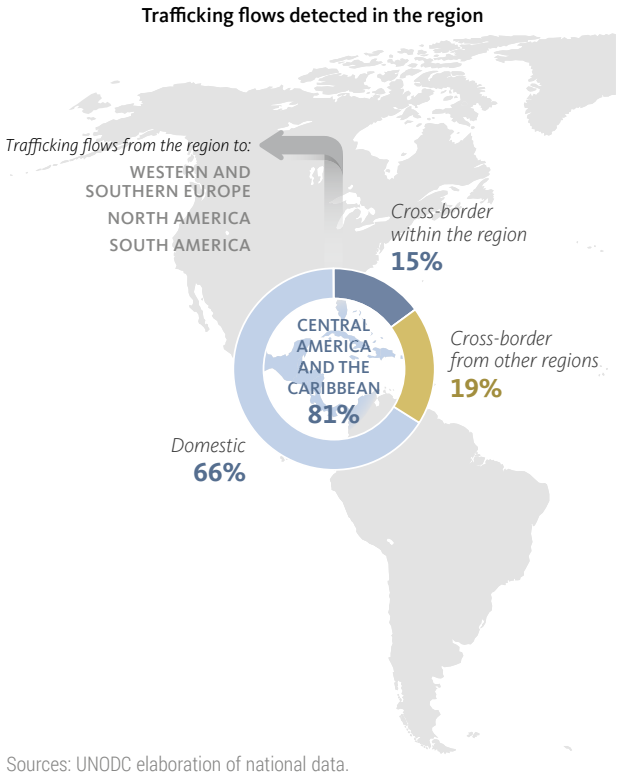
Compared to the past, in 2020 **fewer victims of trafficking in persons of foreign citizenship were detected in Central America and the Caribbean**. Domestic trafficking made up two-thirds of the cases that were detected.

Fig. 90 Trend: Detected victims in North America, by region of citizenship, 2014–2020



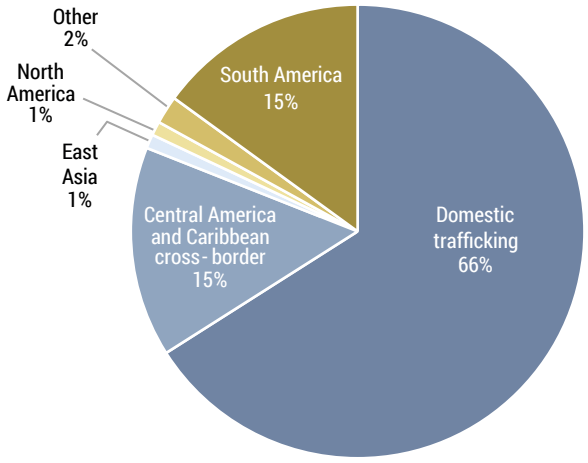
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Map. 13 Main trafficking flows detected for Central America and the Caribbean, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Fig. 91 Detected victims in Central America and the Caribbean, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)

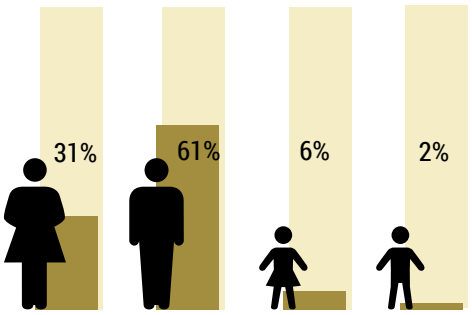


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

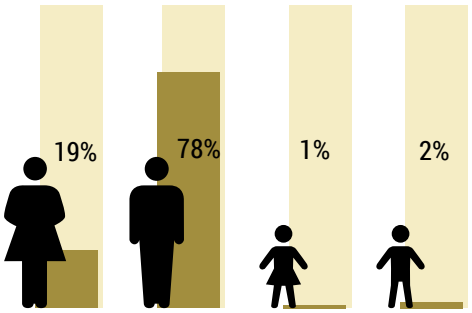
In North America, the vast majority of traffickers who are prosecuted and convicted are men. In Central America women represent nearly half the people prosecuted and convicted for trafficking in persons. This follows the general pattern of higher detection of women's involvement in the trafficking business being reported in countries of origin, compared to destinations.

Fig. 92 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in North America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



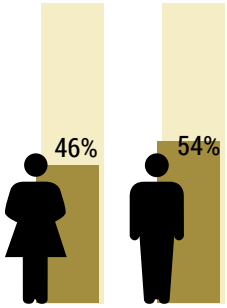
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 93 Persons convicted of trafficking in North America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



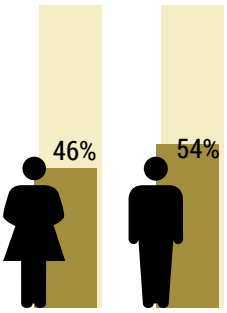
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 94 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



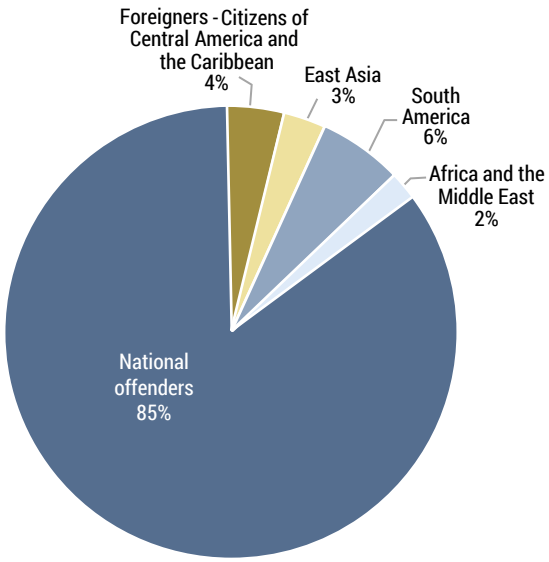
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data

Fig. 95 Persons convicted of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 96 Persons convicted of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Very limited information is currently available about the nationality of apprehended offenders in North America, while people convicted for trafficking in persons in Central America and the Caribbean are mostly nationals of the country of conviction.

The cases shared by national authorities from North America depict a rather organized, highly structured criminal trafficking scene, especially when compared to other parts of the world. Overall, trafficking groups active in this subregion seem to operate within organized, relatively large structures.

Dozens guilty in transnational criminal organization trafficking hundreds of women

In 2018, 36 defendants, mostly men, were convicted by federal juries in the United States for being part of a massive criminal enterprise that trafficked hundreds of vulnerable women from South-East Asia to the United States of America for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The criminal organization used sophisticated money laundering techniques to conceal illicit profits.

This criminal organization compelled hundreds of women to engage in commercial sex acts in various cities across the United States, including Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Phoenix, Washington, D.C., Las Vegas, Houston, Dallas, Seattle and Austin. The trafficking victims were often from impoverished backgrounds and were easily deceived about the working opportunities in the United States, as well as the opportunity to provide money to their families back home.

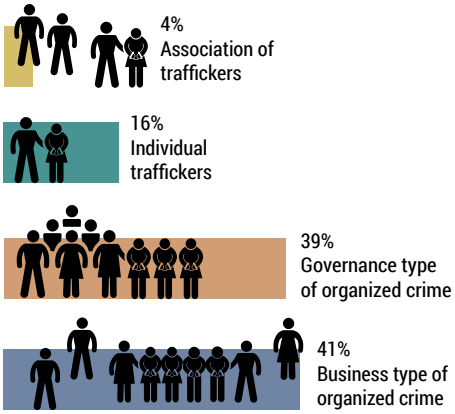
Once in the United States, the victims were sent to informal brothels where they were forced into sexual exploitation. The victims were not allowed to leave on their own and were moved around to be exploited in multiple cities, always under the threat of violence to them and their families back home.

To facilitate international travel, the organization engaged in widespread visa fraud. Traffickers obtained fraudulent visas and travel documents by funding false bank accounts, creating fictitious backgrounds and occupations, and instructing the victims to enter into fraudulent marriages to increase the likelihood that their visa applications would be approved.

The organization used accounts to launder and route cash from cities across the United States to the money launderers in Los Angeles. Investigators were able to recover 1.5 million US dollars in cash and 15 million dollars in titles. During the extensive investigation, law enforcement traced tens of millions of dollars to the organization sent back to South-East Asia.

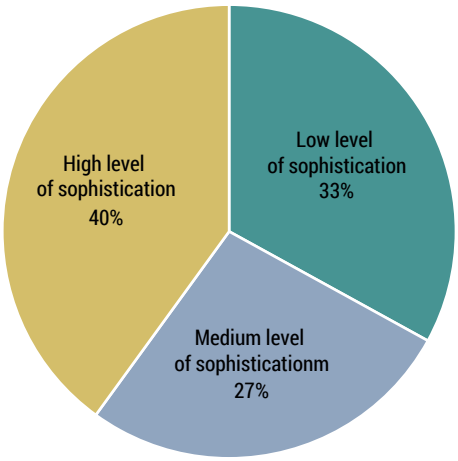
Source: UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, USA, Case 458.

Fig. 97 Type of criminal organization[147] reported in North America, as reported in case narratives (2012–2021)



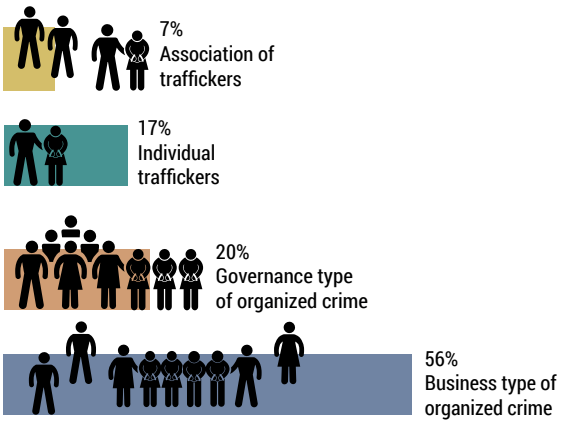
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 98 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization[148] in North America, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)



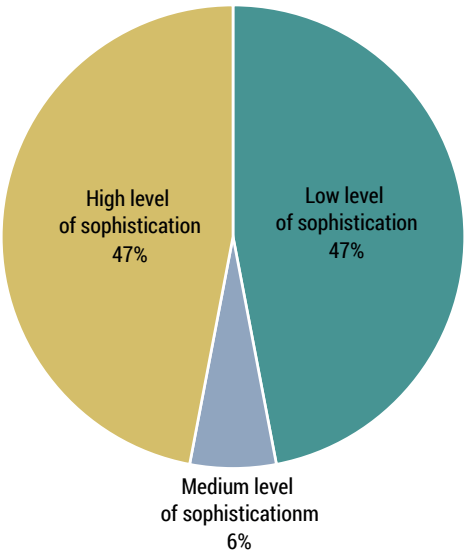
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Fig. 99 Type of criminal organization reported in Central America and the Caribbean, as reported in the case narrative (2012–2021)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 100 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization[149] in Central America and the Caribbean, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

147 See definitions of criminal organization types on page 48 of this report.

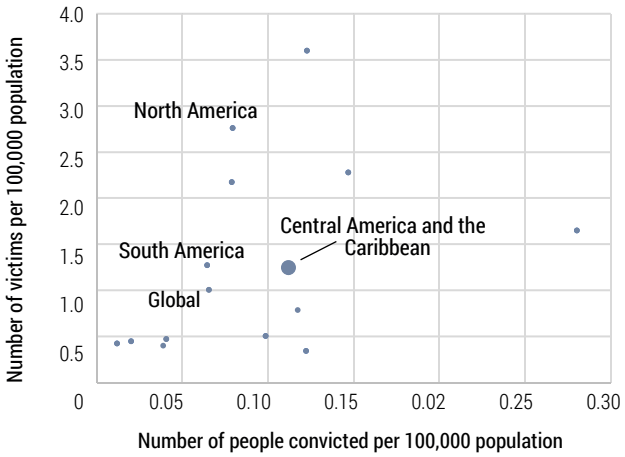
148 UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

149 Ibid.

Criminal justice response

Compared to most regions of the world, **countries in North America detected more victims of trafficking in 2020** - about 2.7 per 100,000 people in the broader population (compared to the global average of one). Countries in Central America and the Caribbean detected fewer victims than North America, but still detected higher proportions of victims compared to the global average. At the same time, the level of trafficking convictions in Central America and the Caribbean is relatively high compared to most regions of the world.

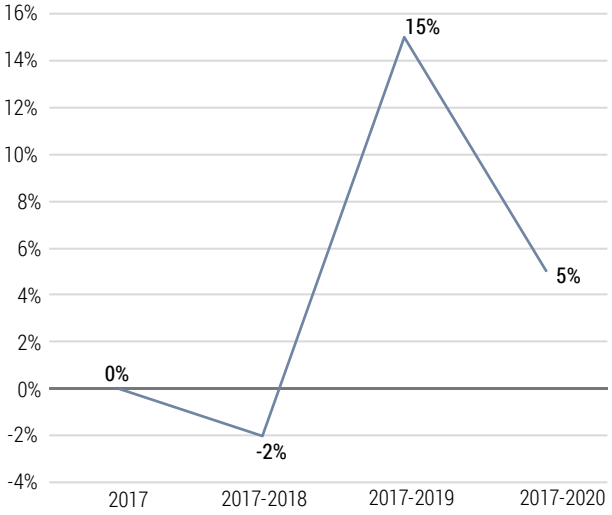
Fig. 101 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

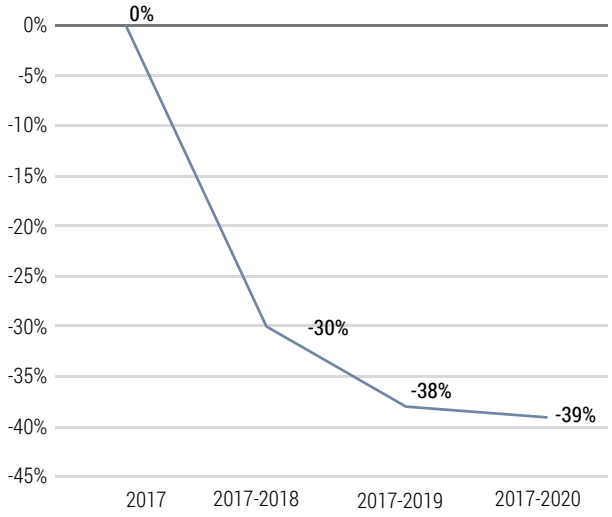
Over the period considered, the overall criminal justice response in both subregions seems to have slowed. The number of convictions in North America recorded a notable decrease in 2020. Likewise, a drop in the number of prosecutions has continued from 2018 and in 2020 stood at 39 per cent fewer prosecutions than in 2017. Similar trends were recorded in Central America and the Caribbean, where countries recorded a 61 per cent drop in convictions over the same period. This also seems part of a longer trend of a decreasing number of investigations and prosecutions.

Fig. 102 Change in the number of persons investigated in North America, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



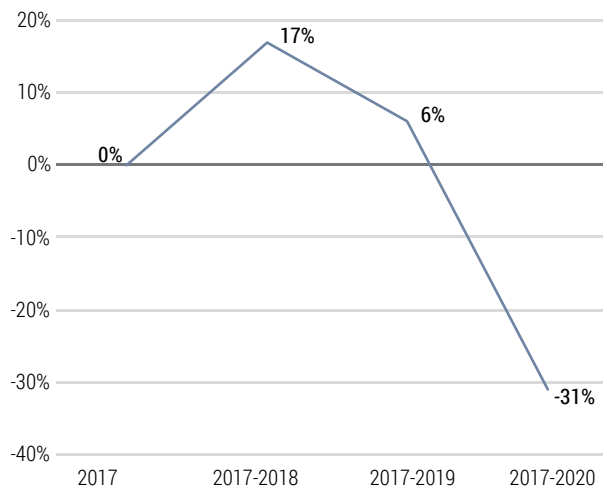
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 103 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in North America, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



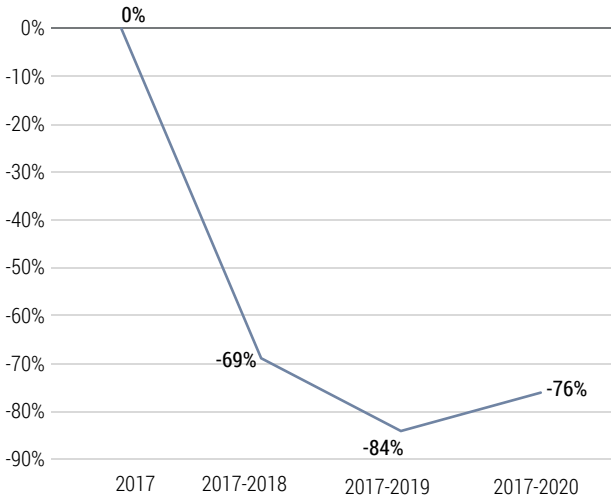
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 104 Change in the number of persons convicted in North America, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



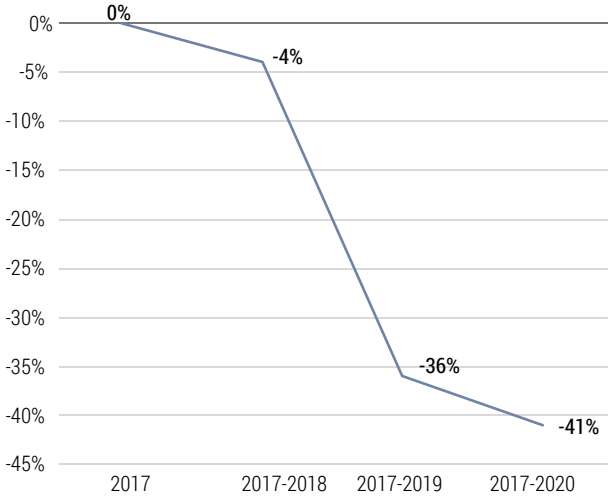
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 105 Change in the number of persons investigated in Central America and the Caribbean, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



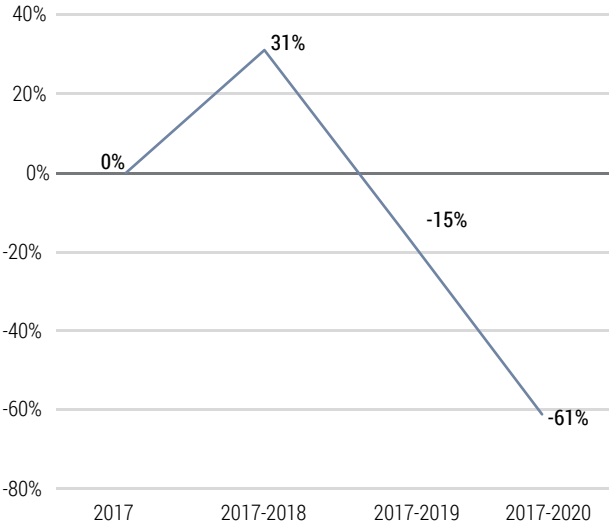
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 106 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Central America and the Caribbean, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 107 Change in the number of persons convicted in Central America and the Caribbean, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 108 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in North America, Central America and the Caribbean, 2017–2020)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

In this region, the number of offenders prosecuted is around 40 per cent of those investigated by police authorities in the two previous years. About one-third of the total number of people prosecuted were convicted. As a result, around 11 offenders are convicted for every 100 individuals investigated by police authorities.

North American countries recorded the highest share of people convicted among people investigated across all regions. The prosecution and conviction rates are considerably lower in Central America and the Caribbean.



South America

Map. 14 Countries and territories covered in South America*



Source: UNODC.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

* This region consists of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

Fig. 109 Emerging trends in South America in 2020

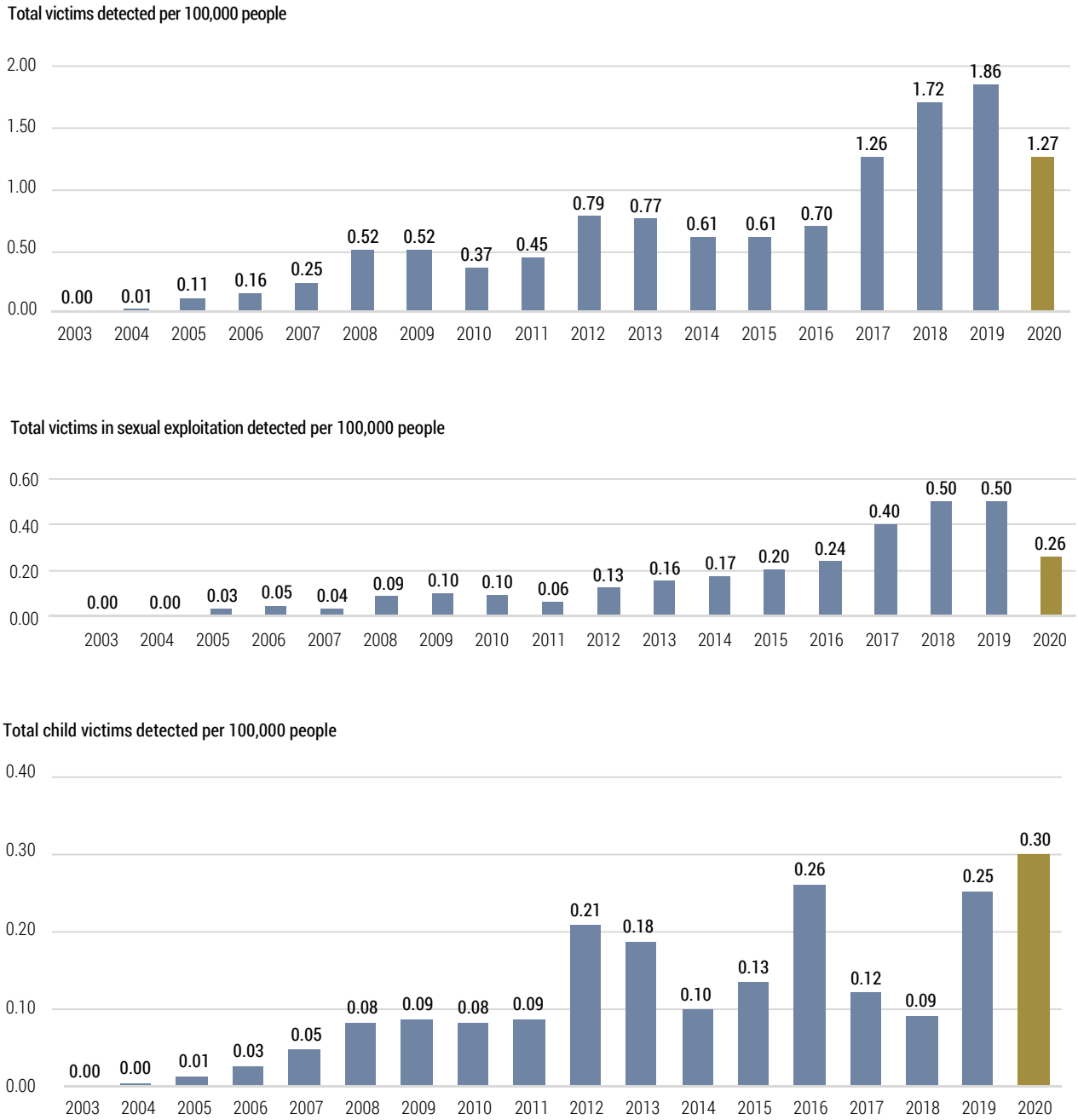
	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
 Total	Victims of trafficking detected (per100,000p): – 32%	
 Types of trafficking flows	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per100,000p): – 58% Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per100,000p): – 29%	
 Forms of exploitation	Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per100,000p): – 49% Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per100,000p): – 13%	
 Victims' profiles	Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): – 38% Male victims detected (per 100,000 males) – 23%	Child victims detected (per100,000p): + 18%
 Criminal justice response	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: – 46% Persons investigated or suspected of trafficking in persons: – 31%	

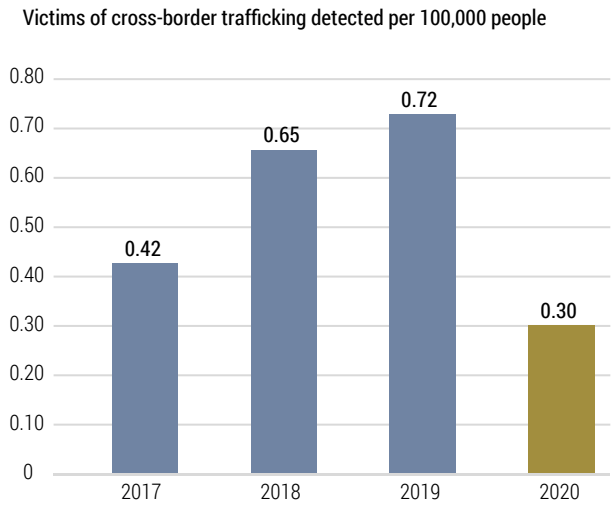
Trends

The trend toward higher detection of trafficking in persons in South America seems to have been hampered by the pandemic. **In 2020, the detection of most victim categories fell drastically**. Detection of female adults, as well as foreigners trafficked for any form of exploitation showed marked drops. The **reduction in detected victims is more relevant** if considered against what had been an increasing trend until 2019. **The area where** growth in detection continued **is among child victims, where increase persisted in 2020**.

