Chapter II
Regional Overviews
North Africa and the Middle East

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

* This subregion includes 16 countries and comprises North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) and the other countries of the Middle East (Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of trafficking flows</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>−40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>−70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>−65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td>Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>−64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>−73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims’ profiles</td>
<td>Child victims detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>−68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female victims detected (per 100,000 females):</td>
<td>−26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>−18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>+16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trends

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

In 2020, North Africa and the Middle East recorded a sharp decrease in the detection of victims for sexual exploitation (-64 per cent).
Victims
In 2020, authorities in North Africa detected more child victims than adults, accounting for over 60 per cent of the total number of victims detected. In 2020, women victims accounted for 22 per cent of total detected victims. Further, these victims were mainly exploited in begging, forced criminal activity and trafficking for organ removal.
Meanwhile, in other countries in the Middle East, women are detected in much larger shares and comprised the overwhelming majority of detected victims. Along similar lines, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council detected a significant increase in the proportion of women victims of trafficking identified. In these countries, forced labour is relatively more reported, with more than 50 per cent of detected victims having been trafficked for that purpose.
Meanwhile, in other countries in the Middle East, women are detected in much larger shares and comprised the overwhelming majority of detected victims. Along similar lines, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council detected a significant increase in the proportion of women victims of trafficking identified. In these countries, forced labour is relatively more reported, with more than 50 per cent of detected victims having been trafficked for that purpose.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries in the Middle East</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

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

Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
Trafficking in persons from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries

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

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

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

![Fig. 55](image1)

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

![Fig. 55.1](image2)

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

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

![Fig. 56](image3)

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

* See definitions of organization types on page 48 of this report.

Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
Criminal justice response

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

In terms of the differences between the rates of investigation, prosecution and conviction, between 2017 and 2020, the number of individuals investigated was three times higher than those prosecuted, and five times higher than those convicted of trafficking in persons in North Africa and the Middle East. As a result, around 18% offenders are convicted for every 100 individuals investigated by police authorities. While the number of persons suspected and prosecuted for trafficking in persons in the region has increased since 2017, the number of convictions sharply decreased in 2019 and 2020.
**Fig. 59** Change in the number of persons prosecuted in North Africa and the Middle East, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
Sub-Saharan Africa

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

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

Source: UNODC

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
### Emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected</td>
<td>- 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(per 100,000p):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of trafficking flows</strong></td>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forms of exploitation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male victims detected</td>
<td>- 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(per 100,000 males):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female victims detected</td>
<td>- 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(per 100,000 females):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victims’ profiles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons (per 100,000p):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal justice response</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa involved the number and profile of victims detected, the forms of exploitation recorded, and the number of persons prosecuted and convicted of trafficking in persons. In terms of victim detections, there was a slight decrease (-12 per cent) in the number of victims of trafficking detected per year in the region between 2019 and 2020. Yet, it is important to consider that the detection rate registered in this region since 2003 has been volatile and heavily dependent on national reporting capacity. More significantly, the number of foreign victims detected in Sub-Saharan Africa countries fell in the same period (-36 per cent). This could be attributed to numerous causes, particularly involving factors at borders of countries, given the period analysed. For example, authorities in Uganda attributed the decrease to the enhanced deployment of security personnel at entry and exit points and the mobility ban.\footnote{Uganda Police, “Annual Crime Report”, 2020.}


Regarding the age and sex of detected victims, children continue to account for the majority. Between 2019 and 2020, the rate of child victims within each 100,000 population increased by 43 per cent. Further, trafficking for other forms of exploitation, including forced begging, forced criminality and illegal adoption, is also increasingly detected in the region. There is some variation among the geographic areas in forms of exploitation. While in East and West Africa forced labour comprises the most commonly detected form of trafficking in persons, in Southern Africa, sexual exploitation comprises the largest share (48 per cent).
Victims

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion</th>
<th>Trafficking for other purposes</th>
<th>Trafficking for sexual exploitation</th>
<th>Trafficking for forced labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 4,392 victims detected in 38 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Court case narratives report that detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Sub-Saharan Africa are exploited in private apartments. According to recent research, people who engage in prostitution in Nairobi consider bars, lodgings and hotels the safest locations, and apartments as the most dangerous ones. At the same time, sexual health practitioners report that, as a result of the lockdown and curfews, prostitution moved from public places to apartments. The COVID-19 pandemic may, hence, have increased the level of abuse and isolation for individuals who are in prostitution, including those who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.143

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

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

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

143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
Cross-border trafficking from West Africa to the Middle East

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

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

**Traffickers**

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Prosecuted Male</th>
<th>Prosecuted Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Convicted Male</th>
<th>Convicted Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

- National offenders 70%
- Foreigners: Citizens of Sub-Saharan Africa 27%
- North Africa and the Middle East 2%
- Other 1%

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

- 4% Individual traffickers
- 22% Association of traffickers
- 74% Business type of organized crime

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

When compared to other regions of the world, Sub-Saharan African countries detect fewer victims. The region detects about 0.4 victims per 100,000 people within the population compared to the 2020 global average of 1 per 100,000 population. At the same time, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa also convict fewer traffickers than other regions. Further, between 2017 and 2020, the share of investigations resulting in prosecution and convictions was much lower than the global average. In this period, of ten persons investigated, two were then prosecuted for trafficking in persons offences, while four out of ten persons prosecuted were then convicted.

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

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

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

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The Americas

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

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

* These two subregions are comprised of three countries in North America and nine countries in Central America and the Caribbean. North America consists of Canada, Mexico and the United States of America. Central America and the Caribbean includes the Bahamas, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.
### Emerging trends in North and Central America and the Caribbean in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of trafficking flows</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>− 36%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>+ 16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>− 41%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>+ 14%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>− 51%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>+ 25%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>− 48%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>+ 16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): <strong>− 67%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): <strong>+ 26%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): <strong>− 60%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Child victims detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>+ 25%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: <strong>− 54%</strong></td>
<td>In North America Female victims detected (per 100,000 people): <strong>+ 14%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims’ profiles</td>
<td>In Central America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>In North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: <strong>− 35%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td></td>
<td>In North America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trends
The region of North and Central America and the Caribbean is comprised of two subregions that had distinctly different trends in detecting trafficking in persons during the pandemic. In North America, detection of trafficking victims seems not to have been impacted by the pandemic response measures. The detection of adults and children, citizens and foreigners all increased at similar rising rates as those recorded in the previous years (total detection in 2020 was up 16 per cent while in 2019 it had been 18.5 per cent higher than the year before). There was, however, a 35 per cent drop in the number of convictions that took place in North America during 2020.

