An abstract painting with thick, expressive brushstrokes in various colors including teal, purple, brown, black, and white. The composition is dense and textured, with a sense of movement and depth. The colors are layered and blended, creating a rich, multi-toned effect.

*Chapter I*

***Global  
Overview***



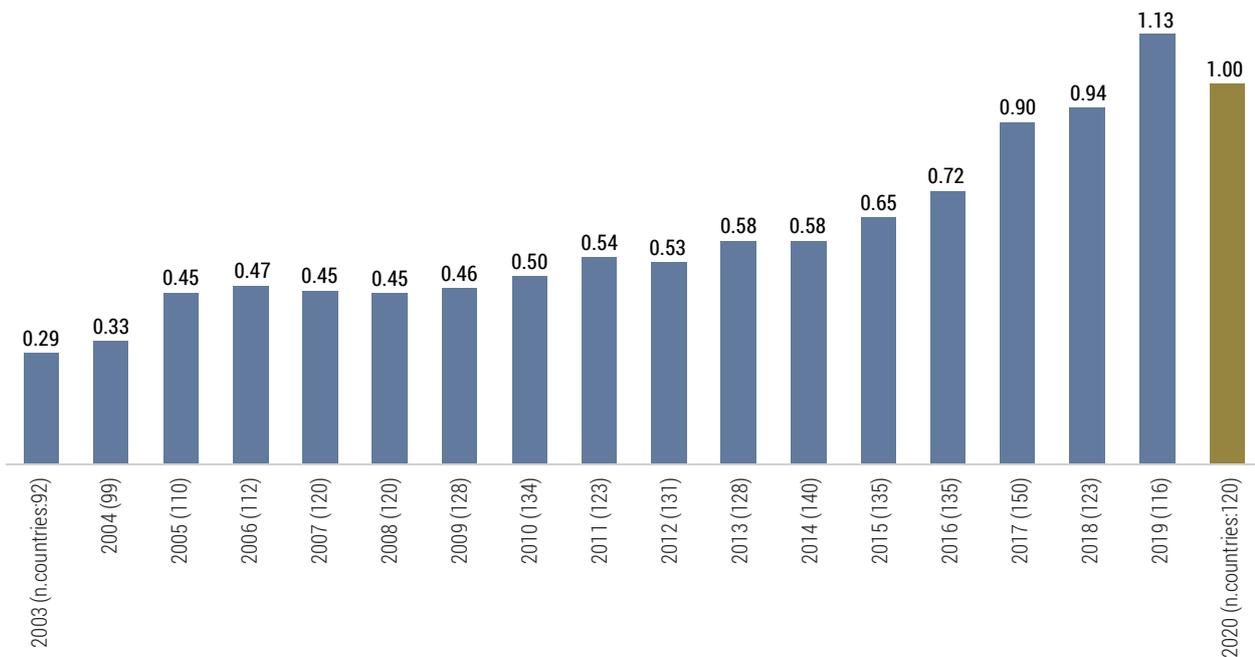
### Dramatic shifts and accelerated trends

*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 remains 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
 <p>Total <sup>4</sup></p>	<p>Total victims of trafficking in persons detected (per 100,000p) <b>- 11%</b></p> 	
 <p>Types of trafficking flows <sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Cross-border trafficking victims detected (per 100,000p) <b>- 21%</b></p> 	
 <p>Forms of exploitation <sup>6</sup></p>	<p>Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p) <b>- 24%</b></p> <p>Victims trafficked for "other" <sup>7</sup> forms of exploitation detected (per 100,000p) <b>- 15%</b></p> 	
 <p>Victims' profiles <sup>8</sup></p>	<p>Female trafficking victims detected (per 100,000 females) <b>- 11%</b></p> 	<p>Male trafficking victims detected (per 100,000 males) <b>+ 3%</b></p> 
 <p>Criminal justice response <sup>9</sup></p>	<p>Persons convicted for trafficking in persons: <b>- 27%</b></p> 	

<sup>4</sup> 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.

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

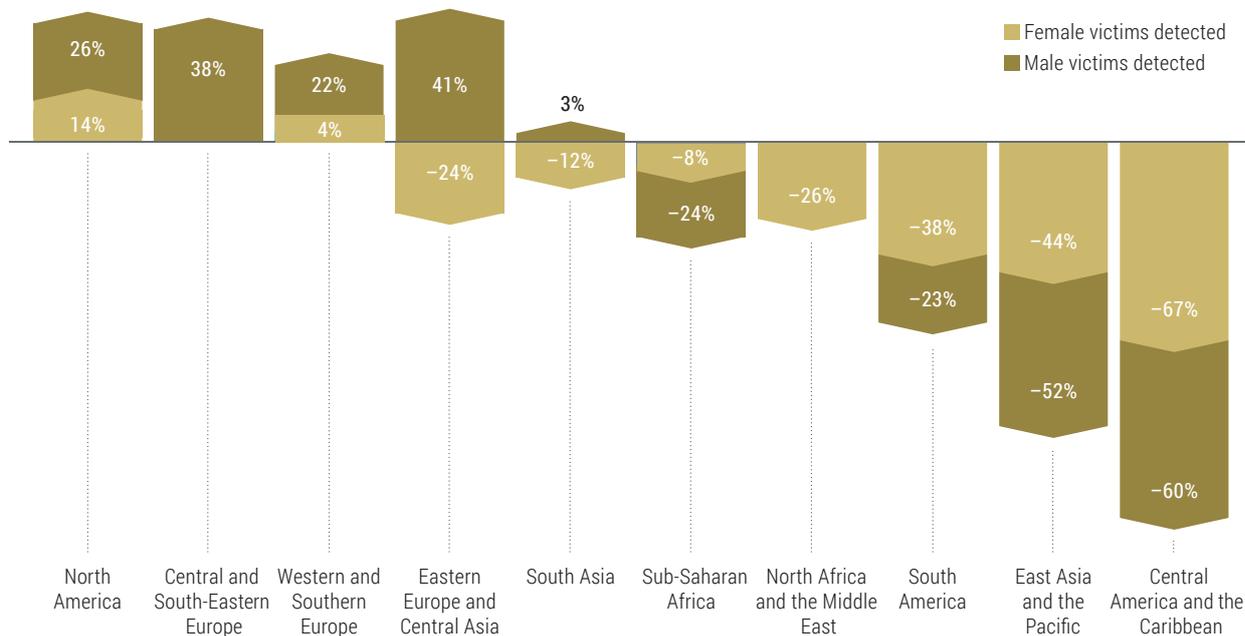
<sup>6</sup> Based on information on total victims detected in 2019 and in 2020, collected from 89 countries.

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

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

<sup>9</sup> 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

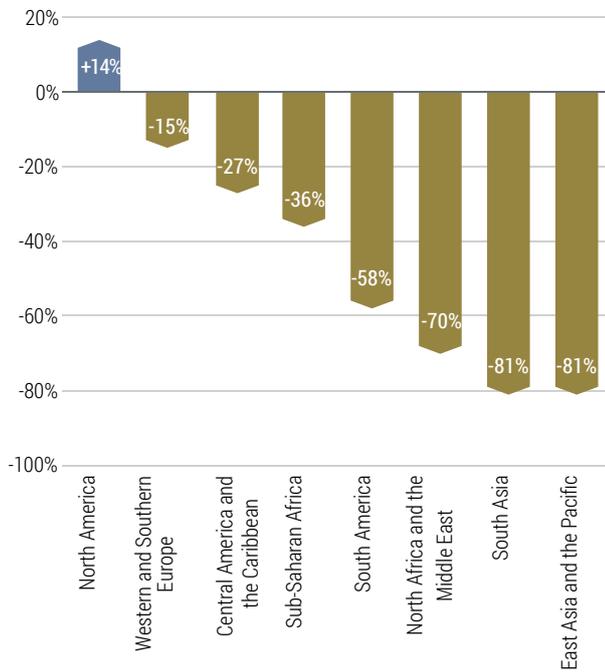
may have contributed to this trend.<sup>10</sup> For example, Uganda Police forces reported that the downward trend in the number of trafficking cases was the results of, “restriction of cross-border movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of transport within and outside the country 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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\*

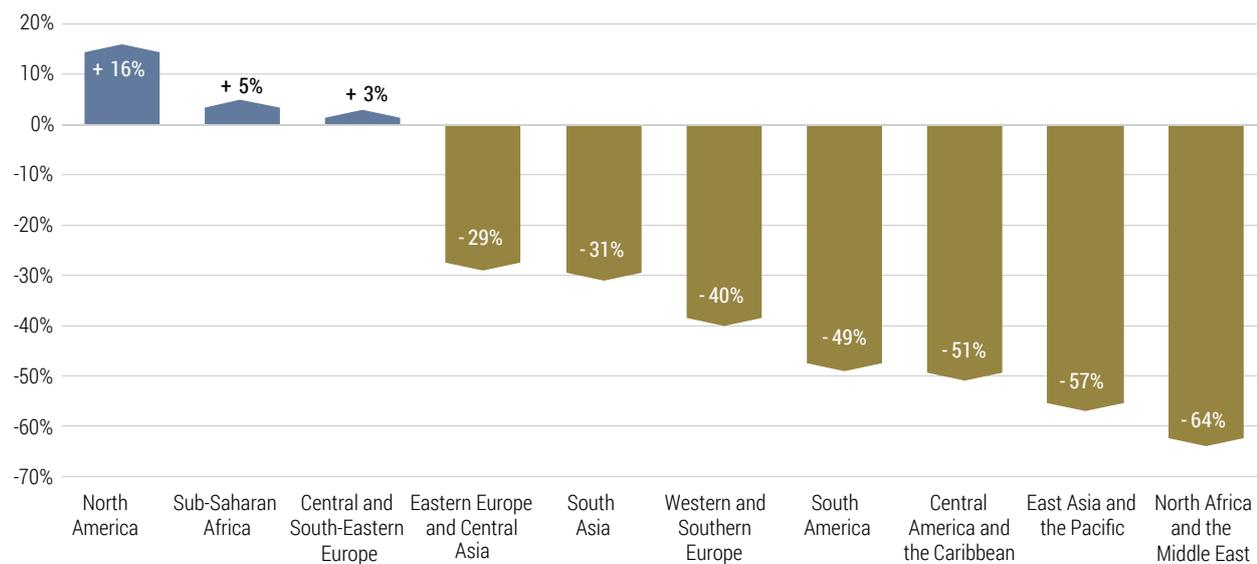


In 2020, a **drastic drop in the detection of trafficking for sexual exploitation** was recorded in most of the world. The only exception was North America, where the detection of victims of this form of trafficking continued to increase in 2020 at the same growth rate recorded in previous years.

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

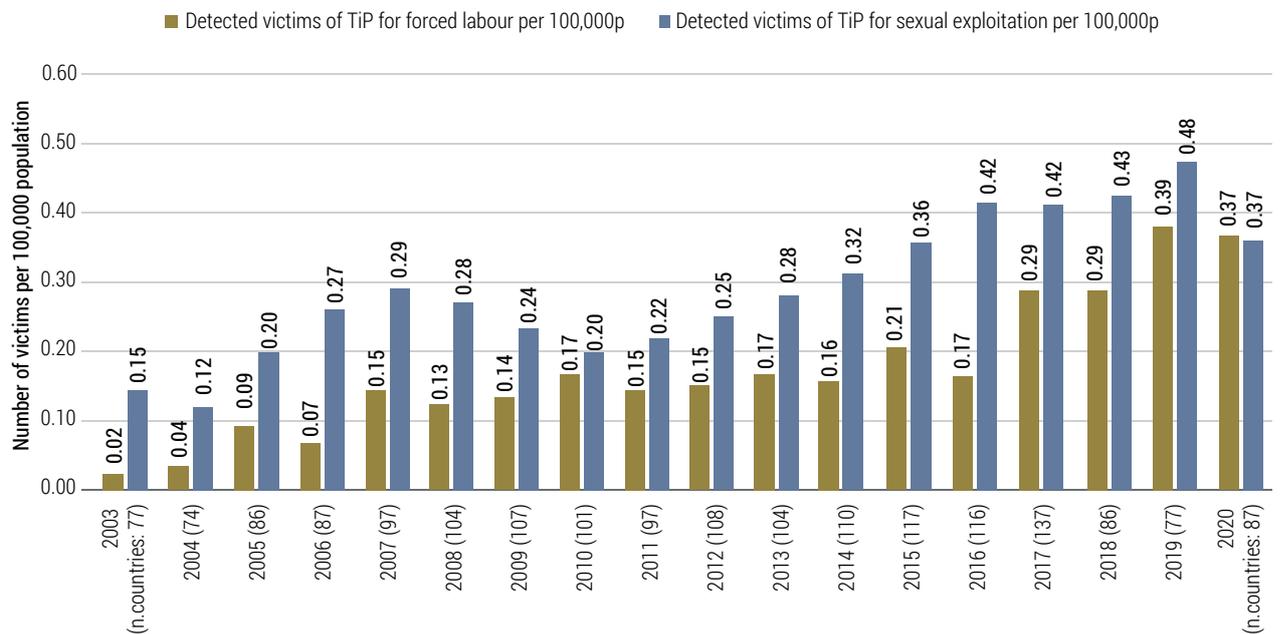
\* Based on information collected from 73 countries: 18 in Western and Southern Europe; 12 in East Asia and the Pacific; 10 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; eight in South America; seven in the Middle East and North Africa; six in Sub-Saharan Africa; four in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; five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

**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.<sup>13</sup> 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.**<sup>14</sup> 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.**<sup>15</sup>

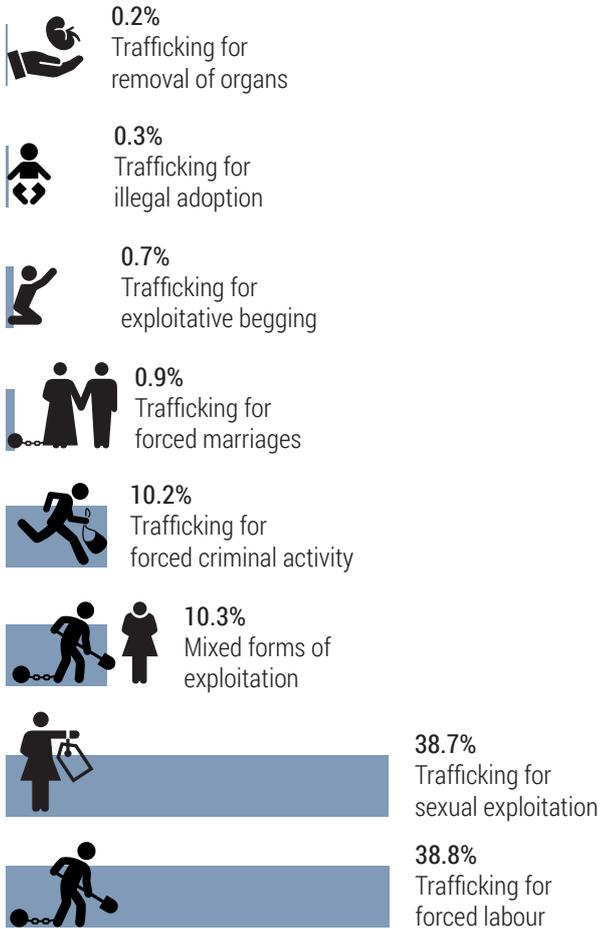
For the first time since UNODC started collecting data on trafficking in persons, **detection of trafficking for forced labour in 2020 was equal to that of trafficking for sexual exploitation**, at just under 40 per cent each.

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., & Ingrasci, 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 and Southern Africa", 2021; Tan RKJ, Ho V, Sherqeshaa 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; PMID: 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.