The criminal justice response to trafficking recorded a similar drop in 2020, likely due to the pandemic; the number of people convicted in the region was 46 per cent lower than that seen in 2019. Prior to 2020, there had been a rapidly increasing number of convictions recorded in South America.

Fig. 110 Emerging trends in South America





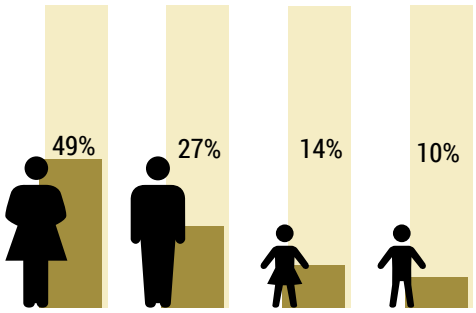
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Victims

Women victims continue be the majority of victims detected in South America. Women as a proportion of all victims detected significantly declined, though, compared to the past, for example 65 per cent of victims detected in 2018 were women.

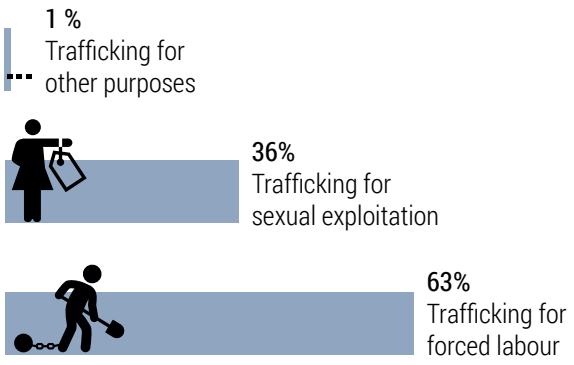
In 2020, the most common form of exploitation experienced by detected victims of trafficking were **forced labour, accounting for nearly two-thirds, and sexual exploitation, over a third**. This is a significant change when compared to the past when, in 2018, two-thirds of victims detected had been trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Fig. 111 Detected victims of trafficking in South America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



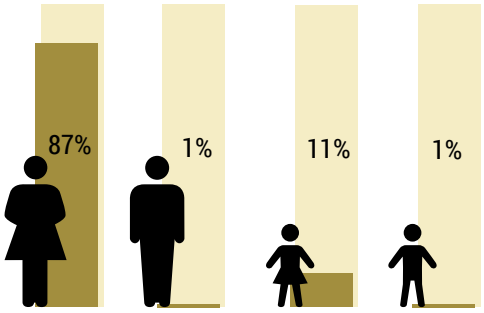
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 112 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in South America, 2020 (or most recent)



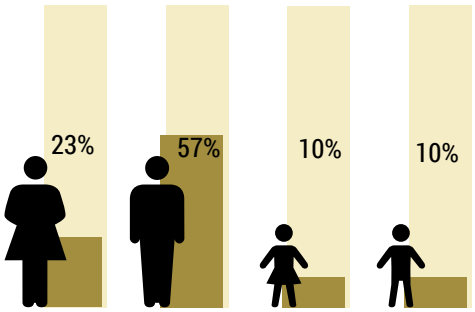
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 113 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in South America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 114 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in South America, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Women, who make up half of all detected victims, are trafficked for sexual exploitation as well as forced labour. They make up 87% of the detected victims of sexual exploitation in South America. A further 11 per cent of those sexually exploited are girls. About four per cent of the victims of sexual exploitation detected in Argentina are transgender persons including transgender women, girls, men boys and non-binary persons.

In South America, men account for more than half of the detected victims who face forced labour, but women also account for about one fifth of this group of victims.

Four sisters trafficked for street selling

In Argentina, two traffickers, a husband and wife, recruited, transferred and detained four sisters, three of whom were children. The traffickers leveraged family relations – the man was the uncle of the victims – and the family's economic need to lure the girls into exploitation.

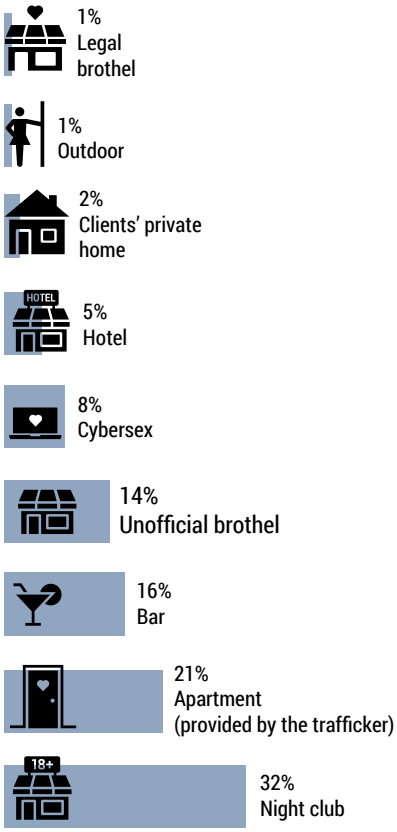
For four months, the couple held the girls captive and forced them to sell tortillas on the street, in very unhygienic and unsafe conditions. At home, the victims were abused psychologically and physically. Money was taken by the couple, and they were forced to work between 12 to 14 hours each day.

An investigation was started because of an anonymous call to a law enforcement hotline. In 2018, the traffickers were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.[150]

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 397 – Argentina.

In a majority of the court cases provided to UNODC which detailed trafficking for sexual exploitation in South America, the crime took place indoors in publicly accessible locations, such as bars and night clubs. Victims are also found in more hidden locations, including apartments, hotels or behind webcams for online sexual exploitation. Clearly, hidden forms of trafficking for sexual exploitation are less easily detected by national authorities, and, thus, less likely to show up in statistics.

Fig. 115 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, South America, (2012-2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries

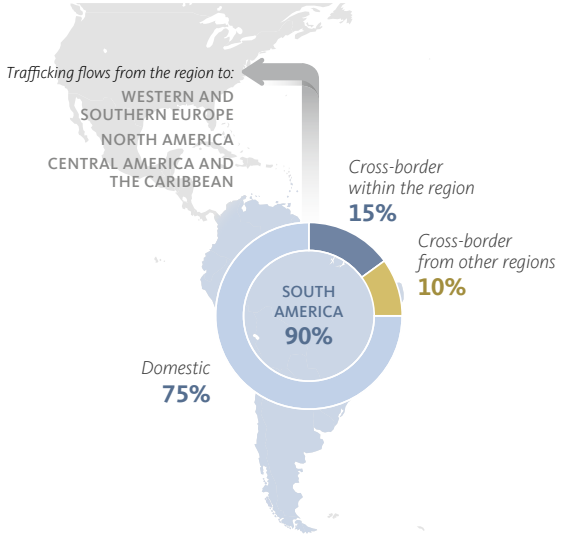
150 See Case 397, Argentina, 2018.

Trafficking flows

In 2020, fewer foreign victims were detected in South America compared to the past. **Domestic trafficking is increasingly the predominant form of trafficking detected in the region** (up from one-third in 2018). Overall, detected trafficking flows in South America are relatively limited in terms of geographical reach. About 90 per cent of the victims detected in South America are citizens from South American countries. Domestic trafficking makes up three-quarters of these victims and close by cross-border trafficking, within South America, is another 15 per cent.

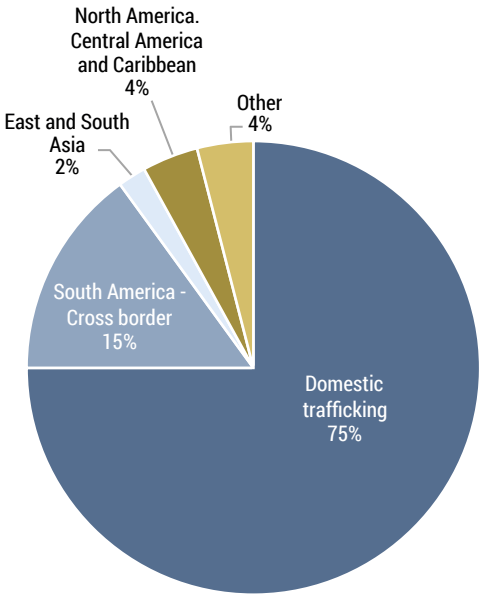
About four per cent of all the victims detected in South America in 2020 originated from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, a significant number compared to the relatively small size of these two countries.

Map. 15 Region of origin of detected victims of trafficking in persons in South America, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Fig. 16.1 Detected victims in South America, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



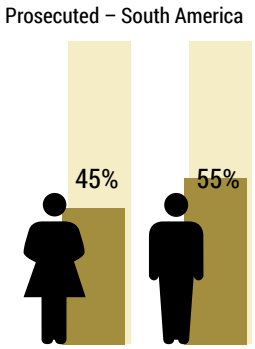
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

Compared to other regions, **women represent a very large share of people prosecuted and convicted for trafficking in persons**, although still in the minority. People convicted for trafficking in persons in this region are primarily nationals of the country where they were convicted, followed by citizens of other South American countries.

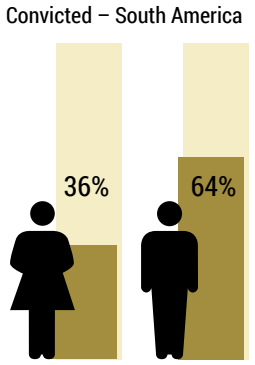
The cases shared by national authorities in South America depict a criminal scene where most forms of detected trafficking are carried out by criminals who are loosely connected through business relationships. A very small number of uncovered cases involved structured criminal organizations leveraging territorial control. Overall, trafficking groups active in this region seem to operate with rather minimal organization in relatively small structures.

Fig. 116 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in South America, by sex, 2020 (or most recent)



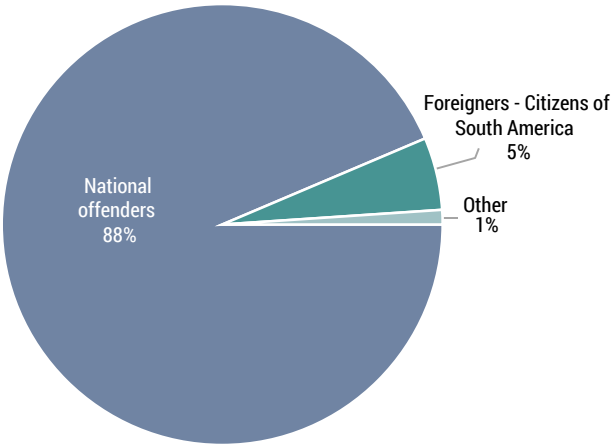
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 117 Persons convicted of trafficking in South America, by sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 118 Persons convicted of trafficking in South America, by sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

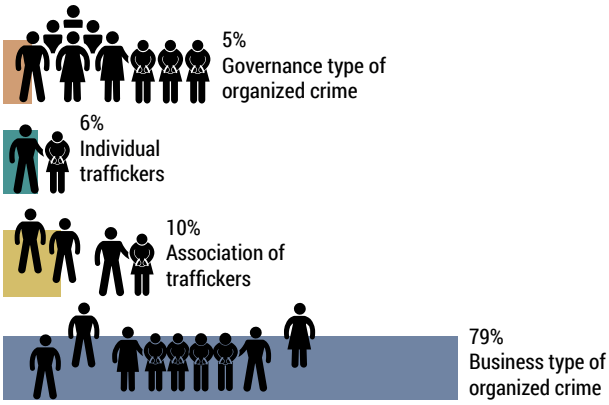
A business type of criminal organization trafficking women for sexual exploitation

In 2008, a wife and her husband who was a business partner in an investment group, together owned night clubs in the South of Chile - Punta Arenas. In 2014, these two engaged a group of three traffickers, all men, operating from abroad to recruit young women to be exploited in their clubs. The traffickers used the economic need of these women to deceive them with offers of jobs waiting tables. They managed to traffic victims to Punta Arenas where they were forced into sexual exploitation.

Victims were controlled trough a system of video cameras. Profits from the exploitation were kept by the club owners. The authorities believe at least 26 women were exploited in these night clubs in 2014 and 2015 alone.

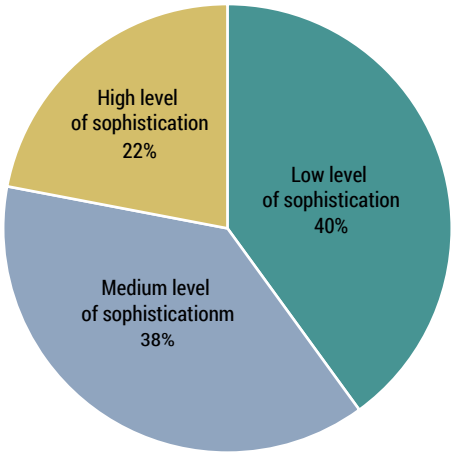
Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 246 – Chile.

Fig. 119 Type of criminal organization* reported in South America, as reported in case narratives (2009-2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries
* See definitions of criminal organization type on page 48 of this report.

Fig. 120 Level of sophistication* of the trafficking organization in South America, as reported in case narratives (2009-2021)

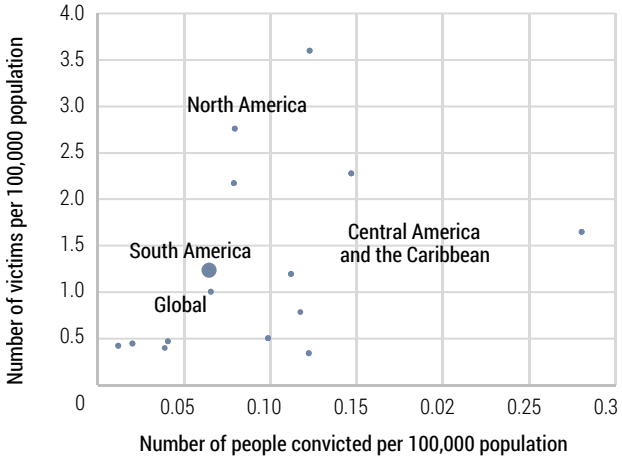


Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

Criminal justice response

Countries in South America detected an average of 1.3 victims per 100,000 people in 2020. This detection rate is slightly higher than the global average of one. Likewise, this group of countries report conviction numbers nearly the same as the average across the world (0.06 persons convicted per 100,000 people).

Fig. 121 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020

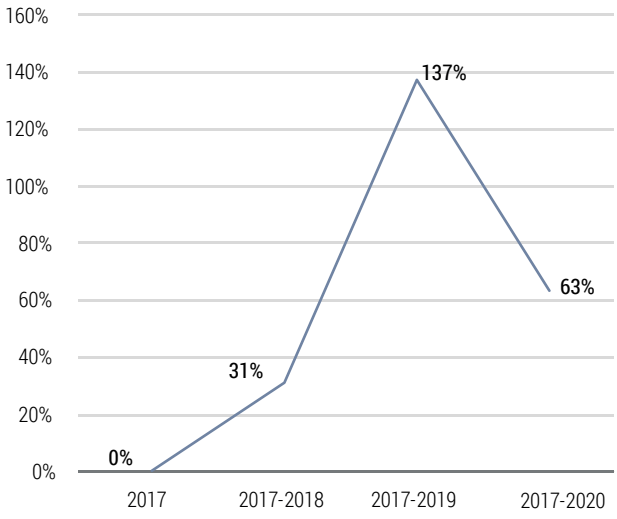


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

As noted above, the **number of investigations and convictions in South America fell in 2020**. Both numbers had been tracking upwards, so the precipitous decline may be a reflection of the impact that the preventive measures of the pandemic had on the criminal justice systems in countries in the region.

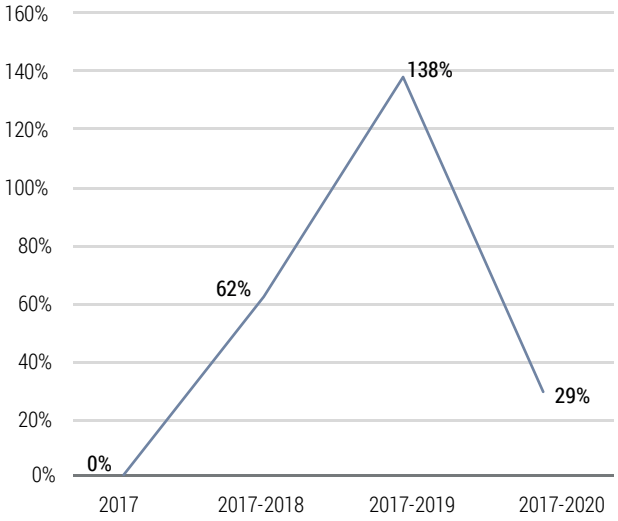
In this region, the number of offenders prosecuted between 2017 and 2020 is around 48 per cent of those investigated by police authorities. About 10 per cent of the total number of people prosecuted were convicted.

Fig. 122 Change in the number of persons investigated in South America, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



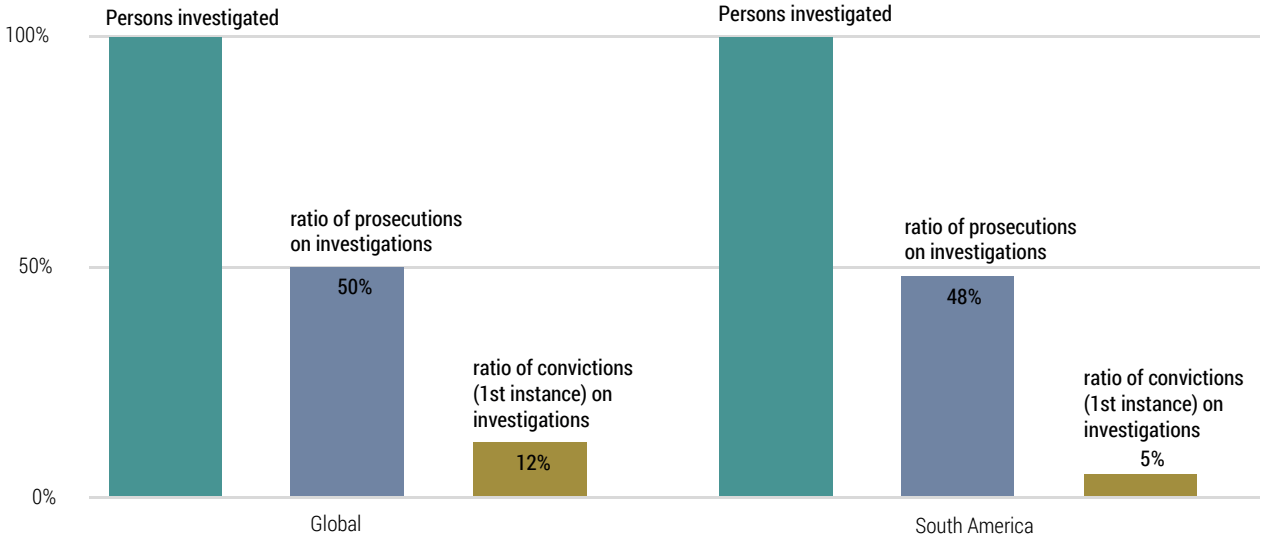
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 123 Change in the number of persons convicted in South America, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 124 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in South America, 2017-2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



East Asia and the Pacific

Map. 16 Countries and territories covered in East Asia and the Pacific*



Source: UNODC.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

* This subregion comprises eleven countries in East Asia and eight countries in the Pacific. East Asia consists of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand. The Pacific includes Australia, Fiji, Federal State of Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau and Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu.

Fig. 125 Emerging trends in East Asia and the Pacific in 2020

	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total	Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p): – 59%	
Types of trafficking flows	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p): – 81% Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p): – 29%	
Forms of exploitation	Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p): – 57% Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p): – 38%	
Victims' profiles	Child victims detected (per 100,000p): – 36% Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): – 44% Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): – 52%	
Criminal justice response	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: – 23% Persons prosecuted of trafficking in persons: – 27% Persons investigated of trafficking in persons: – 58%	

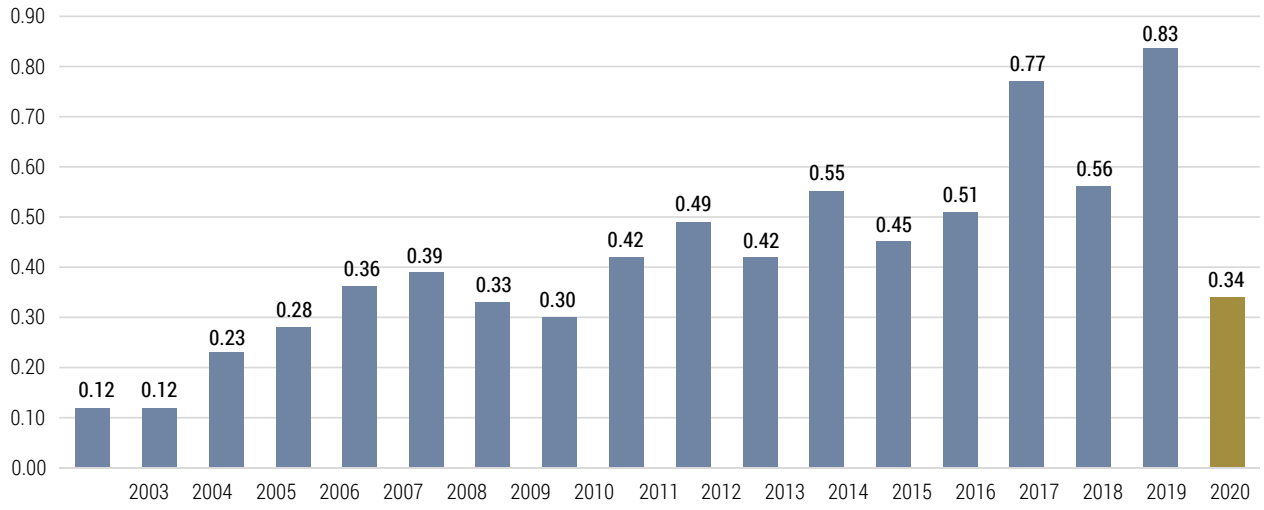
Trends

Detection of all types of trafficking fell sharply in 2020 compared to 2019 throughout East Asia and the Pacific (-59 per cent). Most dramatically, a drop in the number of foreign victims of trafficking detected in 2020 in the region likely drove this overall decline in numbers. The number of individuals investigated for trafficking in persons was also halved in 2020, compared to 2019.