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

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

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

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

Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, JAM004.

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

On the other hand, girls account for more than half of the victims who experience trafficking for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean. One-third of the victims in sexual exploitation are women.
Analysis of the cases provided to UNODC involving trafficking for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean suggests that exploitation of those victims who are detected by law enforcement in the region mostly takes place indoors, either at publicly accessible locations such as bars, or out of sight places such as apartments and hotels. Similar patterns are found in North America, where most of the sexual exploitation takes places in closed settings, such as brothels that are not officially registered, apartments or hotels.
As was stated above, more victims were detected in 2020 in North America than in the past. More victims of domestic trafficking, as well as foreigners. In 2020 in the subregion, the profile of these victims seems to have changed only to a limited extent. The only major change in victims’ origins in 2020 was an increasing number of victims detected from the northern part of Central America. This group made up only three per cent of detected victims in North America in 2018 but jumped to 11 per cent in 2020. Other flows to North America seem not to have changed significantly over time.

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

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
Traffickers

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

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

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

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

In 2018, 36 defendants, mostly men, were convicted by federal juries in the United States for being part of a massive criminal enterprise that trafficked hundreds of vulnerable women from South-East Asia to the United States of America for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The criminal organization used sophisticated money laundering techniques to conceal illicit profits. This criminal organization compelled hundreds of women to engage in commercial sex acts in various cities across the United States, including Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Phoenix, Washington, D.C., Las Vegas, Houston, Dallas, Seattle and Austin. The trafficking victims were often from impoverished backgrounds and were easily deceived about the working opportunities in the United States, as well as the opportunity to provide money to their families back home.

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

To facilitate international travel, the organization engaged in widespread visa fraud. Traffickers obtained fraudulent visas and travel documents by funding false bank accounts, creating fictitious backgrounds and occupations, and instructing the victims to enter into fraudulent marriages to increase the likelihood that their visa applications would be approved. The organization used accounts to launder and route cash from cities across the United States to the money launderers in Los Angeles. Investigators were able to recover 1.5 million US dollars in cash and 15 million dollars in titles. During the extensive investigation, law enforcement traced tens of millions of dollars to the organization sent back to South-East Asia.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, USA, Case 458.
Regional Overview — North America, Central America and the Caribbean

**Fig. 97**  
Type of criminal organization\(^{147}\) reported in North America, as reported in case narratives (2012–2021)

- 4% Association of traffickers
- 16% Individual traffickers
- 29% Governance type of organized crime
- 41% Business type of organized crime

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 98**  
Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization\(^{148}\) in North America, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)

- Low level of sophistication: 33%
- Medium level of sophistication: 27%
- High level of sophistication: 40%

Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

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

- 7% Association of traffickers
- 17% Individual traffickers
- 20% Governance type of organized crime
- 56% Business type of organized crime

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 100**  
Level of sophistication of the trafficking organization\(^{148}\) in Central America and the Caribbean, as reported in case narratives (2009–2021)

- Low level of sophistication: 47%
- Medium level of sophistication: 6%
- High level of sophistication: 47%

Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

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\(^{147}\) See definitions of criminal organization types on page 48 of this report.

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

\(^{149}\) Ibid.
**Criminal justice response**

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

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

![Graph showing the number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population for different regions.](source: UNODC elaboration of national data.)

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

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

![Graph showing the change in the number of persons investigated in North America, 2017–2020.](source: UNODC elaboration of national data.)

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

![Graph showing the change in the number of persons prosecuted in North America, 2017–2020.](source: UNODC elaboration of national data.)
Fig. 104  Change in the number of persons convicted in North America, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Persons convicted in North America

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

Persons investigated in Central America

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

Persons prosecuted in Central America

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

Persons convicted in Central America

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Persons investigated</th>
<th>Ratio of prosecutions on investigations</th>
<th>Ratio of convictions (first instance) on investigations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
**South America**

* This region consists of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
### Emerging trends in South America in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of trafficking flows</td>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>-58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td>Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>-13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims’ profiles</td>
<td>Female victims detected (per 100,000 females):</td>
<td>-38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male victims detected (per 100,000 males):</td>
<td>-23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child victims detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>-46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons investigated or suspected of trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>-31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trends
The trend toward higher detection of trafficking in persons in South America seems to have been hampered by the pandemic. In 2020, the detection of most victim categories fell drastically. Detection of female adults, as well as foreigners trafficked for any form of exploitation showed marked drops. The reduction in detected victims is more relevant if considered against what had been an increasing trend until 2019. The area where growth in detection continued is among child victims, where increase persisted in 2020.
The criminal justice response to trafficking recorded a similar drop in 2020, likely due to the pandemic; the number of people convicted in the region was 46 per cent lower than that seen in 2019. Prior to 2020, there had been a rapidly increasing number of convictions recorded in South America.
Victims

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

- 63% Trafficking for forced labour
- 36% Trafficking for sexual exploitation
- 1% Trafficking for other purposes

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

- 87% Female
- 1% Male
- 11% Child Female
- 1% Child Male

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

- 23% Female
- 57% Male
- 10% Child Female
- 10% Child Male

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

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

In Argentina, two traffickers, a husband and wife, recruited, transferred and detained four sisters, three of whom were children. The traffickers leveraged family relations – the man was the uncle of the victims – and the family’s economic need to lure the girls into exploitation. For four months, the couple held the girls captive and forced them to sell tortillas on the street, in very unhygienic and unsafe conditions. At home, the victims were abused psychologically and physically. Money was taken by the couple, and they were forced to work between 12 to 14 hours each day.

