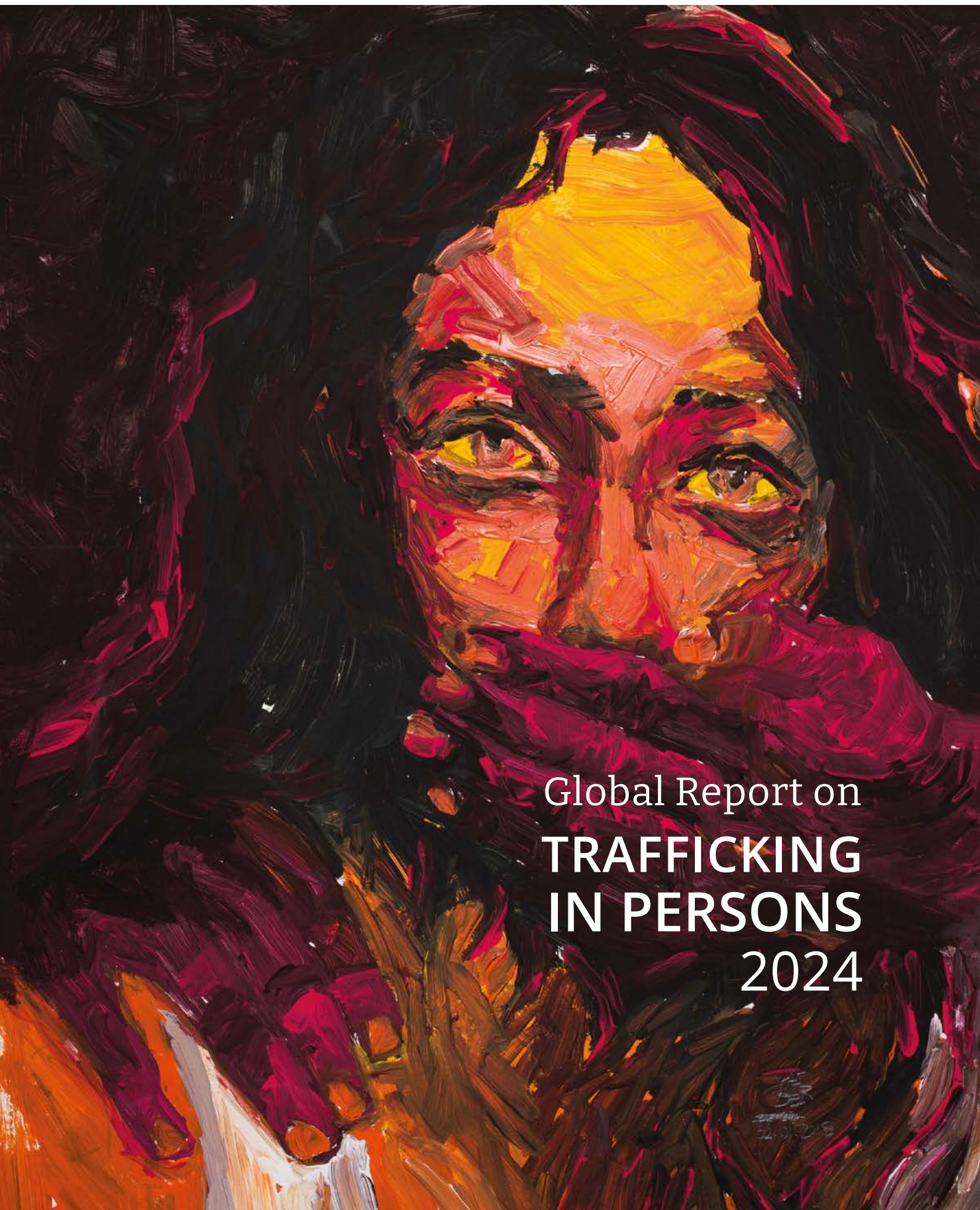




United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime



Global Report on
**TRAFFICKING
IN PERSONS**
2024

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**TRAFFICKING
IN PERSONS**
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Generation 30

Generation 30 is an initiative of the UNODC RAB featuring contributions from young and early-career researchers collected through an open call and selected on the basis of the quality of the empirical research and relevance of the topic. One contribution was selected for this edition of the Report: Family involvement, juju rituals, physical and sexual violence and stigma and labelling: The convoluted experiences of young Nigerian victims trafficked to Italy by Sarah Adeyinka, post-doctoral researcher, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands; affiliated post-doctoral researcher, Ghent University, Belgium.

Cover drawing and artwork © Yasser Rezahi

PREFACE

The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024* is a call to be alert and to act for the people being trafficked and exploited in today's volatile context. After a marked decrease in the detection of victims during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of victims detected globally in 2022 increased sharply again and even surpassed pre-pandemic levels, rising by 25% compared to 2019. This may partly be a reflection of improved detection capacity, but it is likely also a reflection of the fragility we see in every corner of the globe.

As climate disasters, conflicts, and displacement converge and their consequences cascade, vulnerabilities are growing. Some of the people at the heart of those crises are pushed directly into trafficking and exploitation, others are left without homes and prospects and at huge risk of trafficking, while others still are exposed due to structural risks created by low incomes and insecurity.

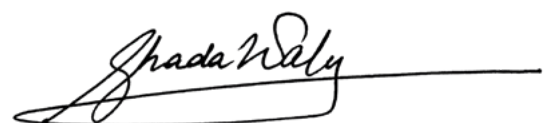
Human trafficking continues to target the vulnerable, and we see this in persistent as well as emerging trends. Women and girls remain the biggest share of detected victims worldwide, accounting for 61% of the total in 2022, and most of them continue to be trafficked for sexual exploitation, a pattern that has carried on for many years now. In parallel, the number of children among detected victims is growing rapidly and alarmingly, increasing by a third over the space of three years. In particular, the number of girls detected has surged, increasing by 38%. In several regions, children now account for the majority of trafficking victims detected.

The dynamics of trafficking in persons are also changing. It is becoming an increasingly global and transnational phenomenon, with more nationalities and more countries of destination detected than before. A third of all cross-border human trafficking flows involve citizens of Africa, where the impact of crises has been particularly stark, and where there are more people at risk than anywhere else. This report dedicates a full chapter to trafficking in and from Africa, looking at root causes and underlining that this problem and its solutions entail a shared global responsibility.

Another important development is the fact that victims trafficked for forced labour now account for the biggest share of all victims around the world, overtaking those who are trafficked for sexual exploitation, yet criminal convictions remain primarily focused on the latter. We are also seeing a rise in trafficking for forced criminality, as organized crime models evolve and use trafficking victims to conduct online scams and other crimes in a spiral of victimization. It is critical to highlight the role of organized crime in human trafficking more broadly, and to dispel any misconception that trafficking is largely an isolated or disorganized form of crime. Our findings suggest that most traffickers operate as structured groups or loose networks, and that these organized traffickers exploit more victims.

If there is one key takeaway from this report, it is the need to adapt as human trafficking shifts. Justice systems need to broaden their focus and be better equipped to address different forms of trafficking, including trafficking for forced labour and across national borders, and to target larger, more structured criminal networks and those at the top of their hierarchies. Child protection and assistance must be fully integrated into all anti-trafficking frameworks, and efforts to end child labour and child marriage should be revitalized. Preventing human trafficking needs to be an integral part of worker protection and responsible supply chains, and efforts to sensitize people and improve reporting should be stepped up. Crucially, attitudes that blame and punish victims must end, and priority must be given to protecting the safety and dignity of victims and people at risk, including people on the move.

I hope that this report will be a tool for governments, as well as the private sector, civil society, and academia, to fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities in responding to the urgent and dynamic threats posed by human trafficking today.



Ghada Waly

Executive Director
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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GLOBAL REPORT ON
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 2024

Special Points of Interest

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

The number of victims of trafficking detected globally is on the rise again after falling back during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1



Child victims are increasingly detected globally with distinct patterns emerging for boys and girls.

2



Trafficking for forced labour is on the rise but the criminal justice response is lagging behind.

3



Women and girls continue to make up the majority of victims detected worldwide.

4



Most trafficking in persons is perpetrated by organized crime groups operating in business or governance types of structures.

5



Victims are trafficked globally through an increasing number of international routes, with African victims trafficked to the highest number of destinations.

6



Displacement, insecurity and climate change are exacerbating the vulnerability of Africans to being trafficked.

7





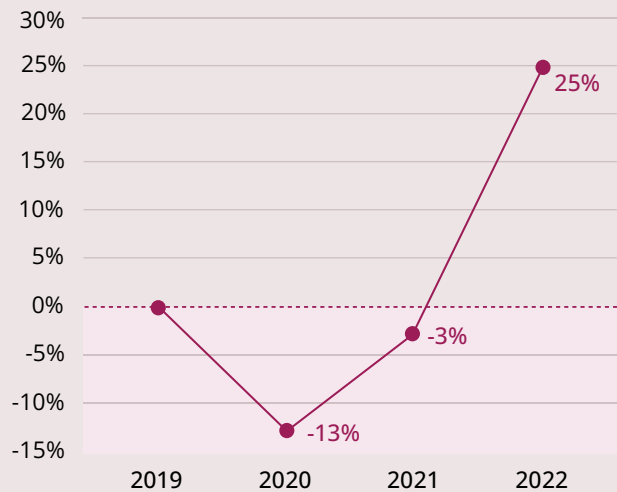
Special Point of Interest

The number of victims of trafficking detected globally is on the rise again after falling back during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A 25 per cent rise in the global detection of victims was recorded in 2022 compared to 2019. The increase is 43 per cent when compared to 2020, when the number of detected cases fell sharply during the pandemic. Preliminary data for the year 2023 confirms a continued increasing trend. The trend is not, however, seen across all regions.

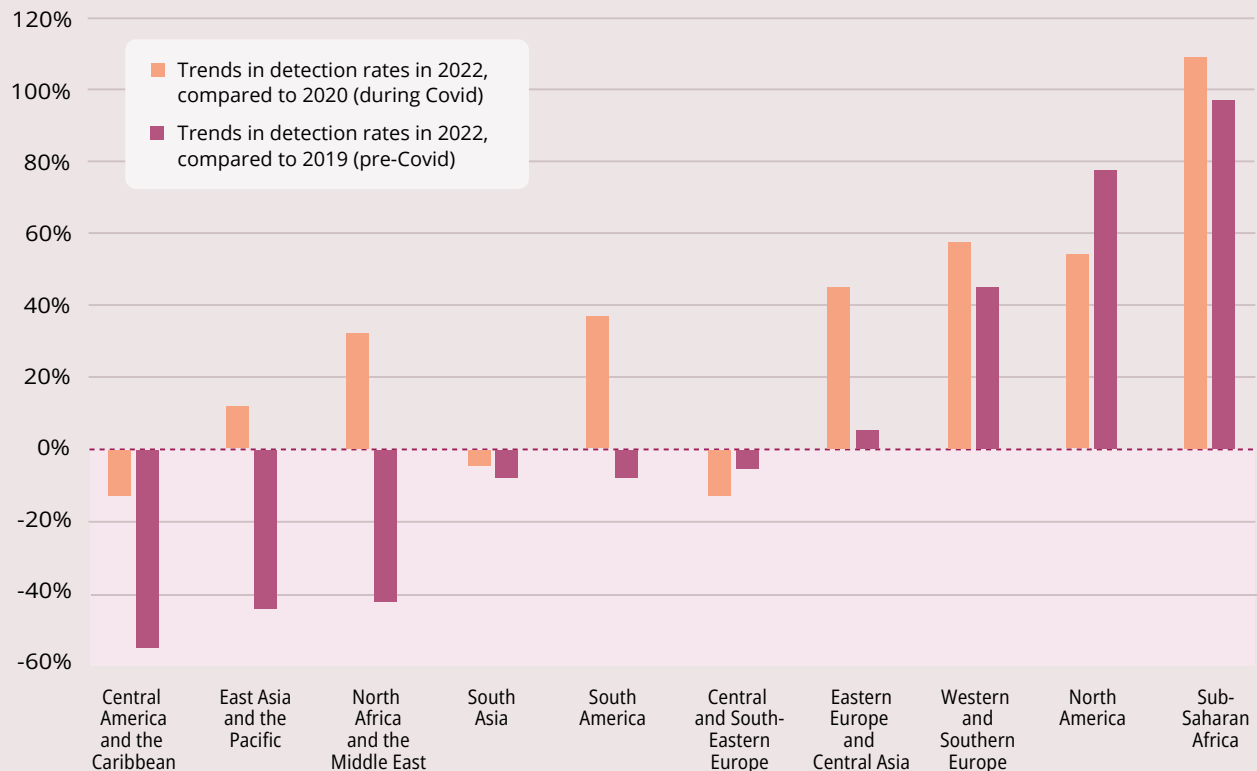
Sub-Saharan Africa, North America, and Western European countries saw significant increases in the detection of victims compared to 2019, while countries in South America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, North Africa and the Middle East recorded increasing detections compared to 2020, but still fewer compared to the 2019 pre-pandemic period. On the other hand, countries in Central America and the Caribbean recorded a decrease when compared to 2020.