While the number of victims of sexual exploitation detected has decreased steadily since 2014, **detection of trafficking for sexual exploitation further dropped following the outbreak of the pandemic**. In 2020, the number of victims of sexual exploitation detected in East Asia and the Pacific dropped by 57 per cent compared to 2019.

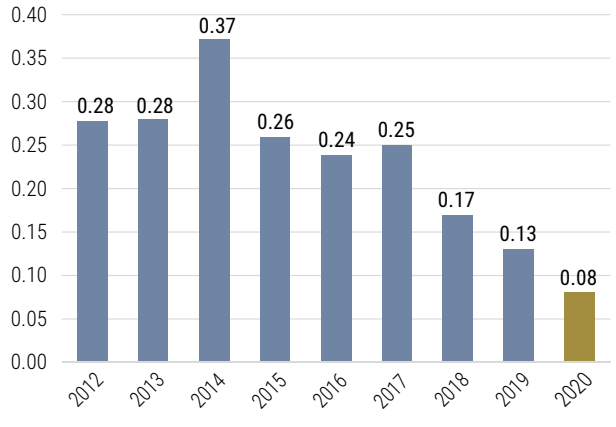
Fig. 126 Emerging trends in East Asia and the Pacific

Number of victims detected per 100,000 population, East Asia and the Pacific, 2003 to 2020



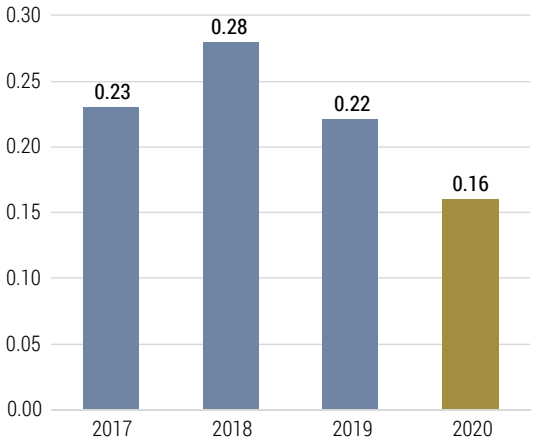
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population, East Asia and the Pacific, 2012 to 2020



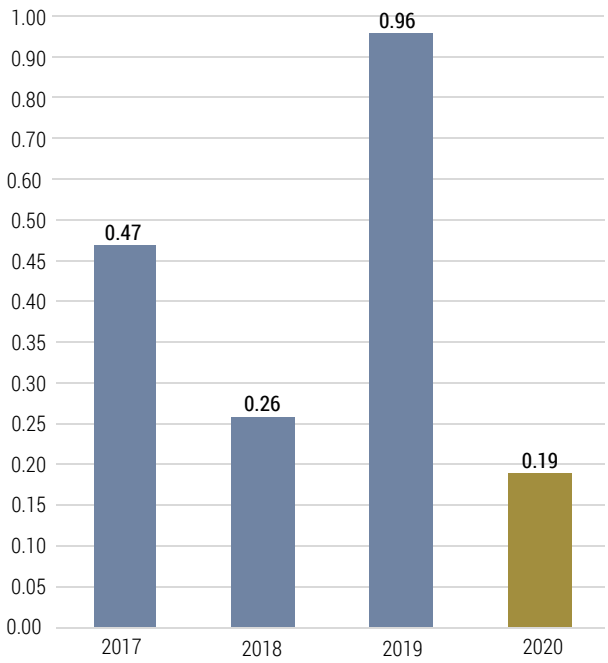
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Number of victims of domestic trafficking detected per 100,000 population, East Asia and the Pacific, 2017 to 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Number of victims of cross-border trafficking detected per 100,000 population, East Asia and the Pacific, 2017 to 2020

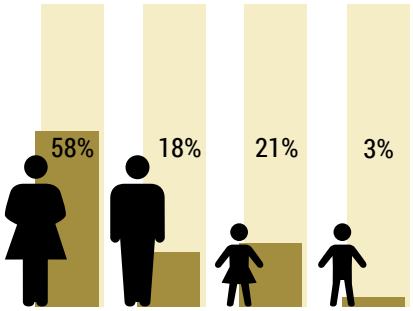


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Victims

In 2020 in East Asia and the Pacific, **women remain the largest group of detected victims**. Compared to previous years, relatively more women than men were identified as victims of trafficking in persons (in 2018, 48 per cent were women and 21 per cent were men). Conversely, **fewer children were detected as victims of trafficking** compared to 2018, when children accounted for one-third of detected victims.

Fig. 127 Detected victims of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 4,282 victims detected in 23 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

Fig. 128 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 3,265 victims detected in 26 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

In 2020, forced labour was the most detected form of exploitation in East Asia and the Pacific. The share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour almost doubled between 2018 and 2020, rising from 29 per cent to 54 per cent.

The decline in victims' detection in 2020, followed the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and may have been influenced by the preventive measures put in place in many countries in the region, including mobility restrictions, supply chain disruptions, and the diversion of law enforcement engagement from anti-trafficking action.[151]

Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation who came to the attention of the authorities in East Asia and the Pacific were more likely to be exploited in public, accessible locations, such as bars, sauna/massage parlours and hotels, according to the narratives of the cases shared by national authorities. According to a recent study conducted in Singapore, people engaged in prostitution in entertainment establishments or brothels suffered higher food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to those who operated outside of such venues.[152] Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation at the same time had to rely on traffickers more heavily and potentially had reduced access to support networks and rescue service. In such instances, sexual exploitation may have become more hidden and harder to detect.

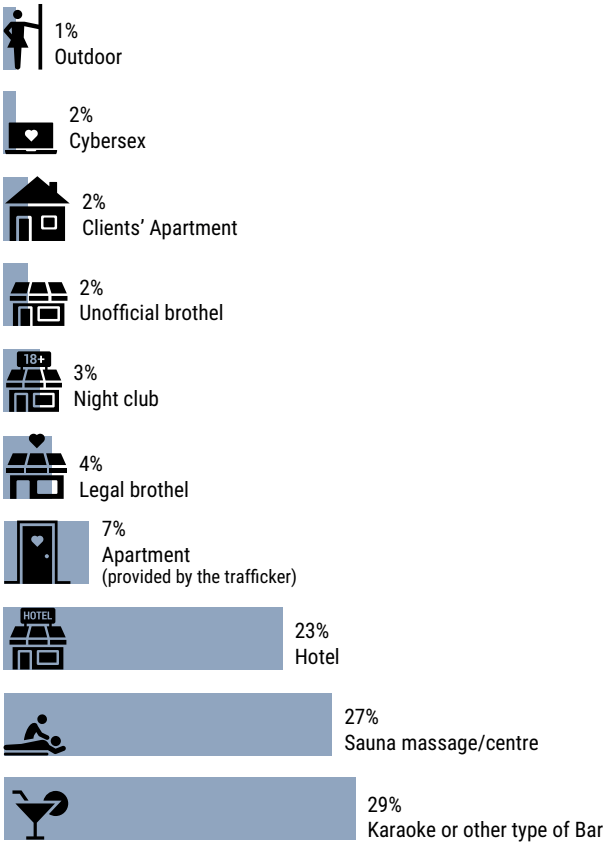
At the same time, a decline in commercial fishing glob-

151 Royal Thai Government's Country Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts (1 January – 31 December 2020).

152 Tan RKJ, et. Al., The Impact of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) on the Health and Social Needs of Sex Workers in Singapore. Arch Sex Behav. 2021 Jul;50(5):2017-2029. doi: 10.1007/s10508-021-01951-8. Epub 2021 Jun 30. PMID: 34191194; PMCID: PMC8244454.

ally, due to a slump in demand for seafood in the United States and the European Union during the pandemic, reduced work available in the fishing industry, especially in East Asia and the Pacific. Labour force reduction was also due to the initial job losses resulting from supply chain disruption, the decision of many migrant workers to go home to be with their families, and a fall in production.[153] Workers in the fishing industry are particularly at risk of trafficking for forced labour in the region.[154] Such a decline in the labour force may have reduced the number of people at risk of trafficking, while possibly increasingly the level of exploitation by those already victimized by business and private companies faced with financial losses and market insecurity.

Fig. 129 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, East Asia and the Pacific, 2012–2020



GLOTIP collection of court case summaries

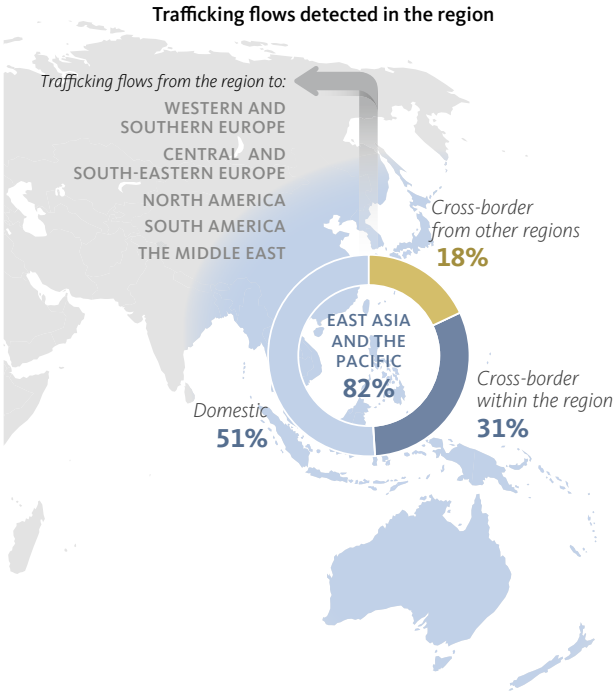
153 The International Labour Organizations reports a 14.4 per cent drop in the United States' and European Union's combined seafood imports from five Asian countries was registered in 2020. The same survey showed a decrease in available fishing jobs, a 15 per cent drop in Thailand and 9 per cent in the Philippines. See: ILO Brief, "Rough seas: The impact of COVID-19 on fishing workers in South-East Asia", April 2022, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/briefingnote/wcms_842605.pdf.

154 UNODC, "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020", (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.3), page 93.

Trafficking flows

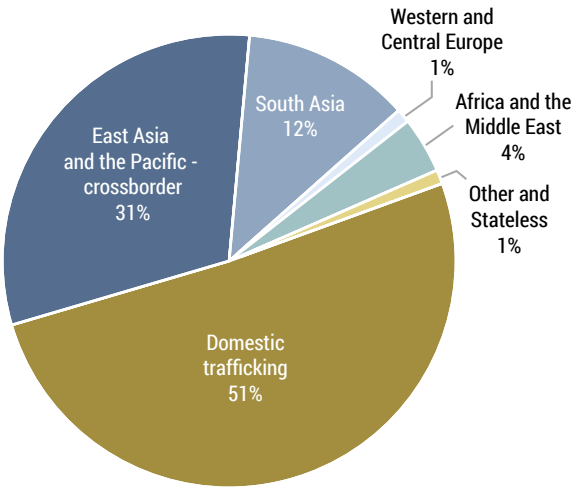
Just half of victims detected in the region were trafficked within their home countries. Another third was trafficked across borders to nearby countries within the region. Foreign victims of trafficking identified in East Asia and the Pacific from further away were most likely to come from South Asia.

Map. 17 Main trafficking flows detected for East Asia and the Pacific, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Fig. 130 Detected victims in East Asia and the Pacific, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Cross-border trafficking from the Pacific Islands

In 2020, New Zealand's national authorities sentenced a 65-year-old man from the Pacific Islands and a resident of New Zealand to 11 years imprisonment for having trafficked 13 victims - men, women and children - to New Zealand for the purpose of forced labour. The victims were trafficked in four groups from 1994 to 2019 by convincing them with false promises of significant financial opportunities.

The victims originated from the same islands in the Pacific as the trafficker. Some were even members of his extended family. A number of the victims had limited education.

The perpetrator arranged their visas, and then once they arrived in New Zealand, restricted their movement and controlled them through threats of violence and actual violence. They were not allowed to speak to other people, to leave the defendant's property or to communicate with their family back home. A few victims eventually escaped. Some were then located by the police or immigration officers and deported soon after, while others managed to remain in the country longer before being located and deported. The case was eventually brought to the attention of New Zealand authorities, which led to an almost five-year joint Investigation by Police and Immigration New Zealand.

Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, Case number NZLx012 – New Zealand.

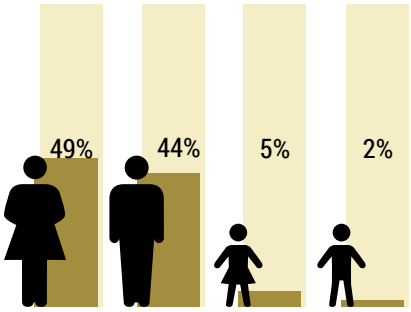
Traffickers

In 2020, nearly even proportions of men and women were investigated or prosecuted for trafficking in persons. At the same time, most of the people convicted are females. These values represent among highest share of women involved in criminal procedures globally. This was a shift from previous reporting, in 2018, when women represented around a third of those investigated and/or arrested for trafficking in persons in East Asia and the Pacific. The **vast majority of offenders convicted of trafficking in persons in this region were citizens** of the country where the offence took place.

The court cases shared with UNODC give the impression that the trafficking cases that come to the attention of the authorities take place on a smaller scale than what is seen globally. For example, a larger proportion of individual traffickers were convicted in East Asia and the Pacific compared to the worldwide average.

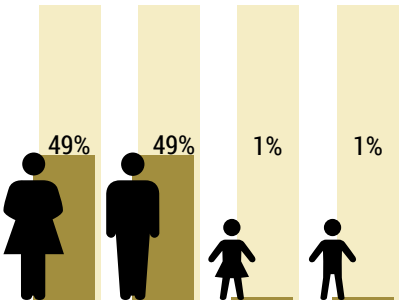
Recent studies have shown that traffickers convicted in the East Asia and Pacific region often share the same profile as their victims, including experiences of poverty and former victimhood.[155] In Vietnam, research showed that most convicted traffickers are poor, lack education and are members of a disadvantaged ethnic minority community. Perpetrators largely manipulated relations of trust with their victims to deceive them with false offers of jobs or marriage. In general, convicted traffickers receive modest remuneration for their crimes. Most recruiters convicted are traffickers organized in small scale organizations.[156] Likewise in Australia, female traffickers whose victims were sexually exploited had experienced economic deprivation and domestic violence from a very young age.[157]

Fig. 131 Persons investigated for trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 132 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



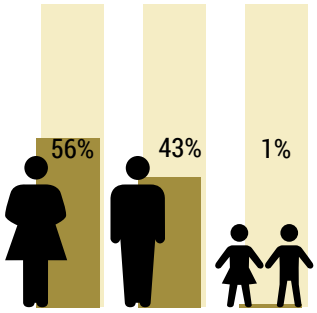
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

155 "Special Issue – Traffickers", Anti-trafficking review, issue 18, April 2022. ISSN: 2286-7511

156 L T H Le and C Wyndham, "What We Know about Human Traffickers in Vietnam", Anti-Trafficking Review, issue 18, 2022, pp. 33-48, available at: https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201222183.

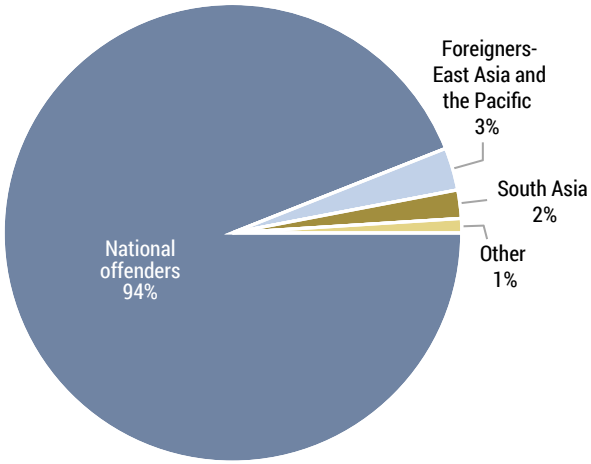
157 Alexandra Louise Anderson Baxter, "When the Line between Victimization and Criminalization Blurs: The Victim-Offender Overlap Observed in Female Offenders in Cases of Trafficking in Persons for Sexual Exploitation in Australia", Journal of Human Trafficking, 2020, vol. 6:3, 327-338, DOI: 10.1080/23322705.2019.1578579.

Fig. 133 Persons convicted of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



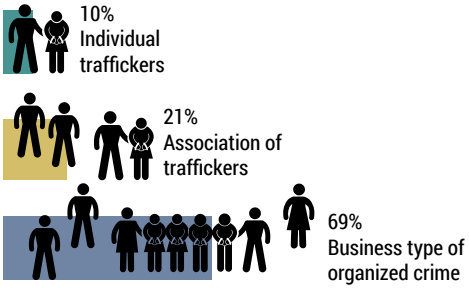
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 134 Persons convicted of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

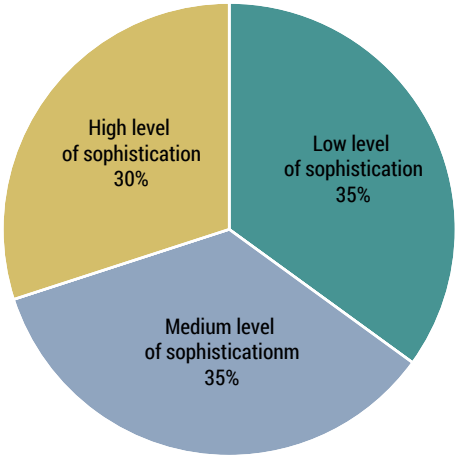
Fig. 135 Type of criminal organization[158] reported in East Asia and the Pacific, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

158 See definitions of organization types on page 48 of this report.

Fig. 136 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization[159] in East Asia and the Pacific, as reported in case narratives (2007–2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

A lone trafficker from Western and Southern Europe

In 2014, authorities in the Philippines initiated an investigation into a Western European man who was temporarily residing in the country. After originally arriving as a tourist, the man prolonged his stay in the country and spent several months in a resort catering to Europeans. The investigation led to the rescue of two children (13 and 14 years old). The children had been subject to sexual exploitation and used to produce child sexual abuse material that was then distributed online for profit. Beyond those rescued, many other victims remain undetected. The offender abused his victims' state of socio-economic need. The man was convicted of 8 years in prison plus compensation to his victims in 2021.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 493 – The Philippines.

159 UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

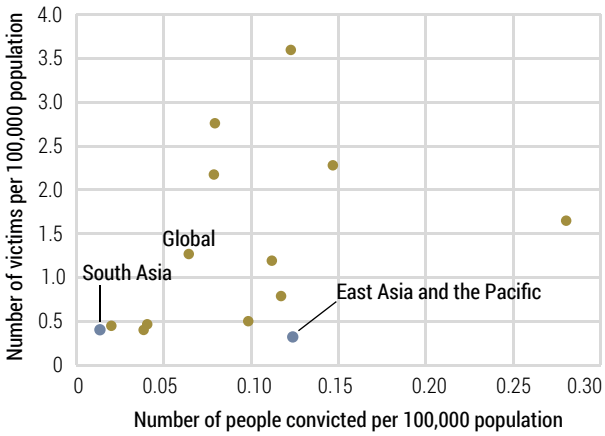
Criminal justice response

Most countries in East Asia and the Pacific have introduced a specific offence of trafficking in persons. **Countries in East Asia and the Pacific record more than 0.1 convictions per 100,000 population.** A much greater share of individuals who are investigated go on to be prosecuted and then convicted in the region, compared to the global average. However, the number of individuals convicted has decreased since 2017.

At the same time, **this group of countries detect fewer victims of trafficking in persons**. While the global average stands around one person among each 100,000 people, East Asia and the Pacific countries detect less than half that number.

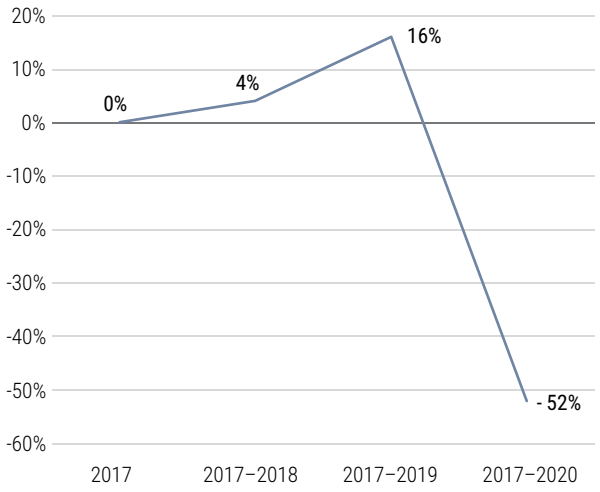
In 2020, there were significant declines in both investigations and prosecutions, likely due to pandemic-related slowdowns in justice systems. For example, the national authorities of Thailand reported that their low number of investigations and prosecutions in 2020 was related to law enforcement involvement in COVID-19 preventive measures.[160]

Fig. 137 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



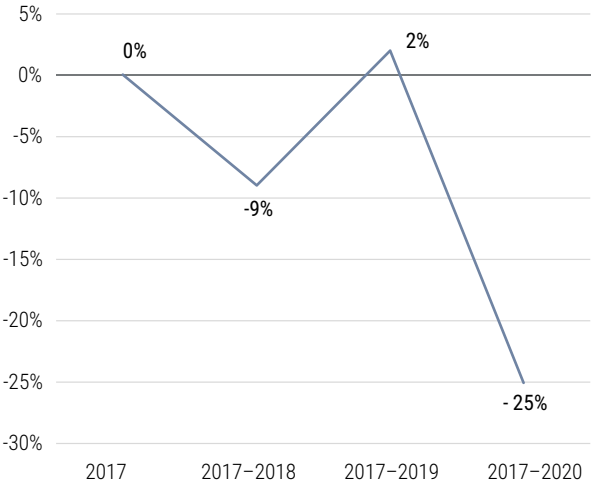
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 138 Change in the number of persons investigated in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

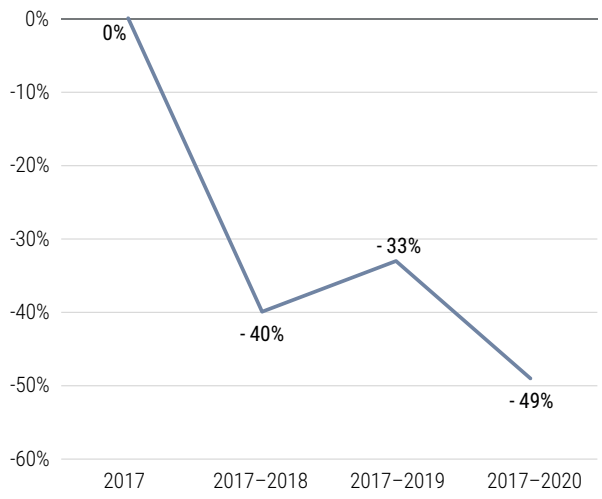
Fig. 139 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

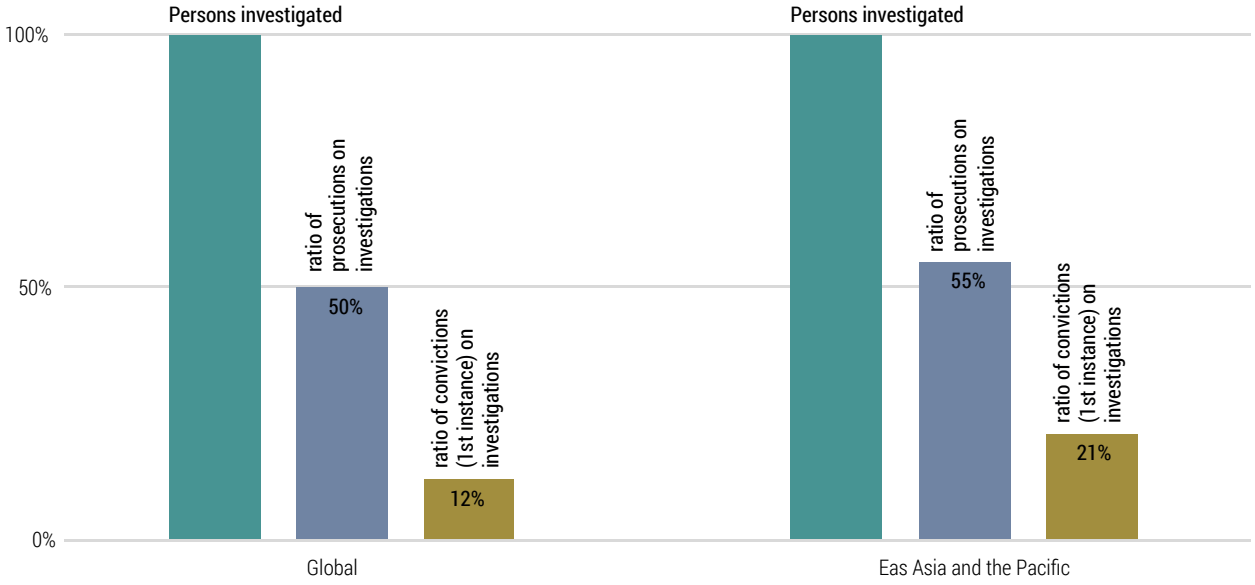
160 Royal Thai Government's Country Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts (1 January–31 December 2020).