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

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

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

Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries

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150 See Case 397, Argentina, 2018.
**Trafficking flows**

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

**Map. 15**

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

**Fig. 16.1**

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

Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

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

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

In 2008, a wife and her husband who was a business partner in an investment group, together owned night clubs in the South of Chile - Punta Arenas. In 2014, these two engaged a group of three traffickers, all men, operating from abroad to recruit young women to be exploited in their clubs. The traffickers used the economic need of these women to deceive them with offers of jobs waiting tables. They managed to traffic victims to Punta Arenas where they were forced into sexual exploitation. Victims were controlled through a system of video cameras. Profits from the exploitation were kept by the club owners. The authorities believe at least 26 women were exploited in these night clubs in 2014 and 2015 alone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In this region, the number of offenders prosecuted between 2017 and 2020 is around 48 per cent of those investigated by police authorities. About 10 per cent of the total number of people prosecuted were convicted.
Change in the number of persons investigated in South America, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
East Asia and the Pacific

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

Countries and territories covered
Countries and territories not covered

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

* This subregion comprises eleven countries in East Asia and eight countries in the Pacific. East Asia consists of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand. The Pacific includes Australia, Fiji, Federal State of Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau and Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu.
### Emerging trends in East Asia and the Pacific in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of trafficking flows</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of trafficking flows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child victims detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>- 36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female victims detected (per 100,000 females):</td>
<td>- 44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male victims detected (per 100,000 males):</td>
<td>- 52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims’ profiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>- 23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons prosecuted of trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>- 27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons investigated of trafficking in persons:</td>
<td>- 58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trends
Detection of all types of trafficking fell sharply in 2020 compared to 2019 throughout East Asia and the Pacific (-59 per cent). Most dramatically, a drop in the number of foreign victims of trafficking detected in 2020 in the region likely drove this overall decline in numbers. The number of individuals investigated for trafficking in persons was also halved in 2020, compared to 2019.

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

Fig. 126. Emerging trends in East Asia and the Pacific
Victims

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

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

The decline in victims’ detection in 2020, followed the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and may have been influenced by the preventive measures put in place in many countries in the region, including mobility restrictions, supply chain disruptions, and the diversion of law enforcement engagement from anti-trafficking action.151 Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation who came to the attention of the authorities in East Asia and the Pacific were more likely to be exploited in public, accessible locations, such as bars, sauna/massage parlours and hotels, according to the narratives of the cases shared by national authorities. According to a recent study conducted in Singapore, people engaged in prostitution in entertainment establishments or brothels suffered higher food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to those who operated outside of such venues.152 Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation at the same time had to rely on traffickers more heavily and potentially had reduced access to support networks and rescue service. In such instances, sexual exploitation may have become more hidden and harder to detect.

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

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

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

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

Cross-border trafficking from the Pacific Islands

In 2020, New Zealand’s national authorities sentenced a 65-year-old man from the Pacific Islands and a resident of New Zealand to 11 years imprisonment for having trafficked 13 victims - men, women and children - to New Zealand for the purpose of forced labour. The victims were trafficked in four groups from 1994 to 2019 by convincing them with false promises of significant financial opportunities. The victims originated from the same islands in the Pacific as the trafficker. Some were even members of his extended family. A number of the victims had limited education. The perpetrator arranged their visas, and then once they arrived in New Zealand, restricted their movement and controlled them through threats of violence and actual violence. They were not allowed to speak to other people, to leave the defendant’s property or to communicate with their family back home. A few victims eventually escaped. Some were then located by the police or immigration officers and deported soon after, while others managed to remain in the country longer before being located and deported. The case was eventually brought to the attention of New Zealand authorities, which led to an almost five-year joint Investigation by Police and Immigration New Zealand.

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

Traffickers

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

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

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

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

![Fig. 131](source: UNODC elaboration of national data)

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

![Fig. 132](source: UNODC elaboration of national data)

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A lone trafficker from Western and Southern Europe

In 2014, authorities in the Philippines initiated an investigation into a Western European man who was temporarily residing in the country. After originally arriving as a tourist, the man prolonged his stay in the country and spent several months in a resort catering to Europeans. The investigation led to the rescue of two children (13 and 14 years old). The children had been subject to sexual exploitation and used to produce child sexual abuse material that was then distributed online for profit. Beyond those rescued, many other victims remain undetected. The offender abused his victims’ state of socio-economic need. The man was convicted of 8 years in prison plus compensation to his victims in 2021.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 493 – The Philippines.

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158 See definitions of organization types on page 48 of this report.

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

Most countries in East Asia and the Pacific have introduced a specific offence of trafficking in persons. Countries in East Asia and the Pacific record more than 0.1 convictions per 100,000 population. A much greater share of individuals who are investigated go on to be prosecuted and then convicted in the region, compared to the global average. However, the number of individuals convicted has decreased since 2017.

At the same time, this group of countries detect fewer victims of trafficking in persons. While the global average stands around one person among each 100,000 people, East Asia and the Pacific countries detect less than half that number.

In 2020, there were significant declines in both investigations and prosecutions, likely due to pandemic-related slowdowns in justice systems. For example, the national authorities of Thailand reported that their low number of investigations and prosecutions in 2020 was related to law enforcement involvement in COVID-19 preventive measures.160

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**Fig. 140** Change in the number of persons convicted in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 141** Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2020

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
South Asia

**Map 18.** Countries and territories covered in South Asia*

Source: UNODC

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dashed lines represent underdetermined boundaries. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

* This subregion includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
Emerging trends in South Asia in 2020 compared to 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p).</td>
<td>− 6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of trafficking flows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>− 81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>− 23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p).</td>
<td>− 31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced criminality and mixed forms of exploitation detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>− 67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>+ 58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child victims detected (per 100,000p):</td>
<td>− 11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male victims detected (per 100,000 males):</td>
<td>+ 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons.</td>
<td>− 56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trends
The countries of South Asia have detected a stable number of victims of trafficking in persons since 2017. But there were some moderate declines in reports of some profiles of trafficking victims in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. There was a 23 per cent decline in the number of domestic victims detected in 2020. Victims of trafficking who experienced sexual exploitation also dropped from the previous year. This, however, marked a return to the levels of sexual exploitation seen in 2017. All this fits with the sustained trend of detecting around 0.4 victims within each 100,000 people in the wider population.

Fig. 143  Emerging trends in South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of victims detected per 100,000 population in South Asia, 2017-2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population in South Asia, 2017-2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of victims detected per 100,000 population in South Asia, 2017-2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims

Women continue to comprise the largest share of trafficking victims detected in South Asia, as is the case globally. In 2020 though, significantly more men were detected as victims of trafficking in this region compared to previous years.