Fig. 1 Global trend of detection rates, base year 2019*



*This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries

Fig. 2 Trends in detection rates, by region, comparison 2019-2022, 2020-2022*

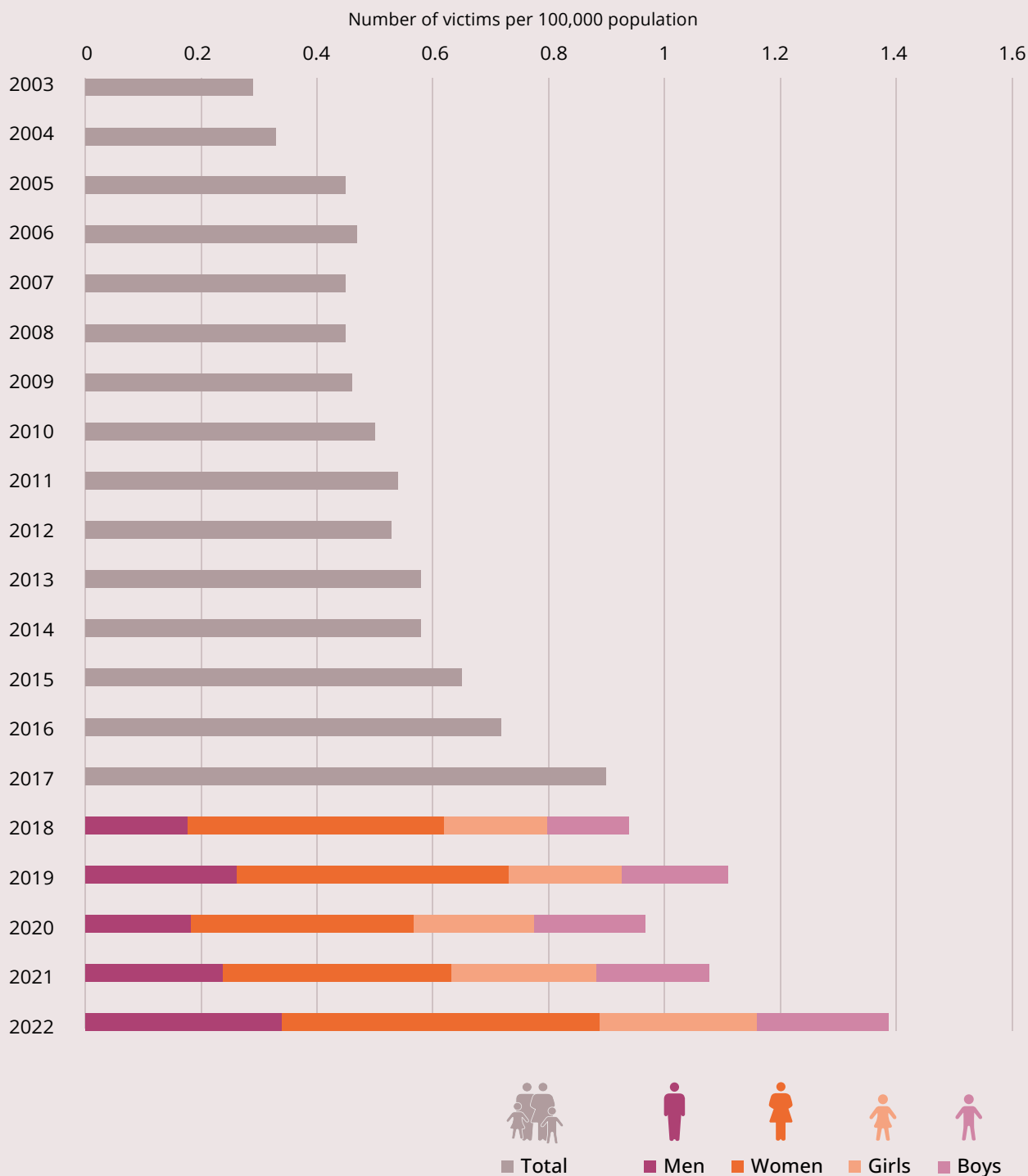


*This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries.



The number of victims of trafficking detected globally is on the rise again after falling back during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fig. 3 Global trend of detection rates of trafficking victims, by age group and sex 2003-2022 (per 100,000 population) *



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries, comprising 61 per cent of the world population, reporting on this indicator from 2003 to 2022.



Special Point of Interest

Child victims are increasingly detected globally, with distinct patterns emerging for boys and girls.

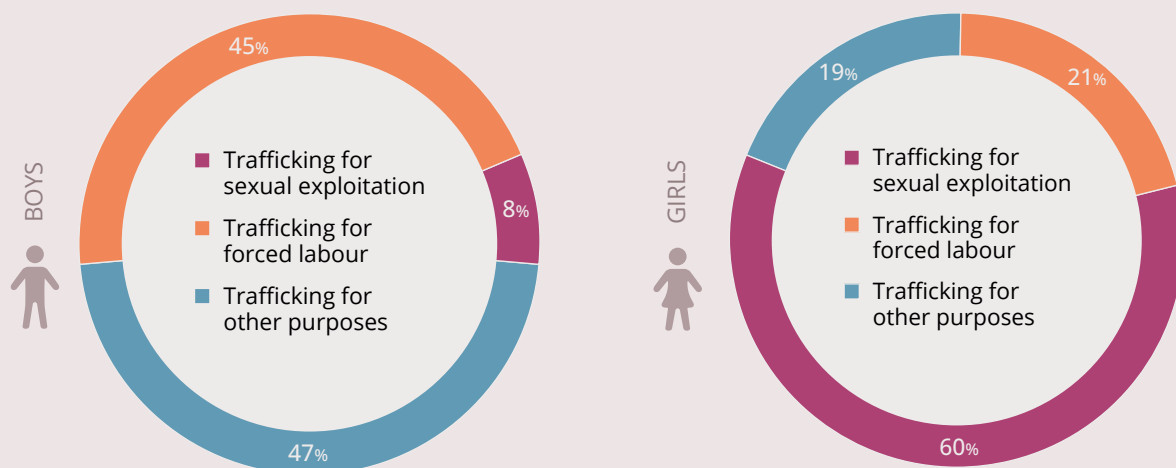
The overall number of child victims detected has climbed significantly. In 2022, global detections increased 31 per cent compared to the pre-pandemic levels in 2019, with a sharper increase of 38 per cent specifically among girls. This upward trend also shows geographical specificities for both girls and boys.

An increasing share of girls detected is recorded in several regions, particularly in the Americas, but also in Europe, in East Asia and the Pacific and North Africa and the Middle East. In Europe and North America increasing numbers of boy victims were reported in the aftermath of the pandemic, in parallel to increasing numbers of unaccompanied and

separated children recorded at borders. These children are at particular risk of trafficking in persons. A contributing factor to the global rise in child victims detected is also the overall increase of the number of cases detected in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region that typically detects more children than adults.

Globally, boy and girl victims show different patterns of exploitation. The majority of girl victims detected (60 per cent) continue to be trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Some 45 per cent of boys detected are trafficked for forced labour and another 47 per cent are exploited for other purposes, including forced criminality and forced begging.

Fig. 4 Share of detected child victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



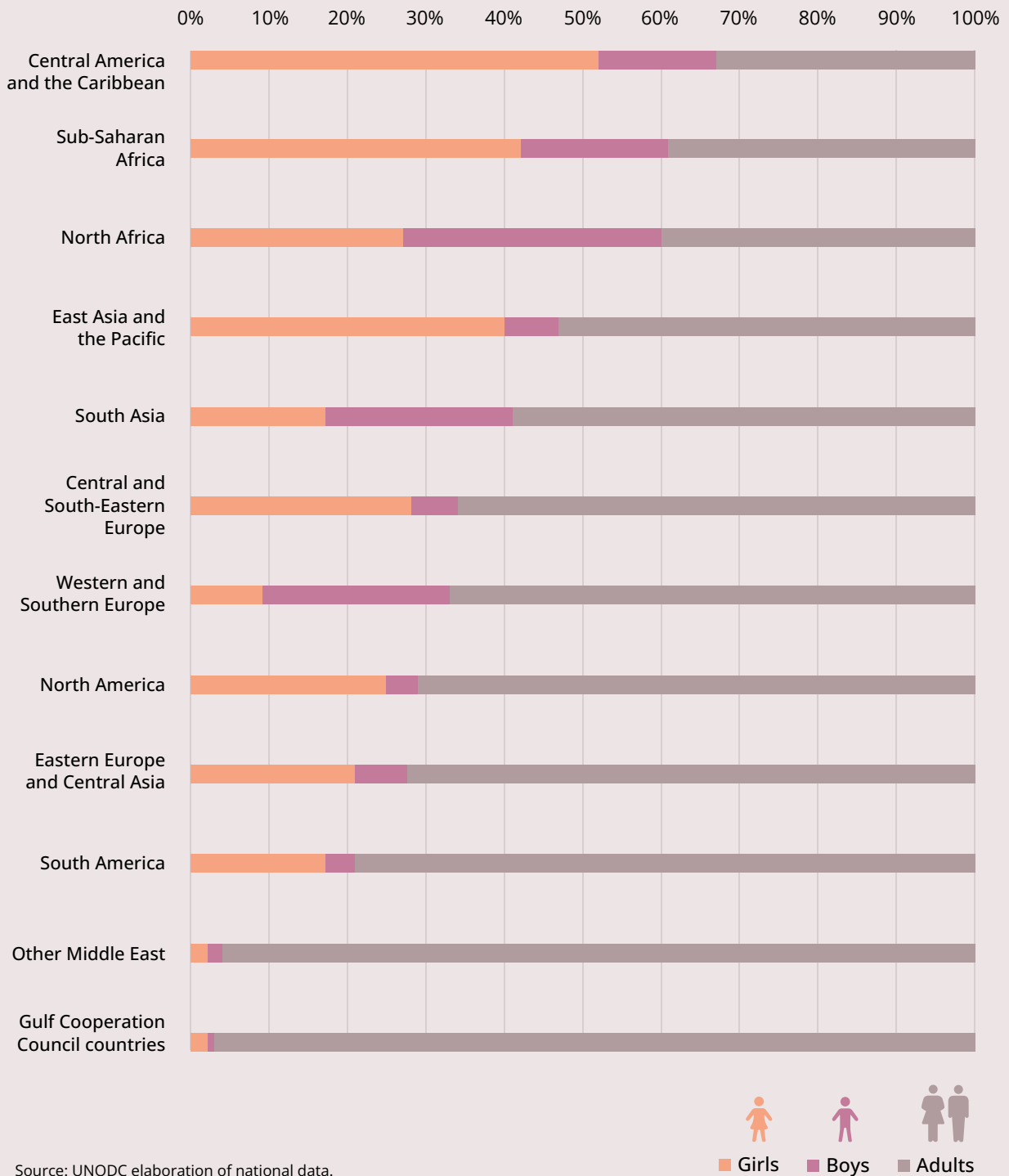
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information about 8,749 boy victims and 9,323 girl victims of trafficking in persons whose forms of exploitation were reported.



Child victims are increasingly detected globally with distinct patterns emerging for boys and girls.

Fig. 5 Share of detected victims of trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, by region 2022 (or most recent)





Special Point of Interest

Trafficking for forced labour is on the rise but the criminal justice response is lagging behind.

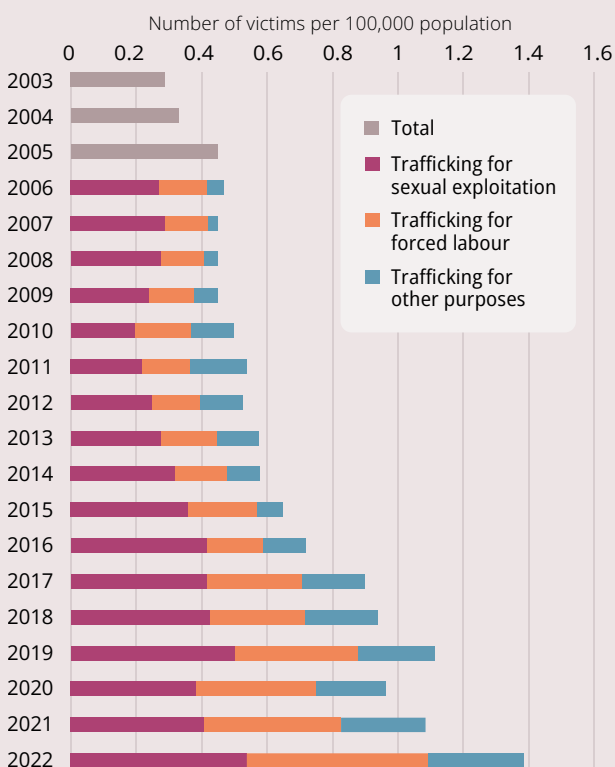
Between 2019 and 2022, the global number of victims detected for forced labour rose by 47 per cent. In 2022, the share of total detected victims trafficked for forced labour (42 per cent) had overtaken that of trafficking for sexual exploitation (36 per cent), which previously represented the largest share of detected victims.

Although an increasing proportion of trafficking victims are identified in forced labour, the majority of convictions worldwide are still related to sexual exploitation. In 2022, just 17 per cent of global convictions were for forced labour, compared to 72 per cent for sexual exploitation.

The analysis of court cases indicates that criminal justice systems typically take about one year longer to secure convictions in trafficking for forced labour cases compared to those involving sexual exploitation as forced labour cases are often more complex to prosecute.

Preliminary results for 2023 show that these trends are ongoing, suggesting that the criminal justice response to cases of forced labour is still less effective than for cases of sexual exploitation.

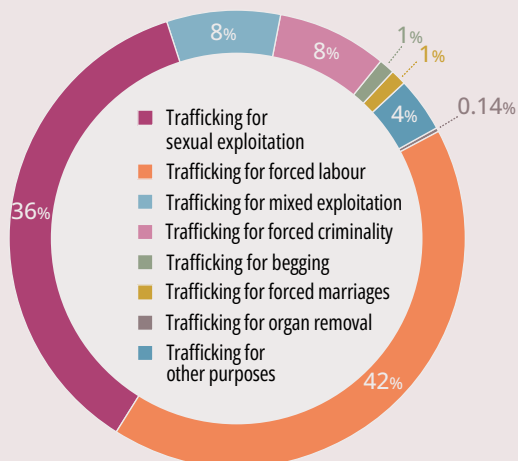
Fig. 6 Global trend on detection rates of trafficking victims, by form of exploitation (per 100,000 population) 2003-2022*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries comprising 61 per cent of the world population reporting

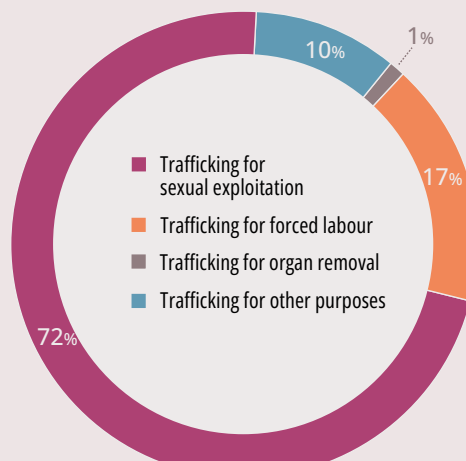
Fig. 7 Share of detected victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from some 65,339 victims detected.

Fig. 8 Share of convictions for trafficking in persons, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from some 3,969 persons convicted.



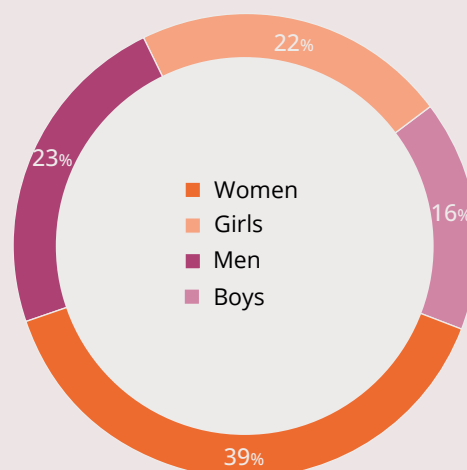
Special Point of Interest

Women and girls continue to make up the majority of victims detected worldwide.