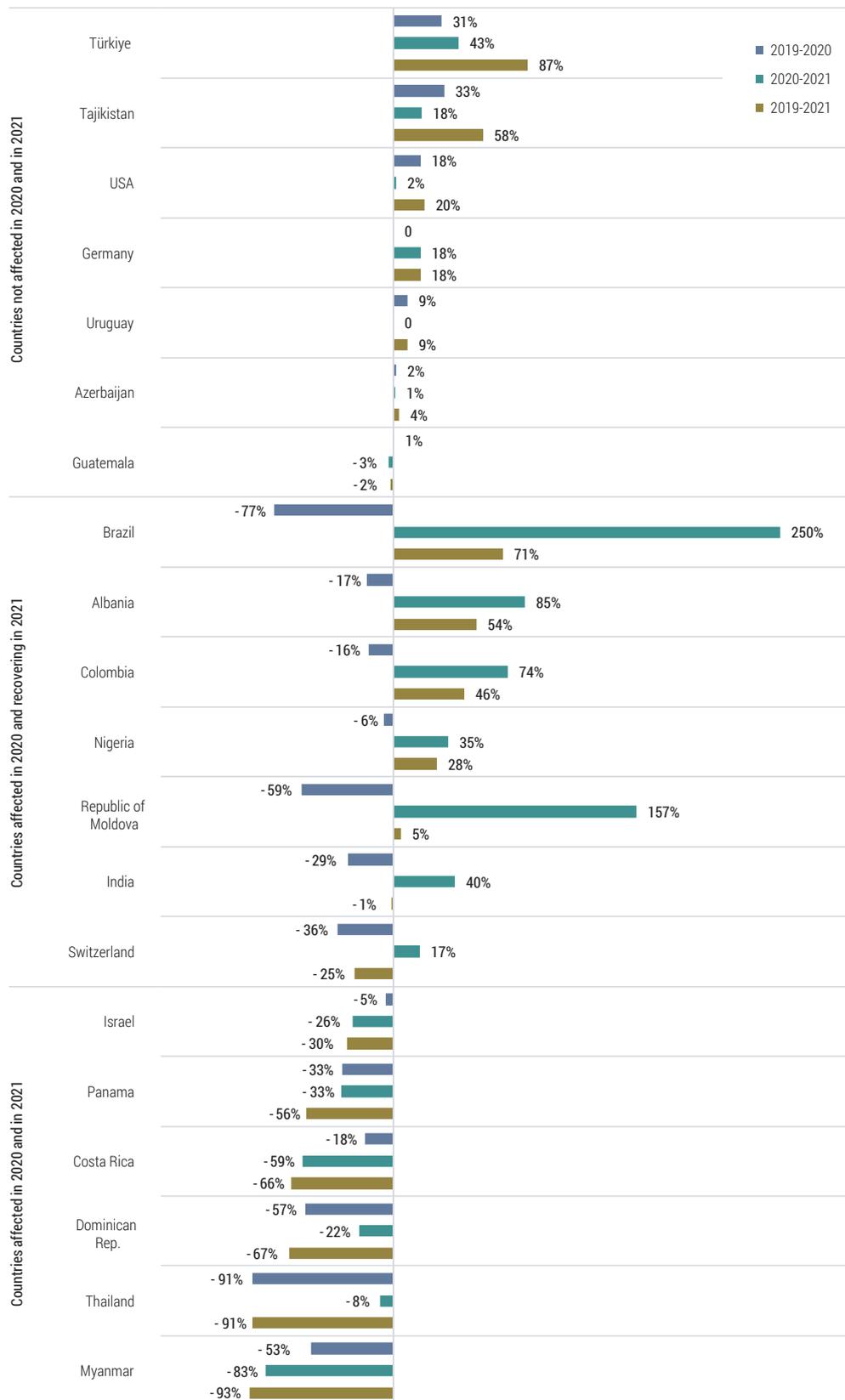
15 German Federal Criminal Police Office, Human Trafficking and Exploitation National Situation Report [Menschenhandel und Ausbeutung Bundeslagebild], 2021, available at: [https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/Statistiken-Lagebilder/Lagebilder/Menschenhandel/menschenhandel\\_node.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/Statistiken-Lagebilder/Lage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

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

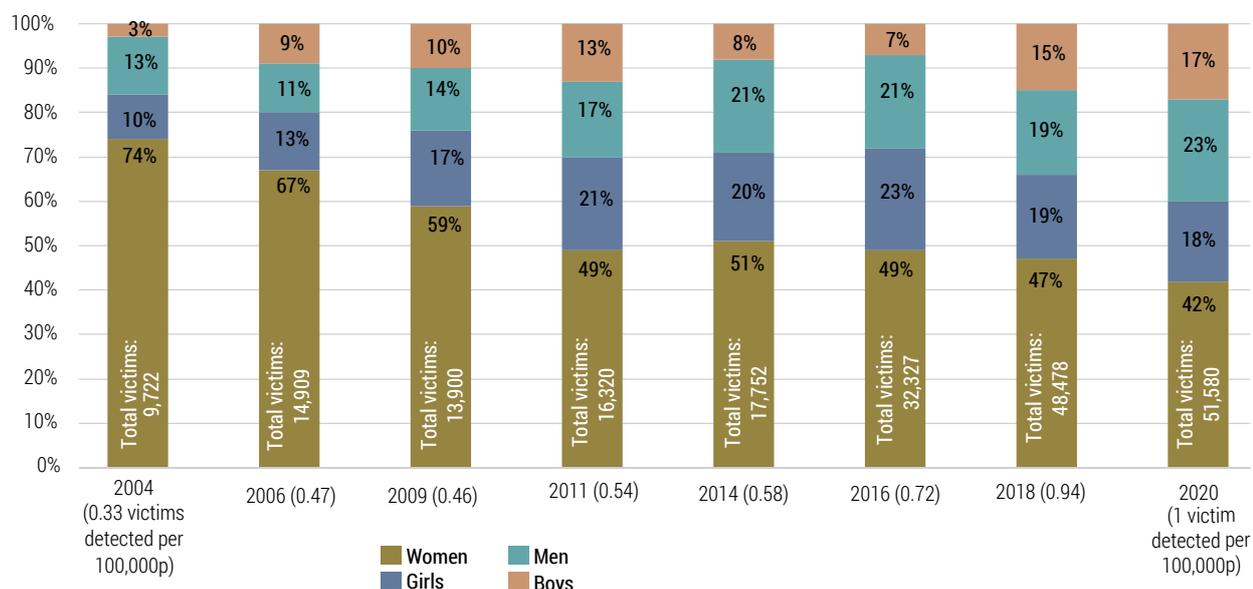


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.  
 \*Based on a total of 36,488 victims detected in 86 countries in 2020.

**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

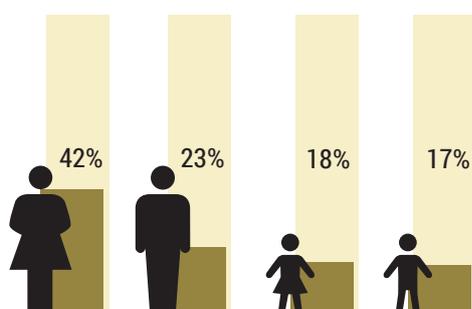
### Women and children face more violent exploitation

**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 wom-**

### Infographic 3

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



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

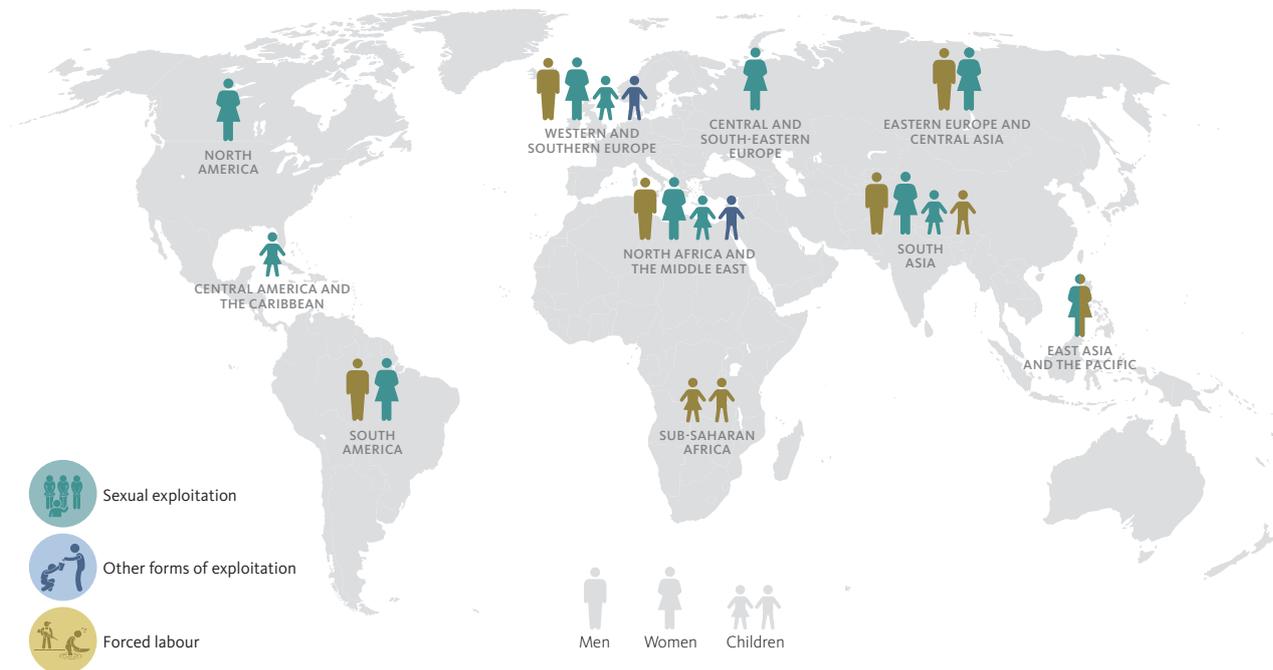
\*Based on a total of 51,675 victims detected in 166 countries in 2020 (or most recent).

**en and child victims, especially girls.**<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> 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."

<sup>17</sup> 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)

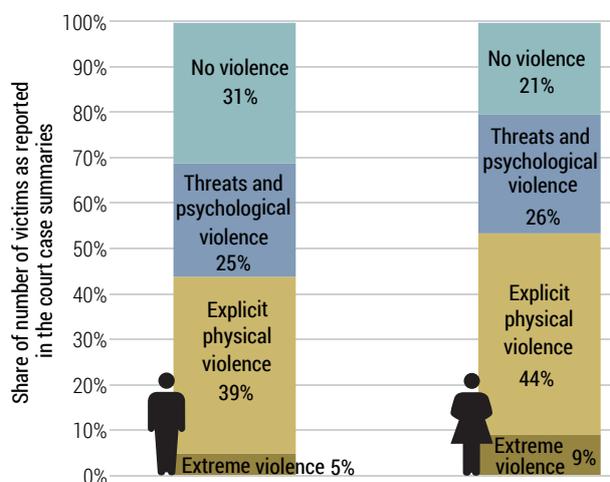


Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

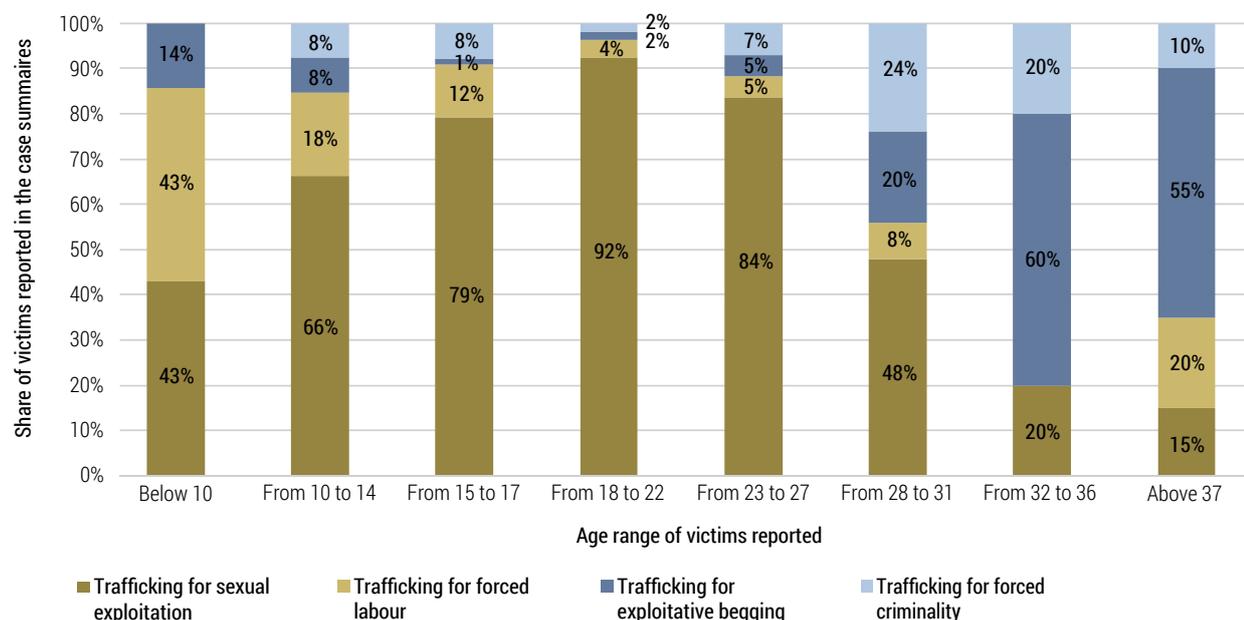
Within these global trends, there are **wide regional differences in the profiles of detected victims**. While countries in North, Central America and the Caribbean, most often detect women and girl victims trafficked for sexual exploitation, countries in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa detect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

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. 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 Sherlock 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.

**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 Sherlock 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.<sup>18</sup> In general, adult victims of trafficking for forced labour<sup>19</sup> are older than those who are trafficked for sexual exploitation.<sup>20</sup> 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<sup>21</sup>**

*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 disproportionately underreported, as few studies conducted at local level have shown.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup>

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.

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).<sup>25</sup> 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-*

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<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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 possess 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.<sup>29</sup> 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., et. 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.

### **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.*

## **Can multisector approaches improve victim identification? <sup>31</sup>**

*Authors:*

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*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.<sup>32</sup> It concludes that victims' identification is higher in normative environments where anti-trafficking strategies are implemented along with migration policies and labour rights.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> 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).

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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

### Mapping international counter-trafficking instruments

The anti-trafficking literature identifies a number of structural factors,<sup>34</sup> including legislation, policies and practices, that affect the capacity to detect trafficking in persons.<sup>35</sup> 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.

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).