In 2020, the proportion of child victims of trafficking among the total number of identified victims fell slightly compared to 2018, when boys and girls accounted for 45 per cent of identified victims, whereas now they make up 37 per cent.

Over half of all victims of trafficking detected in South Asia are exploited for forced labour. This has consistently been the most detected form of exploitation in the region for years.

 Trafficking flows

Almost all victims detected in South Asia were trafficked domestically. The less than one per cent of detected victims trafficked across borders were from neighbouring countries within the region.

Many South Asian victims are instead increasingly detected outside of the region. As an origination point, countries in East Asia and the Pacific, Western and Southern Europe, North America have reported an increasing number of South Asian victims since 2017.

Fig. 144

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 7,878 victims detected in nine countries in South Asia.

Fig. 145

Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in South Asia, 2020 (or most recent) *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Exploitation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trafficking for sexual exploitation</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficking for forced labour</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficking for other purposes</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on forms of exploitation of 5,419 victims detected in nine countries in South Asia.

Map 19

Main trafficking flows detected for South Asia, 2020

Cross-border victims of trafficking for forced labour

Two recent court case summaries shared with UNODC describe South Asian victims, mostly men, trafficked for the purpose of forced labour to North America or Western and Southern Europe. In such cases, local traffickers were able to recruit victims by abusing their socio-economic need or immigration status.

In one case, three victims from South Asia were trafficked for domestic servitude to the United States, where they were threatened and abused physically and psychologically by a middle-aged American couple (man and woman).

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 631 and 667.
In 2020, 5,523 individuals, men and women, were contacted by law enforcement authorities in South Asian countries in relation to investigations of trafficking in persons.\textsuperscript{161} In the same year, at least 3,787 people were prosecuted for trafficking in persons,\textsuperscript{162} and 167 convicted.\textsuperscript{163} Not enough information was available about the sex disaggregation of the individuals involved in the criminal procedure.

Cases shared with UNODC can shed more light on the experiences of South Asian victims who are trafficked across borders outside the region. Usually, traffickers in these cases were higher income co-nationals. They often grew up in the same area as their victims, but with better socio-economic conditions, often with access to permits to stay in the country of destination. A large majority of the offenders convicted in countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council originate from South Asia, according to the court cases shared with UNODC.

Cross-border trafficking of South Asian victims committed by South Asian offenders

In countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Western and Southern Europe, South Asian offenders were convicted of trafficking of co-nationals, for various exploitative purposes. Case narratives shared with UNODC illustrate different dynamics involved in trafficking co-nationals for both sexual exploitation and forced labour to high-income countries. In the cases detected in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the offenders were all men, citizens of Bangladesh or India. They were all convicted of trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In these cases, victims were women, between 20 and 30 years old in most cases, originating from the same areas as their traffickers. They had moved to countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council in search of better opportunities and were instead subject to sexual exploitation. In many of these cases, the women managed to contact the police or an intermediary who then alerted the authorities.

In one case, the victim asked for help to another Bangladeshi woman after spending several months in total isolation at the offenders’ house. The rescuer reported the case to law enforcement authorities who freed the victim and arrested the offender.

In another case in 2019, two Indian nationals – husband and wife – were convicted of trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced labour to Western and Southern Europe. The four Indian victims were subjected to forced labour in a restaurant owned by the couple. As the permit of stay of these victims was linked to their employment in the restaurant, the couple could exert control over them.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 675, Case 676, Case 687, Case 688.

Criminal justice response

Most South Asian countries have a specific offence of trafficking in persons in their legislation. These were introduced after the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children entered into force. However, countries in South Asia convict fewer perpetrators of trafficking in proportion to their populations than most other regions. At the same time, though, the rate at which authorities detect victims in South Asia is comparable to the rest of the world, and higher than countries in East Asia and the Pacific.

Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data

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\textsuperscript{161} As reported by national authorities of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

\textsuperscript{162} As reported by national authorities of Bhutan, India and Nepal.

\textsuperscript{163} As reported by national authorities of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.
Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Map 20 | Countries and territories covered in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*

* This subregion comprises seven countries in Eastern Europe and five countries in Central Asia. Eastern Europe consists of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Central Asia includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
## Fig. 147  Emerging trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of trafficking flows</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>Victims detected (per 100,000p): + 9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Forms of exploitation     |                                    |                                    |
|---------------------------|                                    |                                    |
| Victims in sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p): | - 29%                             | Victims in forced labour detected (per 100,000p): + 35% |

| Victims’ profiles         |                                    |                                    |
|---------------------------|                                    |                                    |
| Female victims detected (per 100,000 females): | - 24%                             | Male victims detected (per 100,000 males): + 41% |

| Criminal justice response |                                    |                                    |
|--------------------------|                                    |                                    |
| Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: | - 21%                             |                                    |
| Persons prosecuted of trafficking in persons: | - 33%                             |                                    |
| Persons investigated of trafficking in persons: | - 44%                             |                                    |
**Fig. 148** Emerging trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Number of victims detected per 100,000 population, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2003–2020)

Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2003–2020)

Total male victims detected per 100,000 males

Change in the number of persons investigated (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.
Trends
In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the pandemic seems to have had a limited impact on the detection of trafficking victims in 2020, which increased about 9 per cent. The most marked trend is a severe slowdown in the criminal justice response to trafficking crime. Far fewer investigations took place, and both prosecutions and convictions fell throughout the region in 2020. Fewer victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were recorded in this period (-30 per cent). A drop in the identification of female victims trafficked for sexual exploitation accounted for the largest proportion of this decrease. Compared to 2019, and against this decreasing trend, more male victims (men and boys) and more victims in forced labour were identified in 2020.

Victims
The profiles of the victims found in the two areas of this region vary drastically. Most detected victims in Eastern Europe are men, while women and girls are the vast majority of victims identified in Central Asia. Compared to other regions of the world, child victims (both girls and boys) account for a smaller share of the victims detected in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Trafficking for forced labour in the construction sector in the South Caucasus
On 22 March 2012, a group of 22 men from the Western Balkans filed a case against a multinational construction company for trafficking for forced labour in the construction industry in the South Caucasus. These workers had been recruited to work at a large construction site, with promises to receive excellent accommodation, good salaries, food expenses, paid visas and health insurance once they arrived. Upon arrival, traffickers took away their travel and identification documents, preventing them from leaving the country. The victims were accommodated in dormitories in inhumane living conditions and their freedom of movement was restricted. Traffickers used various punishments against them, including mental and physical abuse, such as beatings and prolonged physical labour. The men were also deprived of adequate food and many lost significant weight. Also, they had no access to health care and some developed untreatable illnesses. The traffickers did not pay them for their work for several months and most victims were exploited for periods of six months or longer.