In 2022, 61 per cent of trafficking victims detected worldwide were female. Adults continue to be the most detected age group, and adult females make up 39 per cent of all detected victims. At the same time, girls make up a significant 22 per cent of the total detected victims.

The majority of women and girls identified among victims continue to be trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, female victims are also trafficked in large numbers for forced labour, particularly for domestic work, and for other types of exploitation, including forced marriages and forced criminality.

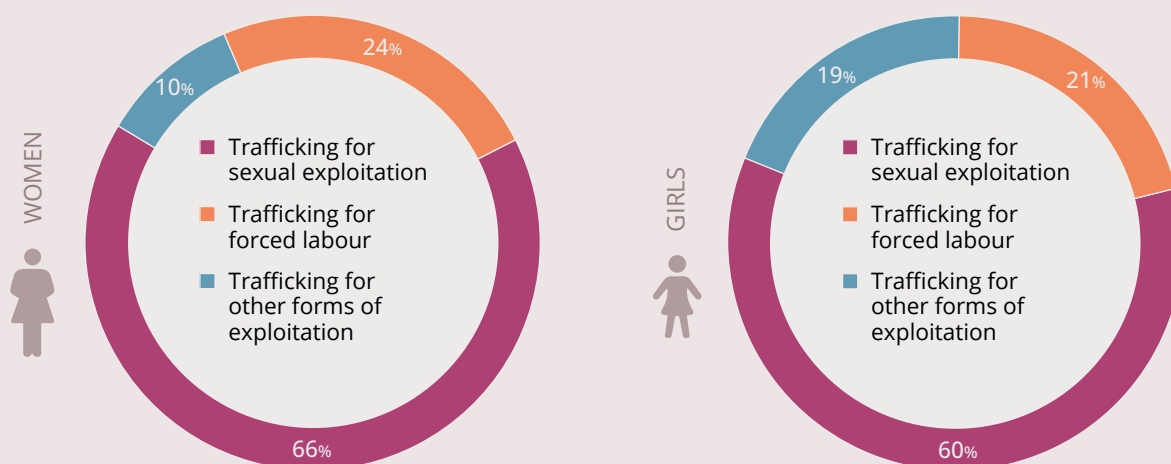
Fig. 9 Share of detected victims of trafficking, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on a total of 68,836 victims detected in 135 countries in 2022 (or most recent), comprising 65 per cent of the world population, reporting on this indicator.

Fig. 10 Share of detected female victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on a total of 19,512 woman and 8,957 girl victims detected in 81 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent).



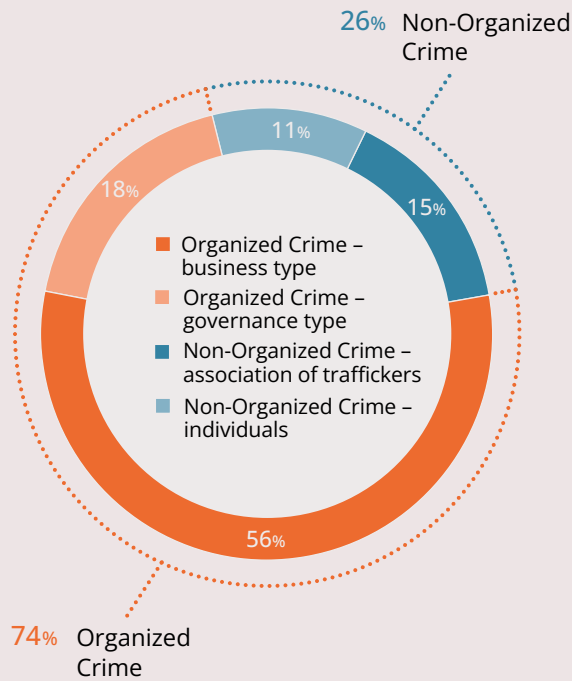
Special Point of Interest

Most trafficking in persons is perpetrated by organized crime groups operating in business or governance types of structures.

Most traffickers operate within organized groups. Based on the analysis of 942 court case summaries, 74 per cent of the 3,121 traffickers involved in these cases operated as groups and networks loosely connected in a business-type criminal relation or as structured criminal organizations rooted in the

territories. Non-organized criminals account for about 26 per cent of traffickers convicted. Compared to non-organized traffickers, organized crime groups traffic more victims.

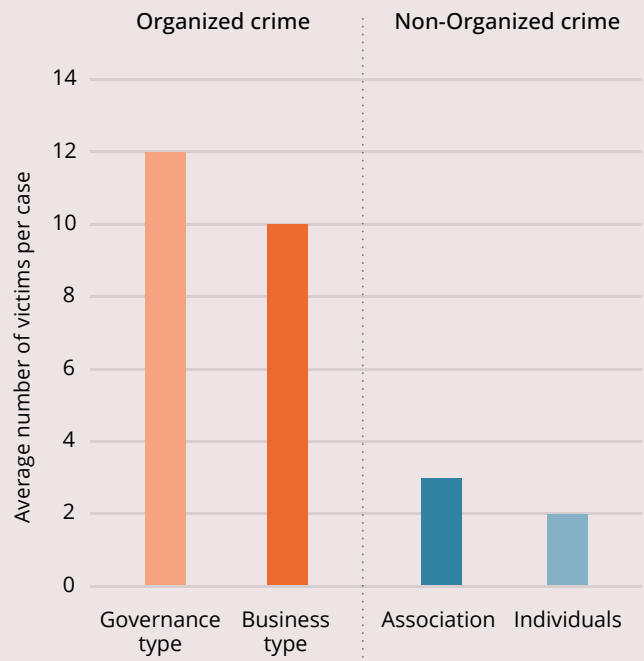
Fig. 11 Share of type of traffickers' structure reported in case narratives, by number of individuals convicted*



Source: UNODC elaboration of court case summaries

* Based on information on 3,121 traffickers convicted in 942 court case summaries.

Fig. 12 Average number of victims reported in case narratives, by type of traffickers' structure*



Source: UNODC elaboration of court case summaries.

* Based on information on 5,451 traffickers convicted in 961 court case summaries.

In 2022, men accounted for about 70 per cent globally of those investigated, prosecuted and convicted of trafficking in persons. Women accounted for around 25-30 per cent, while children were rarely reported as offenders.

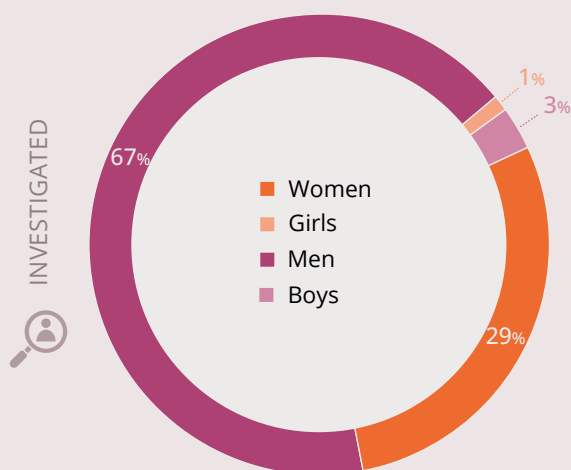


Most trafficking in persons is perpetrated by organized crime groups operating in business or governance types of structure.

Women's involvement in perpetrating trafficking varies considerably depending on the structure of the criminal organization. Most cases of trafficking carried out by organized crime groups involved both men and women traffickers working together.

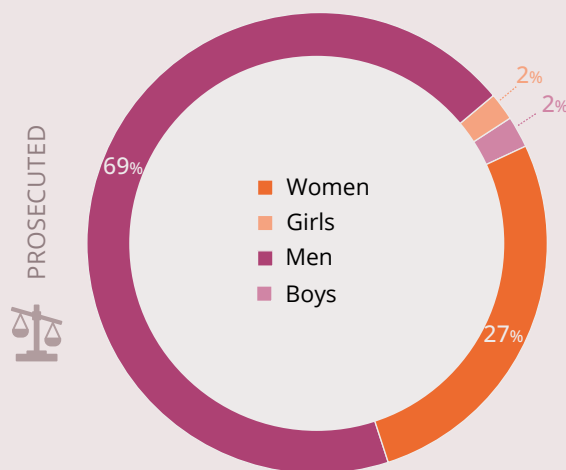
Based on the cases analyzed, when the trafficker was the intimate partner of the victim, it was more likely that the trafficker was a man. Women were more likely to be the trafficker when the trafficking was perpetrated by a parent.

Fig. 13 Share of persons investigated for trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



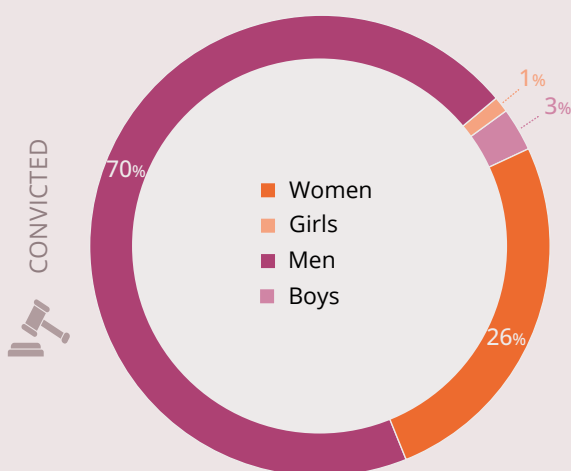
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 13,027 persons investigated in 91 countries.

Fig. 14 Share of persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



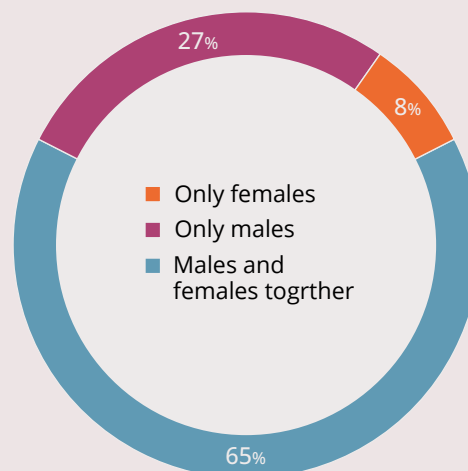
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 8,376 persons prosecuted in 98 countries.

Fig. 15 Share of persons convicted for trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.
* Based on data on sex and age of 3,633 persons convicted in 111 countries.

Fig. 16 Share of court cases involving organized crime groups, by sex composition of the members of the group*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries
* Based on the narratives of 118 court case summaries reporting on 893 traffickers.



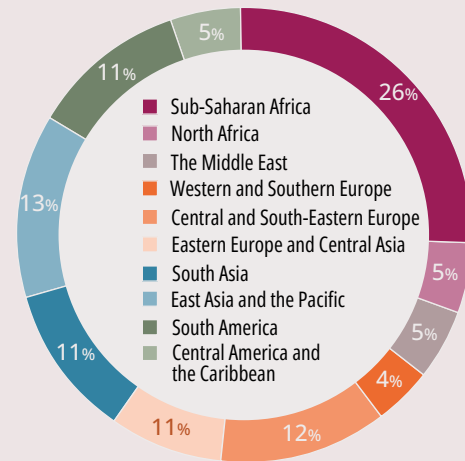
Special Point of Interest

Victims are trafficked globally through an increasing number of international routes, with African victims trafficked to the highest number of destinations.

In 2022, UNODC recorded at least 162 different nationalities that were trafficked to 128 different countries of destination. Of the total cross-border flows detected, 31 per cent involve citizens of African countries, making Africa the trafficking origin with the most destinations both within and outside the region, mainly directed to Europe and to the Middle East.

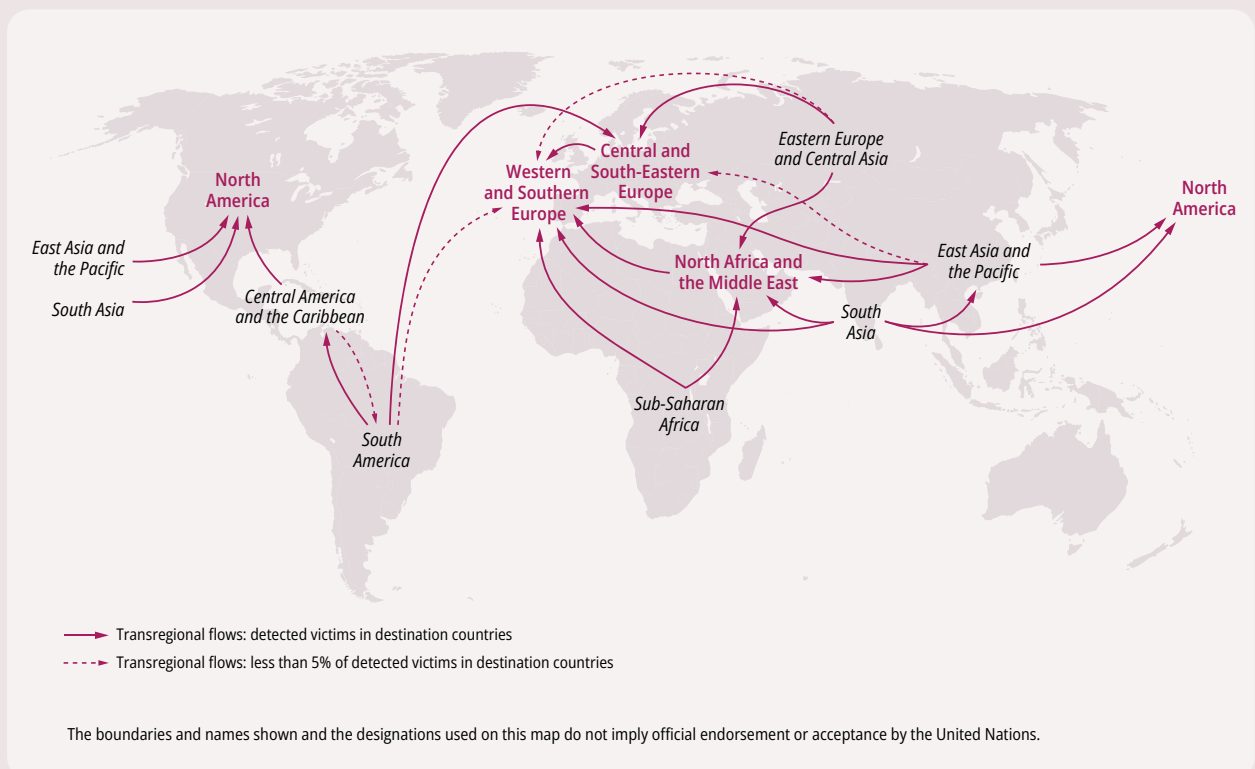
Victims from East Asia and from South Asia are detected in countries in all regions of the world, suggesting these flows have a global reach. Trafficking out of Europe and out of Latin America tend to remain within limited geographical reach.