### 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup>

#### 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

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.<sup>39</sup>

#### **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;

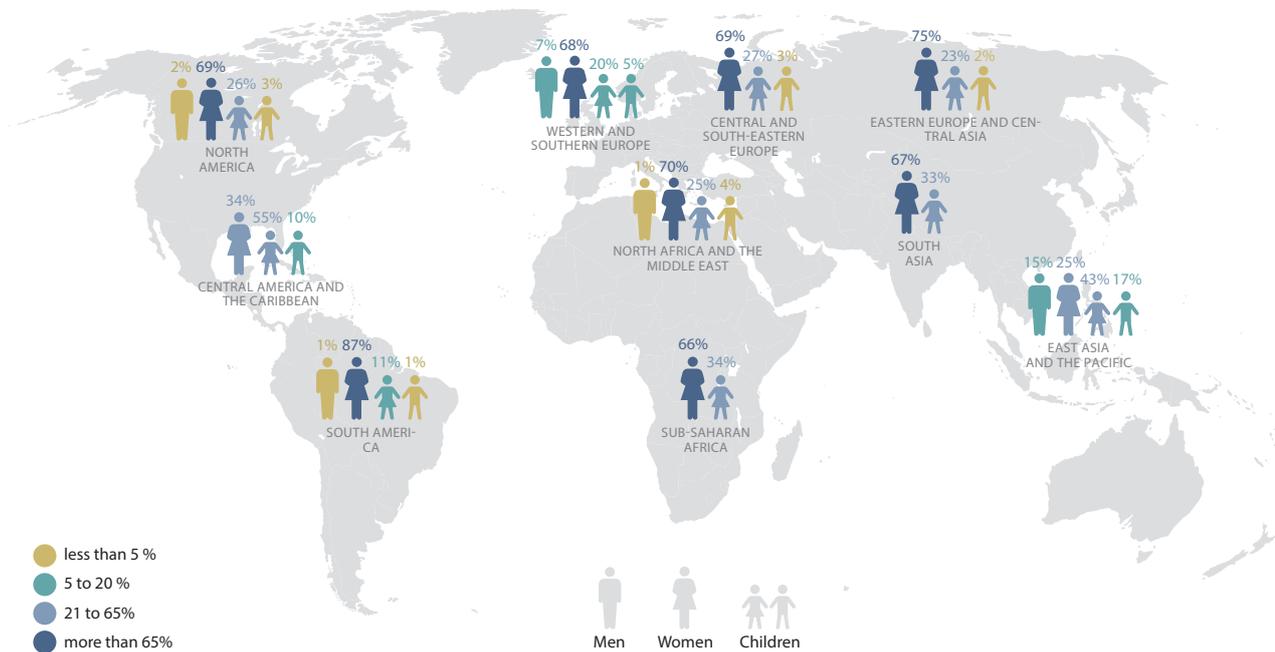
The LCA analysis shows that Member States who have adopted the UN Trafficking Protocol and established formal strategies to address trafficking in persons but do not have a mechanism for refugee protection or a national law on temporary stay and are not fully compliant with international commitments 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.<sup>40</sup>

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 Transnational 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

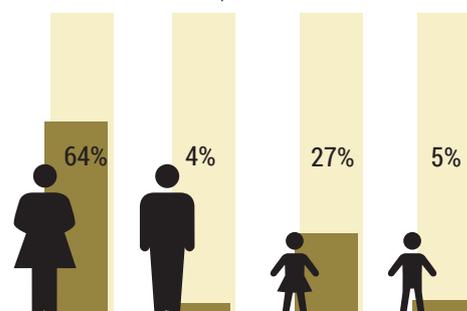
### Targets, types and venues for sexual exploitation

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)\*



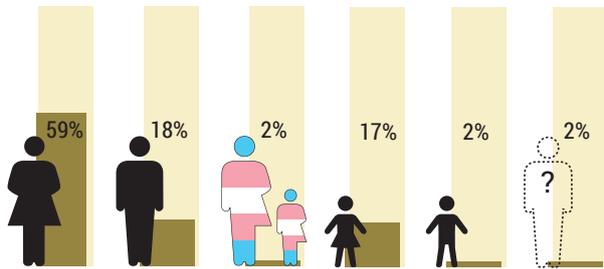
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

\* 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.<sup>41</sup>

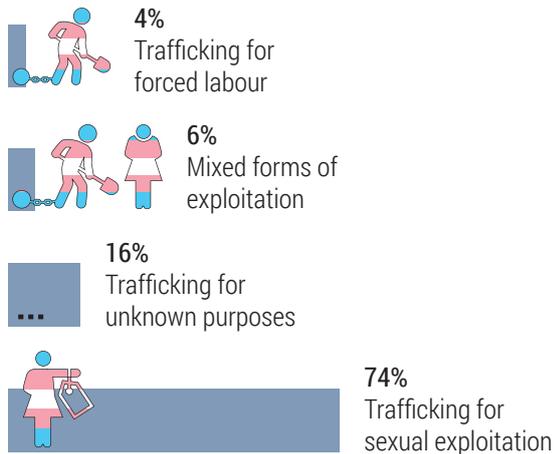
41 Of the reporting countries, six countries are in Western and Southern Europe, three in Central America, two in South America and one in North America. Ninety-five per cent of these non-binary victims ("other" gender category) were reported as "transgender" by the national authorities of the United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



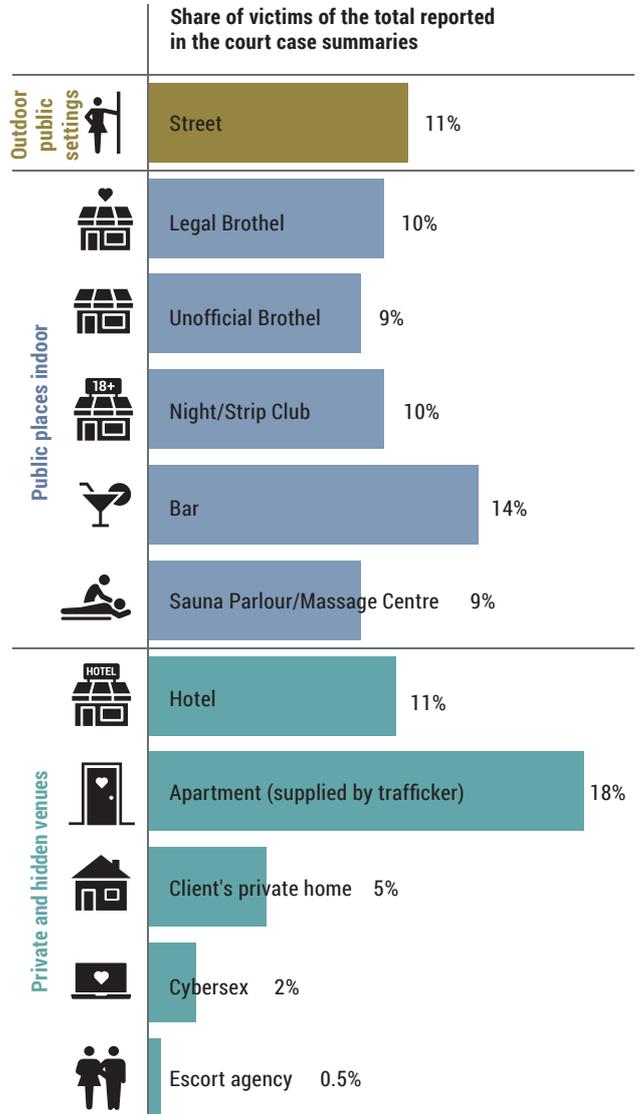
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.  
 \* Based on a total of 7638 victims detected in 9 countries in the Americas and Western and Southern Europe in 2020 (or most recent).

**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.

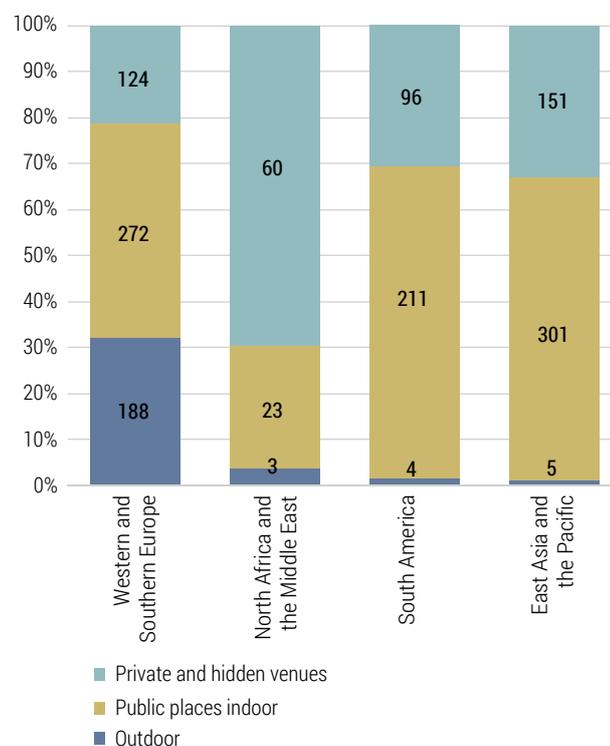
**Infographic 6** Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation by intermediaries or by venues where exploitation took place, as reported in case narrative, (2012-2020)\*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock 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 UN-ODC 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 Sherlock 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.<sup>42</sup>

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](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**

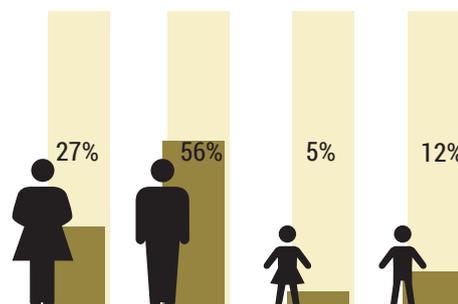
**Trafficking in persons for forced labour** has been increasingly detected over the last decade. In 2020, about the same number of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour per 100,000 population was recorded globally. However, since the overall number of victims detected decreased, in terms 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

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

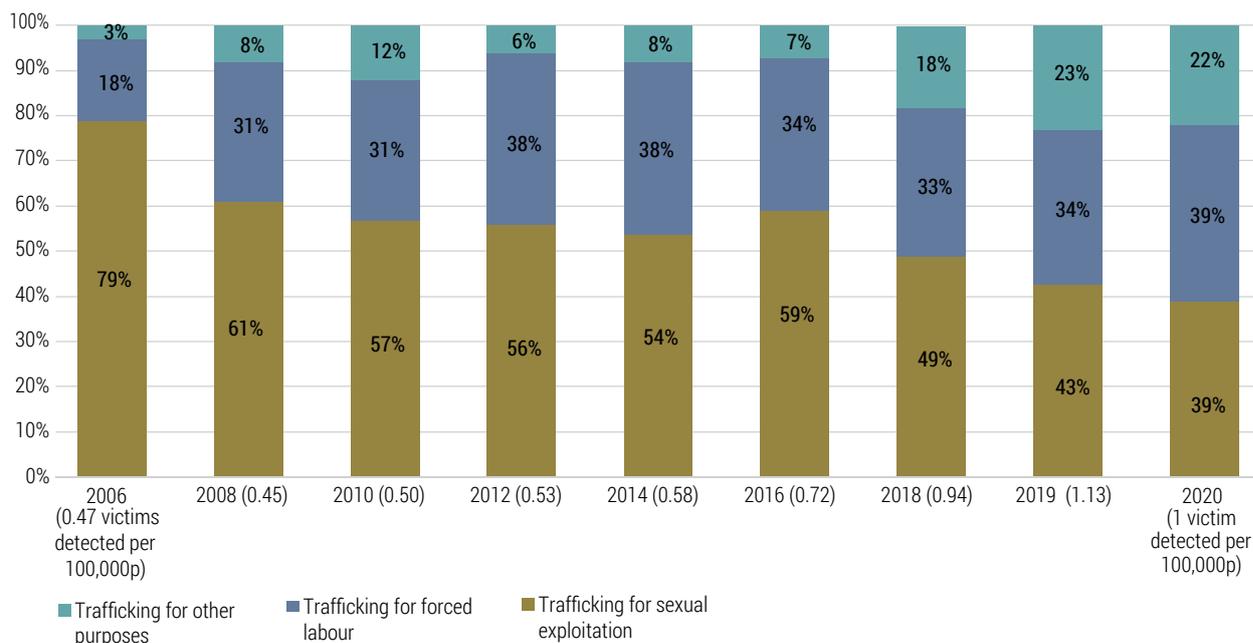


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.  
 \* Based on 8,931 detected victims of trafficking for forced labour whose age and sex were reported in 104 countries.

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**.

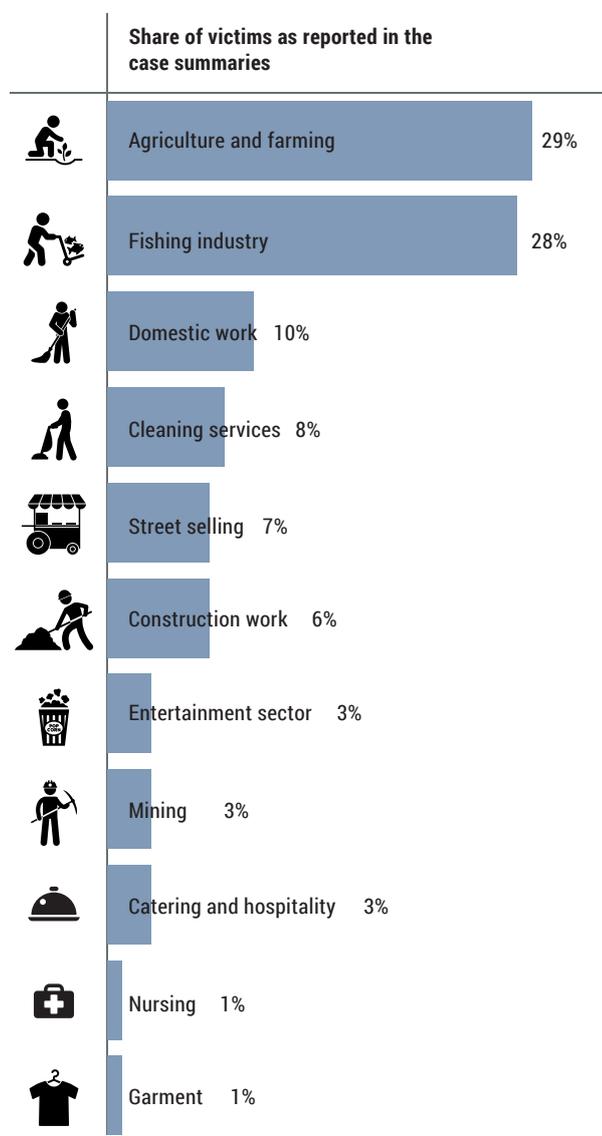
Concerning the age profile of the victims, **South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean detect more children trafficked into forced labour**. In both regions, more girls than boys are detected.

**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 \*



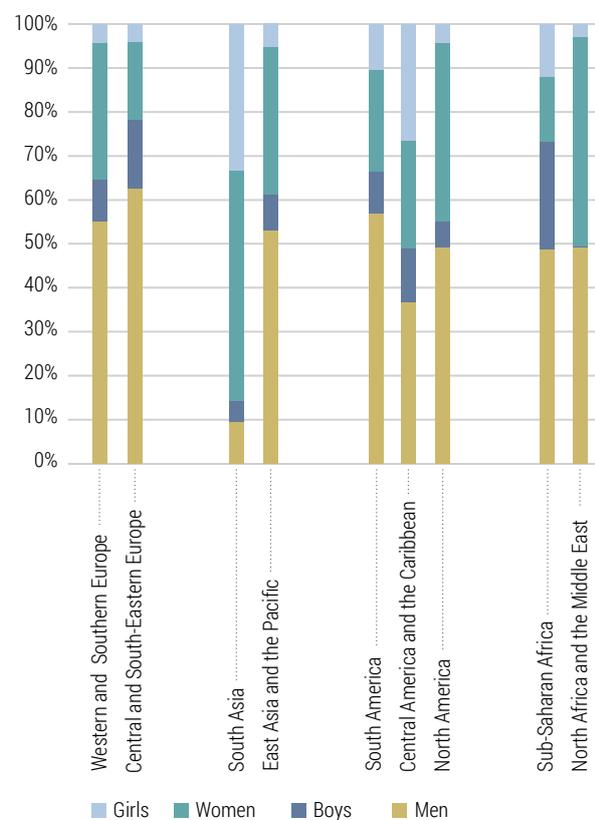
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock Case Law Database.

\* 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.<sup>43</sup> Other cases involved women exploited to serve in bars and forced to have sexual relations with clients.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.

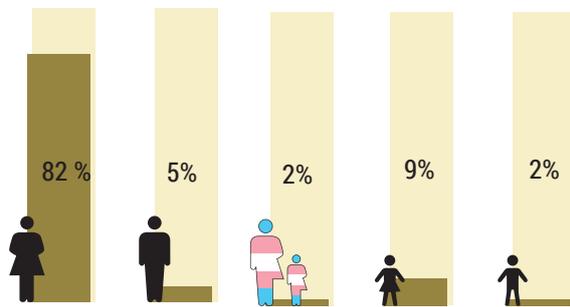
44 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 5, case 287 and case 289.