In October and November 2019, after mobilization of international NGOs in support of these trafficking victims, the company paid part of the unpaid wages to the workers, handed back their passports and arranged their return to their home countries.

Source: UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case number IRBX037.

Fig. 149: Detected victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)

Fig. 150: Detected victims of trafficking in Central Asia, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)
In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, distinctions in victim profiles are seen in relation to the forms of exploitation most reported in the two sub-regions. Nearly 90 per cent of the detected victims in Eastern Europe were exploited for forced labour. So, in this region as a whole, this form of exploitation is the most detected. In Central Asia, on the other hand, sexual exploitation drives three-quarters of the trafficking in persons detected. Women account for most of the victims in sexual exploitation and men, the vast majority of the victims in forced labour.

**Fig. 151.** Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)

- 87% Trafficking for forced labour
- 9% Trafficking for sexual exploitation
- 3% Trafficking for other purposes
- 1% Trafficking for removal of organs

Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 152.** Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Central Asia, 2020 (or most recent)

- 76% Trafficking for sexual exploitation
- 15% Trafficking for forced labour
- 9% Trafficking for other purposes

Source: UNODC Elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 153.** Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Central Asia, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)

- 91% Women
- 9% Men

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 154.** Detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)

- 91% Men
- 6% Women
- 1% Other

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Fig. 155.** Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2012–2020)

- 35% Night club
- 30% Apartment (provided by the trafficker)
- 17% Unofficial brothel
- 11% Bar
- 7% Hotel

Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.
Detected victims of sexual exploitation are most often exploited in visible public locations, according to cases provided to UNODC by national authorities. Many cases describe victims exploited in unlicensed brothels, clubs or bars. Cases where victims face exploitation in private spaces like apartments are, however, likely under-represented because detecting these situations is so challenging and requires lengthy, proactive investigations.

Court cases shared by national authorities in this region highlight that trafficking for forced labour victims are often detected in construction work. Other forms of exploitation found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are trafficking for forced criminality, as well as trafficking for removal of organs.

### Trafficking flows

Almost all the victims of trafficking in persons detected are recruited and exploited within their home countries. Those that are internationally trafficked are unlikely to leave the Eastern Europe and Central Asian region. The only noteworthy flow of trafficking victims outside the region is from Eastern Europe to Central and South-Eastern Europe, as well as to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East.

164 See UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, cases IRBx037, UZB001, and UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 331.

Sources: UNODC elaboration of national data.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
A clearer picture of the types of trafficking organizations most often exposed by law enforcement activities can be assembled from the analysis of 79 cases reported to UNODC between 2010 and 2020. Most of these traffickers committed the crime in conjunction with two or more other criminals systematically working together for the purpose of trafficking people as a core criminal business. Rarely, however, do these groups become more structured criminal organizations or maintain domain over territories. Compared to the other European regions, fewer traffickers convicted and reported to UNODC engaged in trafficking in persons within a highly organized criminal structure.
A women-led criminal group recruiting women and girls for sexual exploitation

In February 2014, a regional court in the Russian Federation delivered a guilty verdict in a criminal case against seven women traffickers working together to recruit girls in Samara and Ulyanovsk provinces, as well as in the Republic of Chuvashia, and then forcing them into sexual exploitation.

The perpetrators placed advertisements in regional newspapers to recruit servers to work in a café. Instead, threatening violence, they forced the women responding to the advertisements to be sexually exploited. This criminal organization managed three brothels in three separate cities, which held 25 women and two girls.

The women were held in heavily guarded apartments. Those who managed to escape were found, beaten and brought back by the criminals. One of the women jumped out of a window and was hospitalized with leg and hand fractures.

The court found all seven women guilty and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from three to 11 years.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 143 – The Russian Federation.

Criminal justice response

All countries in this region have dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons, mostly introduced in 2003 or since. Eastern European and Central Asian countries convict more traffickers in proportion to their populations than the global average. The rate near 0.1/0.15 per 100,000 people in 2020. **Convictions in the region, however, have decreased significantly.** In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries in this region reported a precipitous decline in the number of investigations and prosecution, which will likely continue the downward trend in convictions.

**Fig. 161** Change in the number of persons investigated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

![Graph showing change in number of persons investigated](source: UNODC elaboration of national data.)
Fig. 162. Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 163. Change in the number of persons convicted in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 164. Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017–2020

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
Central and South-Eastern Europe

Map. 22. Countries and territories covered in Central and South-Eastern Europe*

* This subregion consists of the following 16 countries: Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia (Central Europe) and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia (South-Eastern Europe).

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
### Emerging trends in Central and South-Eastern Europe in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of trafficking flows</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of trafficking detected (per 100,000p): + 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p): + 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p): + 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td>Victims exploited in begging and crime activities detected (per 100,000p): - 36%</td>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p): + 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims’ profiles</td>
<td>Child victims detected (per 100,000p): - 11%</td>
<td>Detected male victims (per 100,00 males): + 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons: + 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons: + 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key developments in 2020 in Central and South-Eastern Europe include: a continued increase in the detection of victims of trafficking in persons; a slight shift in victim profiles; and an uptick in the criminal justice response to trafficking. The trend towards identifying more victims of trafficking relative to countries’ populations accelerated – a four per cent increase between 2018 and 2019 jumped to 13 per cent from 2019.

In 2020, victims trafficked for the purpose of forced labour made up a larger share of all the victims detected in this region compared to the past. However, trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the primary form of trafficking in persons those national authorities uncover. Compared to the year before, a higher prevalence of foreigners, as well as men and boys, were detected as trafficking victims in 2020 in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Overall, though, these numbers are in line with earlier figures, which points to increased detection of male victims of trafficking in recent years. However, women trafficked domestically remain the majority of victims detected in the region.

Notably, there was an increase in the number of prosecutions and convictions in 2020, despite any expected pandemic-related slowdown in justice that was observed in other regions of the world.
Victims
In 2020, female victims (both women and girls) accounted for nearly three-quarters of the victims of trafficking that were identified in the Central and South-Eastern region. One-quarter of the total victims identified were children, while a smaller proportion, only 20 per cent, were adult men.