Fig. 140 Change in the number of persons convicted in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 141 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2020

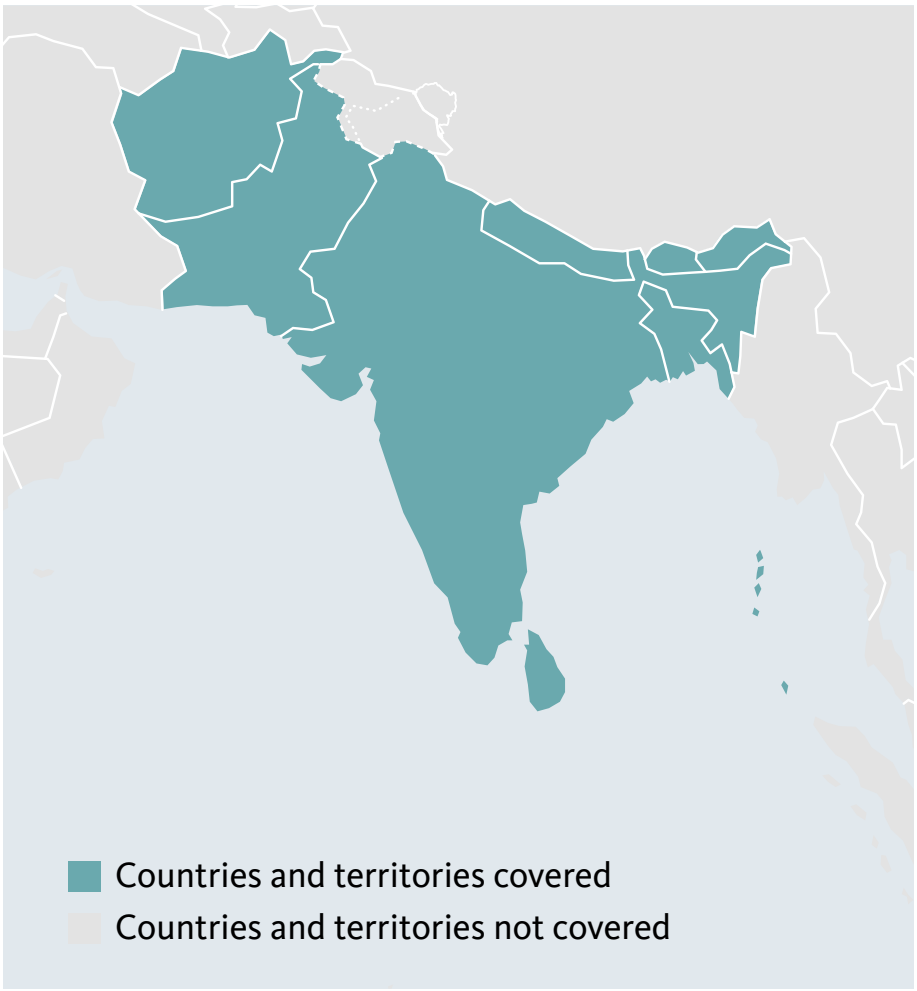


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



South Asia

Map. 18 Countries and territories covered in South Asia*



Source: UNODC
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dashed lines represent underdetermined boundaries. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

* This subregion includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

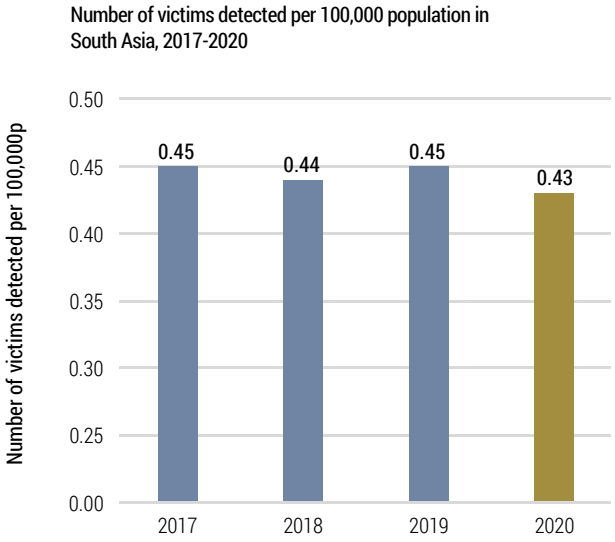
Fig. 142 Emerging trends in South Asia in 2020 compared to 2019

	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total	Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p). – 6%	
Types of trafficking flows	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p): – 81% Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p): – 23%	
Forms of exploitation	Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p). – 31% Victims trafficked for forced criminality and mixed forms of exploitation detected (per 100,000p): – 67%	Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p): + 58%
Victims' profiles	Child victims detected (per 100,000p): - 11%	Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): + 3%
Criminal justice response	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons. – 56%	

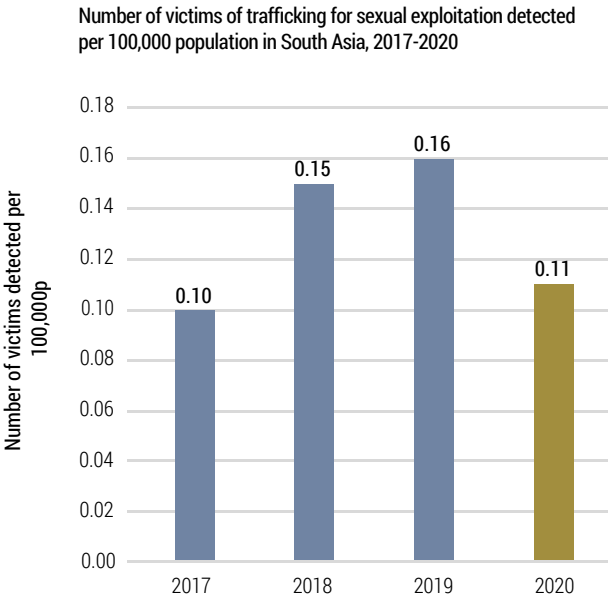
Trends

The countries of South Asia have detected a stable number of victims of trafficking in persons since 2017. But there were some moderate declines in reports of some profiles of trafficking victims in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. There was a 23 per cent decline in the number of domestic victims detected in 2020. Victims of trafficking who experienced sexual exploitation also dropped from the previous year. This, however, marked a return to the levels of sexual exploitation seen in 2017. All this fits with the sustained trend of detecting around 0.4 victims within each 100,000 people in the wider population.

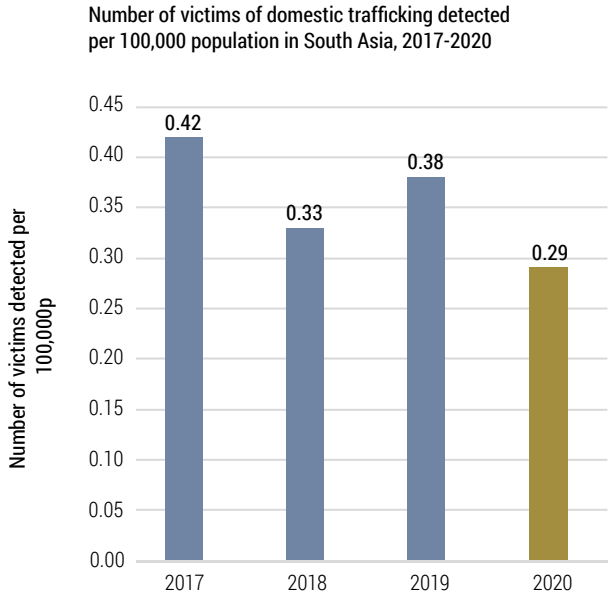
Fig. 143 Emerging trends in South Asia



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

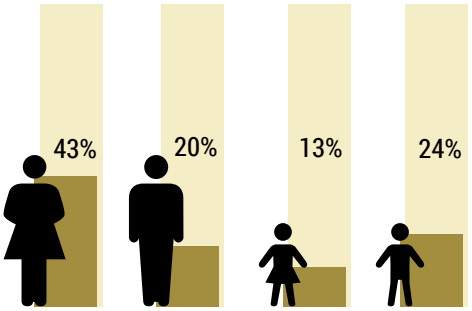
Victims

Women continue to comprise the largest share of trafficking victims detected in South Asia, as is the case globally. In 2020 though, significantly more men were detected as victims of trafficking in this region compared to previous years.

In 2020, the proportion of child victims of trafficking among the total number of identified victims fell slightly compared to 2018, when boys and girls accounted for 45 per cent of identified victims, whereas now they make up 37 per cent.

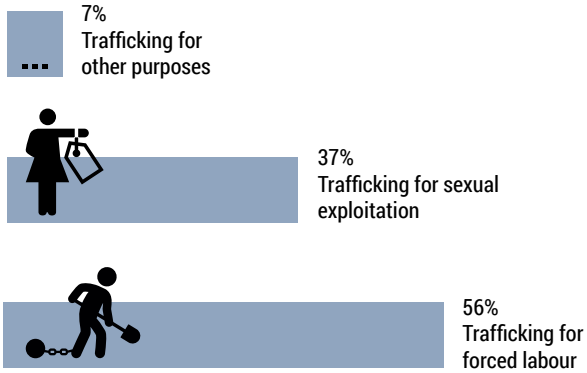
Over half of all victims of trafficking detected in South Asia are exploited for forced labour. This has consistently been the most detected form of exploitation in the region for years.

Fig. 144 Detected victims of trafficking in South Asia, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 7.878 victims detected in nine countries in South Asia.

Fig. 145 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in South Asia, 2020 (or most recent)*



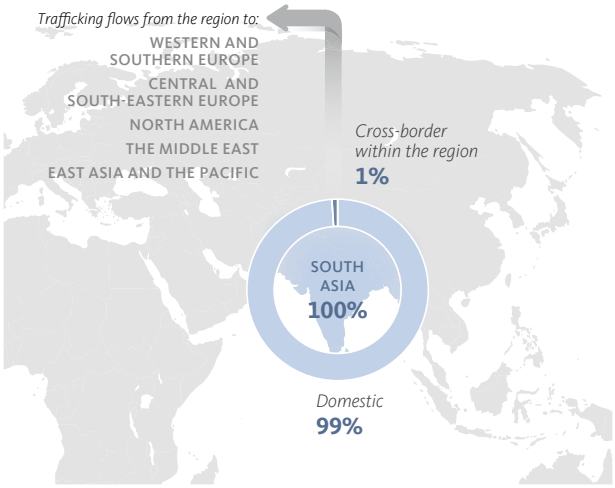
Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 5.419 victims detected in nine countries in South Asia.

Trafficking flows

Almost all victims detected in South Asia were trafficked domestically. The less than one per cent of detected victims trafficked across borders were from neighbouring countries within the region.

Many South Asian victims are instead increasingly detected outside of the region. As an origination point, countries in East Asia and the Pacific, Western and Southern Europe, North America have reported an increasing number of South Asian victims since 2017.

Map. 19 Main trafficking flows detected for South Asia, 2020



Source: UNODC
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Cross-border victims of trafficking for forced labour

Two recent court case summaries shared with UNODC describe South Asian victims, mostly men, trafficked for the purpose of forced labour to North America or Western and Southern Europe. In such cases, local traffickers were able to recruit victims by abusing their socio-economic need or immigration status.

In one case, three victims from South Asia were trafficked for domestic servitude to the United States, where they were threatened and abused physically and psychologically by a middle-aged American couple (man and woman).

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 631 and 667.

Traffickers

In 2020, 5,523 individuals, men and women, were contacted by law enforcement authorities in South Asian countries in relation to investigations of trafficking in persons.[161] In the same year, at least 3,787 people were prosecuted for trafficking in persons,[162] and 167 convicted.[163] Not enough information was available about the sex disaggregation of the individuals involved in the criminal procedure.

Cases shared with UNODC can shed more light on the experiences of South Asian victims who are trafficked across borders outside the region. Usually, traffickers in these cases were higher income co-nationals. They often grew up in the same area as their victims, but with better socio-economic conditions, often with access to permits to stay in the country of destination. A large majority of the offenders convicted in countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council originate from South Asia, according to the court cases shared with UNODC.



Cross-border trafficking of South Asian victims committed by South Asian offenders

In countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Western and Southern Europe, South Asian offenders were convicted of trafficking of co-nationals, for various exploitative purposes. Case narratives shared with UNODC illustrate different dynamics involved in trafficking co-nationals for both sexual exploitation and forced labour to high-income countries.

In the cases detected in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the offenders were all men, citizens of Bangladesh or India. They were all convicted of trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In these cases, victims were women, between 20 and 30 years old in most cases, originating from the same areas as their traffickers. They had moved to countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council in search of better opportunities and were instead subject to sexual exploitation. In many of these cases, the women managed to contact the police or an intermediary who then alerted the authorities.

In one case, the victim asked for help to another Bangladeshi woman after spending several months in total isolation at the offenders' house. The rescuer reported the case to law enforcement authorities who freed the victim and arrested the offender.

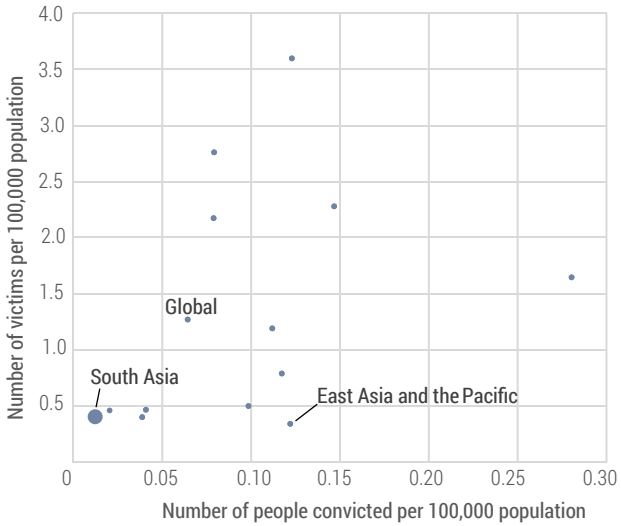
In another case in 2019, two Indian nationals – husband and wife – were convicted of trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced labour to Western and Southern Europe. The four Indian victims were subjected to forced labour in a restaurant owned by the couple. As the permit of stay of these victims was linked to their employment in the restaurant, the couple could exert control over them.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 675, Case 676, Case 687, Case 688.

Criminal justice response

Most South Asian countries have a specific offence of trafficking in persons in their legislation. These were introduced after the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children entered into force. However, countries in South Asia convict fewer perpetrators of trafficking in proportion to their populations than most other regions. At the same time, though, the rate at which authorities detect victims in South Asia is comparable to the rest of the world, and higher than countries in East Asia and the Pacific.

Fig. 146 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data

161 As reported by national authorities of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

162 As reported by national authorities of Bhutan, India and Nepal.

163 As reported by national authorities of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.



Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Map. 20 Countries and territories covered in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*



Source: UNODC.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

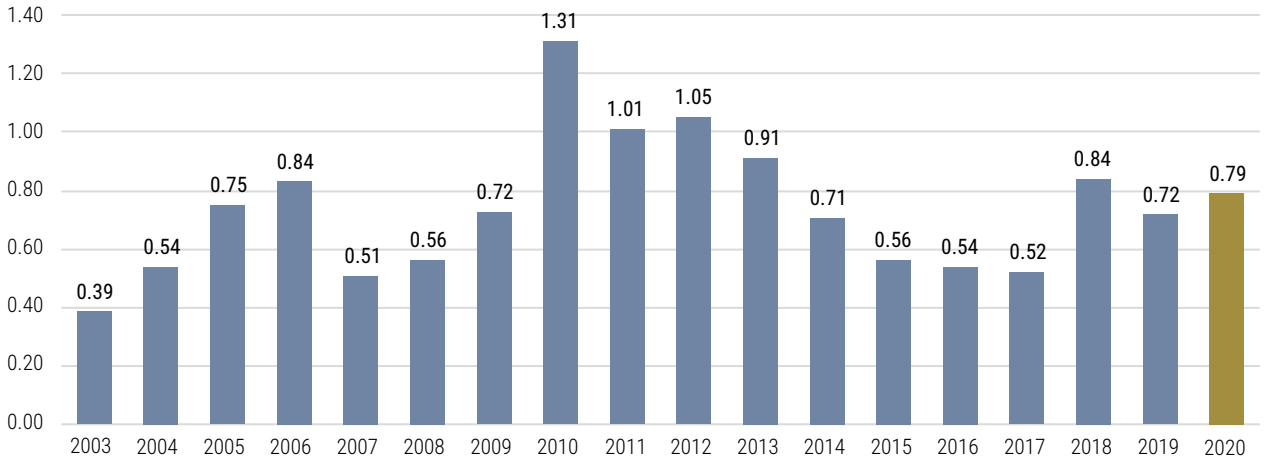
* This subregion comprises seven countries in Eastern Europe and five countries in Central Asia. Eastern Europe consists of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Central Asia includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Fig. 147 Emerging trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

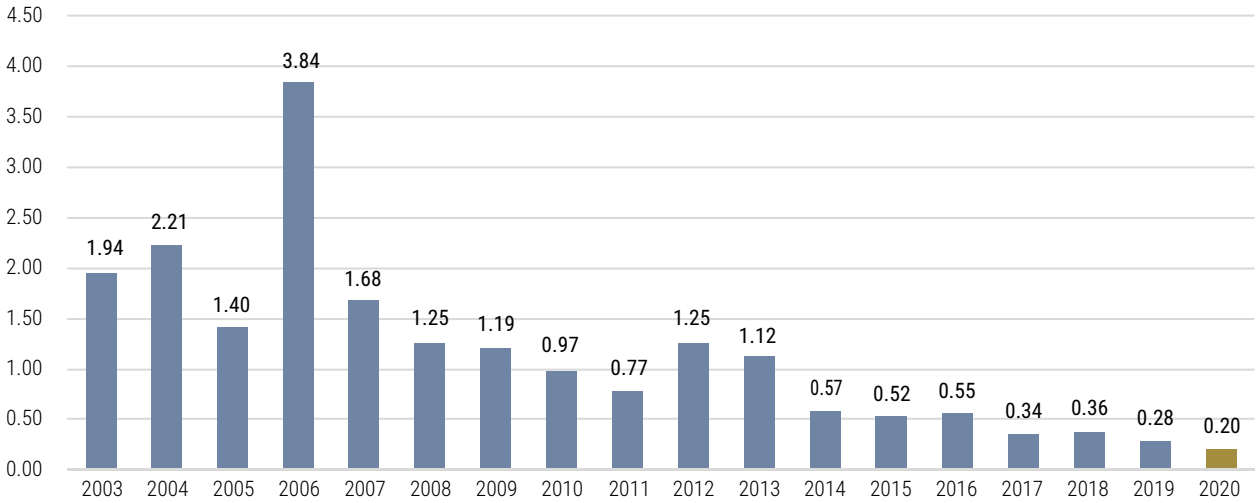
	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total		Victims detected (per 100,000p): + 9%
Types of trafficking flows	Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p): – 9%	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p): + 59%
Forms of exploitation	Victims in sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p): – 29%	Victims in forced labour detected (per 100,000p): + 35%
Victims' profiles	Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): – 24%	Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): + 41%
Criminal justice response	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: - – 21% Persons prosecuted of trafficking in persons: – 33% Persons investigated of trafficking in persons: – 44%	

Fig. 148 Emerging trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

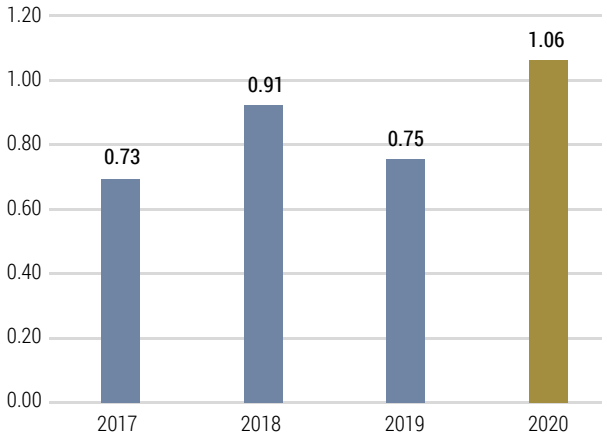
Number of victims detected per 100,000 population, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2003–2020)



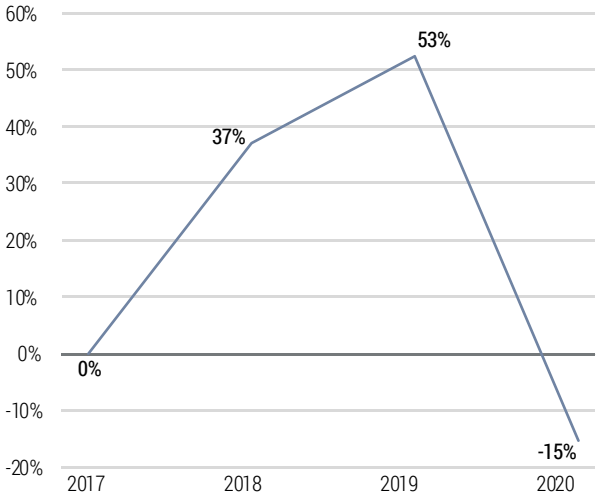
Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2003–2020)



Total male victims detected per 100,000 males



Change in the number of persons investigated (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

Trends

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the pandemic seems have had a limited impact on the detection of trafficking victims in 2020, which increased about 9 per cent. The most marked trend is a severe slowdown in the criminal justice response to trafficking crime. Far fewer investigations took place, and both prosecutions and convictions fell throughout the region in 2020.