45 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, and case 262. See also Giammarino 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.

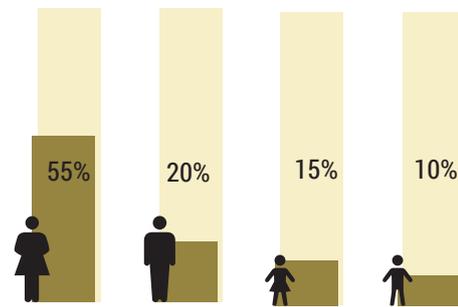
The share of detected victims trafficked to be exploited for forced criminal activity has been increasing, too – what was one per cent in 2016 and six per cent in 2018 was 10 per cent of the total detected victims in 2020. Between 2017 and 2020, this form of exploitation was reported by countries in 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\*



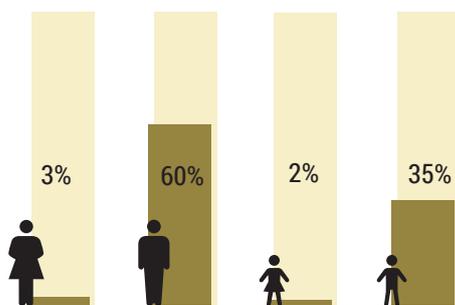
Source: USA response to UNODC GLOTIP Questionnaire.  
\*n=704 victims.

**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\*



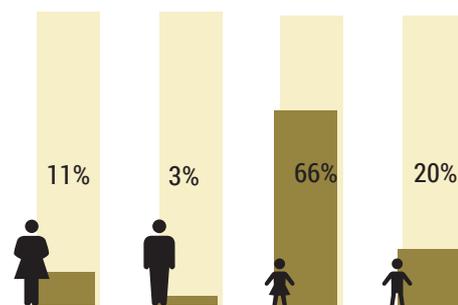
Source: United Kingdom Home Office.  
\*n=425 victims.

**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\*



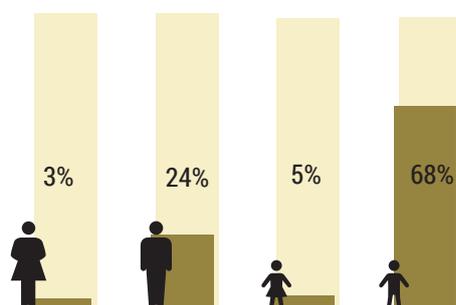
Source: United Kingdom Home Office.  
\*n=1154 victims.

**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**<sup>46</sup>, **pickpocketing**<sup>47</sup> and **other theft**<sup>48</sup> of cars, petrol or jewellery, as well as **drug trafficking** and **fraud in different forms**<sup>49</sup>.

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,<sup>50</sup> children exploited by their own parents in connection with harmful social practices,<sup>51</sup> homeless children with no parental care,<sup>52</sup> or families in extreme poverty.<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup>

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 Sherlock 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 Sherlock 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 Sherlock 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.<sup>57</sup> 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<sup>58</sup>. 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 multi-disciplinary team applied the MSE to estimate the prevalence of trafficking in persons there.<sup>59</sup>

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.

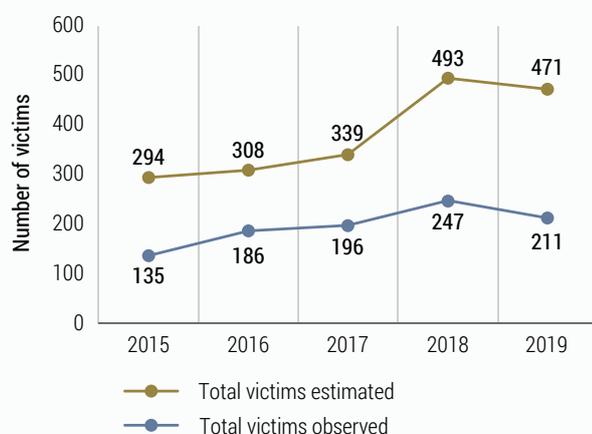
59 Izquierdo, J, “Análisis de Modelos Estadísticos para la Estimación de Víctimas de Trata. Caso de Estudio: Comunidad de Madrid” Master’s thesis, Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid, 2020; and Colmenar Calvo, N. Análisis de los métodos de recopilación de datos de trata de seres humanos. Una oportunidad 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<sup>60</sup>, The Netherlands (2014/2015)<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup>

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.<sup>63</sup> 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

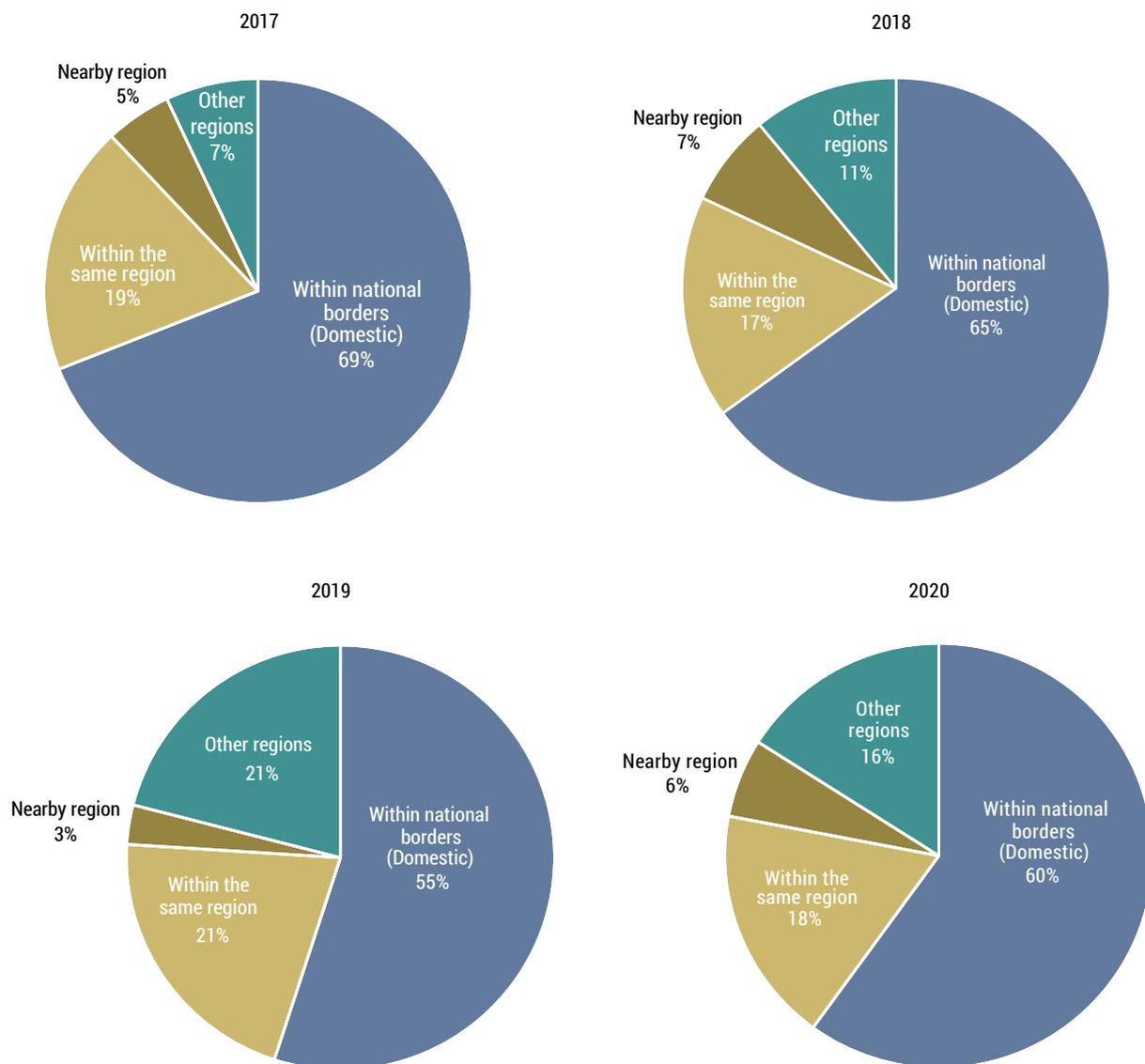
Cross-border trafficking has been increasingly detected since 2017, particularly as part of the longest-distance flows. In 2020, however, **a reduction in cross border trafficking** by over a fifth **was recorded globally**.

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.

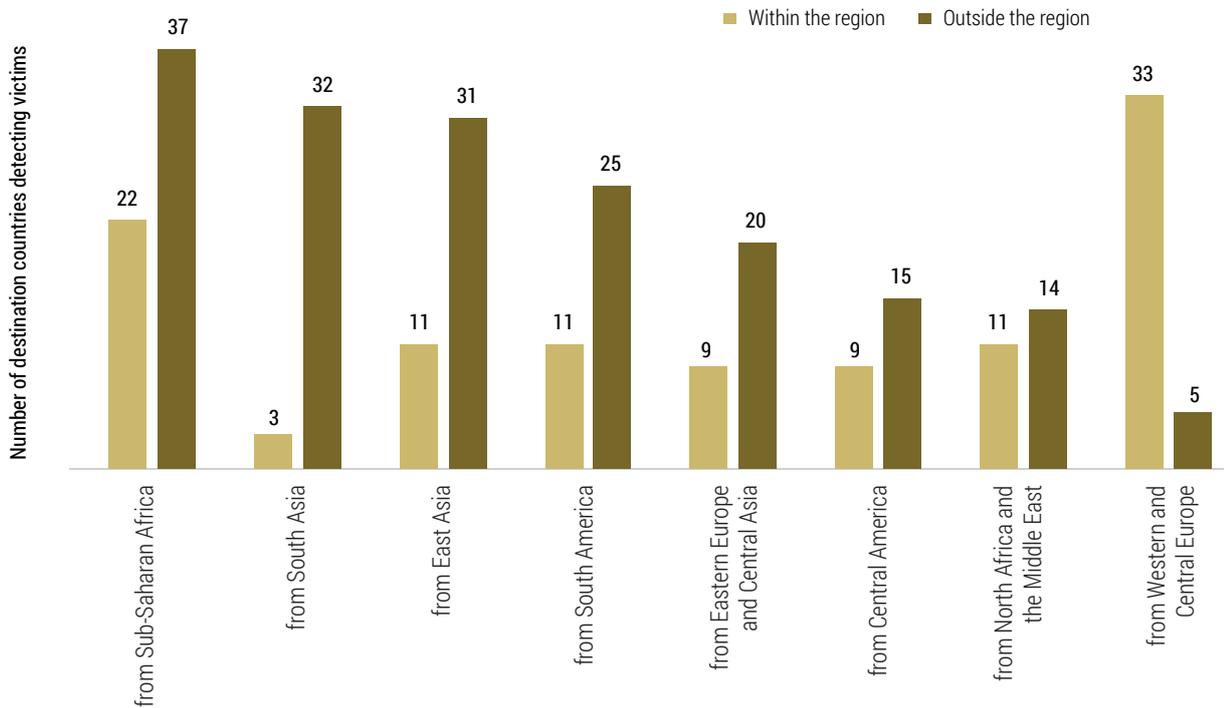
Fig. 19 Detected victims, by region of detection, 2017-2020\*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

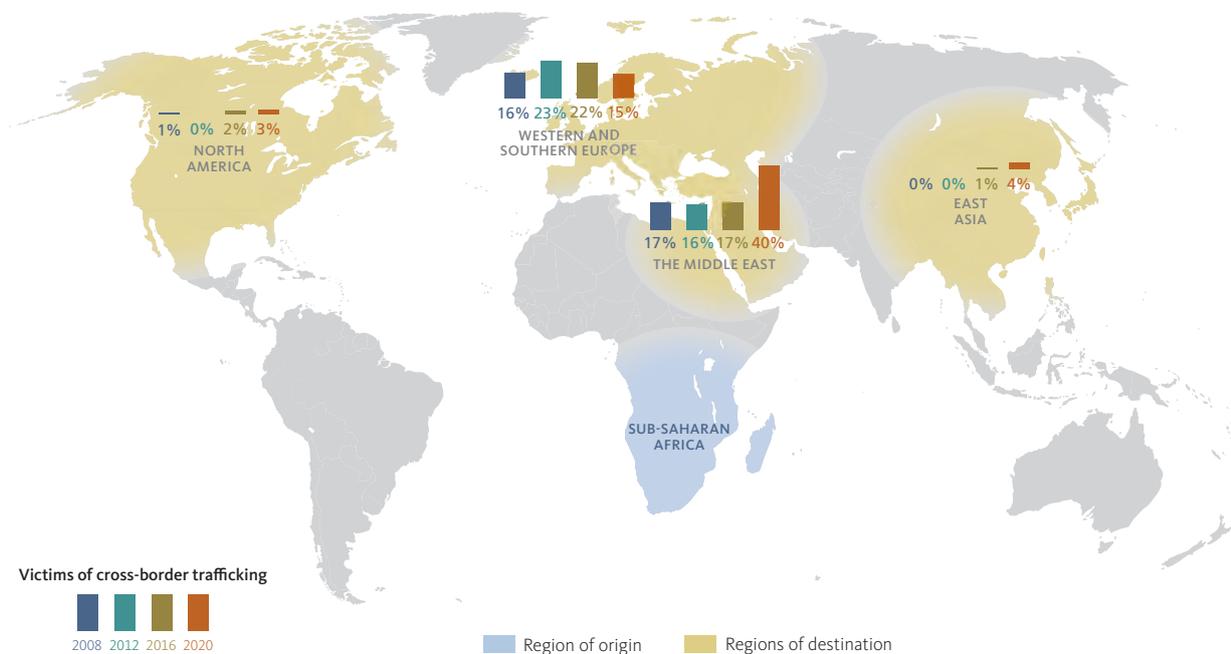
\* Based on 34,667 victims of trafficking in persons detected in 2020; 38,042 of trafficking in persons detected in 2019; 29,525 victims of trafficking in persons detected in 2018; and 49,201 victims of trafficking in persons detected in 2017 whose citizenship was reported.

