

Human Trafficking – People for Sale



Human trafficking is a global problem and one of the world's most shameful crimes, affecting the lives of millions of people around the world and robbing them of their dignity. Traffickers deceive women, men and children from all corners of the world and force them into exploitative situations every day. While the best-known form of human trafficking is for the purpose of sexual exploitation, hundreds of thousands of victims are trafficked for the purposes of forced labour, domestic servitude, child begging or the removal of their organs.

Organized crime – profiting from the exploitation of human beings

The exploitation of human beings can be highly lucrative for organized criminal groups. Although figures vary, an estimate from the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2005 indicated that about 2.4 million people are victims of trafficking at any given time, and that profits from trafficking are about \$32 billion per year.¹ Recent research on overall forced labour trends however would suggest that the scope of the problem is much bigger.² Human trafficking is one of the most lucrative illicit businesses in Europe, with criminal groups making about \$3 billion from it per year,³ making it a considerable criminal business that preys on the world's most marginalized persons.

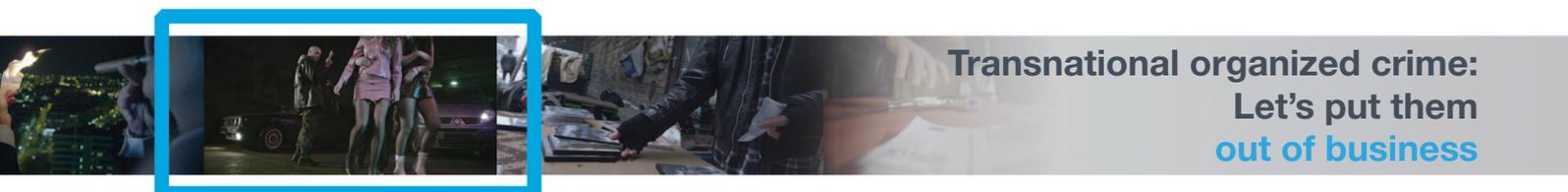
Human traffickers regard people as commodities; items that can be exploited and traded for profit. In Europe, most convicted traffickers are male, though female offenders are overrepresented when compared to other crimes, as some gangs consider

women to be more effective in entrapping victims by gaining their trust.⁴

A local and global crime

In 2005, ILO estimated that, globally, there are around 2.4 million victims of human trafficking at any given time.⁵ Recent research on overall forced labour trends however would suggest that the scope of the problem is much bigger.⁶ In Europe, over 140,000 victims are trapped in a situation of violence and degradation for sexual exploitation and up to one in seven sex workers in the region may have been enslaved into prostitution through trafficking.⁷ Victims are generally misled or forced by organized criminal networks into a situation of abuse from which it is difficult to escape; they might be beaten or raped or their families might be threatened if they try to get away. Victims' passports are often seized by the traffickers, leaving them with no form of identification. In cases where they have been trafficked between countries, victims often have little or no knowledge of the local language.

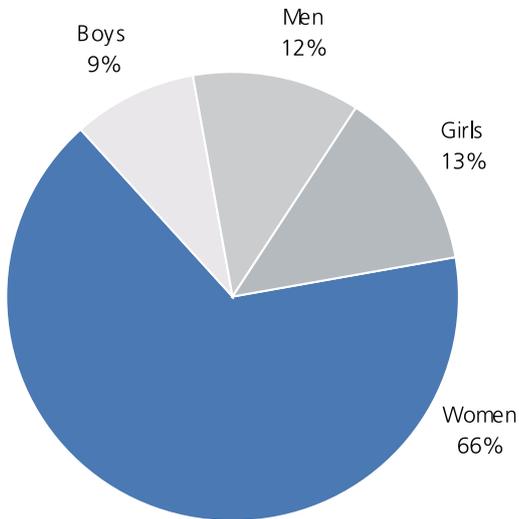
Nearly every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, as a point of origin, transit or destination, and victims from at least 127 countries have been reported to have been exploited in 137 States.⁸ Human trafficking is a regional as well as a domestic crime, with victims trafficked within their own country, to neighbouring countries and between continents. For example, victims from East Asia have been identified in more than 20 countries throughout the



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Profile of victims identified by State authorities in 61 countries, 2006

UNODC: The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment (2010), p. 40



Source: UNODC/UN.GIFT

world, including in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa.⁹

Sexual exploitation and forced labour

The most common form of human trafficking detected by national authorities is trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In 2006, this form accounted for an estimated 79 per cent of all cases globally. The remaining 21 per cent of victims were thought to be trafficked for the purpose of forced labour or other forms of exploitation.¹⁰ It should, however, be noted that these figures are not definitive and may be distorted, given the prominence and visibility of some forms of exploitation over others. For instance, sex workers who are victims of human trafficking may be easier to identify than trafficked labourers on farms or in factories. Additionally, a misperception may exist that men are not victims of human trafficking, which further distorts ratios. More recent data show an increase in the detection of trafficking for forced labour and other forms of exploitation.