Fewer victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were recorded in this period (-30 per cent). A drop in the identification of female victims trafficked for sexual exploitation accounted for the largest proportion of this decrease. Compared to 2019, and against this decreasing trend, more male victims (men and boys) and more victims in forced labour were identified in 2020.

Victims

The profiles of the victims found in the two areas of this region vary drastically. Most detected victims in Eastern Europe are men, while women and girls are the vast majority of victims identified in Central Asia. Compared to other regions of the world, child victims (both girls and boys) account for a smaller share of the victims detected in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Trafficking for forced labour in the construction sector in the South Caucasus

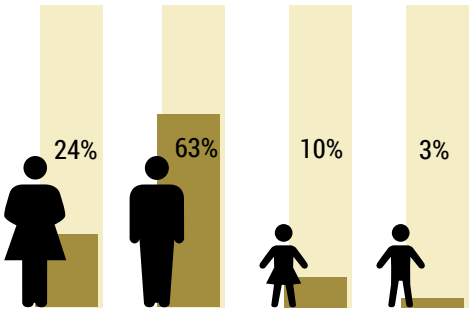
On 22 March 2012, a group of 22 men from the Western Balkans filed a case against a multinational construction company for trafficking for forced labour in the construction industry in the South Caucasus.

These workers had been recruited to work at a large construction site, with promises to receive excellent accommodation, good salaries, food expenses, paid visas and health insurance once they arrived. Upon arrival, traffickers took away their travel and identification documents, preventing them from leaving the country. The victims were accommodated in dormitories in inhumane living conditions and their freedom of movement was restricted. Traffickers used various punishments against them, including mental and physical abuse, such as beatings and prolonged physical labour. The men were also deprived of adequate food and many lost significant weight. Also, they had no access to health care and some developed untreatable illnesses. The traffickers did not pay them for their work for several months and most victims were exploited for periods of six months or longer.

In October and November 2019, after mobilization of international NGOs in support of these trafficking victims, the company paid part of the unpaid wages to the workers, handed back their passports and arranged their return to their home countries.

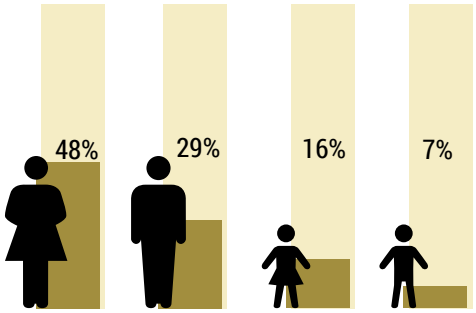
Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case number IRBX037.

Fig. 149 Detected victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

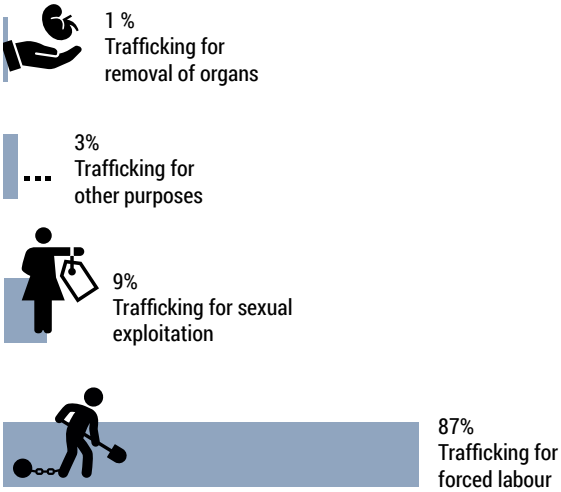
Fig. 150 Detected victims of trafficking in Central Asia, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

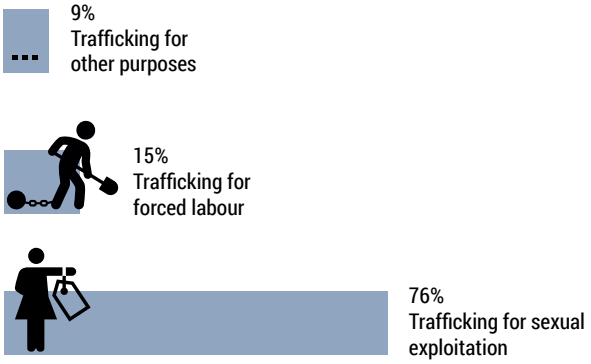
In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, distinctions in victim profiles are seen in relation to the forms of exploitation most reported in the two sub-regions. Nearly 90 per cent of the detected victims in Eastern Europe were exploited for forced labour. So, in this region as a whole, this form of exploitation is the most detected. In Central Asia, on the other hand, sexual exploitation drives three-quarters of the trafficking in persons detected. Women account for most of the victims in sexual exploitation and men, the vast majority of the victims in forced labour.

Fig. 151 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)



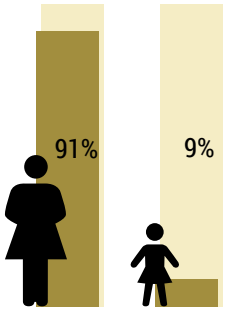
Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

Fig. 152 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Central Asia, 2020 (or most recent)



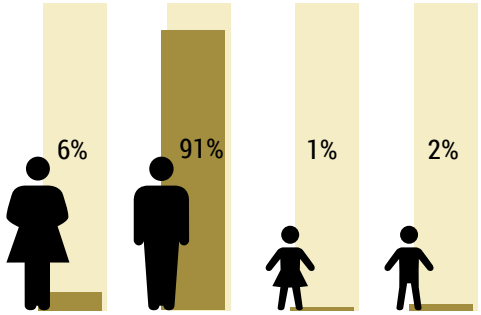
Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

Fig. 153 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Central Asia, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



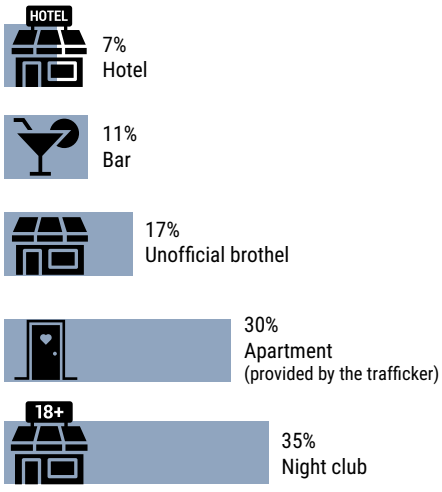
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 154 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 155 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2012–2020)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

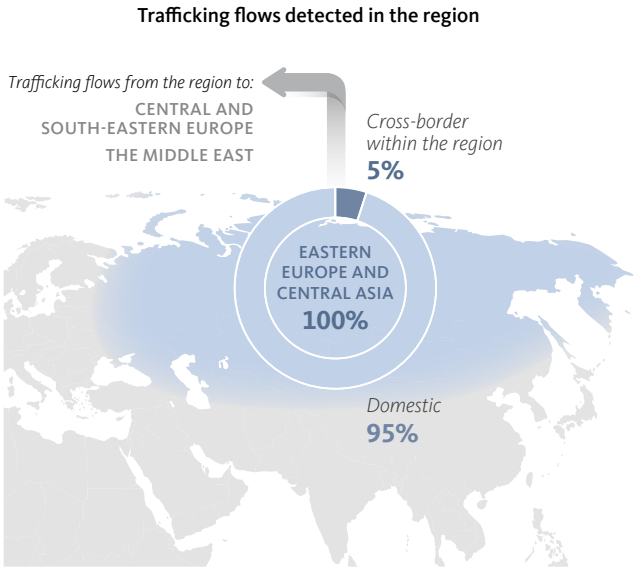
Detected victims of sexual exploitation are most often exploited in visible public locations, according to cases provided to UNODC by national authorities. Many cases describe victims exploited in unlicensed brothels, clubs or bars. Cases where victims face exploitation in private spaces like apartments are, however, likely underrepresented because detecting these situations is so challenging and requires lengthy, proactive investigations.

Court cases shared by national authorities in this region highlight that trafficking for forced labour victims are often detected in construction work.[164] Other forms of exploitation found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are trafficking for forced criminality, as well as trafficking for removal of organs.

Trafficking flows

Almost all the victims of trafficking in persons detected are recruited and exploited within their home countries. Those that are internationally trafficked are unlikely to leave the Eastern Europe and Central Asian region. The only noteworthy flow of trafficking victims outside the region is from Eastern Europe to Central and South-Eastern Europe, as well as to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East.

Map. 21 Main trafficking flows detected for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Trafficking victims sexually exploited in night clubs of Western Europe

In 2015 in the Russian Federation, after a five-year investigation, three citizens were found guilting of trafficking women for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
Under the guise of companies purporting to provide employment services abroad for Russian nationals, since 2007 this organized criminal group recruited and sold young women to owners of nightclubs in Western and Southern Europe to be sexually exploited.
Members of the group sought out women between the ages of 18 and 36 who found themselves in vulnerable situations and recruited them to move abroad. The traffickers used deceit, abuse of trust, persuasion and promises of comfortable living conditions, including high earnings, luxury accommodation and personal security.
The victims were brought from the Far Eastern Federal Area to Moscow, where they were met by members of the criminal group and provided with temporary accommodation in hotels and rented apartments. The group members prepared forged documents in the names of the victims and those documents were used to obtain tourist visas that would enable the victims to enter countries of the European Union. The victims themselves had no part in the process of submitting documents or applying for visas.
Once these tourist visas expired, fake marriages or forged documents were created to keep victims in abusive situations in the European Union. Victims were subjected to physical and psychological abuse, and coerced into engaging in sexual exploitation.
On 4 July 2017, a court sentenced the three perpetrators to between 3.5 and 10 years' imprisonment.

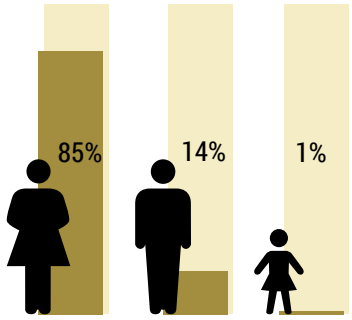
Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 386 – The Russian Federation.

Traffickers

Little information is available about the sex of individuals convicted in Eastern European countries, while **the preponderance of traffickers who are convicted in Central Asia are women**, more than 80 per cent. The overrepresentation of women among those convicted has been evident in this region for a number of years and documented in previous reports. This is the highest share of convicted traffickers who are women found worldwide.
Like much of the rest of the world, though, the vast majority of people convicted of trafficking in persons in this region are citizens of the country where they were convicted.

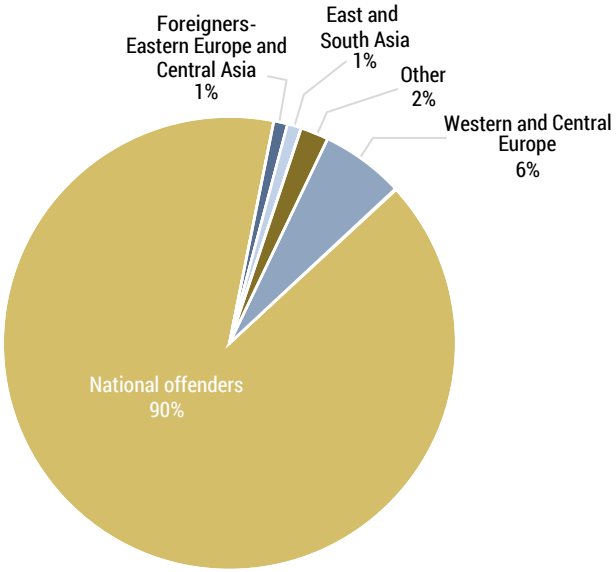
164 See UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, cases IRBx037, UZB001, and UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 331.

Fig. 156 Persons convicted of trafficking in Central Asia, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

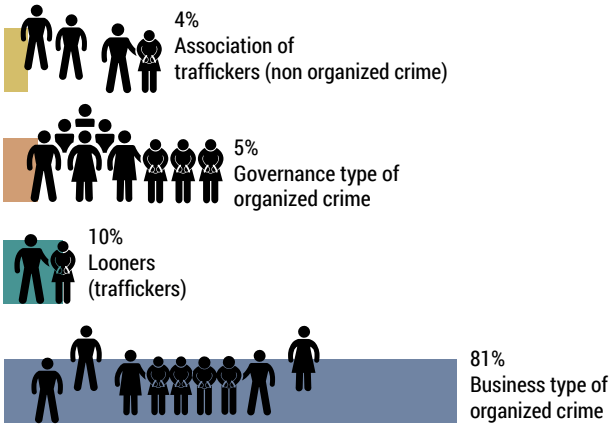
Fig. 157 Persons convicted of trafficking in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

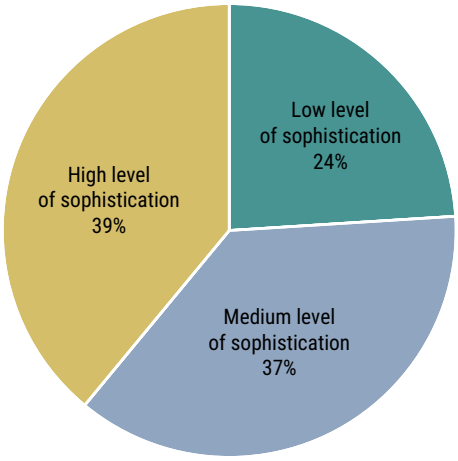
A clearer picture of the types of trafficking organizations most often exposed by law enforcement activities can be assembled from the analysis of 79 cases reported to UNODC between 2010 and 2020. Most of these traffickers committed the crime in conjunction with two or more other criminals systematically working together for the purpose of trafficking people as a core criminal business. Rarely, however, do these groups become more structured criminal organizations or maintain domain over territories. Compared to the other European regions, fewer traffickers convicted and reported to UNODC engaged in trafficking in persons within a highly organized criminal structure.

Fig. 158 Type of criminal organization* reported in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* See definitions of organization types on page 48 of this report.

Fig. 159 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization* in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

A women-led criminal group recruiting women and girls for sexual exploitation

In February 2014, a regional court in the Russian Federation delivered a guilty verdict in a criminal case against seven women traffickers working together to recruit girls in Samara and Ulyanovsk provinces, as well as in the Republic of Chuvashia, and then forcing them into sexual exploitation.

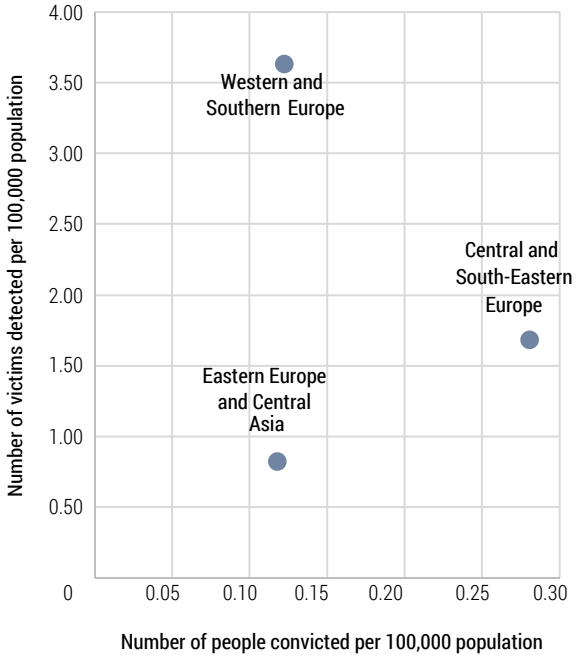
The perpetrators placed advertisements in regional newspapers to recruit servers to work in a café. Instead, threatening violence, they forced the women responding to the advertisements to be sexually exploited. This criminal organization managed three brothels in three separate cities, which held 25 women and two girls.

The women were held in heavily guarded apartments. Those who managed to escape were found, beaten and brought back by the criminals. One of the women jumped out of a window and was hospitalized with leg and hand fractures.

The court found all seven women guilty and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from three to 11 years.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 143 – The Russian Federation.

Fig. 160 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020

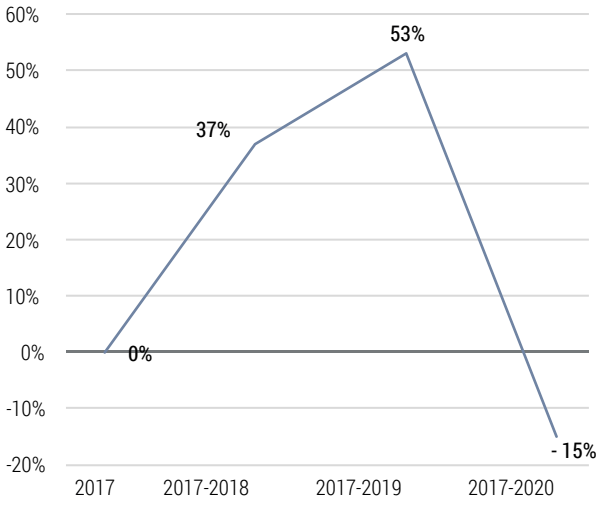


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Criminal justice response

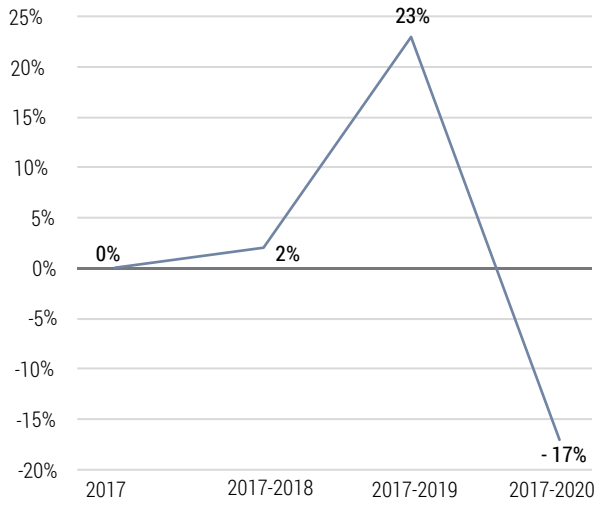
All countries in this region have dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons, mostly introduced in 2003 or since. Eastern European and Central Asian countries convict more traffickers in proportion to their populations than the global average. The rate neared 0.1/0.15 per 100,000 people in 2020. **Convictions in the region, however, have decreased significantly.** In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries in this region reported a precipitous decline in the number of investigations and prosecution, which will likely continue the downward trend in convictions.

Fig. 161 Change in the number of persons investigated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



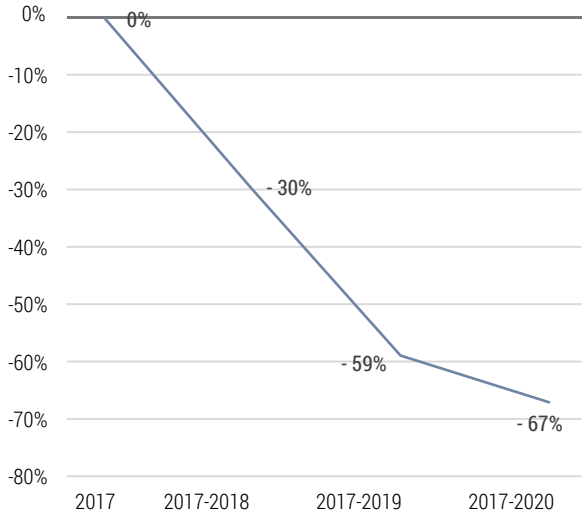
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 162 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



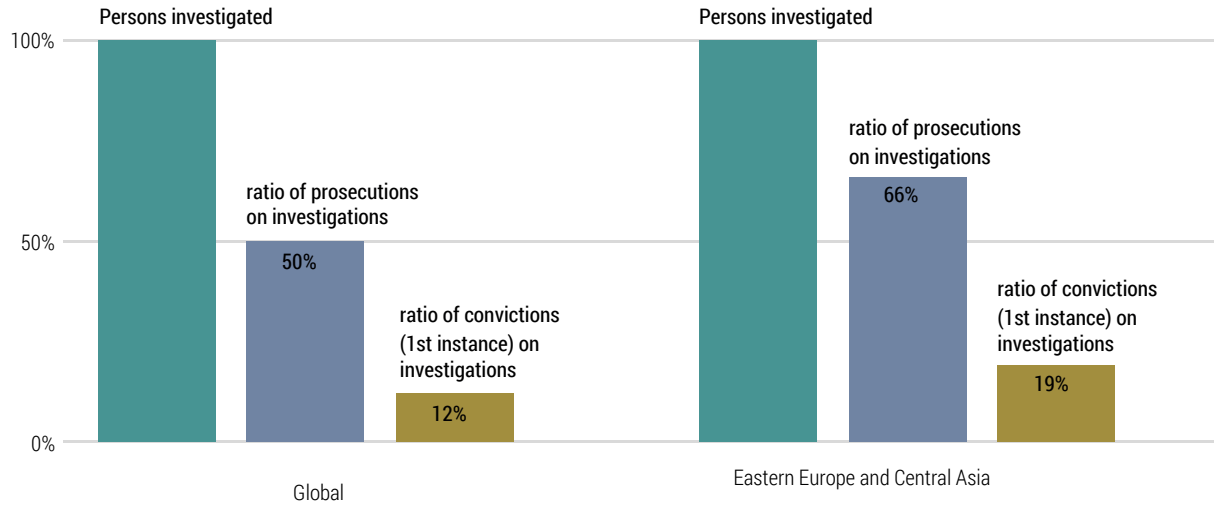
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 163 Change in the number of persons convicted in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 164 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017-2020