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



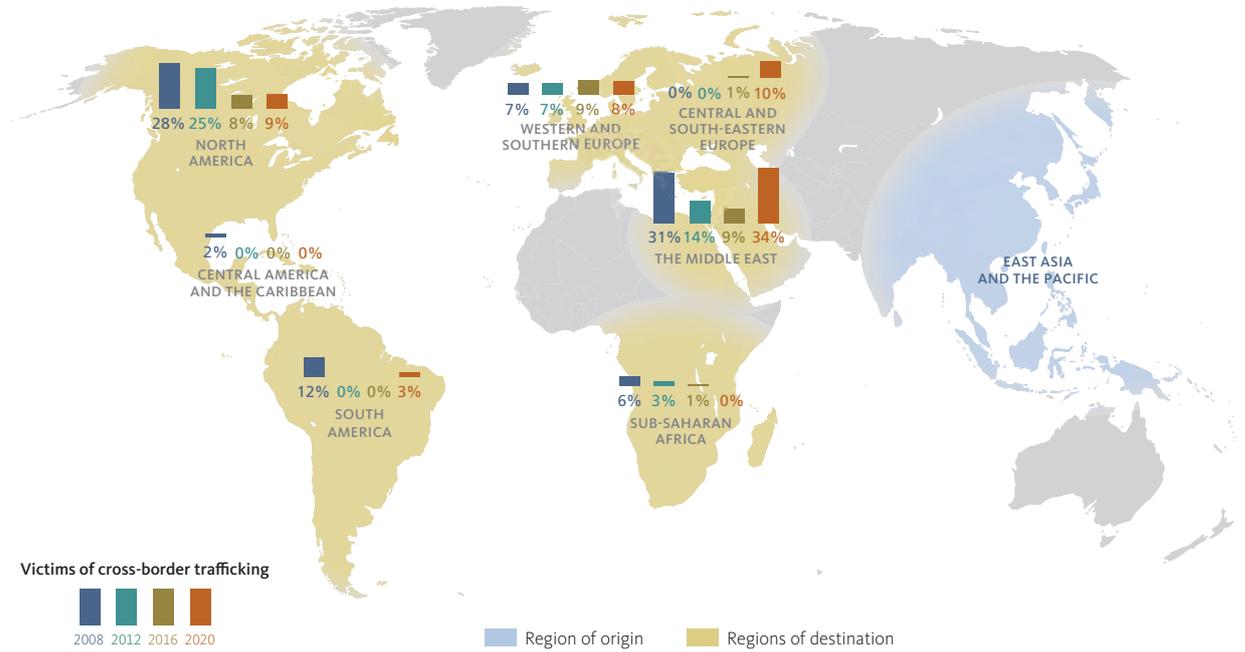
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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



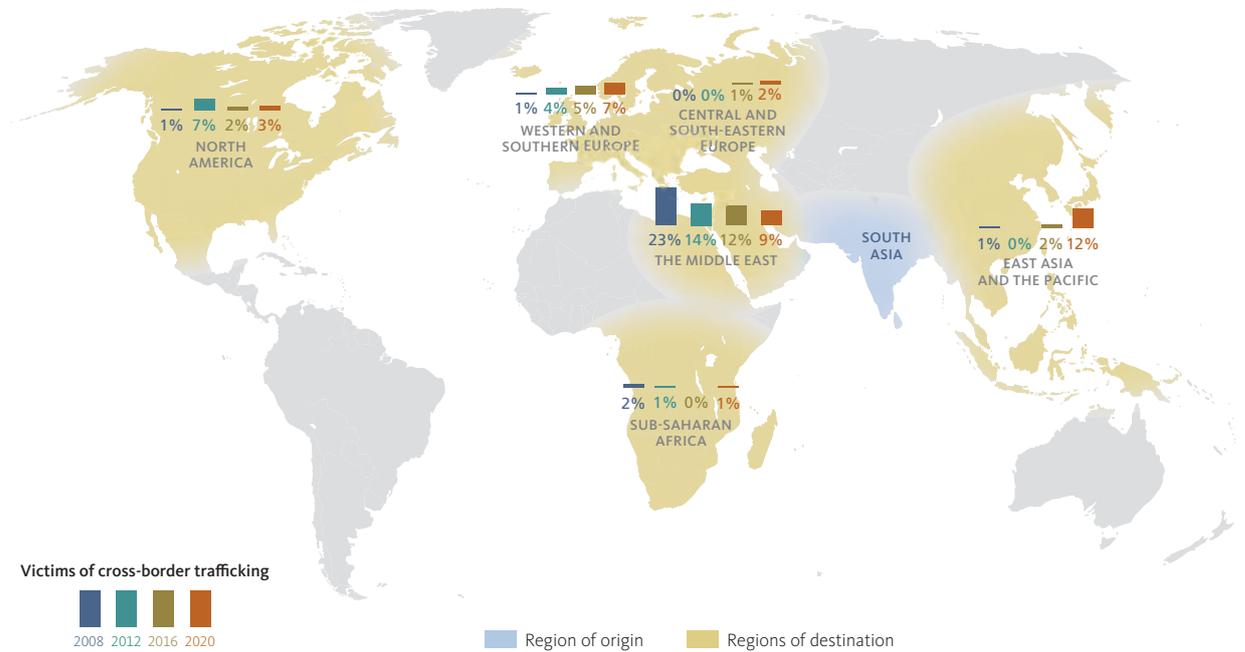
Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**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



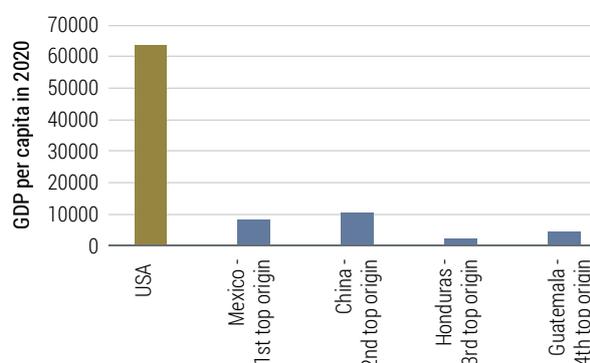
Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.  
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**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.

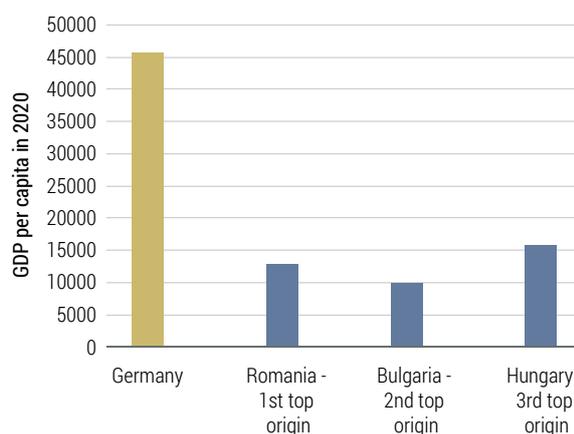
- About a quarter of victims detected in Western and Southern Europe are citizens of countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe or Eastern Europe and 35 per cent are victims of domestic trafficking.
- About 82 per cent of victims detected in East Asia are East Asian citizens, either victims of cross 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



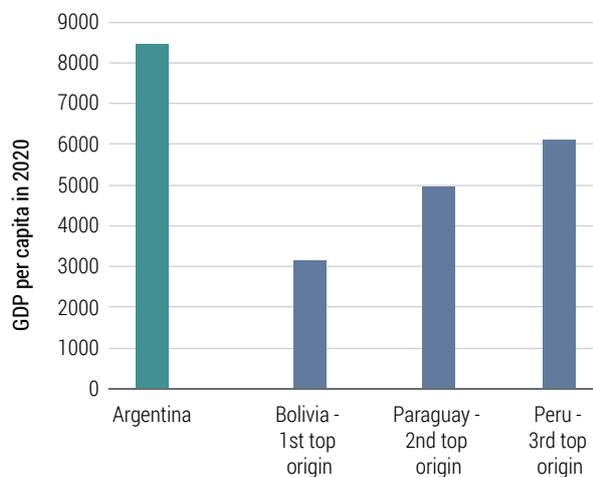
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

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



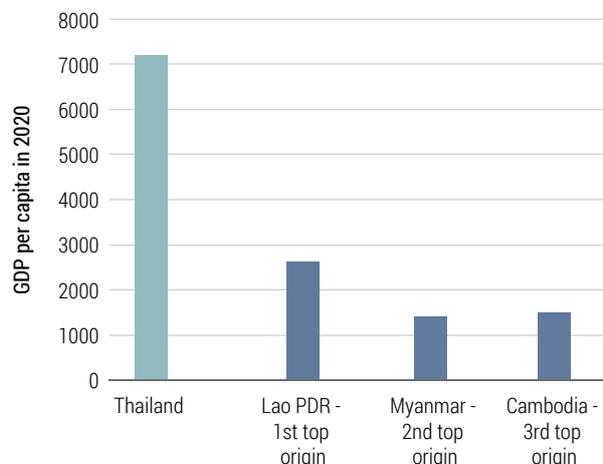
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

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



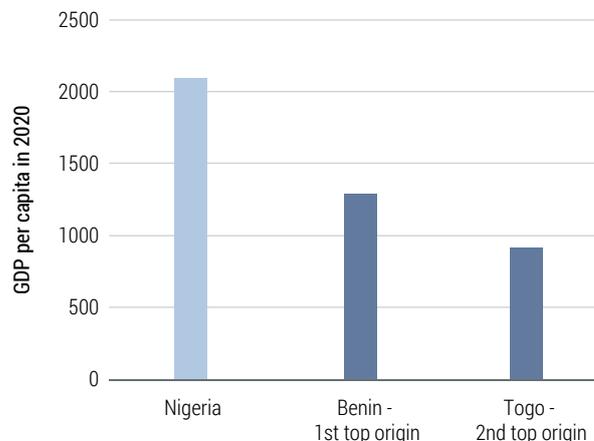
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

**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



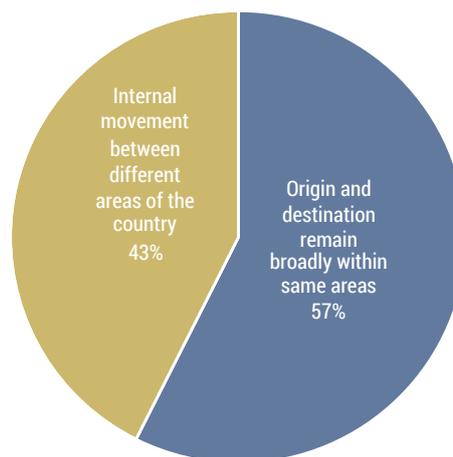
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and World Bank data.

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.<sup>64</sup>

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

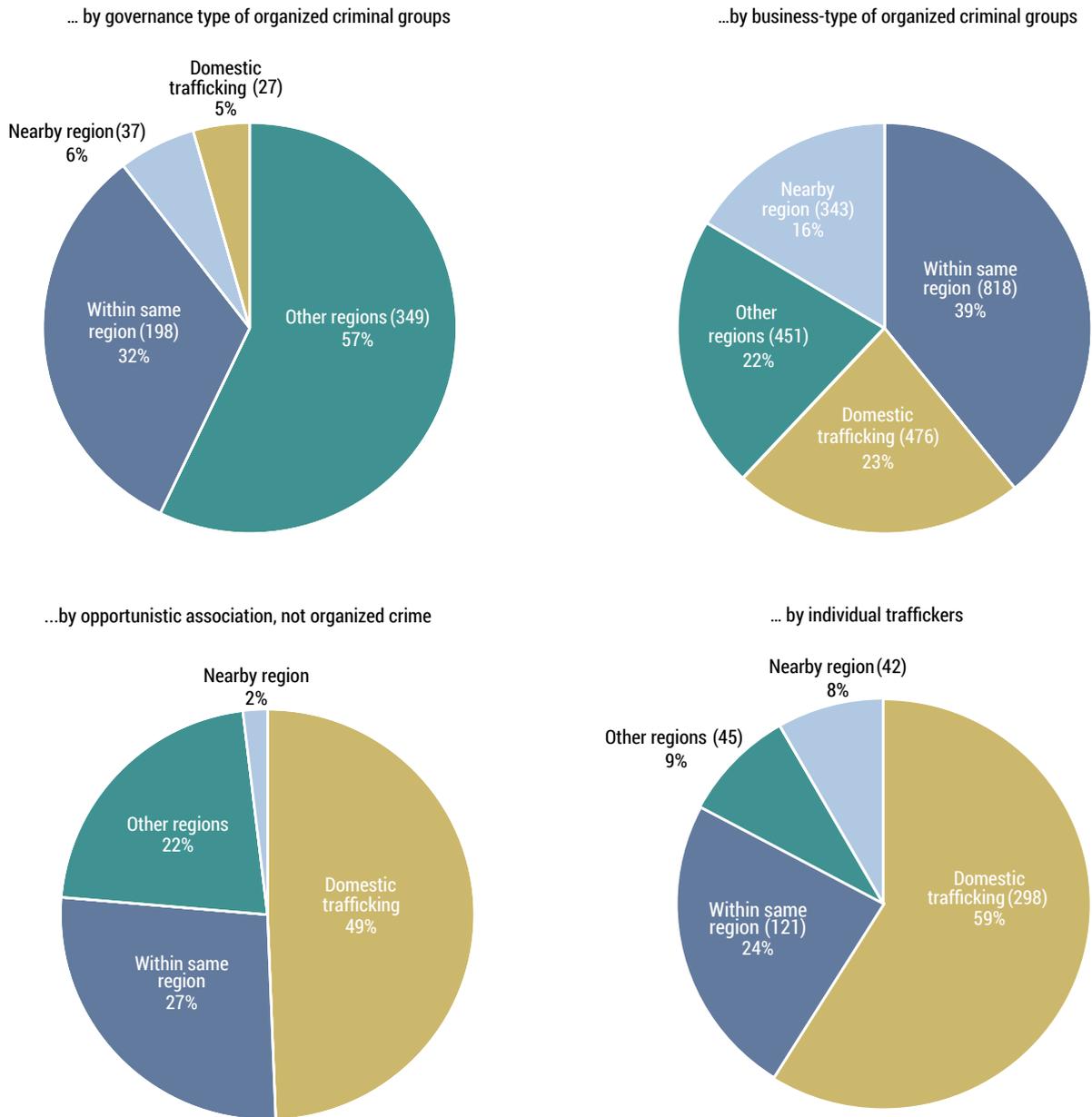


Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock Case Law Database.

\*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\*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock 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.<sup>65</sup>

“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:

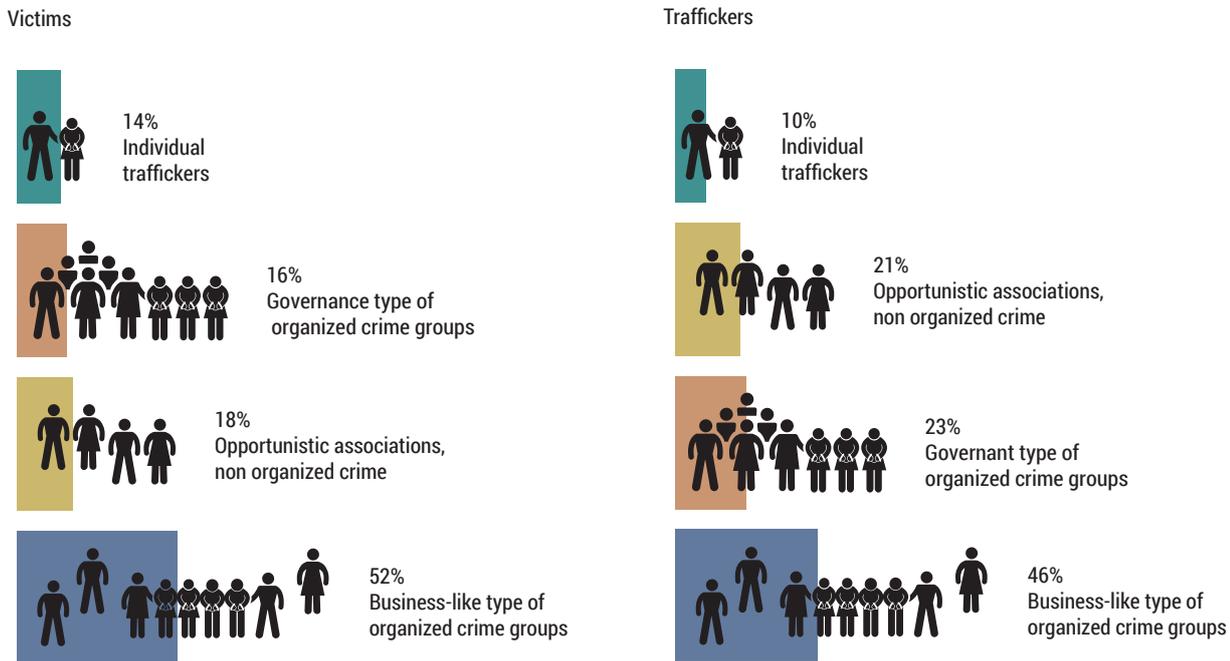
“Opportunistic associations of traffickers” working together, where two traffickers operate together, or more than two traffickers do not systematically work together beyond a single criminal act; and

“Individual traffickers” who typically operate on their own.

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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 Sherlock 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.