The data from 2020 show that two-thirds of the victims identified by national authorities in the region were sexually exploited, representing the most reported form of exploitation in this part of the world, as has been the case for many years. Women account for the great majority of the detected victims facing sexual exploitation and about one-third of the victims in forced labour situations.

Detected forms of sexual exploitation in Central and South-Eastern Europe seem to take place in rather visible, public locations, as more hidden forms of sexual exploitation can be difficult to detect. About half of cases shared by national authorities involve victims exploited in street prostitution, brothels, clubs or bars. The other half of cases indicate victims were exploited in private apartments and hotels.

Detection of trafficking for forced labour rose in 2020. Cases provided to UNODC most often highlighted victims of trafficking in persons for forced labour working in the agriculture sector. Within the category of other forms of exploitation, trafficking for forced criminality made up about 4 per cent of the total victims detected, while trafficking for forced begging made up 2.5 per cent of victims. Illegal adoption also accounts for 2.5 per cent of detected trafficking victims.

Fig. 168. Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)
Nearly 80 per cent of trafficking victims identified in Central and South-Eastern Europe were trafficked within their home countries. They were nationals of the countries where they were exploited and detected by national authorities. This proportion of victims who were domestically trafficked was significantly higher in the region in 2020 compared to 2019, when it was closer to half. Citizens of Central and South-Eastern European countries are also trafficked abroad. Most victims who originate in Central and South-Eastern Europe are identified in Western and Southern Europe, where they make up 20 per cent of detected victims. This number appears to be increasing. Victims from this region were rarely detected outside of Europe during the reporting period.

**Most victims of domestic trafficking are young women or girls who have been sexually exploited.** This is also the case among victims of cross-border trafficking exploited in the region, who tend to be nationals of this region trafficked to other nearby countries within the region and wider Europe. Again, Central and South-Eastern European women and girls who are detected as victims of cross-border trafficking within the region mostly face sexual exploitation. Detected cases of cross-border trafficking into forced begging and criminal activity most often involve children; men account for the majority of the victims of cross-border trafficking for forced labour in agriculture and construction.

The smaller group of foreign victims who faced cross-border trafficking into Central and South-Eastern Europe primarily originated from South-East Asia, Eastern Europe, most often Ukraine, and Central Asia.
East Asian victims exploited to commit fraud in the Balkans

In July 2018, an indictment for trafficking in human beings was filed against an organized international criminal group in the Republic of Slovenia against four individuals from East Asia. This group was found to have exploited a large number of victims throughout Slovenia. For an extended period, they forced victims held in call centers to commit fraud against East Asian nationals in Slovenia. The criminals locked victims in call centers, restricted their freedom of movement and isolated them from outside world, including by restricting and controlling their contact with relatives, as well as confiscating personal documents, money and telephones. The head of each call center used various rules, instructions, demands, threats and penalties to force victims to commit criminal fraud. Later in 2020, another five offenders from this group were also found guilty of trafficking in persons. A similar case in Montenegro in 2020 impacted 37 identified victims from East Asia, including 12 women and 25 men. All victims were exploited to commit online fraud against East Asian nationals residing in these countries.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 621 – Slovenia.
Traffickers

Much like in Western and Southern Europe, most people prosecuted or convicted for trafficking in Central or South-Eastern Europe are men - women make up just a quarter of those prosecuted or convicted for the offence. However, unlike in Western and Southern European countries, the great majority of people convicted are citizens of the country of conviction. Other nationals convicted are typically from the countries where their foreign victims originated.

The perpetrators convicted in the court cases shared by national authorities of Central and South-Eastern European countries committed the crime in conjunction with two or more traffickers, who systematically worked together for the purpose of trafficking persons as a core criminal business. This business-enterprise type usually includes some people specialized in recruiting victims, then selling them to others specialized in exploitation. These groups can be found engaged in all forms of exploitation. They typically operate across borders, trafficking victims from Central and South-Eastern Europe to Western and Southern Europe.

However, compared with Western and Southern Europe, the court cases shared by national authorities from this region describe a lower level of organization among trafficking groups here. Around a third of cases reported having only one or two people engaged in trafficking, similar to what is found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Fig. 172. Persons prosecuted for trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)

Fig. 173. Persons convicted of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)

Fig. 174. Persons convicted of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2020 (or most recent)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

166 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, case 46, case 48, case 49, case 50, case 52, case 65, case 112, case 115, case 118, case 134, case 137, case 139, case 140, case 172, case 251, case 280, case 352, case 421, case 422, case 426, case 579, case 580, case 588.
Tracking a sophisticated criminal organization trafficking pregnant women to sell infants

The Bulgarian and Greek authorities dismantled an organized crime group trafficking pregnant women to Greece for the purpose of sexual exploitation and selling newborn babies. The investigation uncovered more than ten victims of trafficking, who had been forced into sexual exploitation, then forced to give birth and sell their infants in Greece. At the end of 2010 in Sliven, Bulgaria, the authorities used operational-tracking methods to arrest the traffickers. Authorities found documents certifying bank transfers from Greece to Bulgaria, as well as medical documents in Bulgarian, French and Greek languages. Other evidence included birth certificates, international passports, health documents, SIM cards, cell phones, copies of ID cards and a gas pistol. All these proved that the leader of the group dealt with procurement and sale of the new-born children.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 23 – Bulgaria.