Fig. 17 Share of detected cross-border trafficking flows by origin of victims, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Map.1 Main detected transregional flows, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.



Special Point of Interest

Displacement, insecurity and climate change are exacerbating the vulnerability of Africans to fall victim to being trafficked.

Among the many factors that drive trafficking in persons, armed conflicts, climate change and the related displacement appear to be impacting trafficking patterns in Africa.

African countries have significantly increased efforts to tackle the problem of trafficking in persons, as shown by the sustained and significantly increasing number of legislations adopted and convictions recorded throughout the continent. However, the criminal justice response more typically targets small groups and individual traffickers linked to domestic trafficking and less frequently structured criminal organizations that manage international trafficking.

There are different trafficking dynamics affecting African victims. Children are typically trafficked for forced labour across short distances, remaining within their country or region, with traffickers exploiting the economic need of some families by targeting their children for forced labour. Trafficking outside Africa mainly involves the trafficking of adults for labour and sexual exploitation.

Fig. 18 Conflict, mineral resources and child trafficking in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

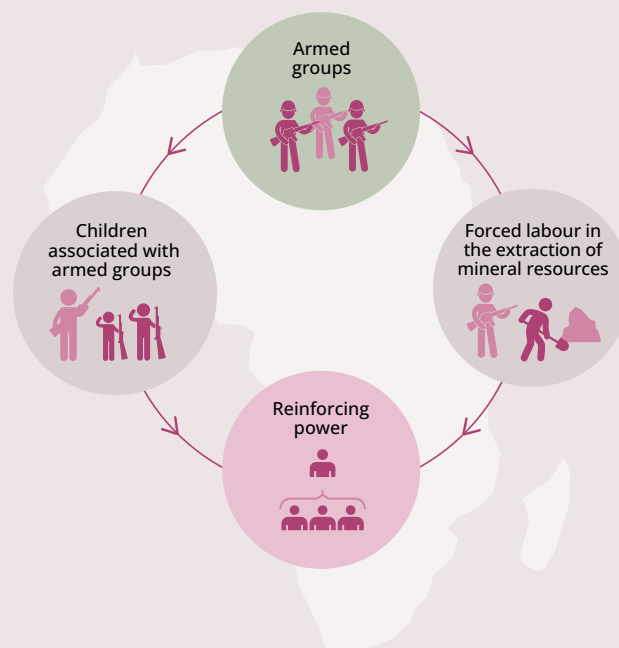
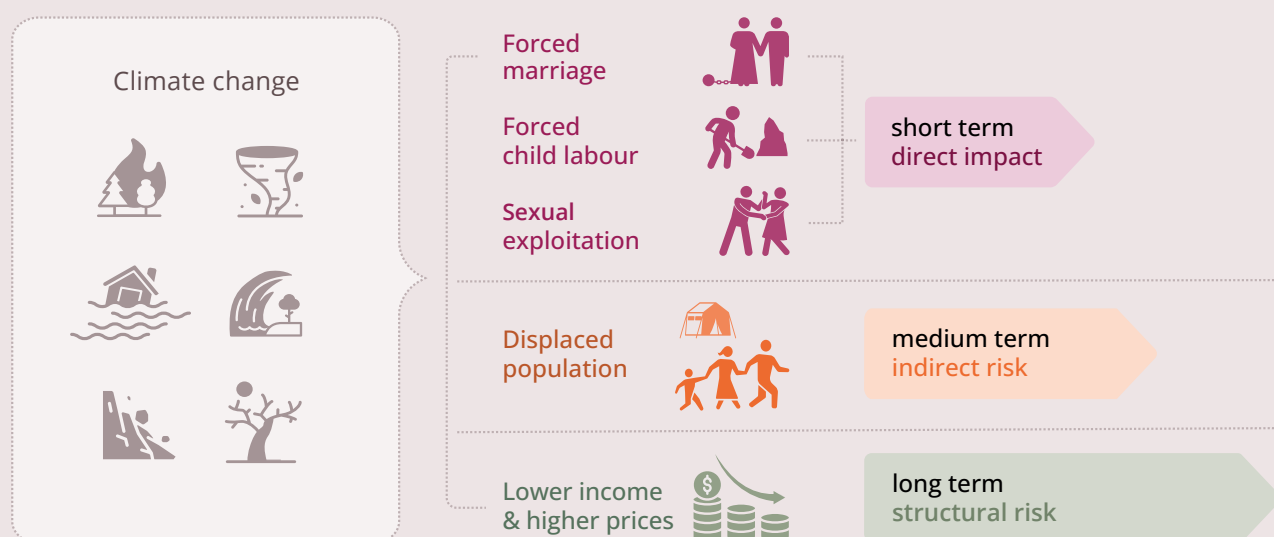


Fig. 19 Climate change can affect human trafficking in Africa on different levels:

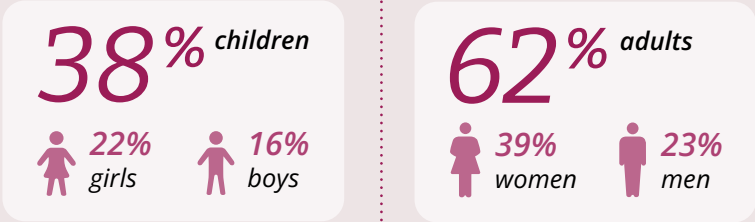


KEY INDICATORS

Number of detected victims



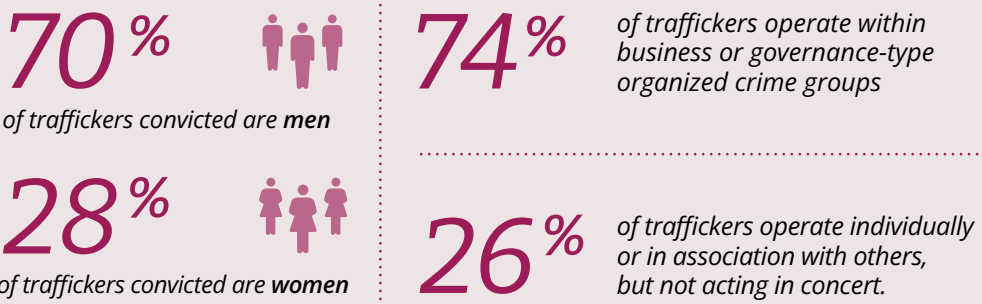
Profiles of detected victims



Forms of exploitation of detected victims



Profiles of detected traffickers



Key changes recorded in 2022 compared to 2019

Fig. 20 Increasing share of victims trafficked for forced labour to the total detected

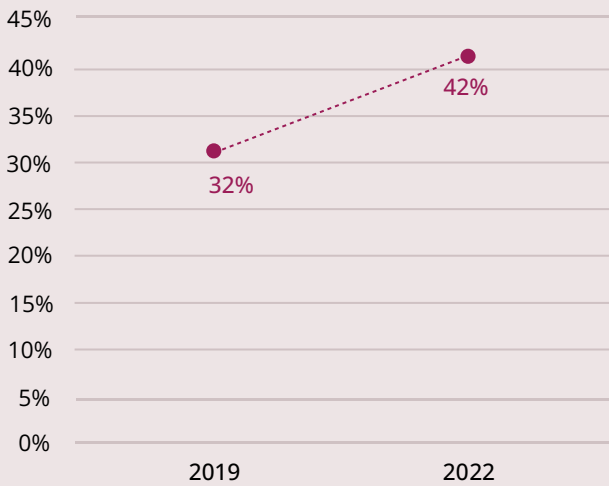
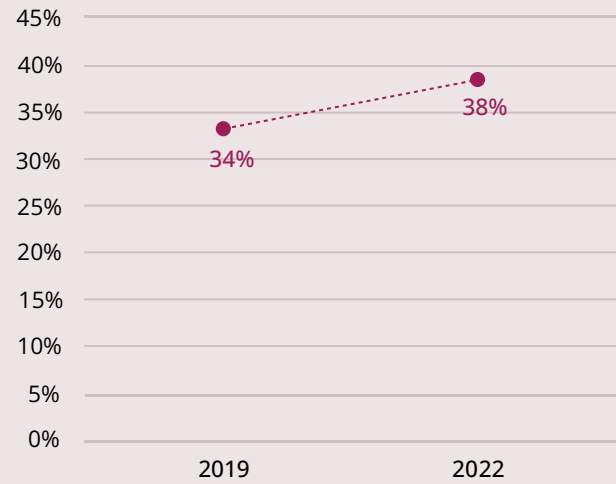
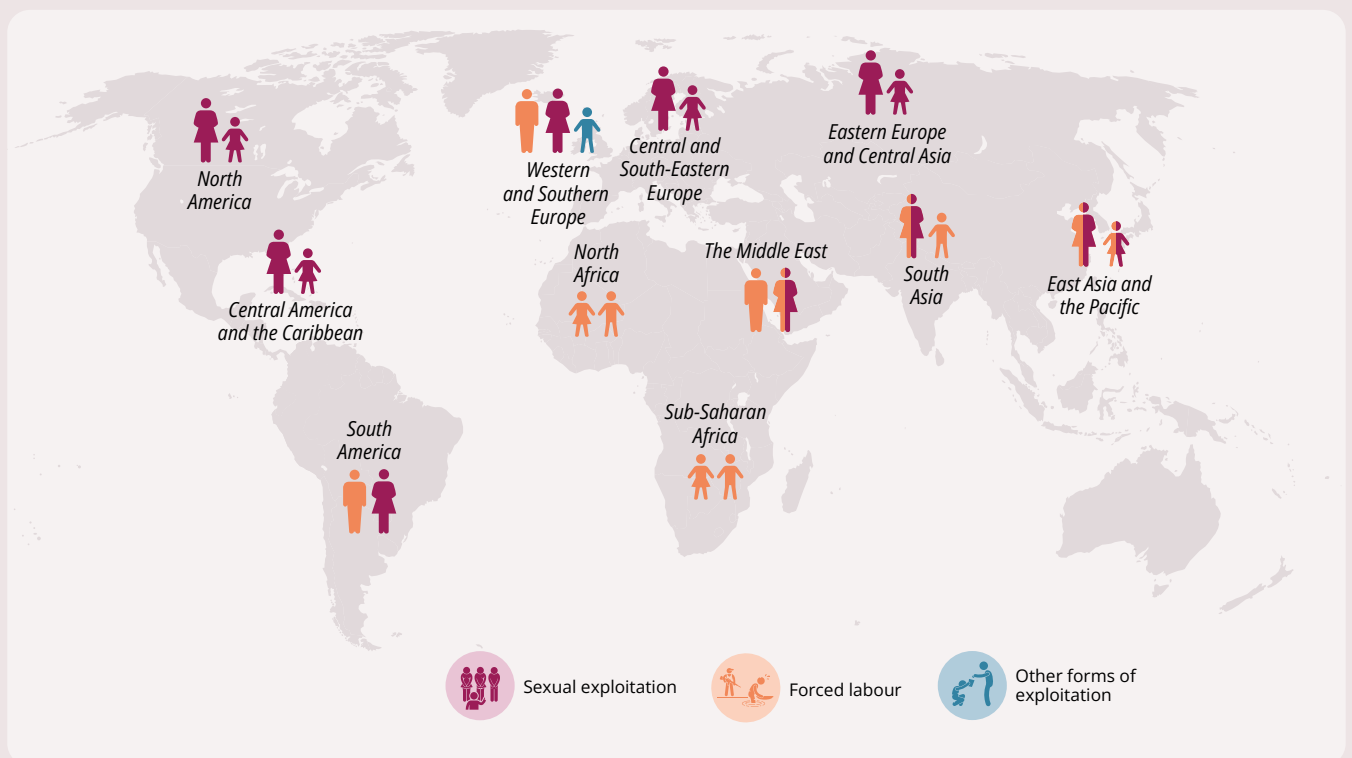


Fig. 21 Increasing share of child victims trafficked to the total detected



Map. 2 Main detected victims and forms of exploitation



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.





INTRODUCTION

The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024

***INTRODUCTION
THE GLOBAL REPORT ON
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 2024***

INTRODUCTION

This edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons presents an analysis on the patterns, flows and trends of trafficking in the aftermath of the global pandemic. Although some regions are recording increasing numbers of identified victims and convictions beyond those recorded in 2019, others are still behind the pre-pandemic levels.

At the same time, some of the trends that emerged during the pandemic have been reinforced. Particularly alarming is the increasing detection of child trafficking. While previous editions of the Report described how child trafficking, especially in the context of forced labour, typically occurred in low-income countries, recent data shows that while child trafficking is still detected in such areas, it is on the rise in high-income countries. This is particularly the cases for girls trafficked for sexual exploitation.

The growing number of children along migratory routes may explain the increasing detection of boys trafficked. Following the pandemic, more unaccompanied and separated children have been recorded at the borders of Europe and North America, and in the same regions more boys are detected as trafficking victims.

In the context of ongoing conflicts and weather-induced disasters, the risk of human trafficking is rising as one of the direct consequences of global instability and climate change resulting in forcibly displaced populations. This edition of the Global Report explores these links on the African continent, a region that has been particularly underrepresented in the previous editions of the Report, primarily due to a lack of data.

For the purpose of the chapter dedicated to Africa, UNODC made extensive efforts to gather data from all regions of the continent. UNODC Field Offices in Africa were instrumental in reaching contacts, while joint initiatives were also conducted by UNODC with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC), the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the national authorities in many African countries. This has resulted in an unprecedented quantity of data from the African

continent that has enabled a more detailed picture of trafficking patterns, flows and trends.

This edition of **the Global Report covers 156 countries** from all regions and subregions of the world, registering the best country coverage for the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons since its first edition in 2009.

The Report presents a global picture of the patterns and flows of trafficking (Chapter 1), alongside detailed regional analyses (Chapter 3).

In addition, the Report includes one thematic chapter (Chapter 2) which analyses trafficking flows, patterns in victim profiles, the organization of traffickers and risk factors for trafficking in persons on the African continent.

This edition of the Report presents a special section on the trafficking for forced criminality into online scams in Southeast Asia (see page 95); an analysis of the trafficking risks connected with migrants' smuggling routes in Africa (see page 87); and an assessment of the experiences of civil society organizations in assisting the victims of trafficking (see page 99).

As with the last edition, this Report presents a contribution from early career and young academic researchers, as part of UNODC's Generation 30 initiative, aimed at building new connections between the UN and academia, while expanding research opportunities for young people. The contributions featured in the report were submitted in response to a call for proposals issued on the UNODC website in 2023 (see page 91).