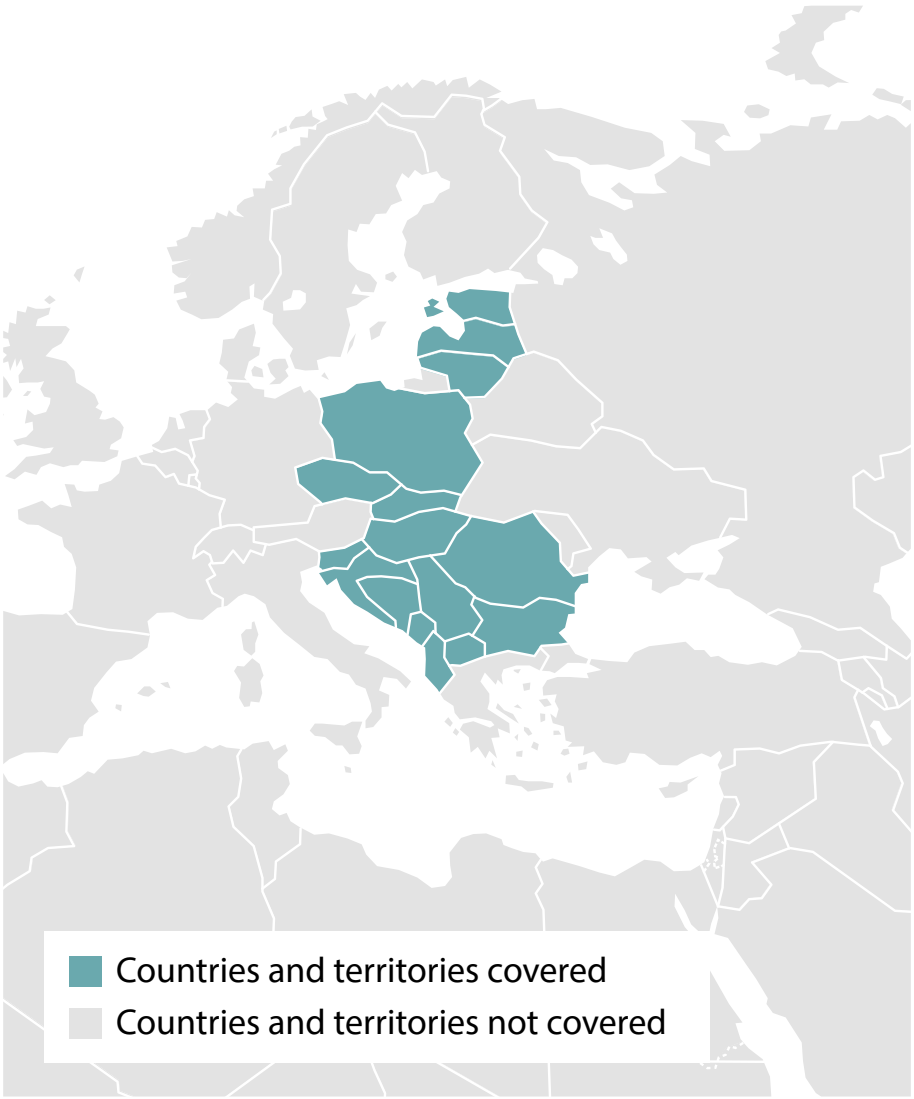


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



Central and South-Eastern Europe

Map. 22 Countries and territories covered in Central and South-Eastern Europe*



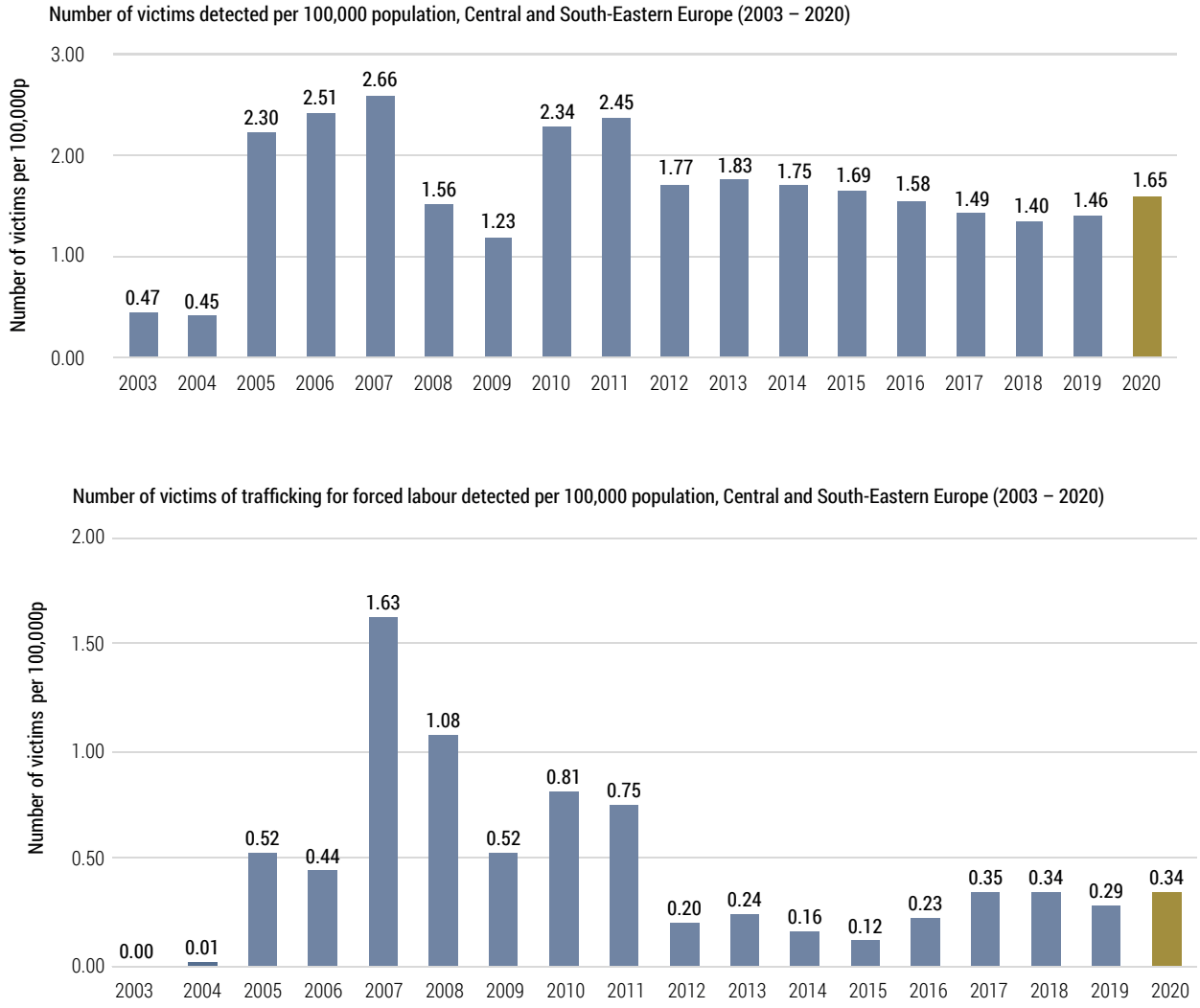
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

* This subregion consists of the following 16 countries: Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia (Central Europe) and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia (South-Eastern Europe).

Fig. 165 Emerging trends in Central and South-Eastern Europe in 2020

	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total		Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p) + 13%
Types of trafficking flows		Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p). + 20% Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p) : + 64%
Forms of exploitation	Victims exploited in begging and crime activities detected (per 100,000p): – 36%	Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p): + 18%
Victims' profiles	Child victims detected (per 100,000p):- – 11%	Detected male victims (per 100,00 males): + 38%
Criminal justice response		Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: + 14% Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons + 12%

Fig. 166 Emerging trends in Central and South-Eastern Europe



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Trends

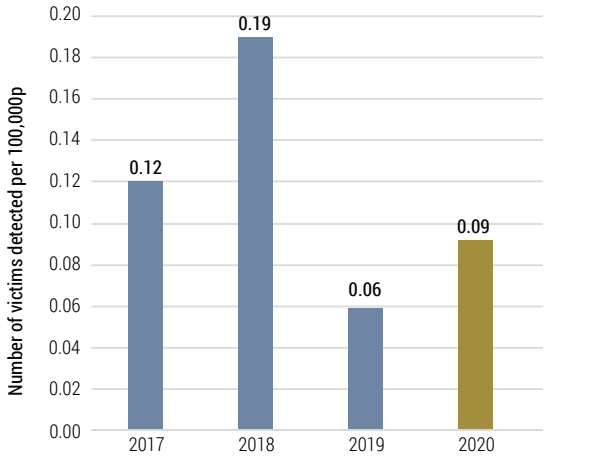
The key developments in 2020 in Central and South-Eastern Europe include: a continued increase in the detection of victims of trafficking in persons; a slight shift in victim profiles; and an uptick in the criminal justice response to trafficking. The trend towards identifying more victims of trafficking relative to countries' populations accelerated – a four per cent increase between 2018 and 2019 jumped to 13 per cent from 2019.

In 2020, victims trafficked for the purpose of forced labour made up a larger share of all the victims detected in this region compared to the past. However, trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the primary form of trafficking in persons those national authorities uncover.

Compared to the year before, a higher prevalence of foreigners, as well as men and boys, were detected as trafficking victims in 2020 in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Overall, though, these numbers are in line with earlier figures, which points to increased detection of male victims of trafficking in recent years. However, women trafficked domestically remain the majority of victims detected in the region.

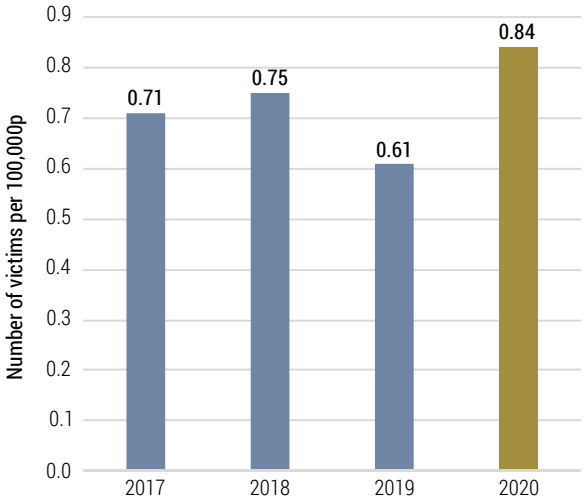
Notably, there was an increase in the number of prosecutions and convictions in 2020, despite any expected pandemic-related slowdown in justice that was observed in other regions of the world.

Number of victims of cross-border trafficking detected per 100,000 population in Central and South-Eastern Europe (2017-2020)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national dataand UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Number of male victims detected per 100,000 population in Central and South-Eastern Europe (2017-2020)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Victims

In 2020, female victims (both women and girls) accounted for nearly three-quarters of the victims of trafficking that were identified in the Central and South-Eastern region. One-quarter of the total victims identified were children, while a smaller proportion, only 20 per cent, were adult men.

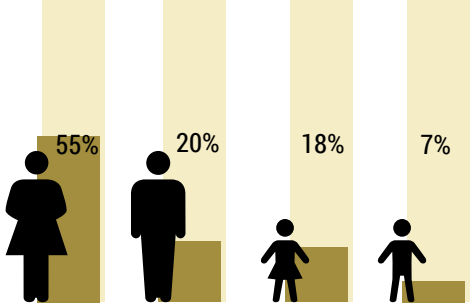
The data from 2020 show that two-thirds of the victims identified by national authorities in the region were sexually exploited, representing the most reported form of exploitation in this part of the world, as has been the case for many years. Women account for the great majority of the detected victims facing sexual exploitation and about one-third of the victims in forced labour situations.

Detected forms of sexual exploitation in Central and South-Eastern Europe seem to take place in rather **visible, public locations**, as more hidden forms of sexual exploitation can be difficult to detect. About half of cases shared by national authorities involve victims exploited in street prostitution, brothels, clubs or bars. The other half of cases indicate victims were exploited in private apartments and hotels.

Detection of trafficking for forced labour rose in 2020. Cases provided to UNODC most often highlighted victims of trafficking in persons for forced labour working in the agriculture sector.[165]

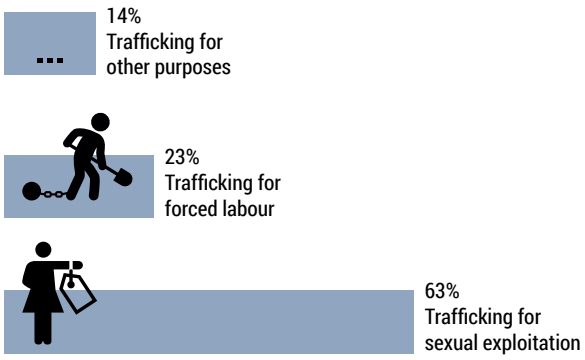
Within the category of other forms of exploitation, trafficking for forced criminality made up about 4 per cent of the total victims detected, while trafficking for forced begging made up 2.5 per cent of victims. Illegal adoption also accounts for 2.5 per cent of detected trafficking victims.

Fig. 167 Detected victims of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

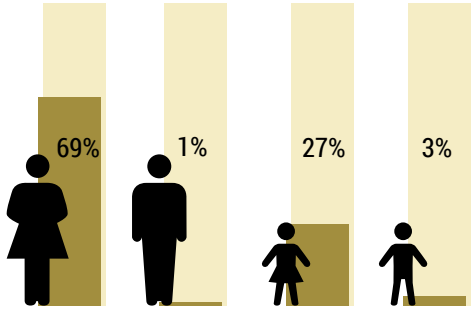
Fig. 168 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

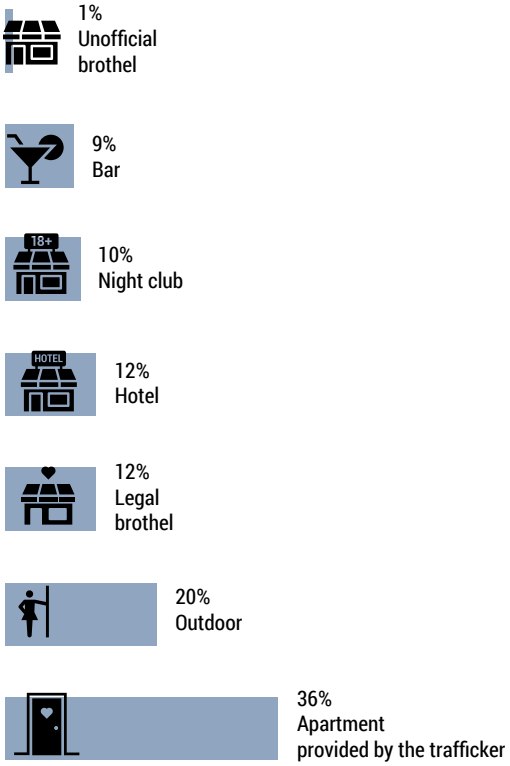
165 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, cases 102, 134, 353, 354, 421 and 578.

Fig. 169 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



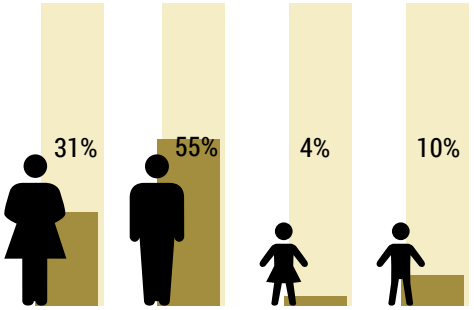
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 170 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, Central and South-Eastern Europe, (2012 - 2020)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Fig. 171 Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Trafficking flows

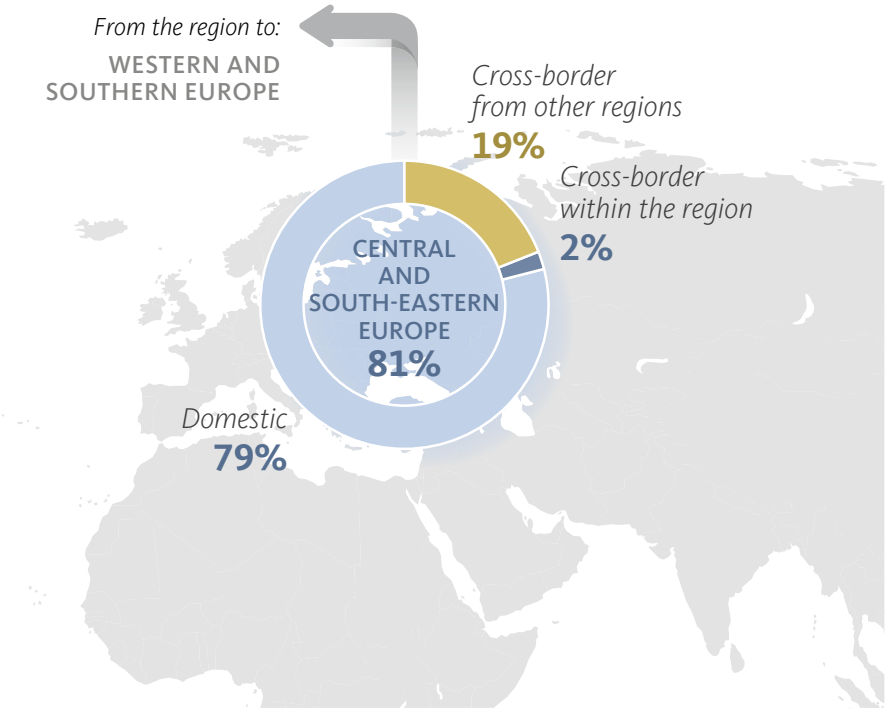
Nearly 80 per cent of trafficking victims identified in Central and South-Eastern Europe were trafficked within their home countries. They were nationals of the countries where they were exploited and detected by national authorities. This proportion of victims who were domestically trafficked was significantly higher in the region in 2020 compared to 2019, when it was closer to half.

Citizens of Central and South-Eastern European countries are also trafficked abroad. Most victims who originate in Central and South-Eastern Europe are identified in Western and Southern Europe, where they make up 20 per cent of detected victims. This number appears to be increasing. Victims from this region were rarely detected outside of Europe during the reporting period.

Most victims of domestic trafficking are young women or girls who have been sexually exploited. This is also the case among victims of cross-border trafficking exploited in the region, who tend to be nationals of this region trafficked to other nearby countries within the region and wider Europe. Again, Central and South-Eastern European women and girls who are detected as victims of cross-border trafficking within the region mostly face sexual exploitation. Detected cases of cross-border trafficking into forced begging and criminal activity most often involve children; men account for the majority of the victims of cross-border trafficking for forced labour in agriculture and construction.

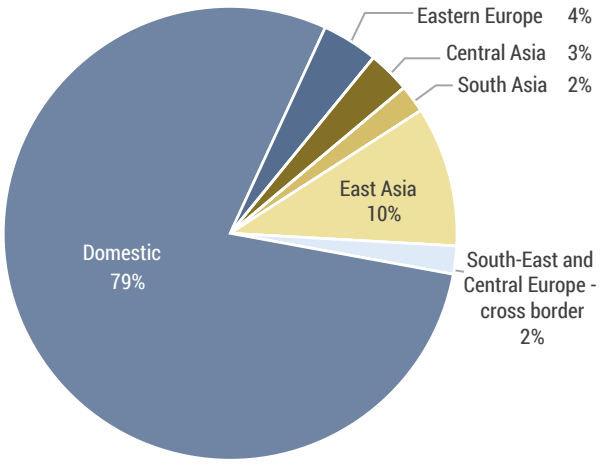
The smaller group of foreign victims who faced cross-border trafficking into Central and South-Eastern Europe primarily originated from South-East Asia, Eastern Europe, most often Ukraine, and Central Asia.

Map. 23 Main trafficking flows detected for Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)



Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Fig. 24.1 Detected victims in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

East Asian victims exploited to commit fraud in the Balkans

In July 2018, an indictment for trafficking in human beings was filed against an organized international criminal group in the Republic of Slovenia against four individuals from East Asia. This group was found to have exploited a large number of victims throughout Slovenia. For an extended period, they forced victims held in call centers to commit fraud against East Asian nationals in Slovenia.

The criminals locked victims in call centers, restricted their freedom of movement and isolated them from outside world, including by restricting and controling their contact with relatives, as well as confiscating personal documents, money and telephones. The head of each call center used various rules, instructions, demands, threats and penalties to force victims to commit criminal fraud. Later in 2020, another five offenders from this group were also found guilty of trafficking in persons.

A similar case in Montenegro in 2020 impacted 37 identified victims from East Asia, including 12 women and 25 men. All victims were exploited to commit online fraud against East Asian nationals residing in these countries.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 621 – Slovenia.

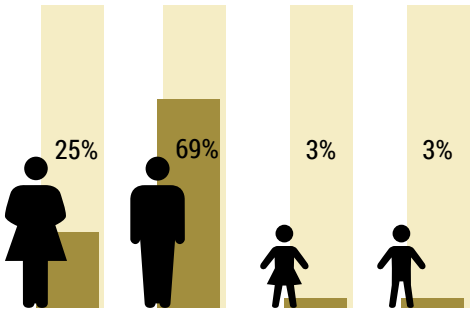
Traffickers

Much like in Western and Southern Europe, most people prosecuted or convicted for trafficking in Central or South-Eastern Europe are men - women make up just a quarter of those prosecuted or convicted for the offence. However, unlike in Western and Southern European countries, **the great majority of people convicted are citizens of the country of conviction**. Other nationals convicted are typically from the countries where their foreign victims originated.

The perpetrators convicted in the court cases shared by national authorities of Central and South-Eastern European countries committed the crime in conjunction with two or more traffickers, who systematically worked together for the purpose of trafficking persons as a core criminal business. This business-enterprise type usually includes some people specialized in recruiting victims, then selling them to others specialized in exploitation.[166] These groups can be found engaged in all forms of exploitation. They typically operate across borders, trafficking victims from Central and South-Eastern Europe to Western and Southern Europe.

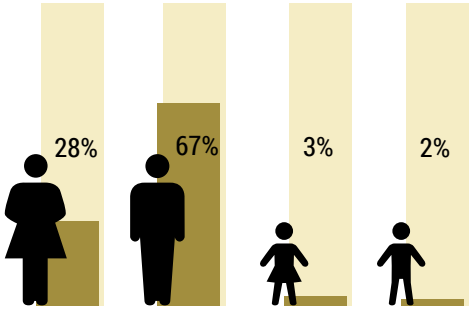
However, compared with Western and Southern Europe, the court cases shared by national authorities from this region describe a lower level of organization among trafficking groups here. Around a third of cases reported having only one or two people engaged in trafficking, similar to what is found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Fig. 172 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



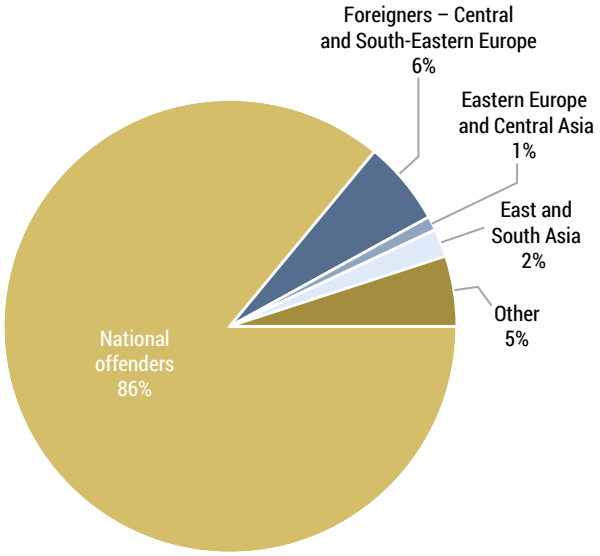
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 173 Persons convicted of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

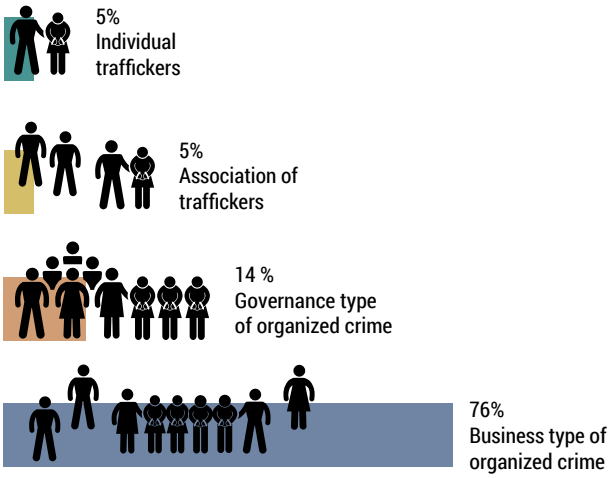
Fig. 174 Persons convicted of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

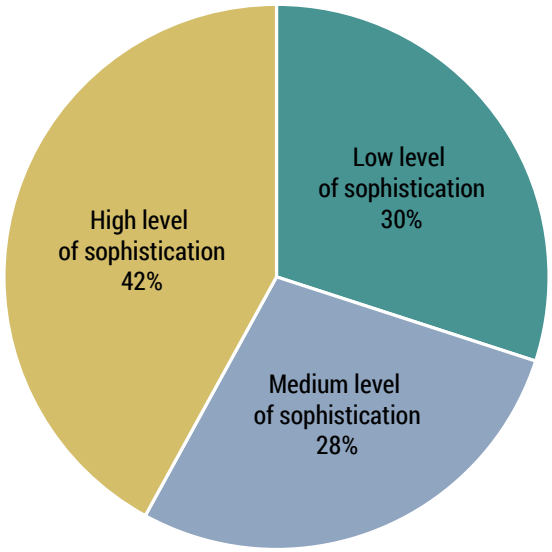
166 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 46, case 48, case 49, case 50, case 52, case 65, case 112, case 115, case 118, case 134, case 137, case 139, case 140, case 172, case 251, case 280, case 352, case 421, case 422, case 426, case 579, case 580, case 588.