Criminal justice response

Central and South-Eastern European countries convict more traffickers than other regions of the world and have long-standing dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons. For every 100,000 people within the broader population, about 0.25/0.3 individuals were convicted for trafficking in the year 2020. Over the entire period (2017 to 2020), some decrease in prosecutions and convictions was recorded compared to previous years. During the pandemic, however, contrary to the global trend, this region recorded a slight increase in prosecutions and convictions. In this region, the number of offenders prosecuted is around 40 per cent of those investigated by police authorities in the two previous years. About one-third of the total number of people prosecuted were convicted. As a result, around 11 offenders are convicted for every 100 individuals investigated by police authorities.
Fig. 177  Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020


Fig. 179  Change in the number of persons convicted in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 178  Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2017-2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 180  Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Central and South-Eastern Europe, 2017-2020

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
Western and Southern Europe

Map 24. Countries and territories covered in Western and Southern Europe*

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

* This subregion consists of the following countries: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
### Emerging trends in Western and Southern Europe in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of trafficking flows</th>
<th>Decreasing trends compared to 2019</th>
<th>Increasing trends compared to 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of cross-border trafficking detected (per 100,000p).</td>
<td>− 15%</td>
<td>Victims of domestic trafficking detected (per 100,000p).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of trafficking flows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation detected (per 100,000p).</td>
<td>− 40%</td>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced criminality and mixed forms of exploitation detected (per 100,000p).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims trafficked for forced labour detected (per 100,000p).</td>
<td>− 12%</td>
<td>Detected child victims (per 100,000p).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims’ profiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons convicted of trafficking in persons.</td>
<td>− 45%</td>
<td>Persons investigated of trafficking in persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detected male victims (per 100,000 males).</td>
<td>+ 22%</td>
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</table>
**Fig. 182**  Emerging trends in Western and Southern Europe

Number of victims detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2003–2020)

Number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2005–2020)

Number of child victims detected per 100,000 population, Western and Southern Europe (2003–2020)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
Among the main trafficking in persons trends in Western and Southern Europe during the year 2020 are: changes in the forms of trafficking and profiles of victims identified; increased detection of domestic trafficking (within one country); and a decrease in prosecutions and convictions. The number of trafficking victims detected relative to countries’ populations continued to increase (+6 per cent), but at a slower pace than in previous years. This number had been increasing steadily since 2003. The most noteworthy change in the forms of trafficking detected is the relative decline in the proportion of cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation identified (−40 per cent), as compared to trafficking for labour exploitation. The decrease in the number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation detected accounts for a significant proportion of the overall slowdown in 2020 in the growth of the number of victims. On the other hand, more trafficked men, boys, and girls were detected. More victims were trafficked for the purposes of forced criminality, and for mixed forms of exploitation, among those detected by national authorities and reported to UNODC.

A higher prevalence of detected victims of trafficking within their country of nationality was reported in 2020 compared to previous years, 1.2 per 100,000 people, as compared to 1.05 per 100,000 in 2019. Thirty-five per cent of all victims identified in Western and Southern Europe were trafficked within their countries. Fewer victims of cross-border trafficking were identified in 2020 compared to previous years. A higher proportion of the foreign victims who were identified had been trafficked from neighbouring regions, whereas there were less reports of long-distance trafficking; more victims from South-Eastern Europe were detected, and fewer from West Africa.

Finally, while the number of investigations reported during this period was higher than in previous years, fewer prosecutions and convictions took place in this region in 2020 than in any of the previous three years.

**Victims**

In 2020 for the first time in Western and Southern Europe, more male victims (men and boys) were detected compared to women and girls and an increased share of the victims identified were children. Children accounted for more than 40 per cent of the total victims detected (compared to the 32 per cent reported in 2019 and 34 per cent in 2018).

One-third of detected victims of trafficking in persons...
were sexually exploited, making it the most reported form of exploitation in this part of the world. Mixed forms of exploitation, which most often combined sex exploitation and forced labour, were also detected more in 2020.

Detected forms of sexual exploitation in this region seem to take place in public locations. Most cases shared by national authorities describe victims exploited outdoors, in legal brothels and other public venues, such as saunas, clubs or bars. Fewer cases include victims exploited within private homes, likely because this form of sexual exploitation is more difficult to detect in this region of the world.

According to a recent study, prostitution declined in the Netherlands and Belgium during the 2020 lockdowns. Likewise, studies conducted in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain highlight a shift towards less visible forms of prostitution during and after the lockdown in 2020. In the Netherlands, workers in clubs, brothels, street and window prostitution were forced toward less secure locations (as escorts and in private settings). In Spain, women in prostitution interviewed for another study had moved their activities to their private apartments. These persons, who displayed several indicators of having been trafficked, cited fear of *loss of income, and consequent inability to afford rent, as main reason to keep working during the pandemic.*

In Northern Italy, research found the pandemic to have altered the geography of sexual exploitation. As free movement in urban areas was restricted, people in street prostitution who could not return to their countries of origin or access support networks were at a heightened risk of sexual exploitation. Trafficked victims had to rely even more on their traffickers/abusers to access food and shelter. As their financial vulnerability grew, these women and girls often ran up debt with their traffickers.

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**Fig. 184** Forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, 2020 (or most recent)*

- 26% Trafficking for forced labour
- 29% Trafficking for sexual exploitation
- 45% Trafficking for other purposes

*Based on data on sex and age of 15,118 victims detected in 24 countries in Western and Southern Europe.

**Fig. 185** Locations where sexual exploitation took place, as reported in case narratives, Western and Southern Europe, (2012–2020)

- 1% Clients’ private home
- 1% Cybersex
- 2% Unofficial brothel
- 2% Hotel
- 2% Escort agency
- 3% Bar
- 4% Night club
- 10% Sauna Massage
- 17% Apartment (provided by the trafficker)
- 26% Legal brothel
- 32% Outdoor

*Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries

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In this region, mixed forms of exploitation appear to involve foreign-born female victims, women or girls, who are exploited in forced labour and, at the same time, sexually abused or exploited by their traffickers. In some cases, victims of sexual exploitation are reported to be forced into selling drugs to their clients, mixing and leveraging different forms of criminal activity.

Court cases provided to UNODC suggest that the increased identification of boys is linked to the rise in cases of trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality. According to the United Kingdom National Crime Agency, children “are likely targeted as they provide the level of criminal capability required by the offending model, but remain easier to control, exploit and reward than adults.” Austria and France also reported large cases where child victims were forced into pickpocketing and other forms of stealing. The Netherlands, similarly, reported cases where young victims were forced into drug trafficking.

Victims of trafficking for forced labour highlighted in the cases provided from Western and Southern European countries were most often detected in domestic work, in agriculture and in the catering sector.

**Trafficking flows**

In 2020 in Western and Southern Europe, a decrease in detected forms of incoming cross-border trafficking was identified compared to previous years. But the detection of victims of domestic trafficking increased. Foreign-born citizens accounted for 65 per cent of the total number of victims identified in Western and Southern European countries in 2020. A higher number of victims originating from South-Eastern Europe was identified starting in 2019 and is continuing. Victims from further away, originating in East and South Asia, had made up a larger share of the victims detected in 2019, but that number fell again in 2020.