Data and information used for the Global Report 2024

The Report is based on several types of information, with the main source for the analysis consisting of official statistics on the detected cases of trafficking in persons collected **from 156 countries**. The countries covered encompass more than 95 per cent of the world's population. The time period covered by the data collection for this Report is 2020-2022. A limited number of **countries (72) also**

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

	2020	2021	2022	2023 (preliminary)	2022 (or most recent)	Total 2020-2023
Number of detected victims reported by Member States	48,188	55,290	69,627	29,373	74,785	202,478
Number of detected victims for which age group and sex was reported by Member States	42,434	50,898	64,981	25,432	68,836	183,745
Number of detected victims for which a form of exploitation was reported by Member States	37,962	45,038	60,444	20,933	65,339	164,377
Number of detected victims for which citizenship was reported by Member States	37,475	42,609	53,374	9,365	59,048	142,823
Number of persons prosecuted reported by Member States	10,971	14,435	17,331	5,911	18,131	48,648
Number of persons convicted reported by Member States	2,819	4,614	5,555	2,950	5,622	15,938

Data was disaggregated by sex and age group wherever data availability permitted.

provided information for the year **2023**; **preliminary trends and patterns emerging from this data are reported when available.**¹

Most countries reported data for the year 2022. Annual patterns and flows at the regional and global levels were derived by using “2022 (or most recent)” as the reference year, meaning that, for the countries where 2022 data was not available, the most recent available data was used (2023, 2021 or 2020).

The official statistics collected refer to cases of trafficking officially recorded by national authorities reporting on the profiles of victims and offenders, as well as the characteristics of trafficking cases.

In addition, the analysis made use of the narratives of court case summaries collected by UNODC since 2012. **A total of 1,038 cases of trafficking in persons were shared by 113 Member States. These cases involved more than 5,700 victims and 3,500 offenders.** Analyses based on this data are referred to as “GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.” These cases can be found in more detail in a dedicated document published in the UNODC Global Report webpage² and in the UNODC Knowledge Portal on Trafficking in Persons and its dedicated Case-law Database, Sherlock.³

The 156 countries covered by the data collection are grouped into four main regions and 10 sub-regions. The four regions are: Africa and the Middle East; South, East Asia and the Pacific; the Americas; and Europe and Central Asia.

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

Countries and territories covered in this edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons

Africa and the Middle East		The Americas			South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific		Europe and Central Asia		
Sub-Saharan Africa (35 countries)	North Africa and Middle East (17 countries)	North America (3 countries)	Central America and the Caribbean (12 countries)	South America (12 countries)	South Asia (8 countries)	East Asia and the Pacific (19 countries)	Western and Southern Europe (23 countries)	Central and South-Eastern Europe (16 countries)	Eastern Europe and Central Asia (11 countries)
Angola		Canada	The Bahamas	Argentina	Afghanistan	Australia	Andorra	Albania	Armenia
Benin	Algeria	Mexico	Belize	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Bangladesh	Brunei Darussalam	Austria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Azerbaijan
Botswana	Bahrain	The United States of America	Costa Rica	Brazil	Bhutan	Cambodia	Belgium	Bulgaria	Belarus
Burkina Faso	Egypt		Cuba	Chile	India	China	Cyprus	Croatia	Georgia
Cabo Verde	Iraq		Dominican Republic (the)	Colombia	Maldives	Cook Islands (the)	Denmark	Czechia	Kazakhstan
Central African Republic (the)	Israel		El Salvador	Ecuador	Nepal	Fiji	Finland	Estonia	Kyrgyzstan
Chad	Jordan		Guatemala	Guyana	Pakistan	Indonesia	France	Hungary	Republic of Moldova (the)
Cote d'Ivoire	Kuwait		Honduras	Paraguay	Sri Lanka	Japan	Germany	Latvia	Tajikistan
Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)	Lebanon		Nicaragua	Peru		Malaysia	Greece	Lithuania	Turkmenistan
	Libya		Panama	Suriname		Marshall Islands (the)	Ireland	Montenegro	Ukraine
Eswatini	Morocco		Saint Lucia	Uruguay		Mongolia	Italy	North Macedonia	Uzbekistan
Gambia (the)	Oman		Trinidad and Tobago	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)		Myanmar	Liechtenstein	Poland	
Ghana	Qatar					New Zealand		Romania	
Guinea	Saudi Arabia					Palau	Luxembourg	Serbia	
Guinea-Bissau	Syrian Arab Republic (the)					Philippines (the)	Malta	Slovakia	
Kenya	Tunisia					Republic of Korea (the)	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	Slovenia	

Countries and territories covered in this edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons

Africa and the Middle East		The Americas			South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific		Europe and Central Asia		
Sub-Saharan Africa (35 countries)	North Africa and Middle East (17 countries)	North America (3 countries)	Central America and the Caribbean (12 countries)	South America (12 countries)	South Asia (8 countries)	East Asia and the Pacific (19 countries)	Western and Southern Europe (23 countries)	Central and South-Eastern Europe (16 countries)	Eastern Europe and Central Asia (11 countries)
Liberia	United Arab Emirates (the)					Singapore	Norway		
Madagascar	Yemen					Thailand	Portugal		
Malawi						Tonga	Spain		
Mali							Sweden		
Mauritania							Switzerland		
Mauritius							United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the)		
Mozambique							Türkiye		
Namibia							Holy See (the)		
Niger									
Nigeria									
Senegal									
Seychelles									
Sierra Leone									
Somalia									
South Africa									
Togo									
Uganda									
United Republic of Tanzania (the)									
Zambia									
Zimbabwe									

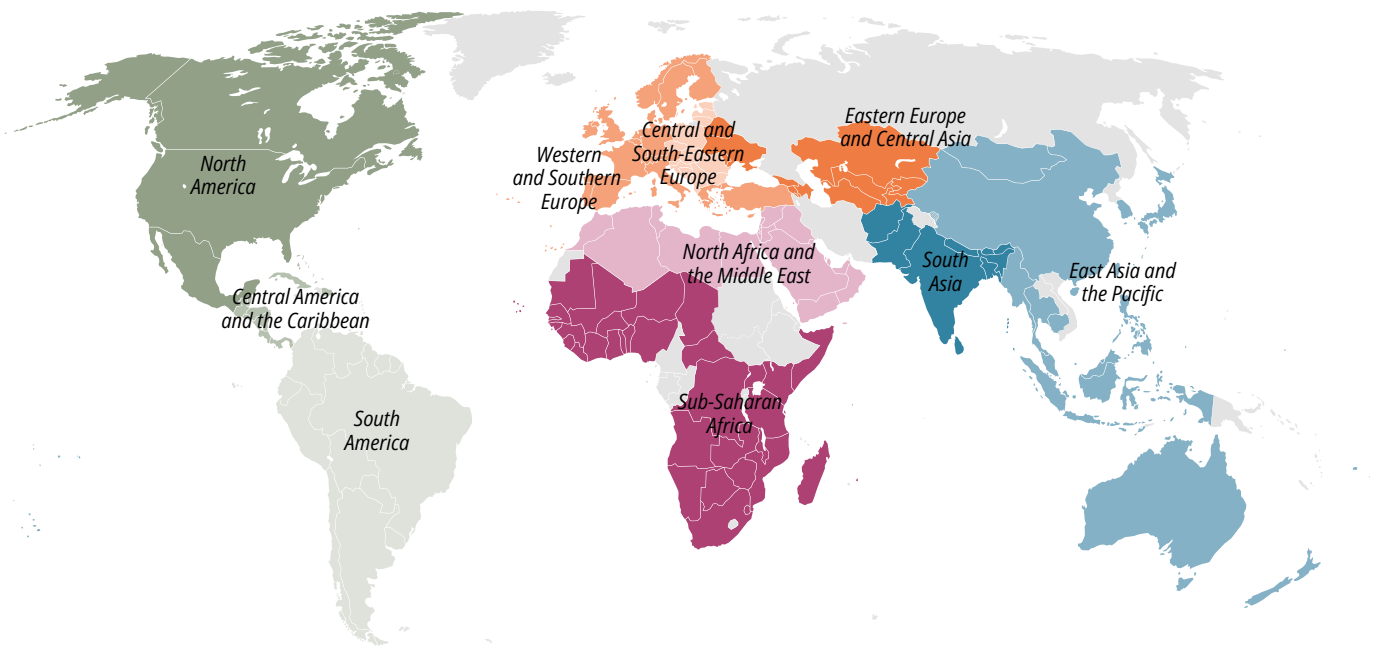
When the data allowed for a more detailed analysis, countries were organized into more specific subgroups: North Africa and the Middle East comprises North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) and the other countries of the Middle East (Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen).

Sub-Saharan Africa comprises East Africa (Kenya, Mauritius, Somalia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania), Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini,

Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).

Eastern Europe and Central Asia comprises Eastern Europe (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) and countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

Map. 3 Country coverage



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. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Endnotes

1 Some of the countries that reported in the past large numbers of cases are not part of this group of 72 countries; the information for the year 2023 is therefore not fully comparable with the results emerging from the analysis presented in this Report. The number of detected victims and convictions reported by this group of countries is indeed only a fraction of the global numbers reported for 2022 (42 per cent of victims and 50 per cent of convictions). The information could serve as an indication of the most recent trends.

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

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

Policy implications

The findings of this edition of the Global Report show that most countries are detecting an increasing number of trafficking victims and obtaining more convictions after the downturn recorded in 2020. However, not all countries have returned to their pre-pandemic levels. Certain forms of trafficking, such as forced labour, forced criminality and child trafficking are confirmed to be on the rise.

Trafficking in persons remains a global phenomenon affecting all countries, either as countries of recruitment or exploitation. The crime requires a combination of responses at all levels: global, regional, national and sub-national. While there has been great progress in setting up national legislations, challenges remain that require adequate operational responses to address prevention, protection and prosecutions for a crime that data proves evolves and adapts to changes in society.

Through the Pact for the Future, the international community has renewed its commitment to “intensify international, regional, and national efforts to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate, forced labor, end modern slavery and trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and eliminate all forms of child labor” (Pact for the Future Action 35). The implementation of the following recommendations may serve to guide those efforts in the context of the latest trafficking trends.

► **Adopt and reinforce counter-trafficking specific measures to prevent child trafficking, protect and assist child victims**

As children are increasingly detected among victims of trafficking, **national authorities should ensure that child protection services, including care facilities, are sensitized and equipped to detect and refer cases of child exploitation and pay particular attention to children’s vulnerabilities to being trafficked.**

As the link between child labour and harmful practices such as forced and early marriage that lead to trafficking in children is increasingly established, **the international community should reinvigorate campaigns to end child labour in all its forms (SDG 8.7) and to eliminate child, early and forced**

marriage (SDG 5.3) as well as support the adoption of national legal frameworks to address these issues.

Trafficking of girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation is recording an alarming increase in many regions of the world. **The international community and national authorities should increase efforts to prevent this form of trafficking, to ensure victim-centred and trauma-informed investigations, as well as tailored protection and assistance programmes for girl victims.**

Some forms of child trafficking in the Global North seem to be connected with the increased numbers of unaccompanied and separated children at borders and further inland. **National authorities should enhance reception services and mechanisms to provide immediate assistance to unaccompanied and separated children at borders in order to reduce the risk of being exploited in destination countries.**

Families have a fundamental role in the prevention of child trafficking, as well as in the detection and assistance of victims. The role of families should be included in counter-trafficking frameworks.

► **Broadening the counter-trafficking institutional framework and understanding**

For many years, the sexual exploitation of women was identified as the main form of trafficking in persons. This has changed considerably over the years. Trafficking for forced labour is now widely reported and is the main form of trafficking in many regions as well as globally, affecting male and female, child and adult victims. Trafficking for forced criminality, including in the emerging form of online scams, ranks third in terms of number of victims detected. The way cases are handled by criminal justice systems does not seem to reflect this development, as traffickers involved in sexual exploitation still disproportionately represent the largest share of convictions. There is a need to broaden the perspective and assist national institutions in developing a more comprehensive understanding of trafficking in all its forms to address all types of exploitation and identify all

victims. The international community and national authorities need to conceptualize and design new anti-trafficking frameworks tailored to other forms of trafficking including for forced labour and forced criminality.

➤ Improve the identification of victims and their protection

In order to detect trafficking in persons in its various forms and identify victims, the role of a wider range of stakeholders needs to be recognized. This would contribute to supporting the efforts of criminal justice practitioners in addressing the crime and support in bringing assistance and providing protection to victims.

In light of the growing trend of trafficking for forced labour, national authorities should provide labour inspectors and social workers with the tools and indicators to integrate trafficking as a serious threat to workers and refer suspicious cases to the appropriate services.

Civil society organizations, NGOs and communities usually have privileged access to the population, especially the most vulnerable, and can play a pivotal role in building relationships with trafficking victims to support their difficult and often non-linear journeys out of trafficking.

National authorities should protect and support their role, and put in place safeguards for staff of NGOs and the persons they assist against potential retaliation, including by introducing or reinforcing fundamental rights and enforce existing legislation concerning the use of violence and intimidation.

At the same time, community members need practical and concrete information on what to do when in the presence of suspected cases of trafficking in persons. **Information campaigns should aim at directing actionable information towards those members of the community who are most likely to interact with victims, in the most-affected areas, with an emphasis on the most prevalent forms and victims of trafficking locally.**

When proactive investigation is initiated by national authorities, more victims are identified, but many fail to adopt a victim-centred approach, hindering the participation of the victims in the prosecution and trial phases. **The international community,**

national authorities and civil society organizations should partner in defining successful practices for proactive investigation, ensuring victims' cooperation during criminal procedures. To build trust and encourage victims to come forward, anti-trafficking initiatives should provide victim and witness protection programmes that apply trauma-informed approaches and ensure dignified access to justice for survivors. They should also provide foreign victims with appropriate interpretation services.

To prevent revictimization and contribute to successful re/integration, counter-trafficking institutions need to go beyond direct assistance and invest in a range of different services, long-term case management capacity and rehabilitation interventions, including helping victims to settle into a stable and safe environment, supporting mental and physical well-being, and providing opportunities for personal, social and economic development.

➤ Reinforcing the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons, especially in some regions

While most regions have recorded increasing detections and convictions since 2020, such as Africa where new legislation was enacted, some regions have not yet recovered to their pre-Covid levels, including in some middle and high-income countries. These progresses and setbacks may be explained by various factors, ranging from the existence and applicability of anti-trafficking legislation to the complexity of the cases and the ability of criminal justice practitioners to secure convictions on trafficking charges based on solid evidence. The high level of involvement of organized crime groups, some of which are transnational, and emerging forms of trafficking, including for forced criminality conducted online, raise the evidentiary burden. This may add to the challenges already posed by international cooperation, impacting on the quality of the cases prosecuted, in addition to the number of convictions. **The international community and national authorities should analyse legislation and judicial practice in selected countries in order to understand where the obstacles to successful prosecutions lie. They should support and implement remedies at the national level such as legal reform to clarify the trafficking offences as well as training to and exchange of experience among prosecutors and judges, but**

also defence lawyers, to better understand the evidential requirements of the offence. This includes: how to deal with complex cases that involve transnational organized criminal groups and digital evidence; the impact of trauma and the coping mechanisms that may impact the credibility of victims and witnesses; and enabling the application of sentences that are proportionate to the seriousness of the trafficking offences.