Fig. 175 Type of criminal organization* reported in Central and South-Eastern Europe, as reported in case narratives (2009-2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries
* See definitions of organization types on page 48 of this report.

Fig. 176 Level of "sophistication" of the trafficking organization in Central and South-Eastern Europe, as reported in case narratives (2009-2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries
* UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

Tracking a sophisticated criminal organization trafficking pregnant women to sell infants

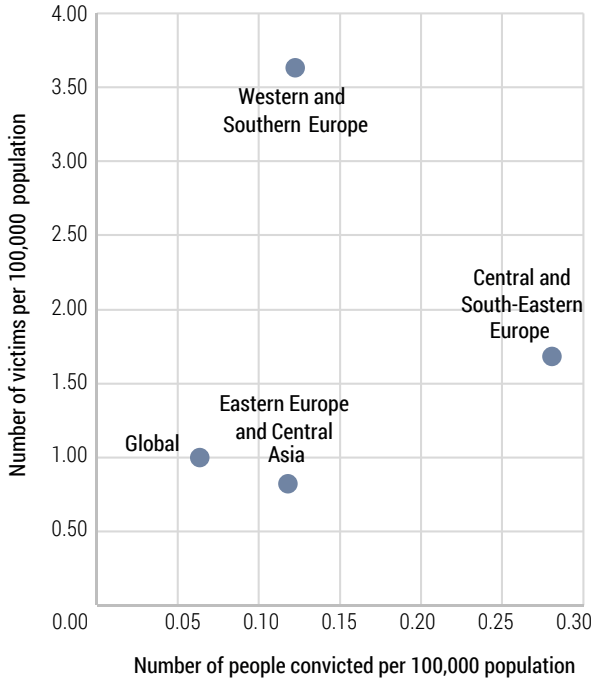
The Bulgarian and Greek authorities dismantled an organized crime group trafficking pregnant women to Greece for the purpose of sexual exploitation and selling newborn babies. The investigation uncovered more than ten victims of trafficking, who had been forced into sexual exploitation, then forced to give birth and sell their infants in Greece. At the end of 2010 in Sliven, Bulgaria, the authorities used operational-tracking methods to arrest the traffickers.
Authorities found documents certifying bank transfers from Greece to Bulgaria, as well as medical documents in Bulgarian, French and Greek languages. Other evidence included birth certificates, international passports, health documents, SIM cards, cell phones, copies of ID cards and a gas pistol. All these proved that the leader of the group dealt with procurement and sale of the new-born children.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 23 – Bulgaria.

Criminal justice response

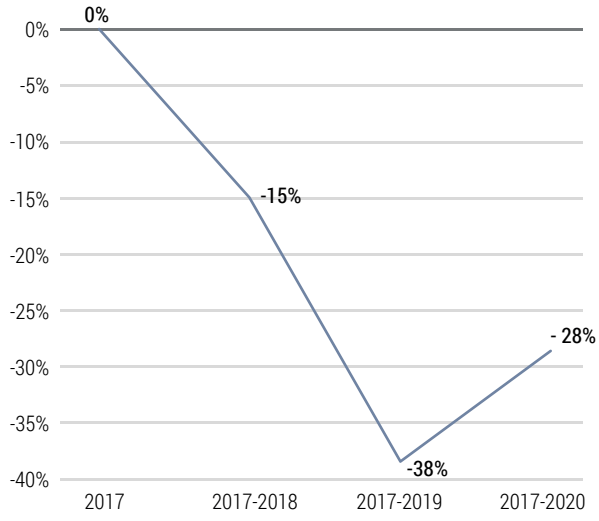
Central and South-Eastern European countries convict more traffickers than other regions of the world and have long-standing dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons. For every 100,000 people within the broader population, about 0.25/0.3 individuals were convicted for trafficking in the year 2020.
Over the entire period (2017 to 2020), some decrease in prosecutions and convictions was recorded compared to previous years. During the pandemic, however, contrary to the global trend, this region recorded a slight increase in prosecutions and convictions.
In this region, the number of offenders prosecuted is around 40 per cent of those investigated by police authorities in the two previous years. About one-third of the total number of people prosecuted were convicted. As a result, around 11 offenders are convicted for every 100 individuals investigated by police authorities.

Fig. 177 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



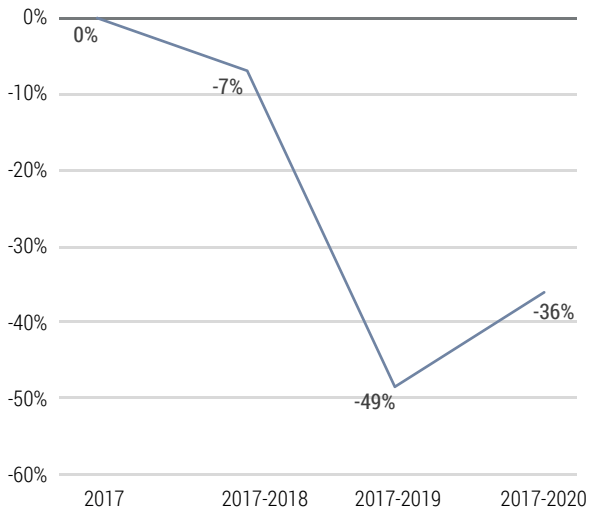
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNDESA World Population Prospects 2019.

Fig. 178 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



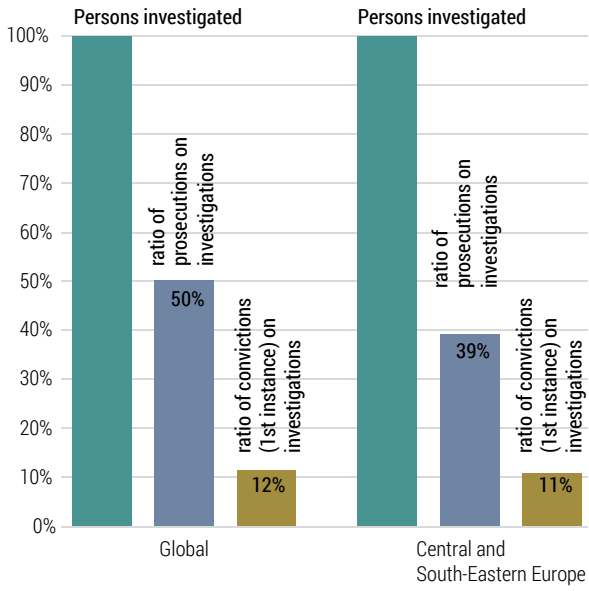
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 179 Change in the number of persons convicted in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 180 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2017-2020

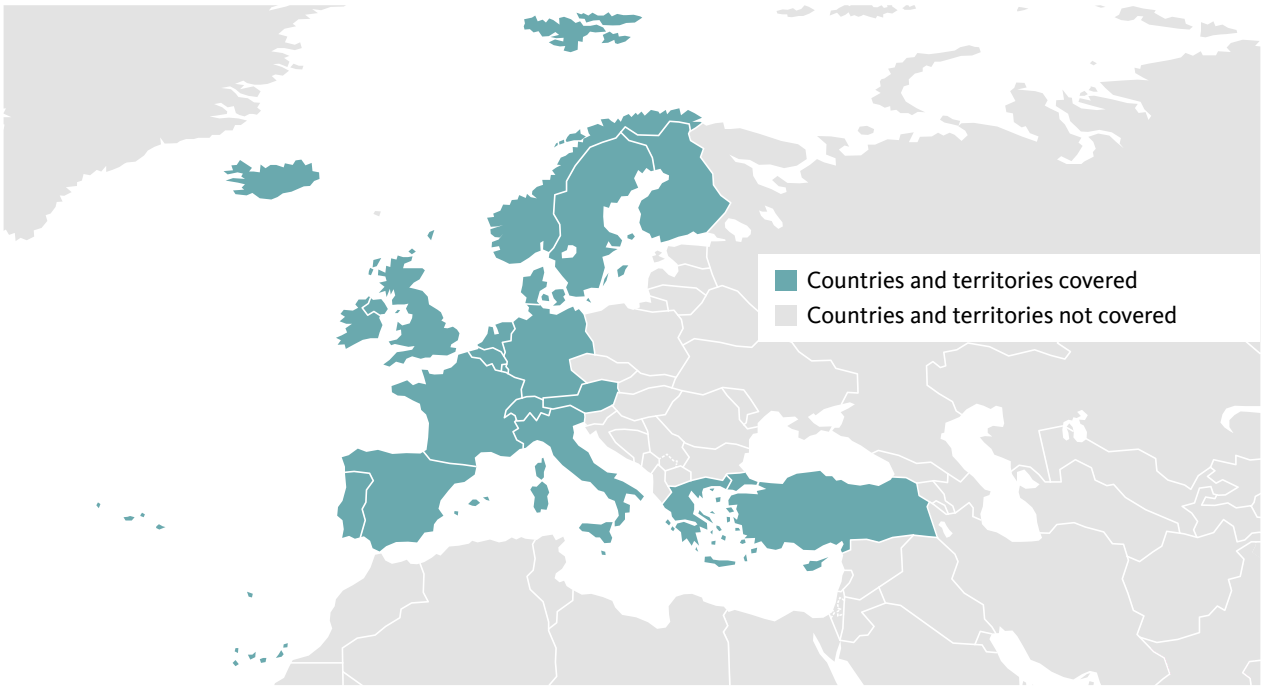


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



Western and Southern Europe

Map. 24 Countries and territories covered in Western and Southern Europe*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

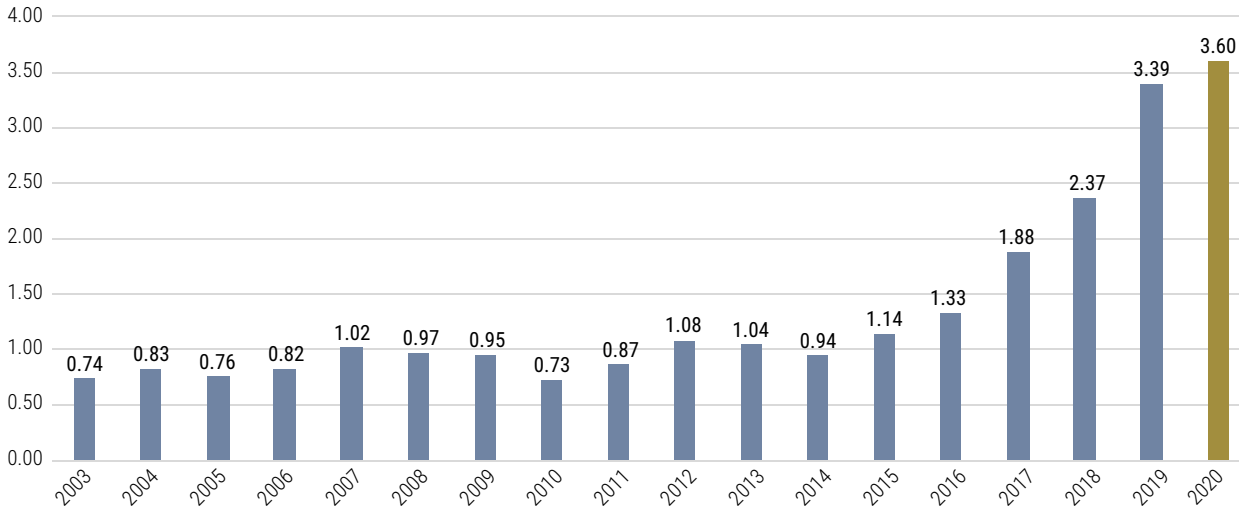
* This subregion consists of the following countries: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Fig. 181 Emerging trends in Western and Southern Europe in 2020

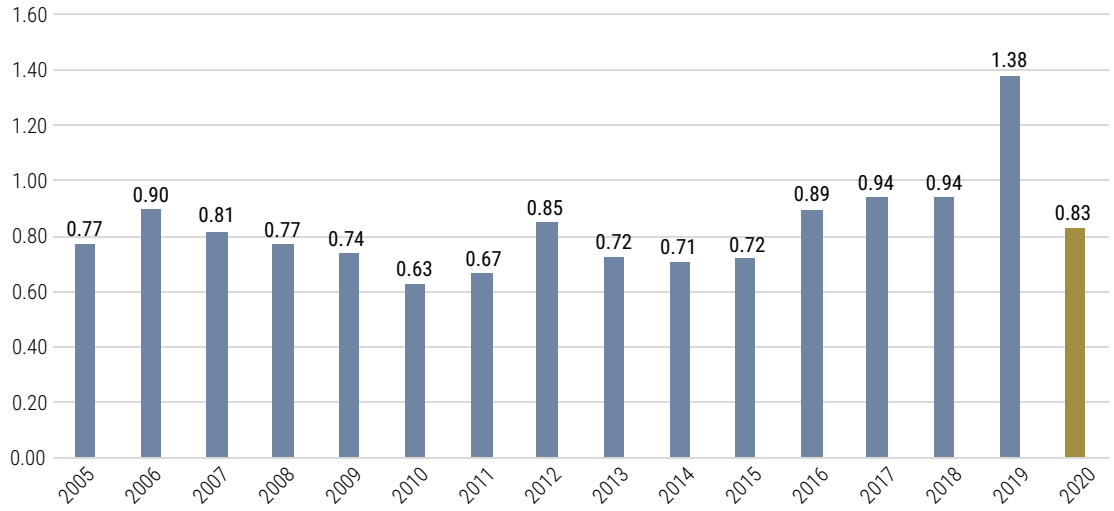
	Decreasing trends compared to 2019	Increasing trends compared to 2019
Total		Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p). **+ 6%**
Types of trafficking flows	Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p). **– 15%**	Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p). **+ 15%**
Forms of exploitation	Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p). **– 40%** Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p). **– 12%**	Victims trafficked for forced criminality and mixed forms of exploitation detected (per 100,000p). **+ 47%**
Victims' profiles		Detected child victims (per 100,000p). **+ 25%** Detected male victims (per 100,000 males). **+ 22%**
Criminal justice response	Persons convicted of trafficking in persons. **– 45%**	Persons investigated of trafficking in persons. **+ 15%**

Fig. 182 Emerging trends in Western and Southern Europe

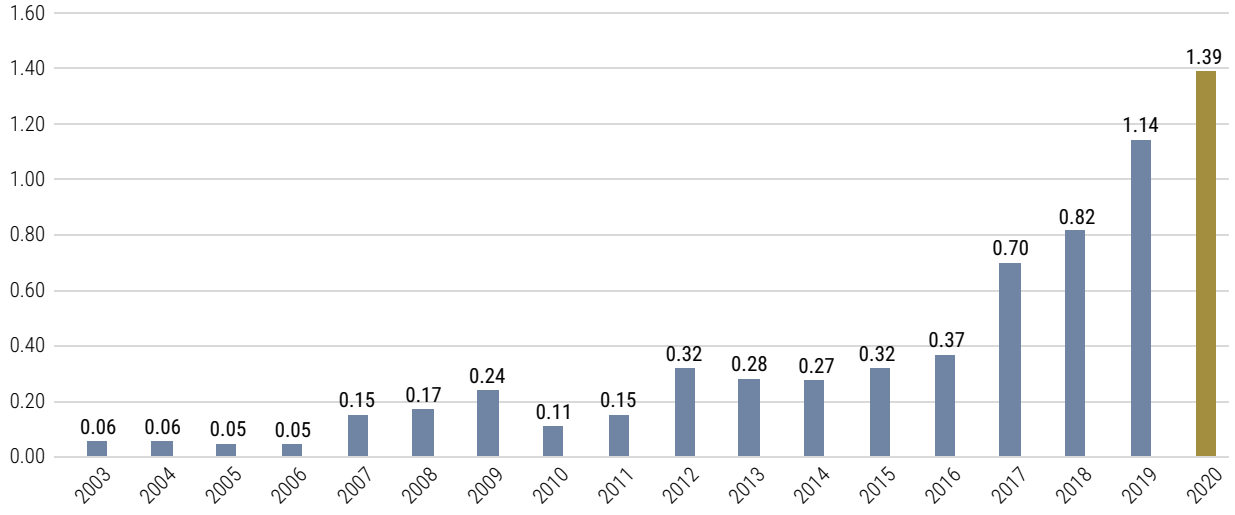
Number of victims detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2003–2020)



Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2005–2020)

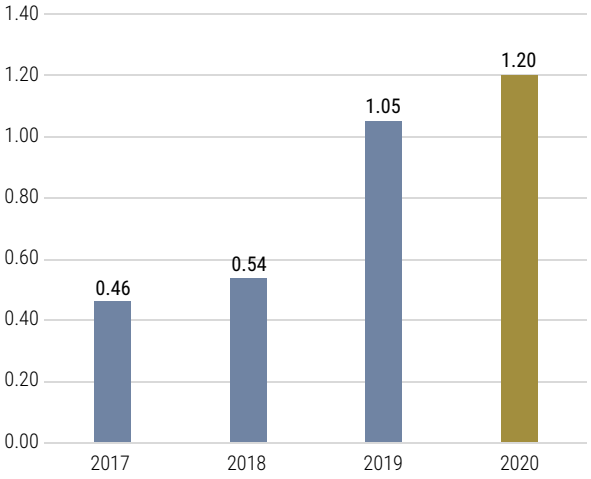


Number of child victims detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2003–2020)



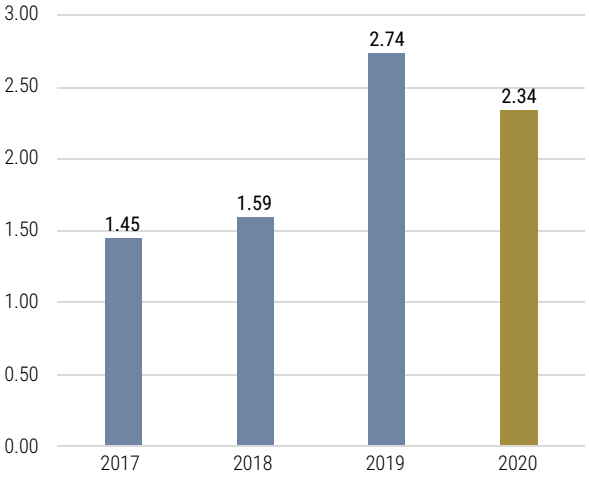
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Number of victims of domestic trafficking detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2017–2020)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Number of victims of cross-border trafficking detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2017–2020)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Trends

Among the main trafficking in persons trends in Western and Southern Europe during the year 2020 are: changes in the forms of trafficking and profiles of victims identified; increased detection of domestic trafficking (within one country); and a decrease in prosecutions and convictions. The number of trafficking victims detected relative to countries' populations continued to increase (+6 per cent), but at a slower pace than in previous years. This number had been increasing steadily since 2003.

The most noteworthy change in the forms of trafficking detected is the relative **decline in the proportion of cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation identified (-40 per cent)**, as compared to trafficking for labour exploitation. The decrease in the number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected accounts for a significant proportion of the overall slowdown in 2020 in the growth of the number of victims. On the other hand, more trafficked men, boys, and girls were detected. More victims were trafficked for the purposes of forced criminality, and for mixed forms of exploitation, among those detected by national authorities and reported to UNODC.

A higher prevalence of detected victims of trafficking within their country of nationality was reported in 2020 compared to previous years, 1.2 per 100,000 people, as compared to 1.05 per 100,000 in 2019. Thirty-five per cent of all victims identified in Western and Southern Europe were trafficked within their countries. **Fewer victims of cross-border trafficking were identified in 2020 compared to previous years.** A higher proportion of the foreign victims who were identified had been trafficked from neighbouring regions, whereas there were less reports of long-distance trafficking; more victims from South-Eastern Europe were detected, and fewer from West Africa.

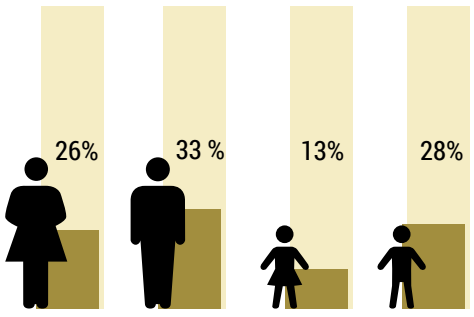
Finally, while the number of investigations reported during this period was higher than in previous years, fewer prosecutions and convictions took place in this region in 2020 than in any of the previous three years.

Victims

In 2020 for the first time in Western and Southern Europe, **more male victims (men and boys) were detected** compared to women and girls and an increased share of the victims identified were children. **Children accounted for more than 40 per cent of the total victims detected** (compared to the 32 per cent reported in 2019 and 34 per cent in 2018).

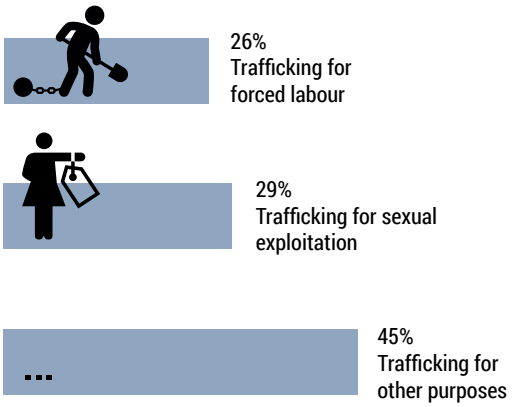
One-third of detected victims of trafficking in persons

Fig. 183 Detected victims of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 14,585 victims detected in 24 countries in Western and Southern Europe.

Fig. 184 Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 15,118 victims detected in 24 countries in Western and Southern Europe.

Fig. 185 Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, Western and Southern Europe, (2012–2020)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries

were sexually exploited, making it the most reported form of exploitation in this part of the world. Mixed forms of exploitation, which most often combined sex exploitation and forced labour, were also detected more in 2020.