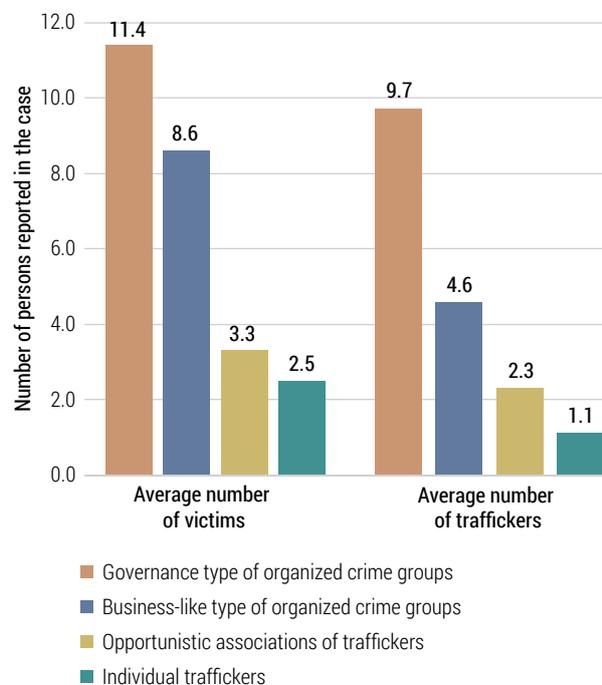
## Trafficking organizations

### 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.

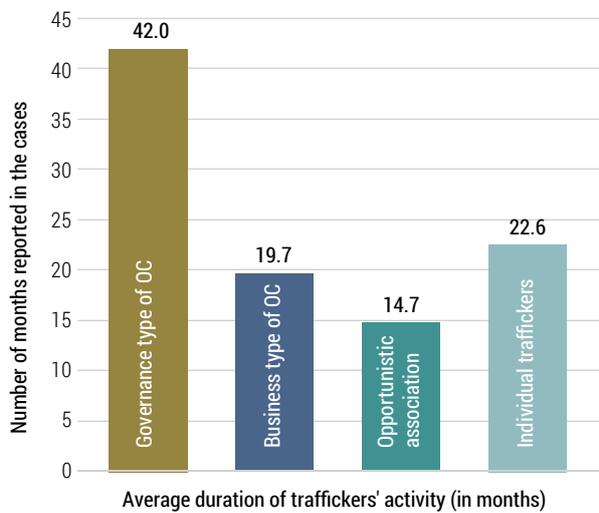
**Fig. 29** Average number of victims and average number of traffickers, by type of trafficking structure, as reported in UNODC court case summaries, 2012-2020\*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock 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 Sherlock 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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> Finally, the case summaries showed that, more than other actors, individ-

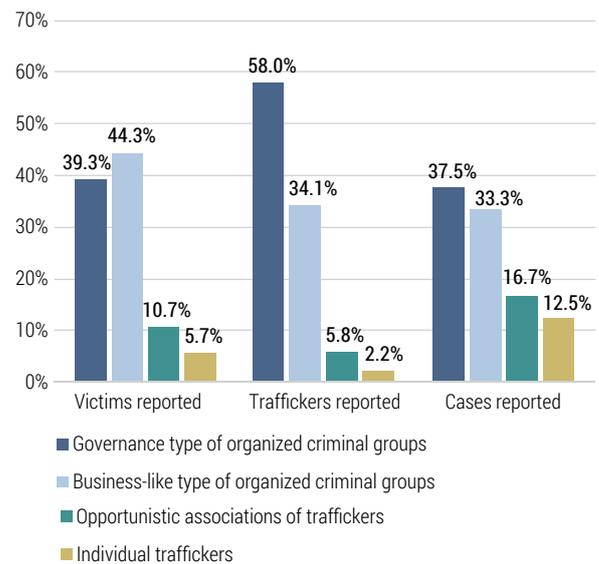
66 An analysis of the case summaries collected by UNODC on the presence or absence of organized crime in the trafficking cases suggests that trafficking for forced labour has higher odds of being carried out by organized crime groups compared to trafficking for sexual exploitation. A logistic regression 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.

ual traffickers are convicted for the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 14, including the production of child sexual abuse material.<sup>68</sup>

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.

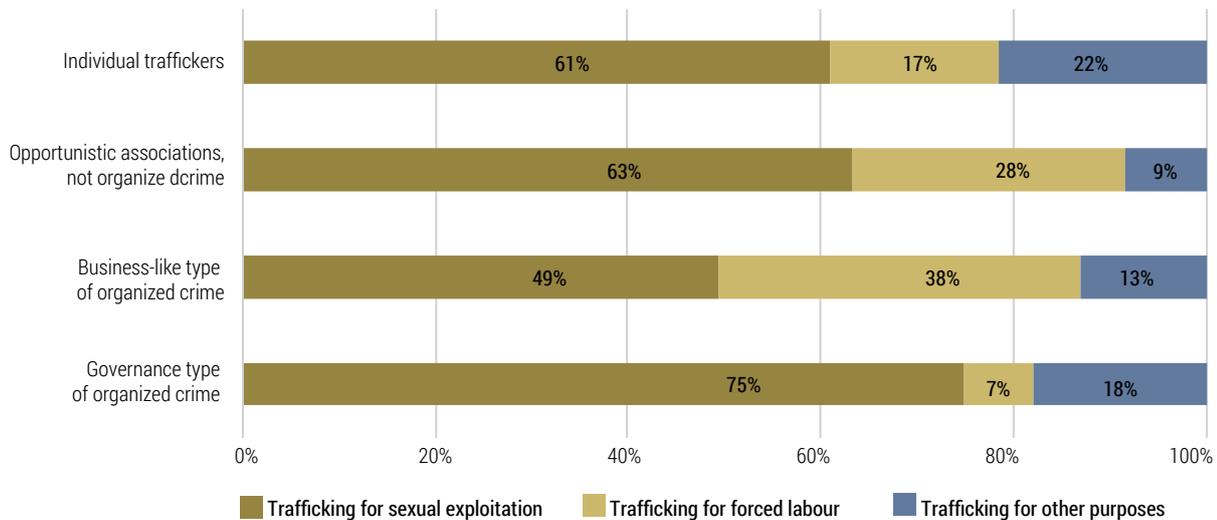
**Fig. 31** Type of trafficking structure in cases of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, by number of traffickers involved and victims detected, as reported in case narratives, 2012 - 2020



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

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.

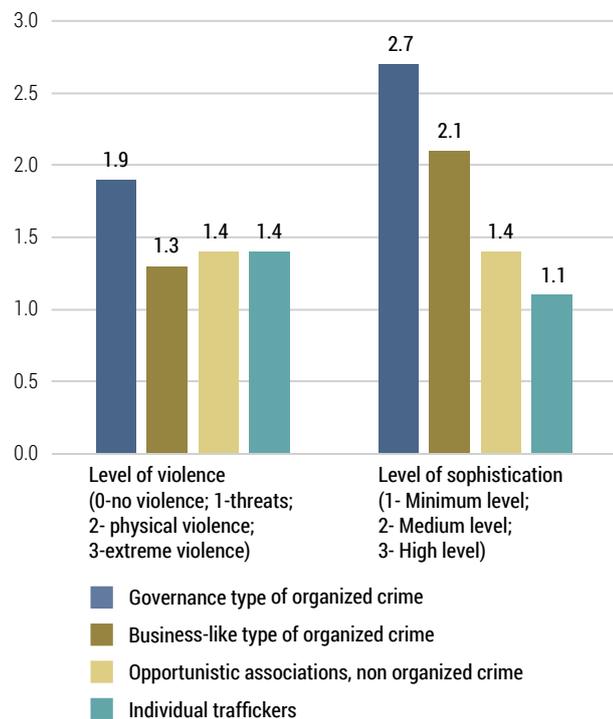
**Fig. 32** Type of trafficking structure, by form of exploitation, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020\*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock 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 Sherlock 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.

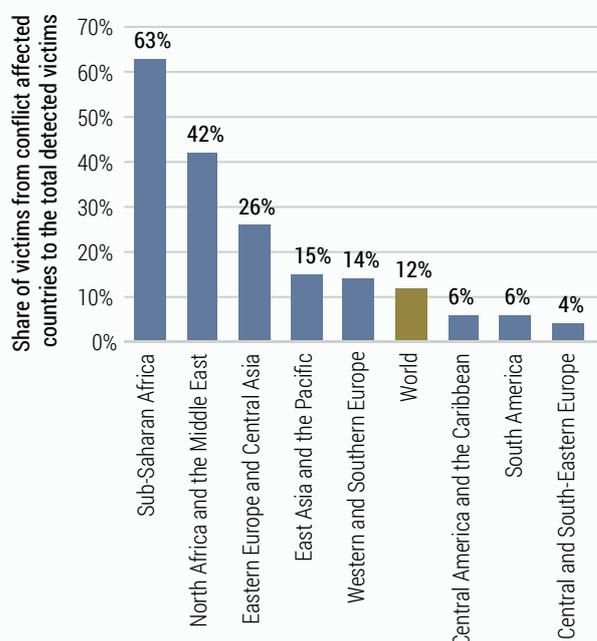
### War. An Opportunity for Traffickers

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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup>

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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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.

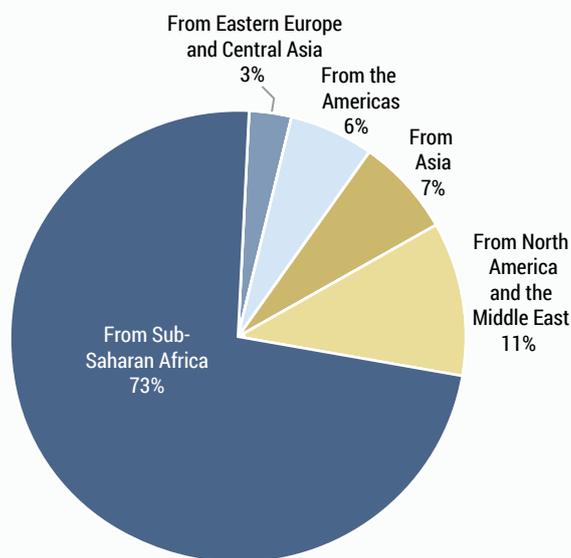
Most detected victims of trafficking originating from countries affected by ongoing conflict are African nationals and they are mostly detected within Africa and in the Middle East.

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.

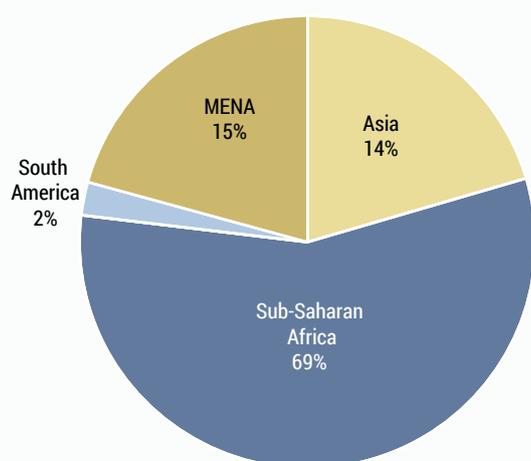
70 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Sipri Yearbook 2022, Armament, Disarmament and International Security, SIPRI, 2022.

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.<sup>73</sup> 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<sup>74</sup> and for this, may not always be recognised as victims of trafficking.<sup>75</sup>

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.

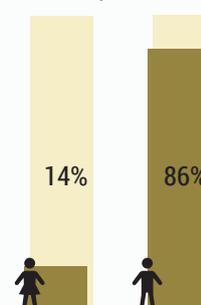
74 See A/70/836-S/2016/360, A/69/926-S/2015/409 and A/HRC/30/67.

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.

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.<sup>76</sup>

Older children are typically recruited into armed units to take active part in hostilities, while younger children are used for other tasks.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> Similar patterns are documented in the Middle East, East Asia and in other conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>80</sup>.

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.

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.

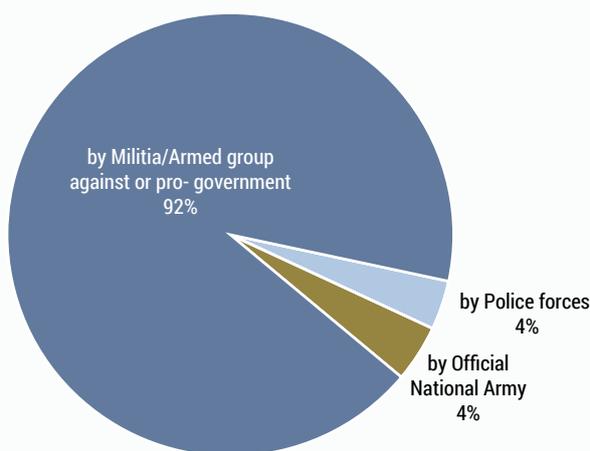
78 Security Council, Children and armed conflict in Yemen Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/761.

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<sup>81</sup>.

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.<sup>82</sup>

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.<sup>83</sup> The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, is often part of the systematic sexual violence perpetrated against civilians during and after conflicts.

### Trafficking 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.**

### Trafficking driven by conflicts



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

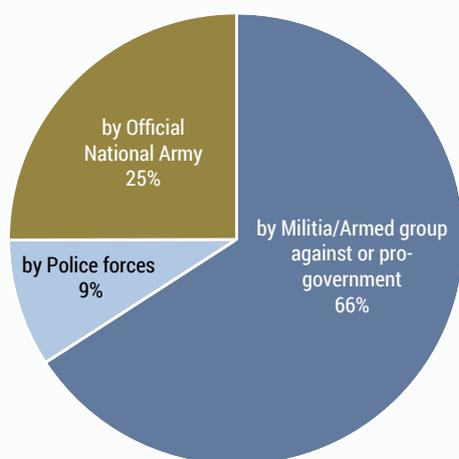
The presence of large numbers of **troops creates demand for labour and sexual services.** In connection with degraded rule of law and weak institutions, this demand generates trafficking flows into the conflict or post-conflict zones.

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<sup>84</sup>.

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.<sup>85</sup>

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.<sup>86</sup> 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<sup>87</sup>.

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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup>

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).<sup>90</sup> Economic need is also recorded as prevalent among Ukrainian refugees hosted in Central European countries.<sup>91</sup> Being in economic need is the first risk factor for people to be targeted by traffickers.<sup>92</sup>

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

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).

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).<sup>93</sup>

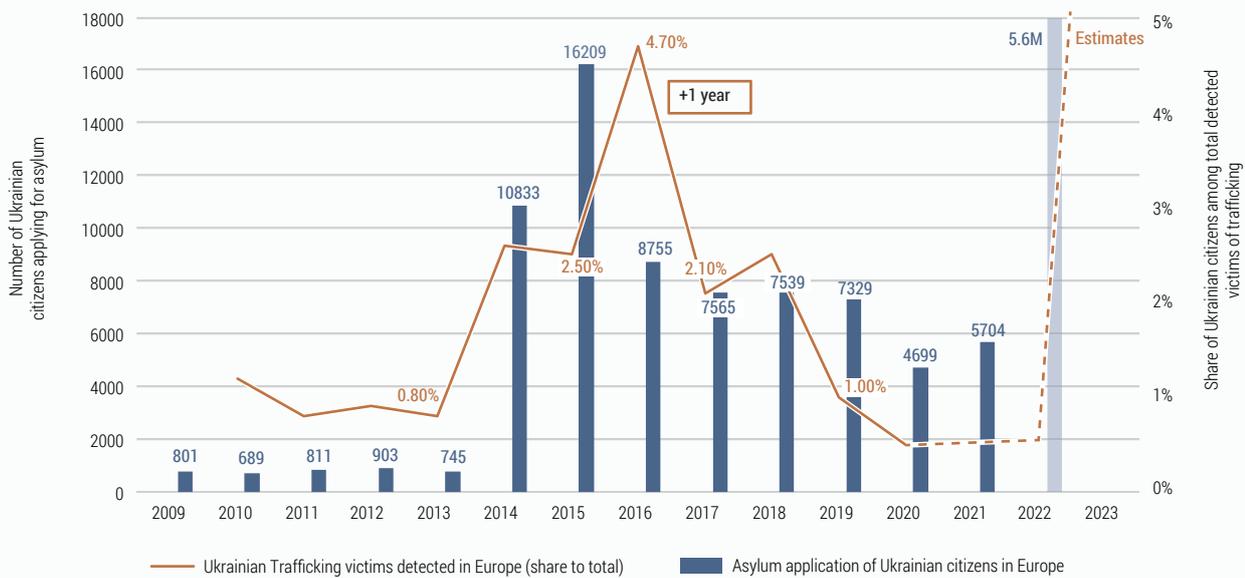
As a much larger number of Ukrainian people were displaced in 2022 – about 5.6 million in temporary protection across Europe, compared to the peak of 16,000 recorded in 2015. The statistical model inferred on the base of the numbers recorded between 2007 and 2020 would suggest such a number of displaced populations would theoretically result into more than 100,000 victims from Ukraine to Europe only<sup>94</sup>. 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.