The cases collected shed light on the experience of West African girls and women, trafficked to Western and Central Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Conversely, court cases concerning victims from South-Eastern Europe describe a different victimization experience, with men, women, girls and boys trafficked for all forms of exploitation, particularly children for exploitative begging and for the commission of criminal activity and female victims for sexual exploitation or in mixed sex and labour exploitation.

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171 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 470, Germany.


173 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: Austria 404, France 268, France 415, France 475, France 518. See Norway 60, Norway 184, Norway 311.

174 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 318, the Netherlands.

175 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 189, 236, 323 and 590.

176 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 307, 322, 506 and 603.

177 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 235, 403, 433 and 510.

178 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, cases: 60, case 61, case 67, case 311, case 623, case 626, case 661, and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case ITA004.

179 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, case 323, case 470, case 560, and UNODC, SHERLOC Case Law Database, case GBR015.
Family-based trafficking from South-Eastern Europe to Northern European countries

Norwegian authorities reported a case of six South-Eastern European citizens who were found guilty of trafficking. They had exploited four girls, aged between 13 and 16 years, from within their extended family. The girls were forced to shoplift, beg and sell jewellery and one girl had been raped and forced into marriage in her home country.

During the case, events were investigated in Norway, Sweden and Romania and 111 witnesses were presented to the court. The six traffickers received prison sentences ranging from one to three years.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 61 – Norway.

Traffickers

More than 60 per cent of the people convicted of trafficking in persons in Western and Southern European countries in 2020 were foreigners. South-Eastern Europeans represent one quarter of those convicted, while citizens from Sub-Saharan Africa and from East Asia account for another eight per cent each.

Most traffickers convicted are men, with women making up about one-third of the convictions for trafficking. Women continue to represent a higher proportion of offenders convicted compared to other crimes. According to UNODC crime statistics, in 2020 14.4 per cent of people convicted for any crime were women, while 85.6 per cent were men. Women account for one-fifth of those prosecuted and children for about 5 per cent.

Fig. 188 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by age group and sex, 2020 (or most recent)
The cases shared by national authorities depict a rather organized and structured criminal scene, especially when compared to other parts of the world. Overall, trafficking groups apprehended in this region seem to operate in organized and relatively large criminal structures. In the cases shared by the national authorities, most convicted traffickers committed the crime in conjunction with two or more other traffickers systematically working together for the purpose of trafficking people as a core criminal business. This type of business-enterprise may have some people specialized in recruiting victims then selling them to others specialized in exploitation. \(^{180}\)

These groups can be found engaged in all types of exploitation, typically operating across borders, trafficking victims from South-Eastern and Central Europe or Asia. They range from minimal to high-level of organization with multiple people operating in different locations in one or more countries.

Further, compared to other regions, Western and Southern European countries reported more cases where criminals organized into structures that maintain a certain level of control of the territories or communities where they operate. These groups typically have a high level of organization, with many different actors involved in more than three locations internationally.

In the case of domestic trafficking, traffickers either operate alone or in opportunistic associations with other actors. Trafficking of persons in Western and Southern Europe also occurs as part of private corporate activities. In three cases reported by Belgian and Dutch authorities between 2014 and 2016, almost 70 victims were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and/or forced labour by one or more private companies. \(^{181}\)

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180 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, cases: 94, 95, 307.

181 See UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, cases: 94, 95, 307.
Cross-border trafficking for sexual exploitation in France

French authorities reported cases of young women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation by transnational criminal organizations. One case illustrated a group of madames who were also affiliated with a cult named “authentic sisters” who worked with their partners and husbands in a separate branch called, “Eye confraternity” or “Blue berets”. The investigation focused on 11 women and 6 men who had identified victims among their communities in rural areas of West Africa. All the victims were sold to the madames then transported irregularly to Europe where they were exploited through coercion and threats. Their families back home were also threatened by intermediaries in their villages.

Investigators report that this group alone had trafficked more than 50 victims, including two children, between 2013 and 2016. With the help and support of civil society organizations, 17 victims came forward to report the case to national authorities. These 17 traffickers were convicted, and each faced two to ten years of imprisonment, plus monetary sanctions.

Source: UNODC, GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 516 - France.

Criminal justice response

All countries in Western and Southern Europe have dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons. Compared to other regions of the world, Western and Southern European countries detect more victims, about 3.5 per 100,000 people in the year 2020 (compared to the world average of one). The number of traffickers convicted relative to each countries’ population is also higher than most regions of the world.

However, over the period considered, prosecutions and convictions declined compared to the previous years. In the first year of the pandemic, a drastic drop in the number of convictions was of about 45 per cent lower than in 2019 and 36 per cent lower than 2017. This, however, may or may not be related to the pandemic, as already in 2019 there was a 37 per cent drop in the number of prosecutions compared to 2017.

When compared to other crimes, the drop remains significant. In 2020, Western and Southern European countries registered a 16 per cent drop in convictions for trafficking in persons (from 111,087 in 2019 to 93,304) which was consistent with the previous year (a 15 per cent decline from the 130,754 convictions in 2018). A drop in trafficking in persons convictions, in a context of declining convictions for all crimes in general, started before the pandemic. At the same time, however, more people have been investigated for this crime since 2017, thus, more prosecutions and convictions are expected over the course of coming years.

Between 2017 and 2020, the number of prosecutions for trafficking in persons accounted for more than a half (56 per cent) of the investigations opened by police authorities, which is relatively higher than globally and in neighbouring regions. Further, convictions amounted to about 38 per cent of prosecutions. For every 100 people investigated in the region, 22 were convicted of trafficking in persons.
Fig. 193: Subregions by average number of trafficking convictions and number of victims detected per 100,000 population, 2020

Fig. 195: Change in the number of persons prosecuted in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data. GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

Fig. 194: Change in the number of persons investigated in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Fig. 196: Change in the number of persons convicted in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020 (base year 2017)

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
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Fig. 197 Persons prosecuted and persons convicted of total persons investigated in Western and Southern Europe, 2017–2020

- **Persons investigated**
  - Global: 50%
  - Western and Southern Europe: 56%
  - Ratio of convictions (1st instance) on investigations: 12%
  - Ratio of convictions (1st instance) on investigations: 22%

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.