Detected forms of sexual exploitation in this region seem to take place in public locations. Most cases shared by national authorities describe victims exploited outdoors, in legal brothels and other public venues, such as saunas, clubs or bars. Fewer cases include victims exploited within private homes, likely because this form of sexual exploitation is more difficult to detect in this region of the world.

According to a recent study, prostitution declined in the Netherlands and Belgium during the 2020 lockdowns. Likewise, studies conducted in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain highlight a **shift towards less visible forms of prostitution during and after the lockdown in 2020**. In the Netherlands, workers in clubs, brothels, street and window prostitution were forced toward less secure locations (as escorts and in private settings).[167] In Spain, women in prostitution interviewed for another study had moved their activities to their private apartments. These persons, who displayed several indicators of having been trafficked, cited fear of loss of income, and consequent inability to afford rent, as main reason to keep working during the pandemic.[168]

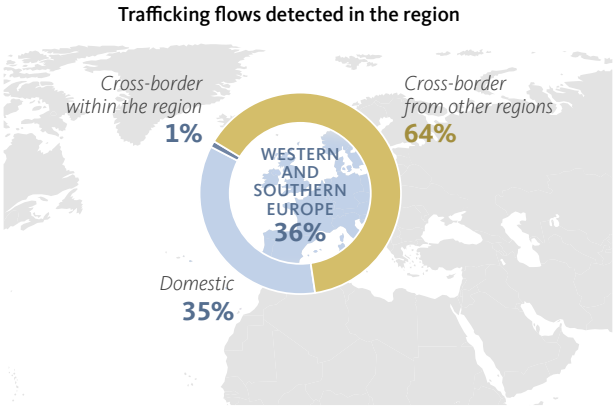
In Northern Italy, research found the pandemic to have altered the geography of sexual exploitation. As free movement in urban areas was restricted, people in street prostitution who could not return to their countries of origin or access support networks were at a heightened risk of sexual exploitation. Trafficked victims had to rely even more on their traffickers/abusers to access food and shelter. As their financial vulnerability grew, these women and girls often ran up debt with their traffickers.[169]

167 Anahita Azam, Stef Adriaenssens & Jef Hendrickx, "How Covid-19affects prostitution markets in the Netherlands and Belgium: dynamics and vulnerabilities under lockdown", European Societies, 2021 vol. 23:sup1, pp. 478-494; and Cabras, F., & Ingrascì, O., "Female Migrant Street Prostitution during COVID-19 in Milan. A Qualitative Study on How Sex Workers Coped with the Challenges of the Pandemic", Sociologica, 2022, vol. 16(1), 95–122, available at https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/13344.

168 Cora Recio Burgos, Fernando Jesús Plaza Del Pino, "'Business can't stop.' Women engaged in prostitution during the COVID-19 pandemic in southern Spain: A qualitative study", Women's Studies International Forum, Volume 86, 2021, 102477, ISSN 0277-5395.

169 Cabras F. and O. Ingrascì (2022).

Map. 25 Main trafficking flows for Western and Southern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

In this region, mixed forms of exploitation appear to involve foreign-born female victims, women or girls, who are exploited in forced labour and, at the same time, sexually abused or exploited by their traffickers.[170] In some cases, victims of sexual exploitation are reported to be forced into selling drugs to their clients, mixing and leveraging different forms of criminal activity.[171]

Court cases provided to UNODC suggest that the increased identification of boys is linked to the rise in cases of trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality. According to the United Kingdom National Crime Agency, children "are likely targeted as they provide the level of criminal capability required by the offending model, but remain easier to control, exploit and reward than adults."[172] Austria and France also reported large cases where child victims were forced into pickpocketing and other forms of stealing.[173] The Netherlands, similarly, reported cases where young victims were forced into drug trafficking.[174]

Victims of trafficking for forced labour highlighted in the cases provided from Western and Southern European countries were most often detected in domestic work,[175] in agriculture[176] and in the catering sector.[177]

Trafficking flows

In 2020 in Western and Southern Europe, **a decrease in detected forms of incoming cross-border trafficking was identified compared to previous years**. But the detection of victims of domestic trafficking increased. Foreign-born citizens accounted for 65 per cent of the total number of victims identified in Western and Southern European countries in 2020. A higher number of victims originating from South-Eastern Europe was identified starting in 2019 and is continuing. Victims from further away, originating in East and South Asia, had made up a larger share of the victims detected in 2019, but that number fell again in 2020.

The cases collected shed light on the experience of West African girls and women, trafficked to Western and Central Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Conversely, court cases concerning victims from South-Eastern Europe describe a different victimization experience, with men, women, girls and boys trafficked for all forms of exploitation, particularly children for exploitative begging and for the commission of criminal activity[178] and female victims for sexual exploitation or in mixed sex and labour exploitation.[179]

170 See, L Palumbo and A Sciurba, "Vulnerability to Forced Labour and Trafficking: The case of Romanian women in the agricultural sector in Sicily", Anti-Trafficking Review, issue 5, 2015, pp. 89–108.

171 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 470, Germany.

172 See "County Lines Drug Supply, Vulnerability and Harm", 2018, NCA Intelligent Assessment 2019.

173 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: Austria 404, France 268, France 415, France 475, France 518. See Norway 60, Norway 184, Norway 311.

174 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 318, the Netherlands.

175 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 189, 236, 323 and 590.

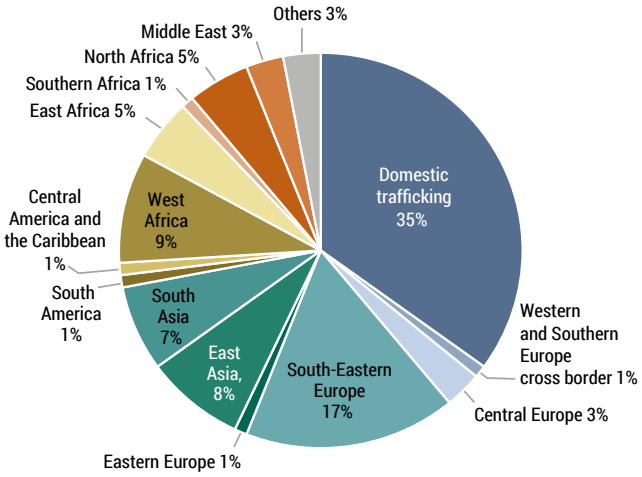
176 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 307, 322, 506 and 603.

177 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 235, 403, 433 and 510.

178 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 60, case 61, case 67, case 311, case 623, case 626, case 661, and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case ITA004.

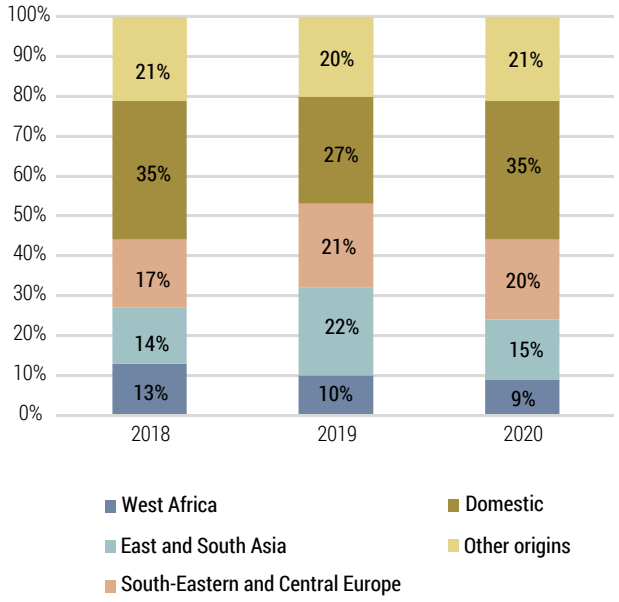
179 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 323, case 470, case 560, and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case GBR015.

Fig. 186 Detected victims in Western and Southern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 187 Trend: Detected victims in Western and Southern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2018–2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Family-based trafficking from South-Eastern Europe to Northern European countries

Norwegian authorities reported a case of six South-Eastern European citizens who were found guilty of trafficking. They had exploited four girls, aged between 13 and 16 years, from within their extended family. The girls were forced to shoplift, beg and sell jewellery and one girl had been raped and forced into marriage in her home country.

During the case, events were investigated in Norway, Sweden and Romania and 111 witnesses were presented to the court. The six traffickers received prison sentences ranging from one to three years.

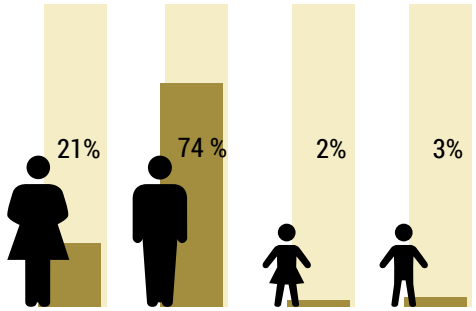
Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 61 – Norway.

Traffickers

More than 60 per cent of the people convicted of trafficking in persons in Western and Southern European countries in 2020 were foreigners. South-Eastern Europeans represent one quarter of those convicted, while citizens from Sub-Saharan Africa and from East Asia account for another eight per cent each.

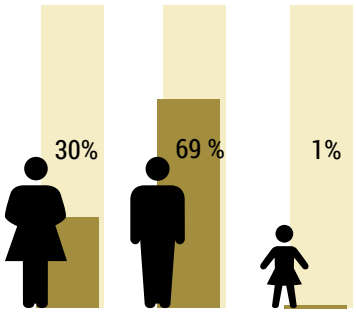
Most traffickers convicted are men, with women making up about one-third of the convictions for trafficking. **Women continue to represent a higher proportion of offenders convicted compared to other crimes.** According to UNODC crime statistics, in 2020 14.4 per cent of people convicted for any crime were women, while 85.6 per cent were men. Women account for one-fifth of those prosecuted and children for about 5 per cent.

Fig. 188 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



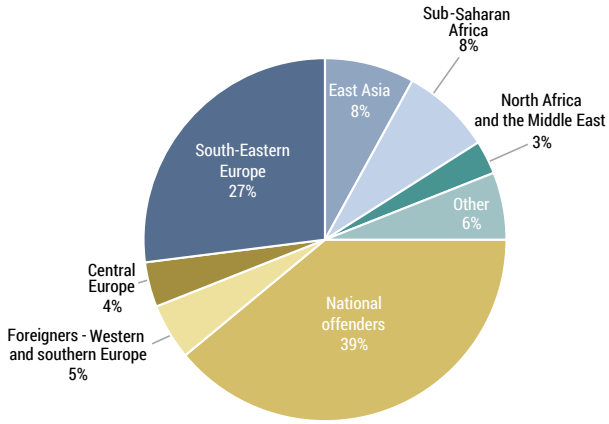
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 189 Persons convicted of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 190 Region of citizenship of traffickers convicted in Western and Southern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)

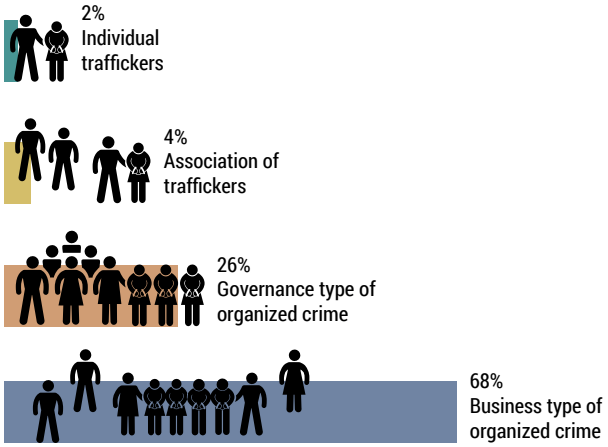


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

These groups can be found engaged in all types of exploitation, typically operating across borders, trafficking victims from South-Eastern and Central Europe or Asia. They range from minimal to high-level of organization with multiple people operating in different locations in one or more countries.

Further, compared to other regions, Western and Southern European countries reported more cases where criminals organized into structures that maintain a certain level of control of the territories or communities where they operate. These groups typically have a high level of organization, with many different actors involved in more than three locations internationally.

Fig. 191 Type of criminal organization reported in case narratives*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* See definitions of organization type on page 48 of this report.

The cases shared by national authorities depict a rather organized and structured criminal scene, especially when compared to other parts of the world. Overall, trafficking groups apprehended in this region seem to operate in organized and relatively large criminal structures.

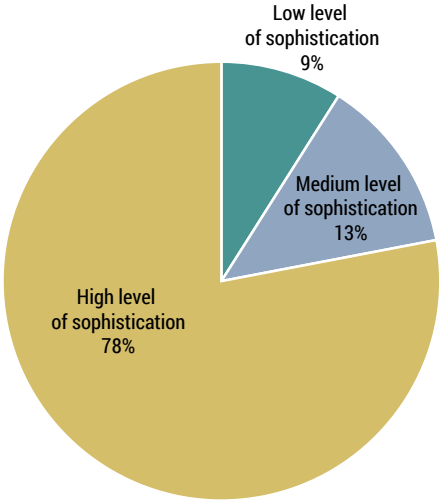
In the cases shared by the national authorities, most convicted traffickers committed the crime in conjunction with two or more other traffickers systematically working together for the purpose of trafficking people as a core criminal business. This type of business-enterprise may have some people specialized in recruiting victims then selling them to others specialized in exploitation.[180]

In the case of domestic trafficking, traffickers either operate alone or in opportunistic associations with other actors. Trafficking of persons in Western and Southern Europe also occurs as part of private corporate activities. In three cases reported by Belgian and Dutch authorities between 2014 and 2016, almost 70 victims were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and/or forced labour by one or more private companies.[181]

180 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 14, case 32, case 62, case 91, case 93, case 94, case 107, case 108, case 162, case 195, case 198, case 225, case 226, case 236, case 237, case 253, case 267, case 268, case 271, case 321, case 323, case 325, case 339, case 340, case 342, case 414, case 416, case 417, case 418, case 419, case 467, case 512, case 516, case 559, case 592, case 626, case 659, case 665, case 667 and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, cases ITAx037, ITA015, ITA006, GRC006, GRC008.

181 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, cases: 94, 95, 307.

Fig. 192 Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization* in Western and Southern Europe, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
* UNODC conducted a content analysis on the narrative of court case summaries and elaborated a three-level scale for the sophistication of the trafficking organization: Minimum, when one or two individuals operate in one or two locations; medium, when three to seven traffickers operate in three or four locations; and high, when more than seven traffickers operate in many locations.

Cross-border trafficking for sexual exploitation in France

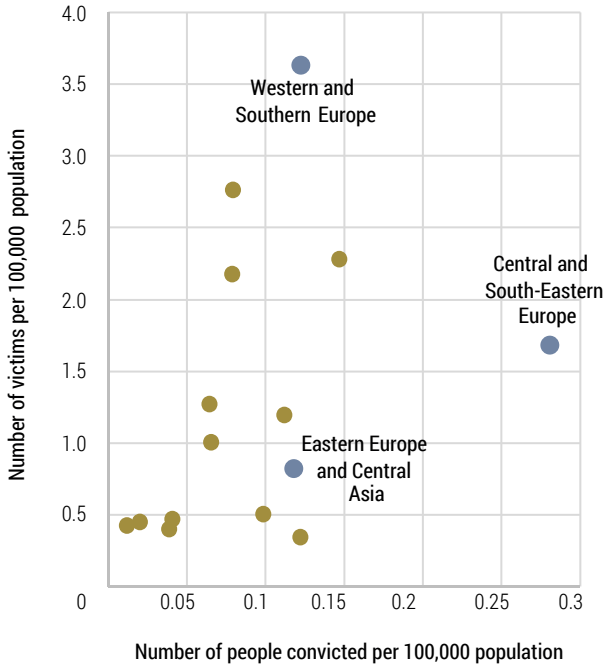
French authorities reported cases of young women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation by transnational criminal organizations. One case illustrated a group of madames who were also affiliated with a cult named "authentic sisters" who worked with their partners and husbands in a separate branch called, "Eye confraternity" or "Blue berets".
The investigation focused on 11 women and 6 men who had identified victims among their communities in rural areas of West Africa. All the victims were sold to the madames then transported irregularly to Europe where they were exploited through coercion and threats. Their families back home were also threatened by intermediaries in their villages.
Investigators report that this group alone had trafficked more than 50 victims, including two children, between 2013 and 2016. With the help and support of civil society organizations, 17 victims came forward to report the case to national authorities.
These 17 traffickers were convicted, and each faced two to ten years of imprisonment, plus monetary sanctions.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 516 - France.

Criminal justice response

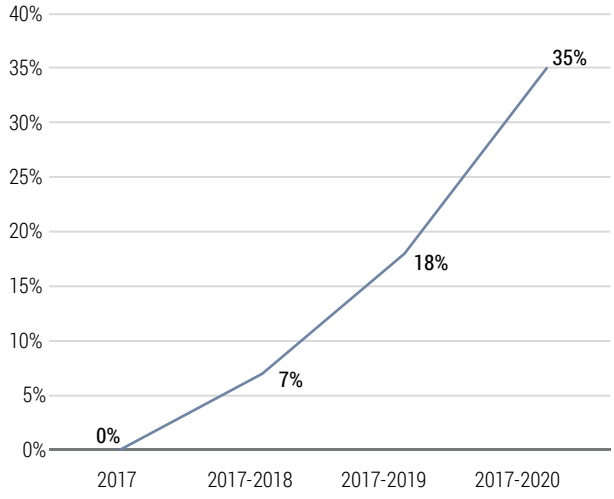
All countries in Western and Southern Europe have dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons. Compared to other regions of the world, Western and Southern European countries detect more victims, about 3.5 per 100,000 people in the year 2020 (compared to the world average of one). The number of traffickers convicted relative to each countries' population is also higher than most regions of the world.
However, **over the period considered, prosecutions and convictions declined compared to the previous years**. In the first year of the pandemic, a drastic drop in the number of convictions was of about 45 per cent lower than in 2019 and 36 per cent lower than 2017. This, however, may or may not be related to the pandemic, as already in 2019 there was a 37 per cent drop in the number of prosecutions compared to 2017.
When compared to other crimes, the drop remains significant. In 2020, Western and Southern European countries registered a 16 per cent drop in convictions for trafficking in persons (from 111,087 in 2019 to 93,304) which was consistent with the previous year (a 15 per cent decline from the 130,754 convictions in 2018). A drop in trafficking in persons convictions, in a context of declining convictions for all crimes in general, started before the pandemic. At the same time, however, more people have been investigated for this crime since 2017, thus, more prosecutions and convictions are expected over the course of coming years.
Between 2017 and 2020, the number of prosecutions for trafficking in persons accounted for more than a half (56 per cent) of the investigations opened by police authorities, which is relatively higher than globally and in neighbouring regions. Further, convictions amounted to about 38 per cent of prosecutions. For every 100 people investigated in the region, 22 were convicted of trafficking in persons.

Fig. 193 Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020



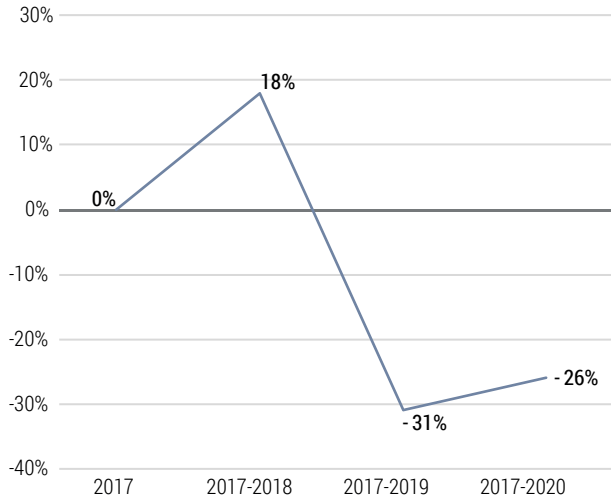
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data. GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Fig. 194 Change in the number of persons investigated in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



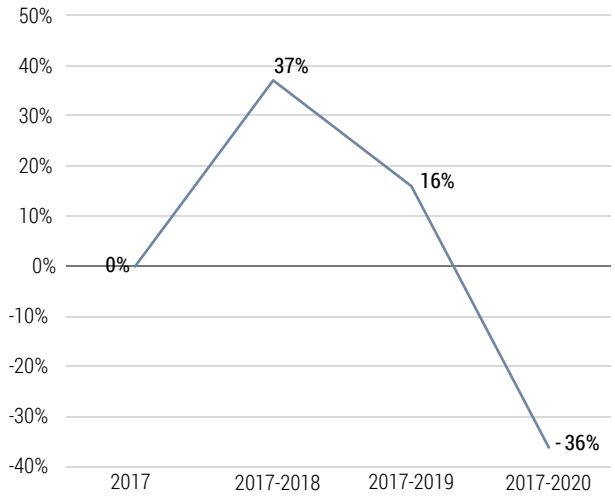
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 195 Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



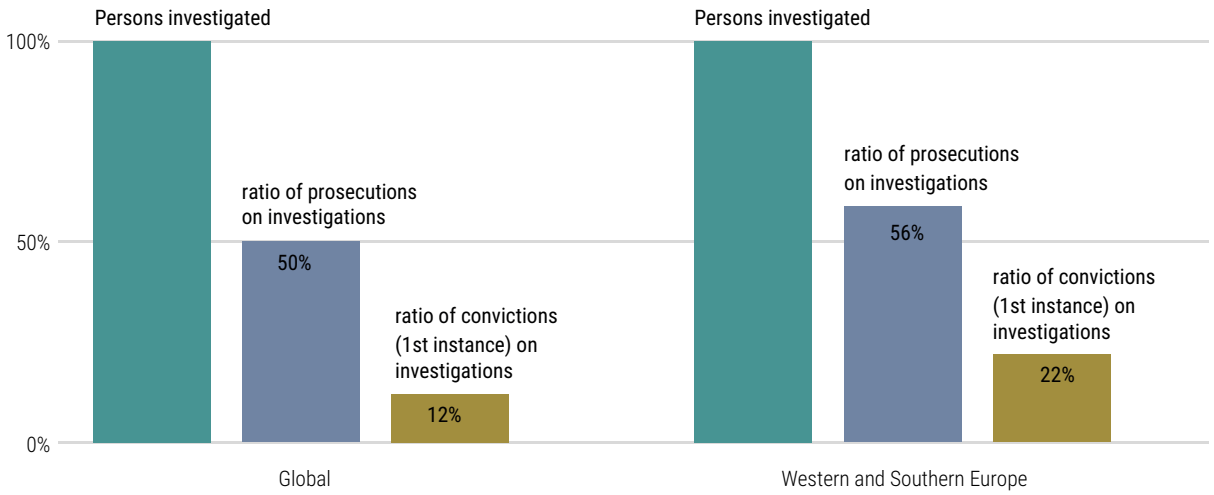
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 196 Change in the number of persons convicted in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 197 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



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Over a decade ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, reaffirming all Member States' commitment to combatting trafficking in persons. The Global Plan reiterated the collective effort behind the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol and tasked UNODC with collecting comprehensive data on this crime.

This edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons is UNODC's seventh report on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and global levels. It covers 141 countries and provides an overview and analysis of the crime of trafficking in persons, as well as how countries are responding to it, based on trafficking cases detected between 2017 and 2021. The report sheds light on how the Covid-19 pandemic, and other crises during this tumultuous period, impacted trafficking in persons and efforts to end it.

This and previous editions of the Global Report are also available at the Report webpage:

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html

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