Gender and age of trafficking victims

Globally, one in five victims of human trafficking are children, although in poorer regions and subregions, such as Africa and

Greater Mekong, they make up the majority of trafficked persons. Children are exploited for the purposes of forced begging, child pornography or sex. Children are sometimes favoured as labourers as their small hands are deemed better for untangling fishing nets, sewing luxury goods or picking cocoa. Children are also enslaved as child soldiers in war zones.

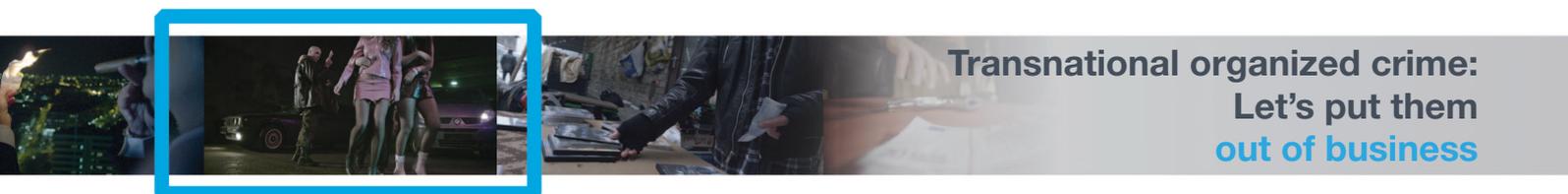
Women make up two thirds of the world’s human trafficking victims.¹¹ The vast majority of these female victims are young women who are lured with false promises of employment and then raped, drugged, imprisoned, beaten or threatened with violence, have debt imposed on them, have their passport confiscated and/or are blackmailed.

Men and boys may be victims of human trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, forced begging and sexual exploitation, and as child soldiers. The percentage of identified male victims is disproportionately lower than that of women for a number of reasons, including the fact that for many years anti-human trafficking legislation around the world tended to focus on trafficking in women and children or trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, of which most victims are women.

The many different types of human trafficking mean that there is no single, typical victim profile. Cases are seen in all parts of the world and victims are targeted irrespective of gender, age or background. Children, for example, might be trafficked from Eastern to Western Europe for the purpose of begging or as pickpockets; young girls, for example from Africa, may be deceived with promises of modelling or au pair jobs only to find themselves trapped in a world of sexual and pornographic exploitation; women from Asia may be tricked with promises of legitimate work, which in reality lead to virtual imprisonment and abuse; and men and women alike, for instance those trafficked from South to North America, may be made to work in gruelling conditions on farms.

What can be done?

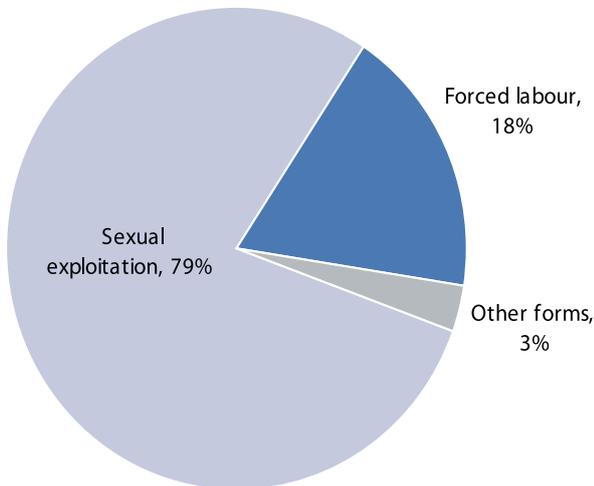
Human trafficking is being tackled through a variety of national and international means. In 2000, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, were adopted by the General Assembly and entered into force at the end of 2003. As the only international legal instrument addressing human trafficking as a crime, the Protocol is the world’s premier tool for preventing and combating human trafficking, protecting and assisting victims and promoting cooperation among countries in order to tackle the crime. As of June 2012, there are 150 States parties to the Protocol but, despite a high





Distribution of victims identified by State authorities according to the form of exploitation, 2006

UNODC: The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment (2010), p. 40