In Africa, where most convictions seem to focus on small groups or individual traffickers, the **international community and donor assistance should focus on the capacity of African countries to address transnational criminal organizations operating on the continent. Destination countries outside of Africa where African victims are exploited should also extend their cooperation to origin countries to stop the trafficking and to prosecute the traffickers.** In addition, considering that the large majority of African trafficking victims are detected within Africa, **the international community should support regional organizations and national authorities in the development and strengthening of transnational referral mechanisms that build on and complement existing national referral mechanisms so as to improve bilateral and regional coordination in investigations, repatriation and protection of victims.**

Finally, to counter the emergence of trafficking for forced criminality into online scams, national authorities should develop public-private partnerships, particularly with tech companies, to deprive traffickers of access to the technical infrastructure that is required to commit these forms of trafficking, as well as with the financial sector, to enhance the tracking of financial flows and gather digital evidence during investigations.

Member States and the international community should reiterate and adopt concrete actions to implement paragraph 32 of the Global Digital Compact, which calls on technology companies and social media platforms to provide online safety-related training materials and safeguards to their users, in particular, children and youth users, and call on social media platforms to establish safe, secure, accessible reporting mechanisms to report policy violations.

➤ **Prevention of trafficking in persons should adopt a multi-layered approach to tackle the drivers of the proliferation of trafficking activity**

Preventing human trafficking may take many forms in the short and long term, with more or less correlated and measurable impact. While awareness-raising initiatives that are context, public and vulnerability specific may have a preventive effect on trafficking, other measures addressing root causes for trafficking in persons, or interventions tailored to sectors that can be breeding grounds for trafficking in persons could also be considered.

In the context of transnational trafficking in persons, considering the increasing push on human mobility from conflicts and climate change, and to reduce risks of trafficking connected with smuggling of migrants, who become more vulnerable to exploitation while on the move, **national authorities should consider legal channels for refugee movement and broadening the scope of regular pathways for migrants that foster safe and dignified journeys for people who need to move across borders.**

To address the root causes of human mobility and loss of economic power related to climate change, **national authorities should adopt comprehensive strategies to address the intersection between climate change, crimes that affect the environment and trafficking in persons, including by providing compensation mechanisms for affected communities to mitigate income loss caused by natural crises and reduce vulnerabilities.**

Promoting youth employment and education as key preventive measures could also counter poverty, conflict, and harmful socio-cultural practices that make individuals vulnerable to trafficking in persons. **National authorities are encouraged to build partnerships with civil society organizations (particularly youth organizations) to create economic opportunities, support vulnerable communities and address underlying vulnerabilities that contribute to trafficking risks.**

Recognizing the influence and position of faith leaders and community representatives, **national authorities should consider leveraging their trusted positions within communities to act as key change-makers in preventing trafficking in**

persons. The influence of peers may also be leveraged by incorporating the experiences of survivors into awareness initiatives.

In the context of trafficking for forced criminality into online scams, as some part of the victims are young individuals enrolled in university or other similar programmes, **national authorities should develop country-specific prevention interventions targeting universities and tertiary education institutions to inform students about the dangers of online scamming operations and recruitment practices used by criminals.**

Finally, in the context of Africa, as emerging from the research, while a wealth of natural resources can turn into durable and effective economic opportunities for African countries, it can also attract criminal actors and result in more victims of trafficking in persons. **National authorities should engage Ministries of Mines to include anti-human-trafficking provisions in mining regulations and leverage mining companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts to combat trafficking for forced labour in the region.** The international community should support African countries to enforce regulatory systems to ensure legal, sustainable and safe extraction of natural resources, as well as increasing fair trade and wealth redistribution to reduce child labour and child trafficking for forced labour.

➡ **More usable data, more precise analysis to understand and report on trafficking in persons**

At the national level, many countries struggle to harmonize disparate data collected from different stakeholders/organizations involved in the counter-trafficking response.

At the same time, contrary to past editions, the extraordinary effort UNODC invested in collecting data in the African continent resulted in an unprecedented coverage of the continent and the subsequent analysis assessing root causes, patterns, trends and institutional response.

Data is available when national and regional institutions are given the instruments to collect and report, and when durable partnerships with national, regional and international actors are built.

Data harmonization can also serve as a powerful tool for combatting trafficking in persons at the international level. When data can be harnessed in an effective, standardized way from a variety of sources, particularly those with more access to the communities affected and more experience and knowledge about the nature of the crime, there is great potential to expand the evidence base.

To this end, IOM and UNODC are developing a new set of *International Classification for Administrative Data on Trafficking in Persons (IC-TIP)* for approval and adoption at international levels. The IC-TIP aims to facilitate the production and dissemination of high-quality administrative data relating to various aspects of the crime of trafficking in persons.

Over the last few years, the research community has registered great progress in the field of estimating the prevalence of trafficking in persons. At the same time, the variety of research approaches and statistical definitions adopted resulted in studies that are not comparable over time and geography. **There is an evident need to define a universal standard for prevalence estimates on trafficking in persons.** To fill this gap, the ILO, UNODC, IOM, and the University of Georgia (UGA) have recently joined forces under the **STATIP project (Standard Tools for Analysing Trafficking in Persons)** to produce a universal statistical definition of trafficking in persons as well as comprehensive, ethical and robust methodologies to estimate the prevalence of trafficking in persons for forced labour.





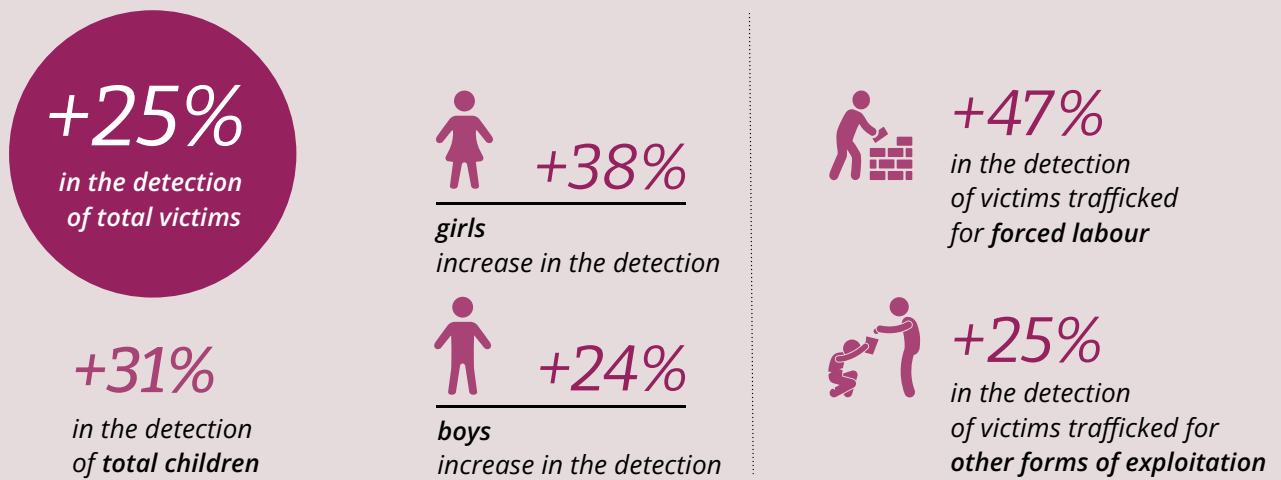
CHAPTER 1

Global overview

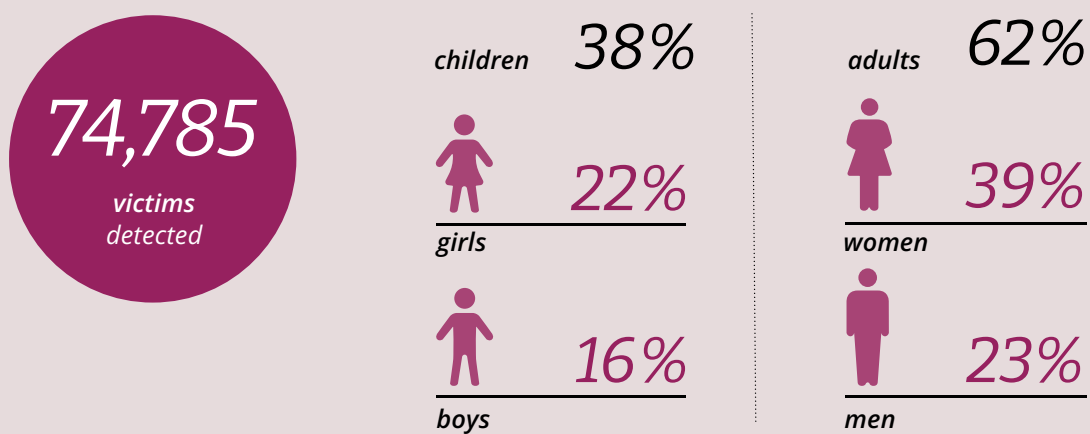
GLOBAL OVERVIEW

KEY FINDINGS FOR THE YEAR 2022

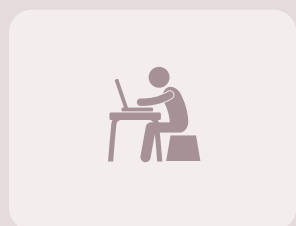
Trends compared to 2019 (pre-covid)



Main profile of victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Emerging forms of exploitation



Trafficking for forced criminality into online scams

Flows detected (2022 or most recent)

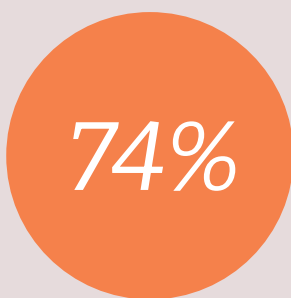


162 different nationalities detected
in 128 destination countries

436 total cross-border flows were detected around the globe:

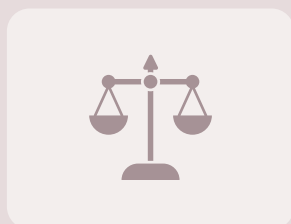
- 31%** of these involved African victims
- 24%** involved victims from South and East Asia
- 24%** involved victims from Europe and Central Asia
- 16%** involved victims from the Americas

Traffickers reported in cases that concluded with a conviction



74% of the traffickers operate in organized crime groups

Criminal Justice response



In 2022, the number of people globally convicted returned to slightly below the 2019 levels, with an increase of +36 per cent compared to 2020.

Convictions for trafficking for forced labour are far less compared to those for sexual exploitation and disproportionate compared to the number of victims detected.

CHAPTER 1

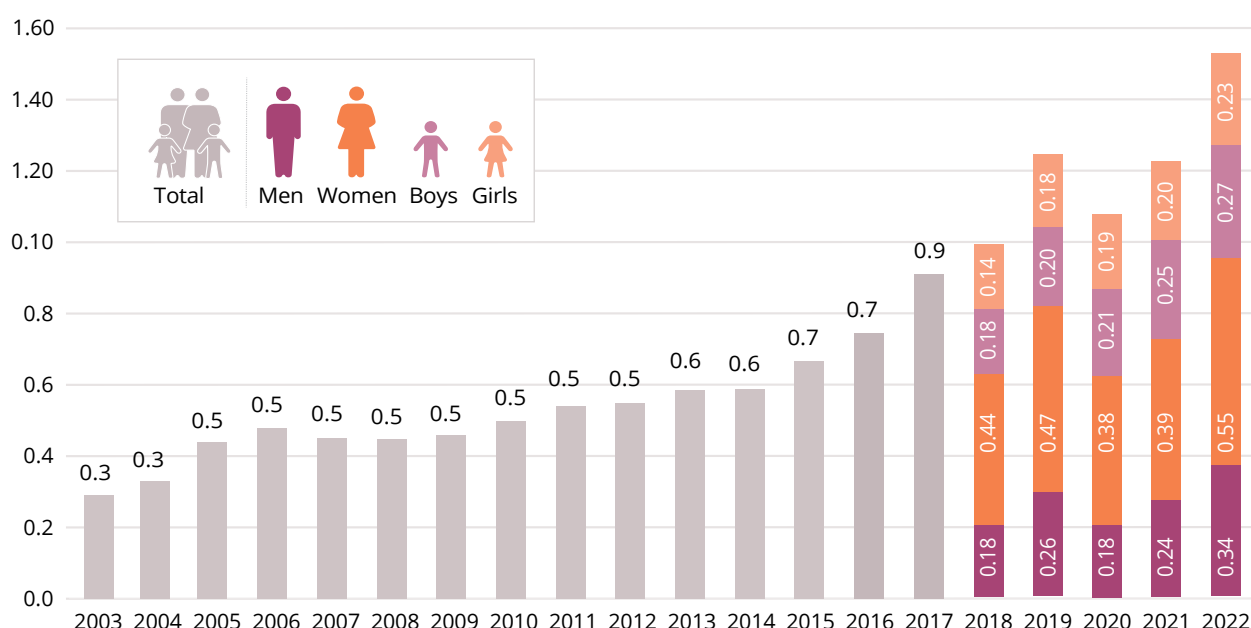
GLOBAL OVERVIEW

DETECTION TRENDS: victim numbers above pre-pandemic levels with child victims increasing

The total number of victims identified in the year 2022 increased beyond the levels recorded in 2019. Globally, 25 per cent more victims were recorded compared to the pre-pandemic period, and a significant 43 per cent more victims were recorded

compared to 2020. This trend can be attributed to the 31 per cent increase in children detected compared to the period before the Covid-19 pandemic.

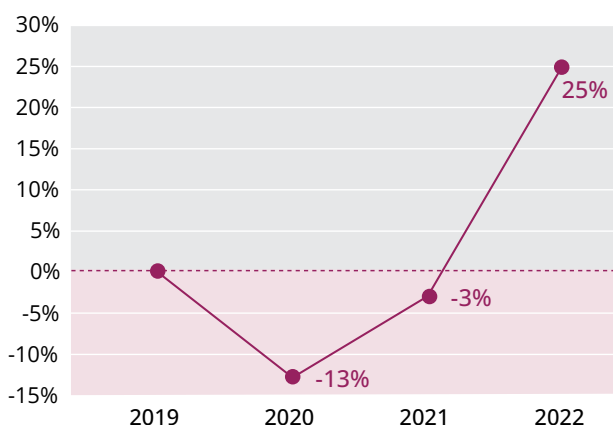
Fig. 22 Global trend in detection rates of trafficking victims, by age group and sex, 2003-2022 (per 100,000 population)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries, comprising 61 per cent of the world population, reporting on this indicator from 2003 to 2022.