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)

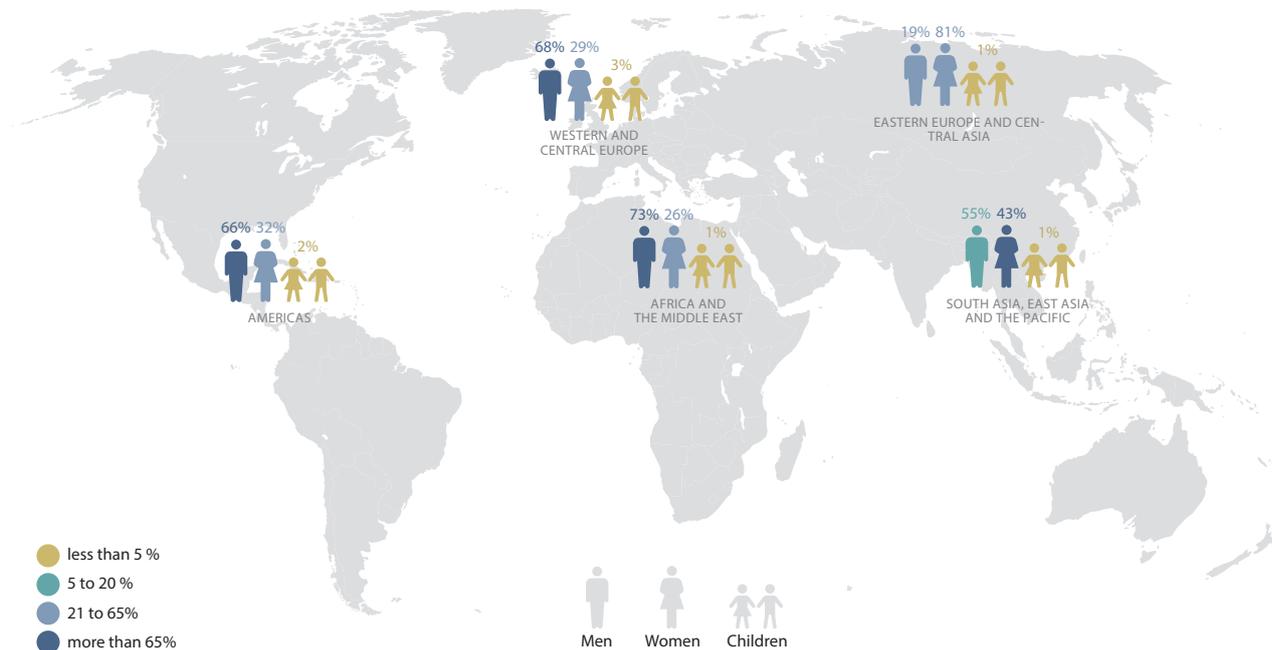
94 This number is calculated by applying the ratio of 5 victims trafficked for every 1 victim detected that is broadly the ratio resulting from Multiple System Estimates method in European countries. See UNODC, Monitoring human trafficking prevalence through multiple system estimation 2022.

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)\*



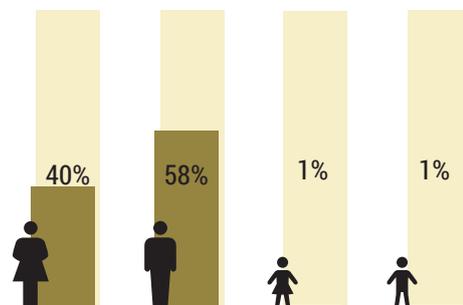
Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**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.<sup>95</sup>

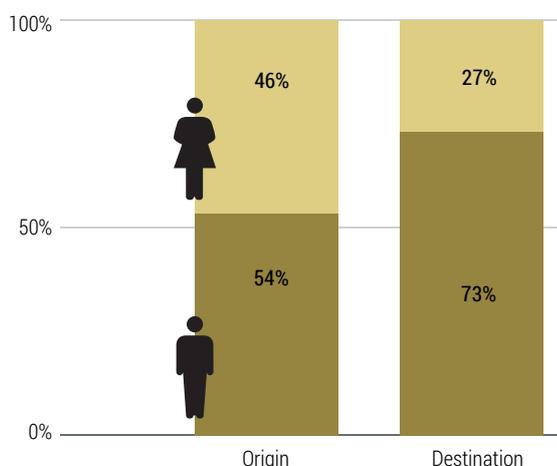
**Fig. 34** Persons convicted of trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)\*



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 in Women 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)\*



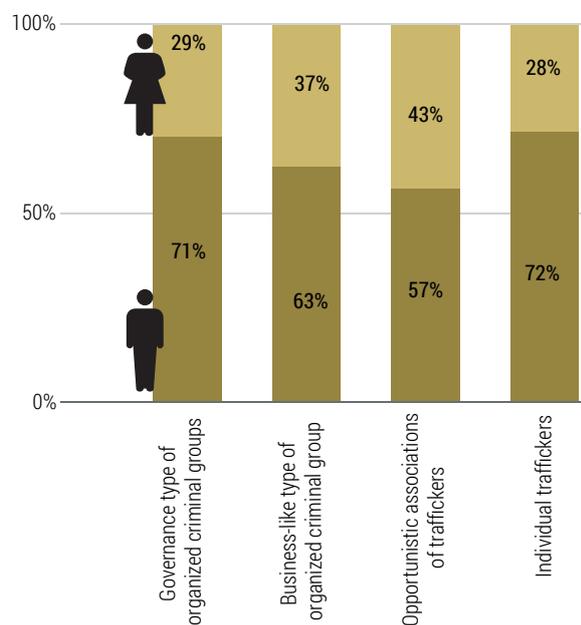
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.  
 \*Based on 564 females and 1,011 males convicted in 92 countries of origin and 70 countries of destination for cross-border trafficking.

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.

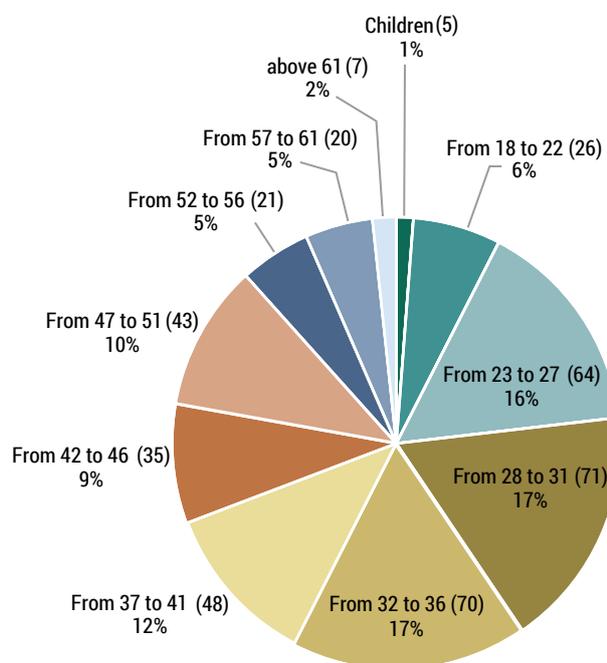
According to the information reported in the case summaries collected, there is a wide span in **traffickers' ages** from below 18 to above 70 years old. **Most traffickers reported in analysed cases were aged between 23 and 36 when convicted** (median 28, average 37). Children are rarely found to be 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 Sherlock Case Law Database.  
 \*Based on 1,207 traffickers reported in 537 court cases of the 800 collected by UNODC.

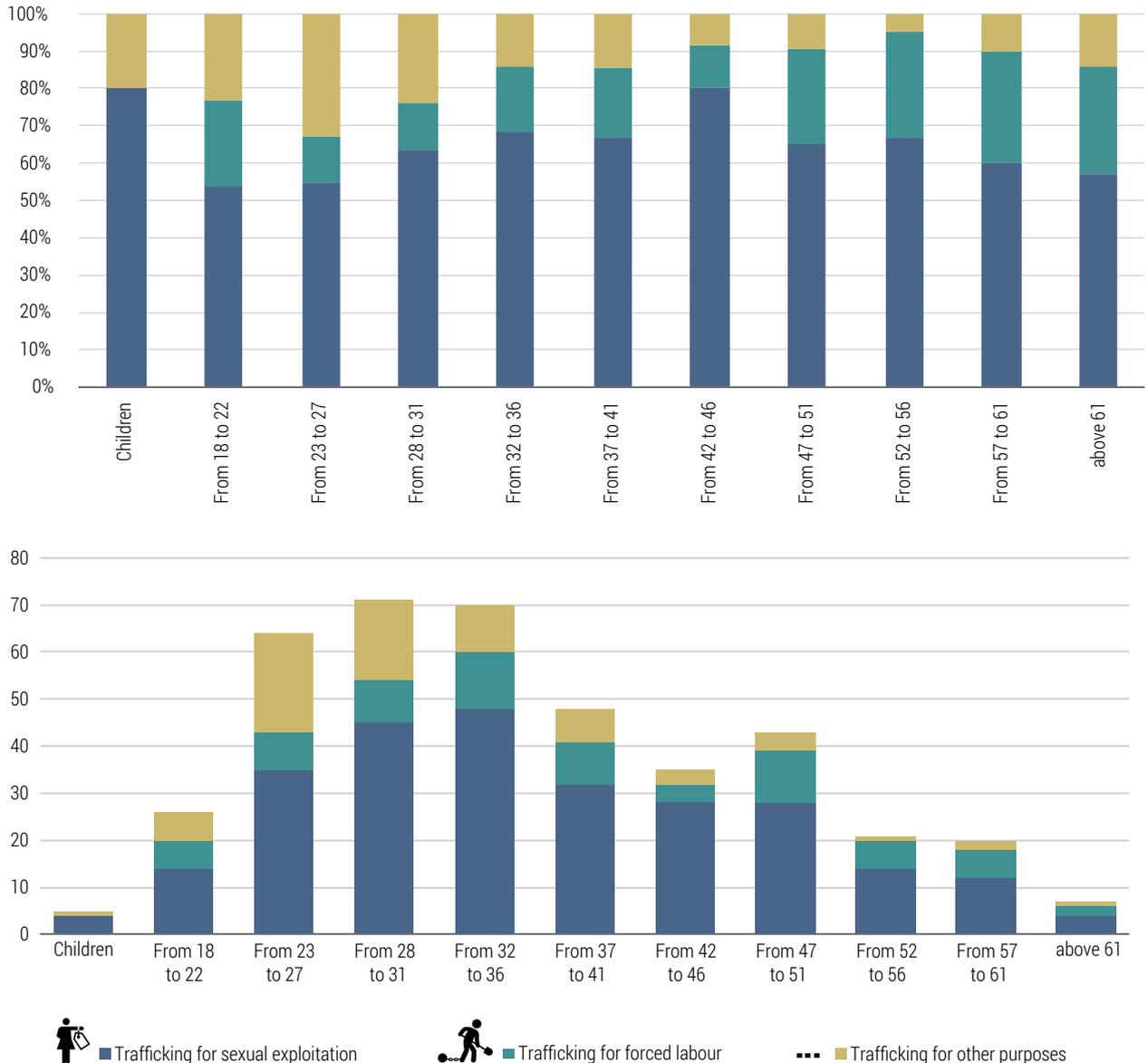
**Fig. 37** Persons convicted, by age group, as reported in case narratives, 2012-2020\*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries and Sherlock 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.<sup>96</sup>

**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 Sherlock 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.<sup>97</sup> Rising and shifting temperatures and weather patterns are disproportionately affecting poor communities relying on the primary economic sector, including agriculture and the extraction of natural resources.<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup>

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.<sup>100</sup> As regions of the world become increasingly uninhabitable, people on the move will face high risk of exploitation along migration routes.<sup>101</sup> “Slow-onset climate change impacts” could force an estimated 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050.<sup>102</sup>

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.<sup>103</sup> 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.<sup>104</sup> 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.<sup>105</sup>

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

### 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](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](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](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.<sup>108</sup>

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.<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup>

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.<sup>111</sup> 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.<sup>112</sup>

### Droughts and floods in Ghana

Droughts and floods in Ghana are forcing many to migrate,<sup>113</sup> 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.<sup>114</sup>

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.<sup>115</sup>

### 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.<sup>116</sup>

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.<sup>117</sup> 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.<sup>118</sup>

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.<sup>119</sup>

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](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](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.

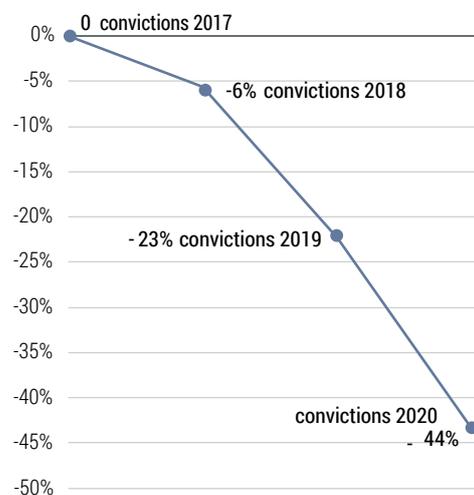
### Criminal Justice Response Most countries record fewer convictions

In 2020, a drop of 27 per cent in the number of individuals convicted was recorded globally from 2019.<sup>120</sup> 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).

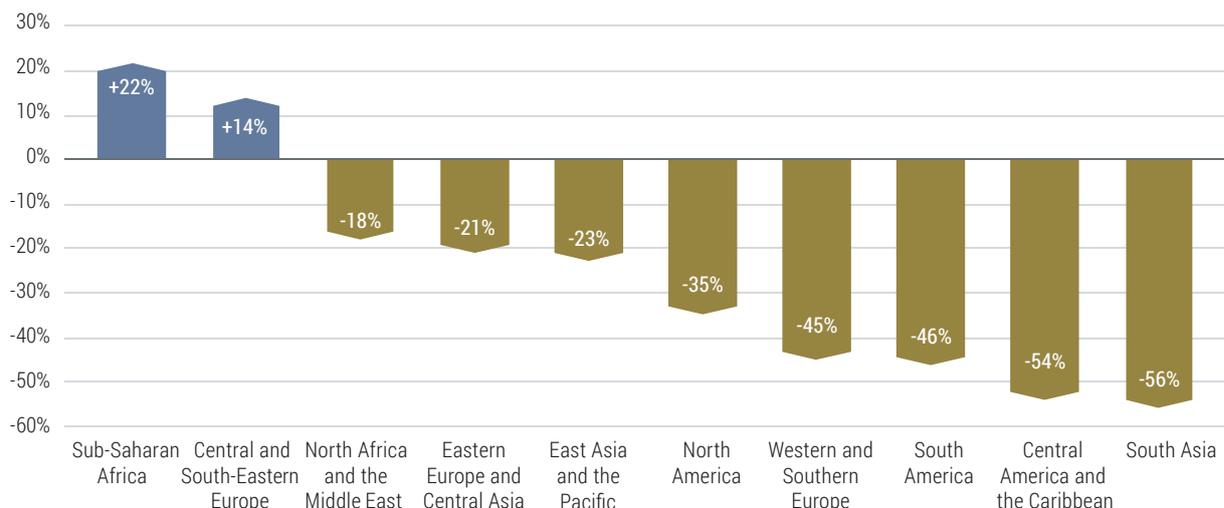
Fig. 39 Global trend in convictions for trafficking in persons, 2017-2020 (2017 base year)\*



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.