Source: UNODC/UN.GIFT

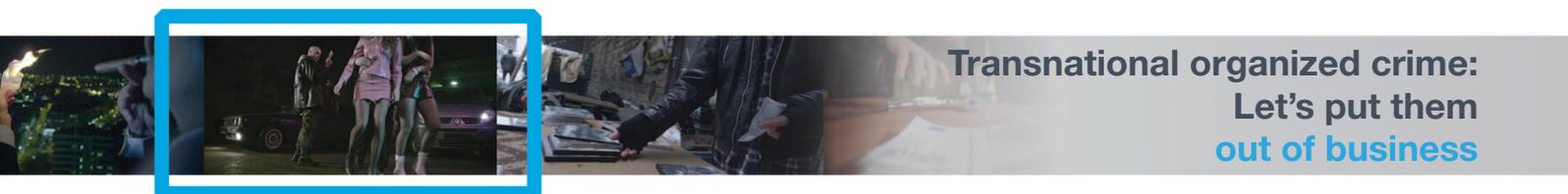
level of political commitment, implementation of the Protocol by States is still very uneven. Towards the end of 2012 UNODC will be publishing a new global report on trafficking in persons. Based on data collected from Member States, the report will provide a basis for evaluating how trends have changed since the last global UNODC data-collection exercise, in 2009, and will provide guidance as to what remains to be done.

At the national level, countries continue to implement the Protocol and work towards integrating anti-human trafficking legislation into their domestic laws. There are also annual improvements in the number of countries with specific legislation, as well as those with special anti-human trafficking police units and national action plans to deal with the issue. However, despite increasing conviction rates for the crime of human trafficking, the number of such convictions remains low. In an effort to tackle this, more effective implementation of the Protocol at the national level and greater degrees of regional and international cooperation are needed.

Fighting human trafficking should not just be seen as the responsibility of the authorities. Ordinary people can help

tackle the crime by being aware of it and by making sure that the plight of victims does not go unnoticed. There are many ways that you can help tackle this crime and make a difference:

- **Be alert:** if you see anything that you think might be related to trafficking, tell the police or telephone your local anti-trafficking helpline, if one is available. These concerns could relate to your workplace or to your private life – remember, victims are coerced into a range of areas. If you are unsure, it is better to be mistaken than to let another victim continue to be enslaved.
- **Be involved:** find out what is being done in your community, see what you can do and encourage your friends, family and neighbours to be more aware about human trafficking. Many national authorities and non-governmental organizations are involved in anti-trafficking work and there is a wealth of information available online through these channels.
- **Be aware:** you and your friends can join the UNODC-led Blue Heart Campaign against human trafficking by visiting www.unodc.org/blueheart. This international initiative works to raise awareness of the plight of victims and build political support to fight the criminals behind trafficking. The Blue Heart campaign is also on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/BlueHeartHT>) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/BlueHeartHT) – “like” and follow us for updates and news on human trafficking and use these channels to share information with your contacts.
- **Be supportive:** you can support the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking (www.unodc.org/humantraffickingfund) which does fundraising to assist grass-roots organizations working with survivors of this crime. One way of raising funds is to organize an event at your school or in your community. You could also adopt the Blue Heart and help increase awareness about human trafficking.
- **Be responsible:** make sure that your consumer choices and actions are ethical ones. While some decisions might be clearer than others, you can pledge not to purchase goods and services that could be linked directly or indirectly with sexual exploitation, forced labour or other forms of forced subjugation.



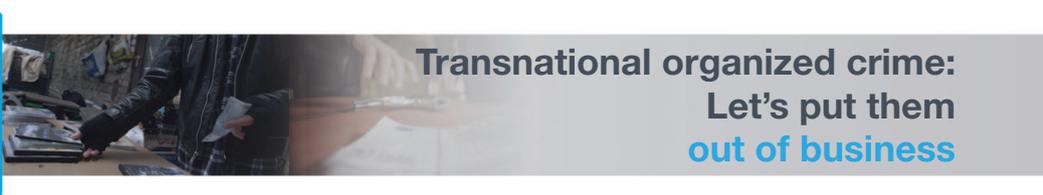
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- ¹ International Labour Organization, *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour: Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* (Geneva, ILO, 2005). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_081882.pdf.
- ² International Labour Organization, *Global Estimate of Forced Labour 2012: Results and Methodology* (Geneva, ILO, 2012). Available from http://www.ilo.org/sapfl/Informationresources/ILOPublications/WCMS_182004/lang--en/index.htm
- ³ *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.IV.6). Available from www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/TOCTA_Report_2010_low_res.pdf.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ International Labour Organization, *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour*.
- ⁶ International Labour Organization, *Global Estimate of Forced Labour 2012: Results and Methodology* (Geneva, ILO, 2012). Available from http://www.ilo.org/sapfl/Informationresources/ILOPublications/WCMS_182004/lang--en/index.htm
- ⁷ *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (February 2009). Available from www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html.
- ¹⁰ *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*.
- ¹¹ *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.



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