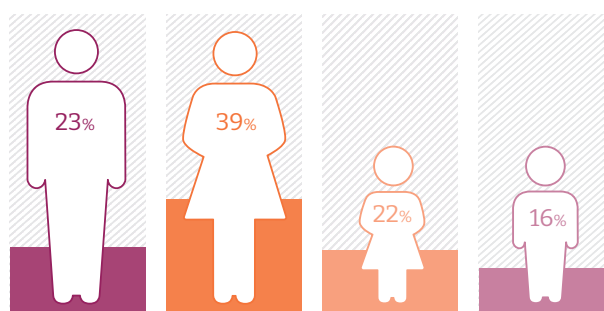
Fig. 23 Global trend in detection rates of trafficking victims, base year 2019*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries, comprising 61 per cent of the world population, reporting on this indicator from 2019 to 2022.

Fig. 24 Share of detected victims of trafficking, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



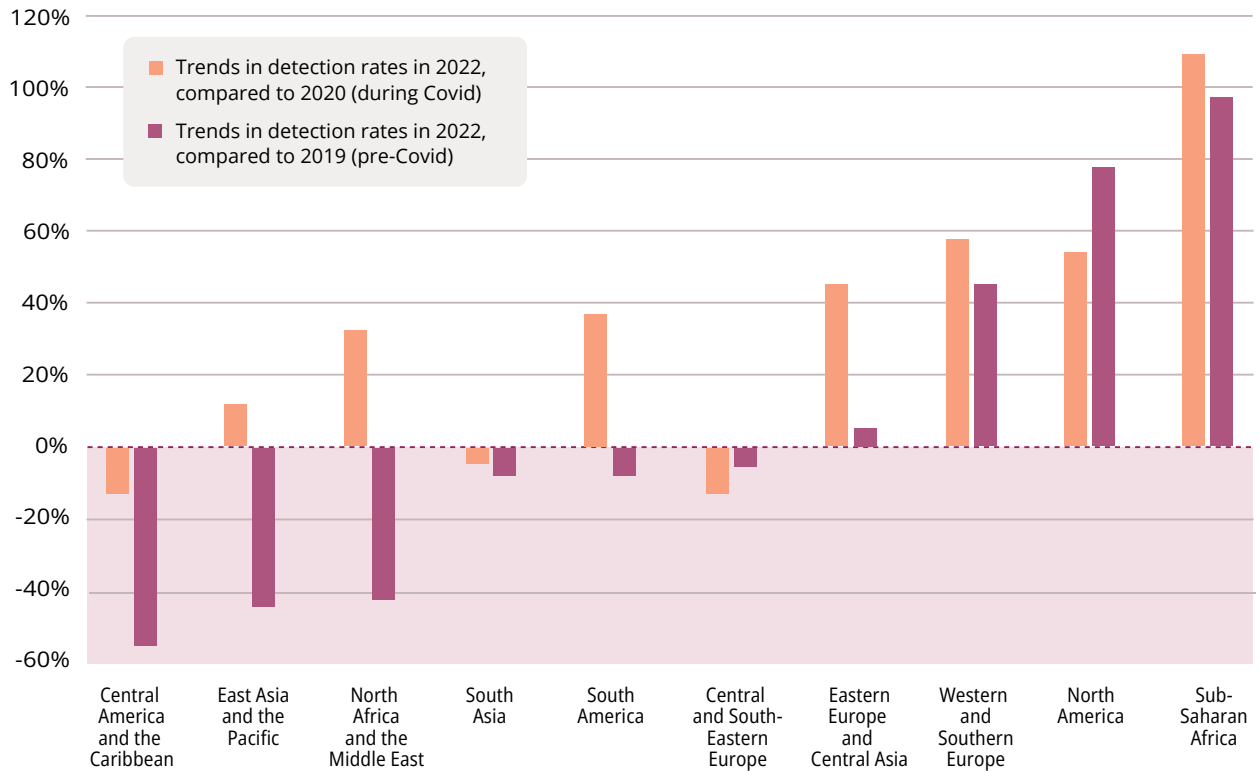
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on a total of 68,090 victims detected in 135 countries in 2022 (or more recent), comprising 65 per cent of the world population, reporting on this indicator.

In 2022, most regions detected more victims compared to 2020, the year when a global drop in detection was recorded. Only Central America and the Caribbean recorded a further decrease compared to the reduced detections during the pandemic.

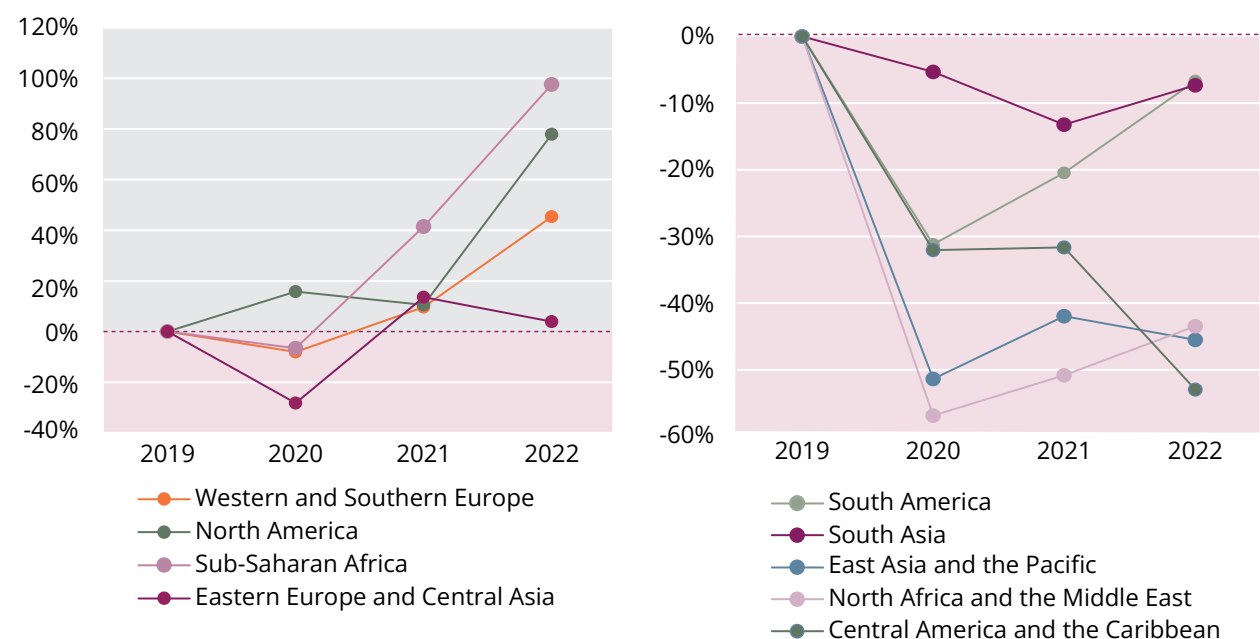
Despite the increases recorded, not all regions have returned to the number of victims recorded in 2019. Countries in East Asia and the Pacific, in North Africa and the Middle East continue to register fewer victims detected compared to the pre-pandemic period.

Fig. 25 Detections of victims of trafficking in 2022 as compared to 2019 (pre-Covid) and to 2020, by region



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 26 Trends in detection rates of trafficking victims, by regions, base year 2019*



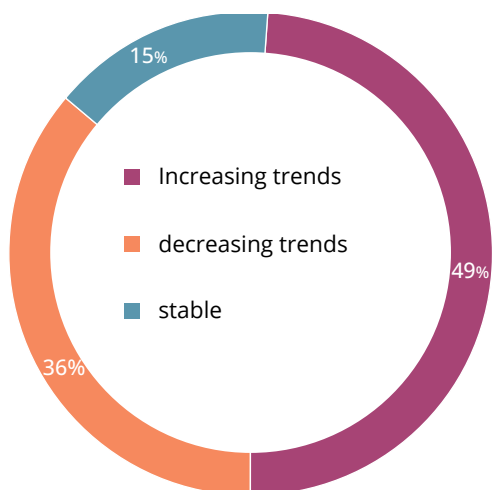
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Conversely, in Sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Western and Southern Europe detection of trafficking victims increased drastically compared to 2019.

Countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, South America and South Asia broadly returned to the levels of victims detected in 2019.

The majority of the 66 countries reporting the number of victims detected for the year 2023 continue to register increasing trends, while about one third of them register decreasing detections compared to 2022. Increasing trends were recorded in Western and Southern Europe, East Asia and the Pacific and North Africa and the Middle East in particular.

Fig. 27 Share of countries reporting data for 2023 by type of trends in the detection of victims, comparing 2023 to 2022



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data. Based on 66 reporting countries.

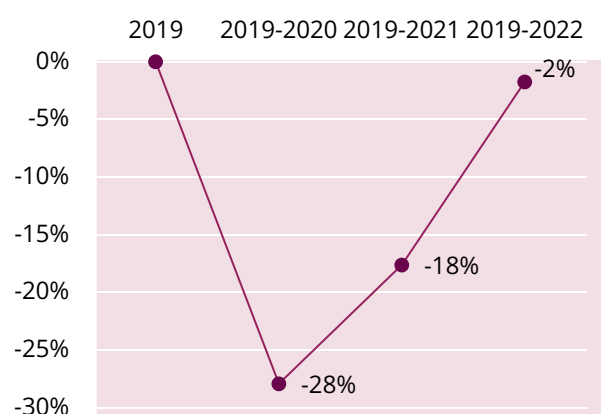
Trends in convictions

The global conviction rate returned to the pre-pandemic figures in 2019. In line with the increased number of victims detected, the global number of convictions rose a significant 36 per cent between 2020 and 2022.

Most regions recorded an increasing number of convictions from 2020 or 2021 to 2022. Despite the increases, however, not all regions managed to recover the levels of convictions recorded in 2019, with countries in East Asia and the Pacific, North America, South America and Eastern Europe and Central Asia recording numbers still below the pre-pandemic levels.

The largest increases between 2019 and 2022 were in Europe and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of convictions recorded a relevant increase in percentage terms. It should be noted, however, that the increase in Sub-Saharan Africa started from low levels in absolute numbers from about 75 in the whole region in 2019, to some

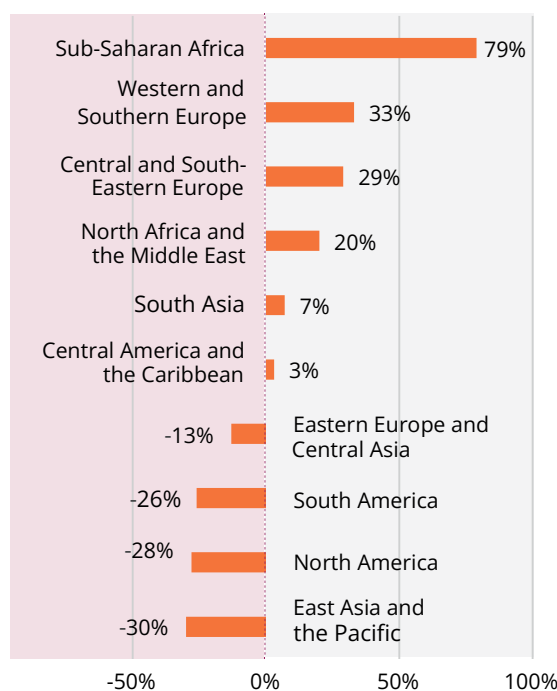
Fig. 28 Global trend in convictions for trafficking in persons, base year 2019*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

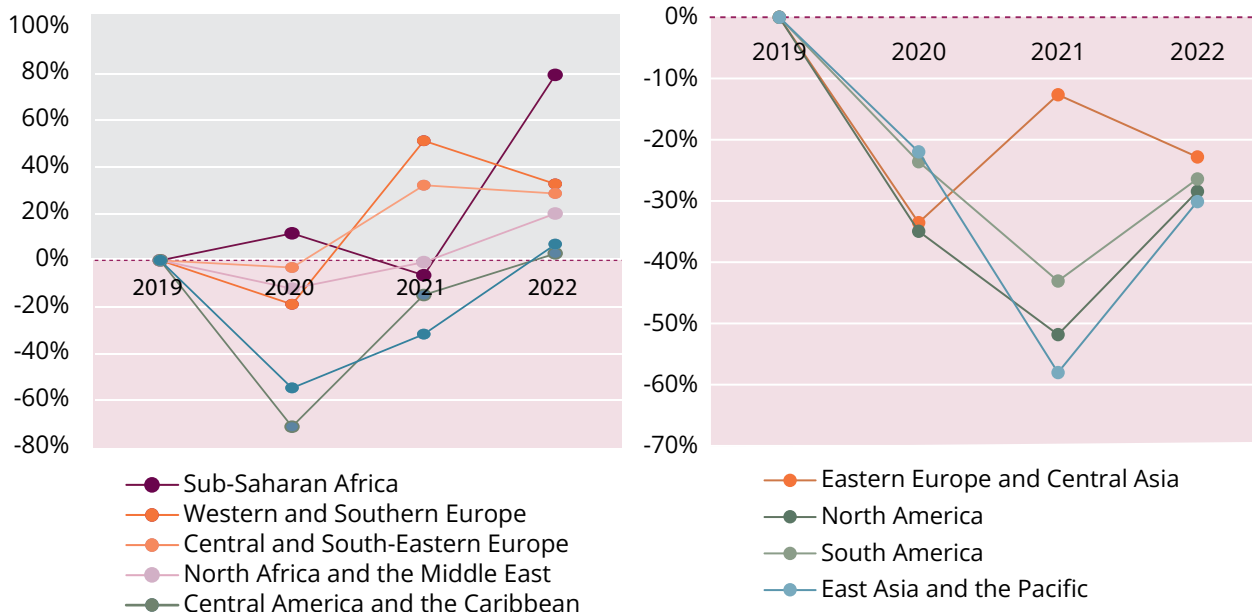
* For comparative purposes, the numbers refer to 92 countries and territories reporting on people convicted for trafficking in persons over the entire period.

Fig. 29 Change in number of convictions for trafficking in persons in 2022 as compared to 2019 (pre-Covid), by region



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 30 Trend in convictions for trafficking in persons, by region, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

140 in 2022. Strong increases were recorded in a few key countries in Sub-Saharan Africa while more moderate increases were recorded in the region as a whole.