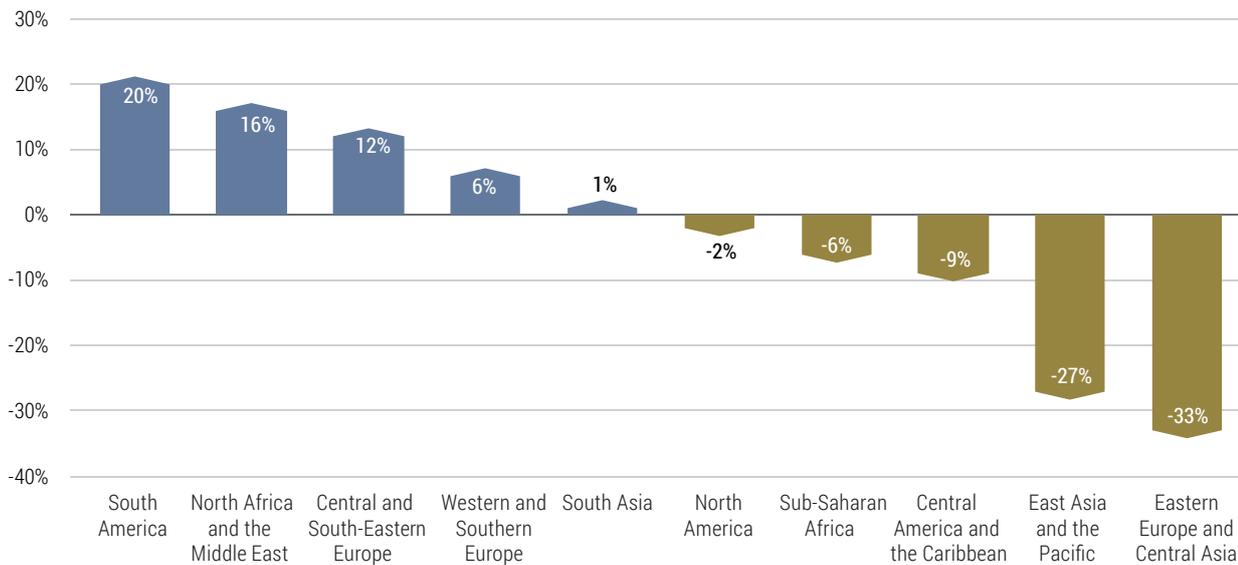
Fig. 40 Conviction trends, by region, comparison from 2019 to 2020



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

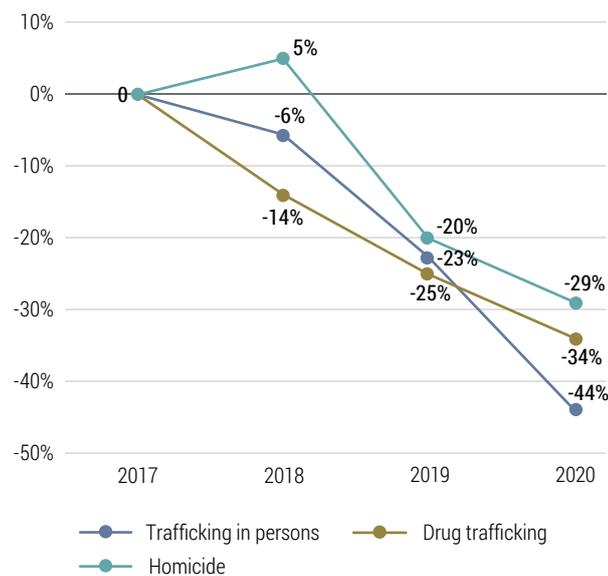
120 Based on the total number of individuals convicted in 2019 and in 2020 in data collected from 85 countries.

**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)\*

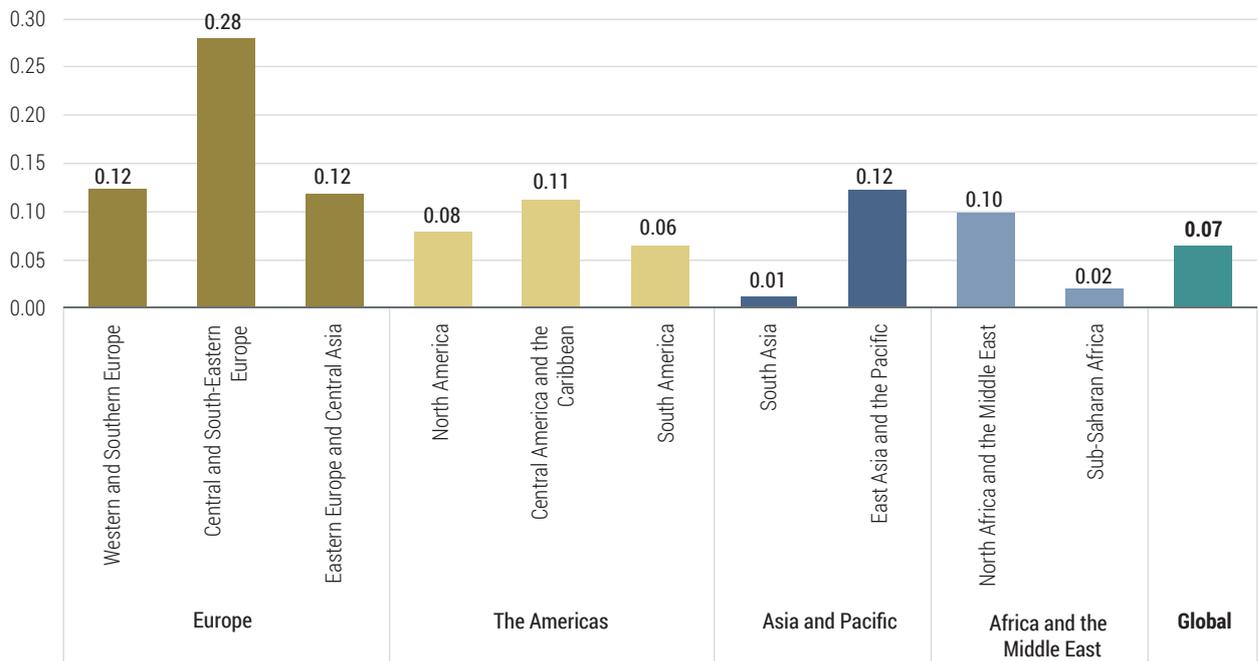


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data and UNODC Crime Trends Survey.

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.

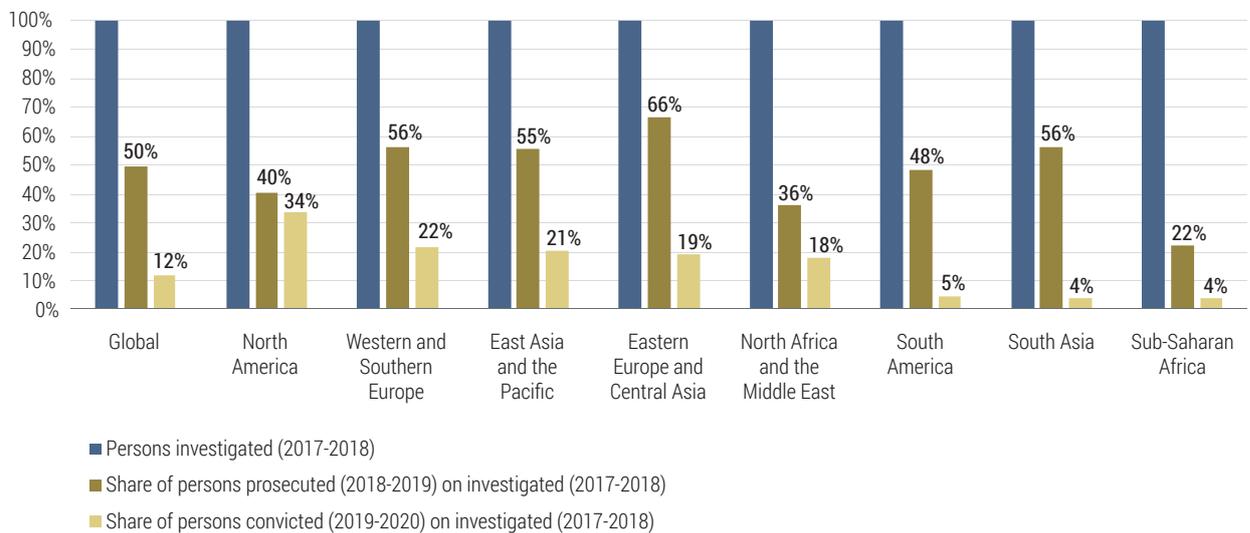
**Fig. 43** Conviction rates per 100,000 population, by region, 2020 (or most recent)\*



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

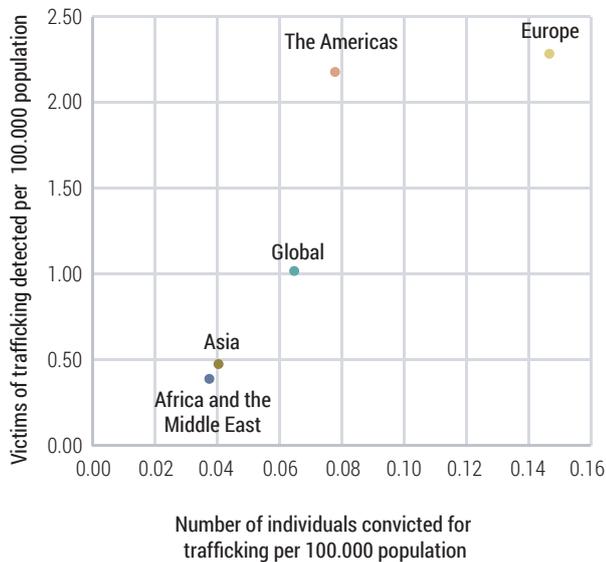
\* Based on 105 countries where information on convictions was available, including: 18 countries in Western and Southern Europe; 18 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; 15 in Central and South-Eastern Europe; 15 countries in East Asia and the Pacific; nine in North Africa and the Middle East; eight in Eastern 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.<sup>121</sup>

**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.<sup>122</sup> 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.<sup>123</sup> 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.

<sup>121</sup> 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.

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

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

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.**<sup>124</sup> This may be the result of several factors, including reduced access to justice for women compared to men during trafficking in persons prosecutions.<sup>125</sup> 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).

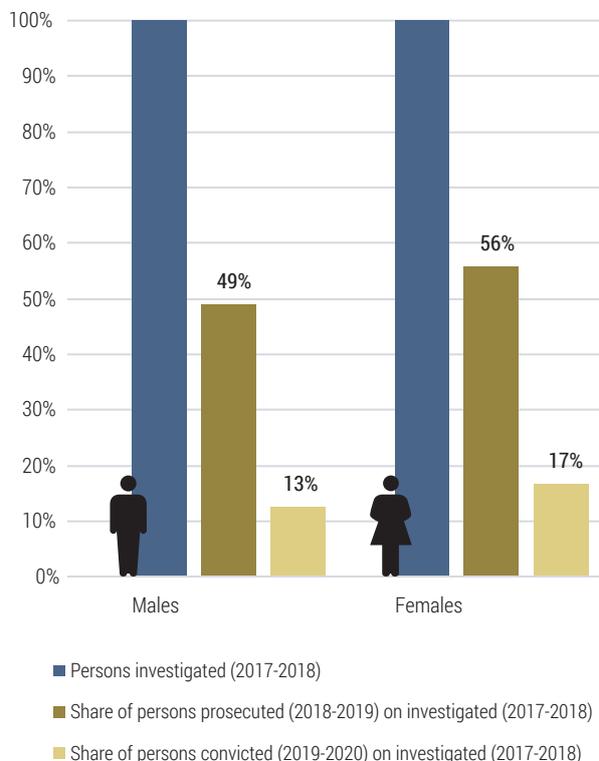
A similar pattern is found regarding convictions for drug offences; According to UNODC research, the proportion of women sentenced for drug-related offences is higher than that of men.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> 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.

<sup>125</sup> 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).

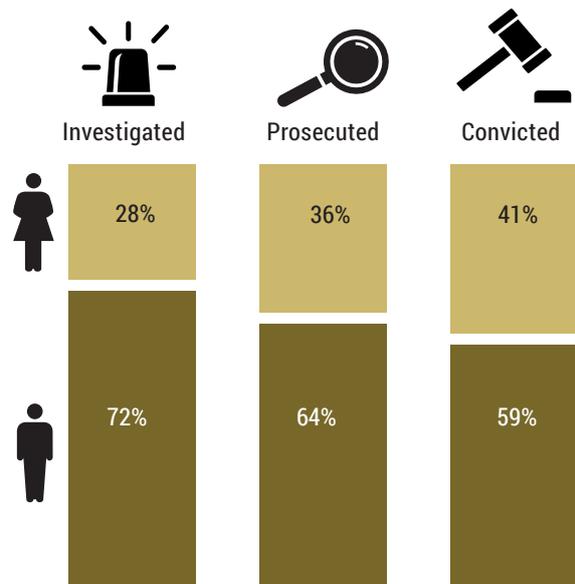
<sup>126</sup> World Drug Report 2018 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.XI.9), Booklet 5, page 7.

**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.<sup>127</sup>

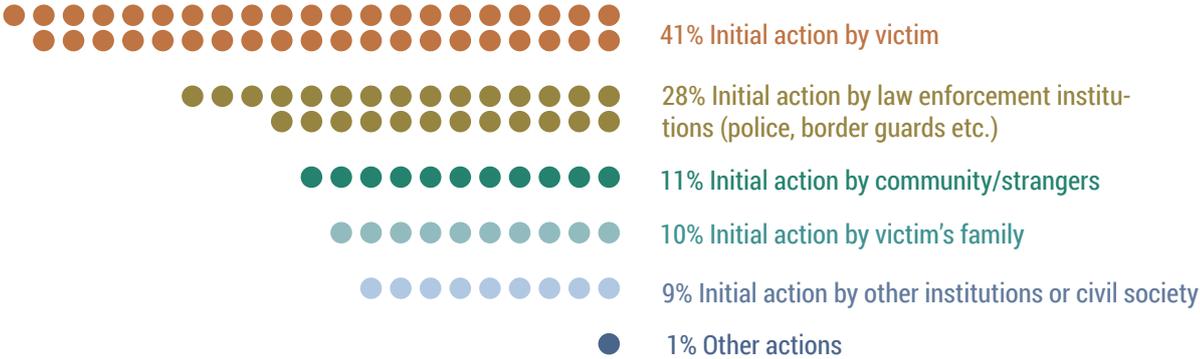
In a smaller group of cases, the **victim's family**, such as parents or siblings, took action and reported the disappearance of their relative. Finally, a limited number of cases emerge because of **actions by other non-law enforcement institutions**, such as hospitals, schools, labour inspectorates 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<sup>128</sup>, 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.

<sup>127</sup> 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).

<sup>128</sup> 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 Sherlock 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)*<sup>129</sup>

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”.<sup>130</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup> 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”.<sup>132</sup>

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 Ma-

terial, increased significantly during the pandemic as lockdown measures and economic instability resulted in increased vulnerability among women and children.<sup>133</sup>

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.<sup>134</sup> 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<sup>135</sup> (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.<sup>136</sup>

### 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.<sup>137</sup>

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.<sup>138</sup> Yet, it is precisely these services that are being abused by traffickers at every stage of the crime.

According to the OSCE,<sup>139</sup> across the globe, policymakers and lawmakers have intentionally adopted approaches to incentivize the development of Internet and technology innovation by allowing

<sup>136</sup> 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.

<sup>137</sup> 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.

<sup>138</sup> 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).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

technology companies to self-regulate.<sup>140</sup> 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.

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