For the year 2023, the number of total convictions were reported only by 51 countries. According to this data, the picture seems to be stable at the levels recorded in 2022, with one third of these countries recording increasing convictions and another third recording decreasing trends and the remaining reporting stable trends.

Children: increasingly exploited in a variety of forms

In 2022, children accounted for 38 per cent of victims detected globally. Girls (22 per cent of total victims) were more typically trafficked for sexual exploitation, and to a lesser extent for forced labour and other forms of exploitation, such as forced marriage. Boys (16 per cent) were primarily trafficked for forced labour and for other forms of exploitation, typically forced criminality.¹

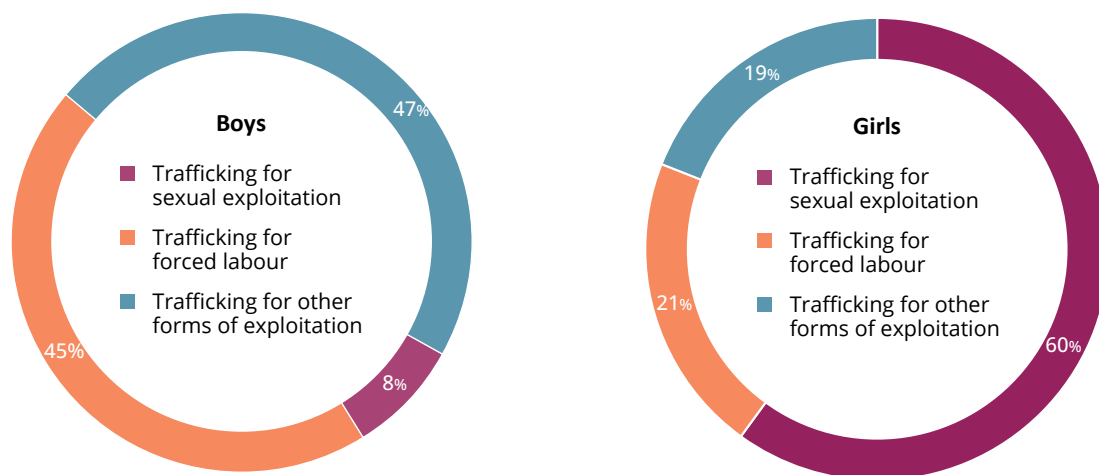
Since 2019, there has been an increase of approximately 31 per cent in recorded child victims. This trend is the result of: (i) a larger share of girls among female victims trafficked for sexual exploitation identified in many regions, (ii) an increase in trafficked boys detected in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in North America, and (iii) a large increase

of detected victims in Africa where generally more child than adult victims are detected (see *Important advancements in criminal justice responses but measures to target organized crime still lacking* in Chapter 2, page 83).

Compared to the past, girls are increasingly trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation

A large increase in girl victims detected (per 100,000 population) was recorded in 2022 in North America, more than double compared to 2019. This increase can be largely attributed to girls trafficked within national borders for the purpose of sexual exploitation and for mixed labour and sexual exploitation. More women victims were also detected during the same period in this region, mainly for the same purposes, but the increase is much smaller (+53 per cent) when compared to girls. In this region, girl victims detected in 2022 amounted to 25 per cent of the total victims, compared to 18 per cent recorded in 2019, while women amounted to 56 per cent, a reduction from 65 per cent in 2019. Countries in Central America and the Caribbean and in South America, in Eastern Europe and Central Asia also report a higher share of girls and lower share of women detected compared to 2019, the vast majority of them trafficked for sexual exploitation. An increased share of girls detected was also recorded in Central and South-Eastern Europe (from 27 per cent to 33 per cent of the total victims

Fig. 31 Share of detected child victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on a total of 8,749 boy and 9,323 girl victims detected in 81 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent).

detected), North Africa and the Middle East (from 14 per cent to 21 per cent). Similar trends were recorded in East Asia and the Pacific.

These numbers suggest that in 2022 girls in these regions were more targeted for the purpose of sexual exploitation compared to 2019.

The increase in boy victims detected could be linked to the increase in the numbers of unaccompanied migrant children in Western countries

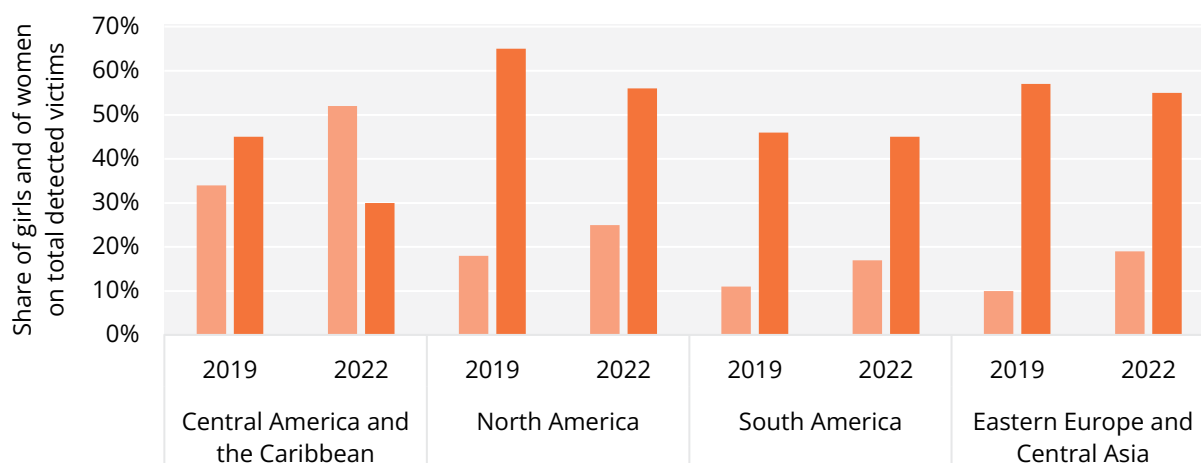
During the same period, an increased number of boys (per 100,000 population) was recorded in Western and Southern Europe (+40 per cent), mainly

detected as trafficked for forced labour and for other forms of exploitation. Similar trends were also recorded in North America, where the number of boys detected in forced labour tripled from 88 in 2019 to 266 in 2022.

Most of the boy victims detected in Western and Southern Europe are foreign citizens, mainly from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The profiles of these children reflect the sex and citizenships of the unaccompanied children² recorded in Western and Southern Europe during the same period.

Countries in Europe are recording increasing numbers of unaccompanied children crossing borders following pandemic-related border and movement

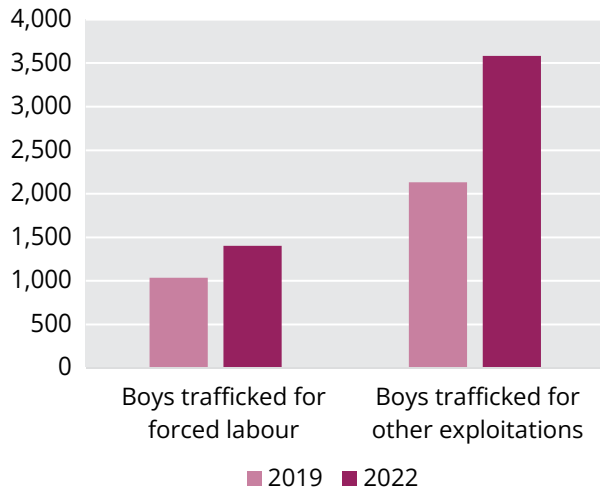
Fig. 32 Share of girls and women detected in regions where the identification of girls is increasing vis-à-vis women (2019, 2022)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

■ Girls ■ Women

Fig. 33 Number of boys detected as trafficked into forced labour and other forms of exploitation in Western and Southern Europe (2019, 2022)

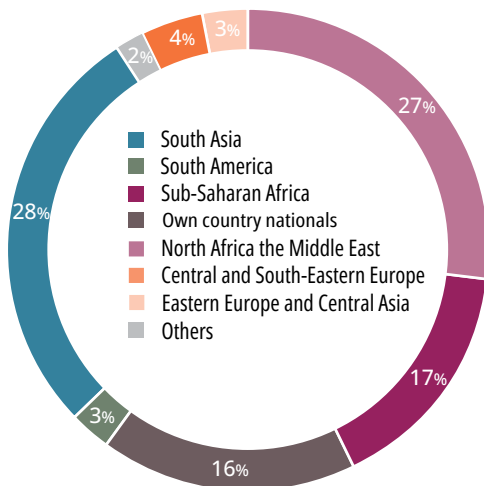


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

restrictions. The majority of unaccompanied children detected are between 14 and 17 years old and are boys, and most originate from North Africa and Afghanistan.³

International organizations,⁴ European institutions⁵ and national police forces⁶ flag that these children are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking in persons, as they urgently need to earn money and lack of parental care, making them vulnerable to being exploited for forced labour, sex or for forced criminality.

Fig. 34 Share of region of citizenship of boys trafficked for forced labour and other forms of trafficking in selected EU countries, 2022*



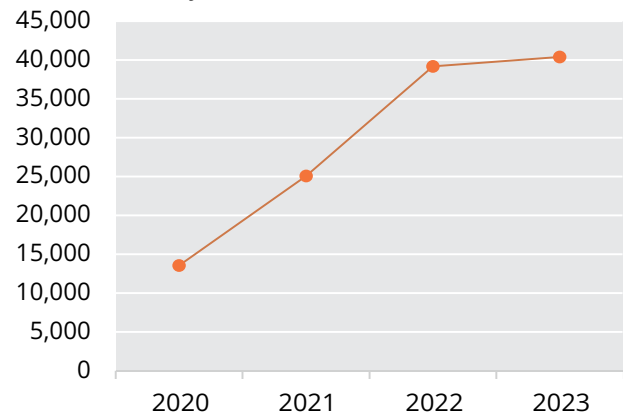
Source: National authorities to Eurostat/UNODC.

* Based on 103 victims detected in Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal.

Similar patterns seem to affect countries in North America, with studies suggesting relevant shares of unaccompanied children are at risk of trafficking.⁷ The majority of unaccompanied children detected are between 15 and 17 years old and are boys – many from Central America and the Caribbean.⁸

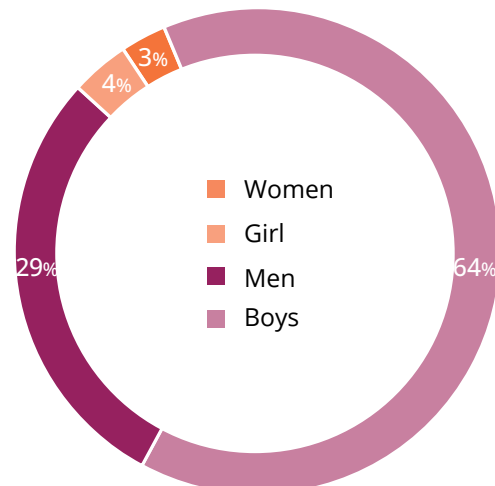
While it is difficult to ascertain an exact figure, data from border interceptions and the asylum process indicate a significant increase in unaccompanied children in the European Union⁹ between 2020 and 2023. In North America, there was a large increase from 2020 up to 2022, with a slight decrease in 2023. These trends could explain the increasing number of boys becoming victims of trafficking in both of these regions.

Fig. 35 Number of unaccompanied children detected as asylum seekers in the EU (2020-2023)*



* Data includes information from the 27 countries of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Montenegro.

Fig. 36 Share of detected victims of trafficking for criminal exploitation in the UK, by sex and age group, 2023*



Source: National referral mechanisms statistics.

* Based on 4543 victims detected in 2023.

Drug cartels trafficking children for forced criminality in Western Europe

Europol and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction have reported that some of Europe's criminal networks are recruiting and exploiting minors and adolescents to act as spotters, distribute drugs or carry out violent attacks.^a These child victims include both national children and foreign children, trafficked by drug cartels and exploited in the ground-level distribution of drugs.^b

Belgium has reported cases involving the exploitation of unaccompanied children for forced criminality.^c Studies conducted in the Netherlands highlight that the number of children trafficked for drug trafficking and for other crimes is underestimated. The study reports that these boys and girls are mainly Dutch children in their teens

in their teens who may suffer from minor mental or behavioural health disorders.^d A similar pattern that has been widely documented and reported in the United Kingdom, where boys, both British and foreigners, including unaccompanied and separated children, are trafficked for forced criminality, particularly for drug trafficking^e.

Increased attention to this phenomenon^f or an increasing number of boys being victimized could explain the increasing number of boy victims trafficked for forced criminality detected in Europe.

- a EUROPOL, Criminal Networks involved in the Trafficking and Exploitation of underage victims in the European Union, Document Ref. No. 1001370; EMCDDA, *EU Drug Markets Analysis 2024: Key insights for policy and practice* (Luxembourg, Publications Office for the European Union, 2024).
- b EUROPOL, Criminal Networks involved in the Trafficking and Exploitation of underage victims in the European Union, Document Ref. No. 1001370; T.L.M. Leito, S.R. van Bommel, F. Noteboom "Changing perspective; an explanatory study into criminal exploitation in 13 large and medium-sized Dutch municipalities", Centre Against Child Trafficking and Human Trafficking, 2022.
- c Belgian Federal Police, "2022 activity report", available at https://www.police.be/annualreport-federalpolice/sites/jaarverslag/files/files/2024-02/00_AR2021_Federal_Police.pdf.
- d T.L.M. Leito, S.R. van Bommel, F. Noteboom, "Changing perspective; an explanatory study into criminal exploitation in 13 large and medium-sized Dutch municipalities", Centre Against Child Trafficking and Human Trafficking, 2022.
- e See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines#who-is-vulnerable-to-county-lines-exploitation> (accessed on 27 October 2024); National Crime Agency County Lines Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply 2017, January 2018.
- f The British Home Office reported statements the phenomenon was prioritized by police which is reflected in the increasing number of cases detected and victims reported. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-offices-county-lines-programme-data/county-lines-programme-data#county-lines-programme-surge-fund-results> (accessed on 27 October 2024).

In some regions, children continue to represent the majority of detected victims

While increasing numbers of child victims of trafficking are recorded in Europe and North America, these regions are still detecting more adult than child victims. In terms of regional variation, Central America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa recorded the highest share of children out of total detected victims, around 60 per cent, followed by East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia.

Detections of children trafficked for forced labour were particularly prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2022. Meanwhile, girls were more typically trafficked for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean. In this region, while a limited number of victims are detected in forced labour, 47 per cent of them are children, more girls (32 per cent) than boys (15 per cent). The court cases reported to UNODC from countries in Central America describe how children may be trafficked for a variety of types of forced labour, including

small-scale economic activities such as harvesting and selling fruit,¹⁰ working in shops¹¹ or for food preparation.¹²

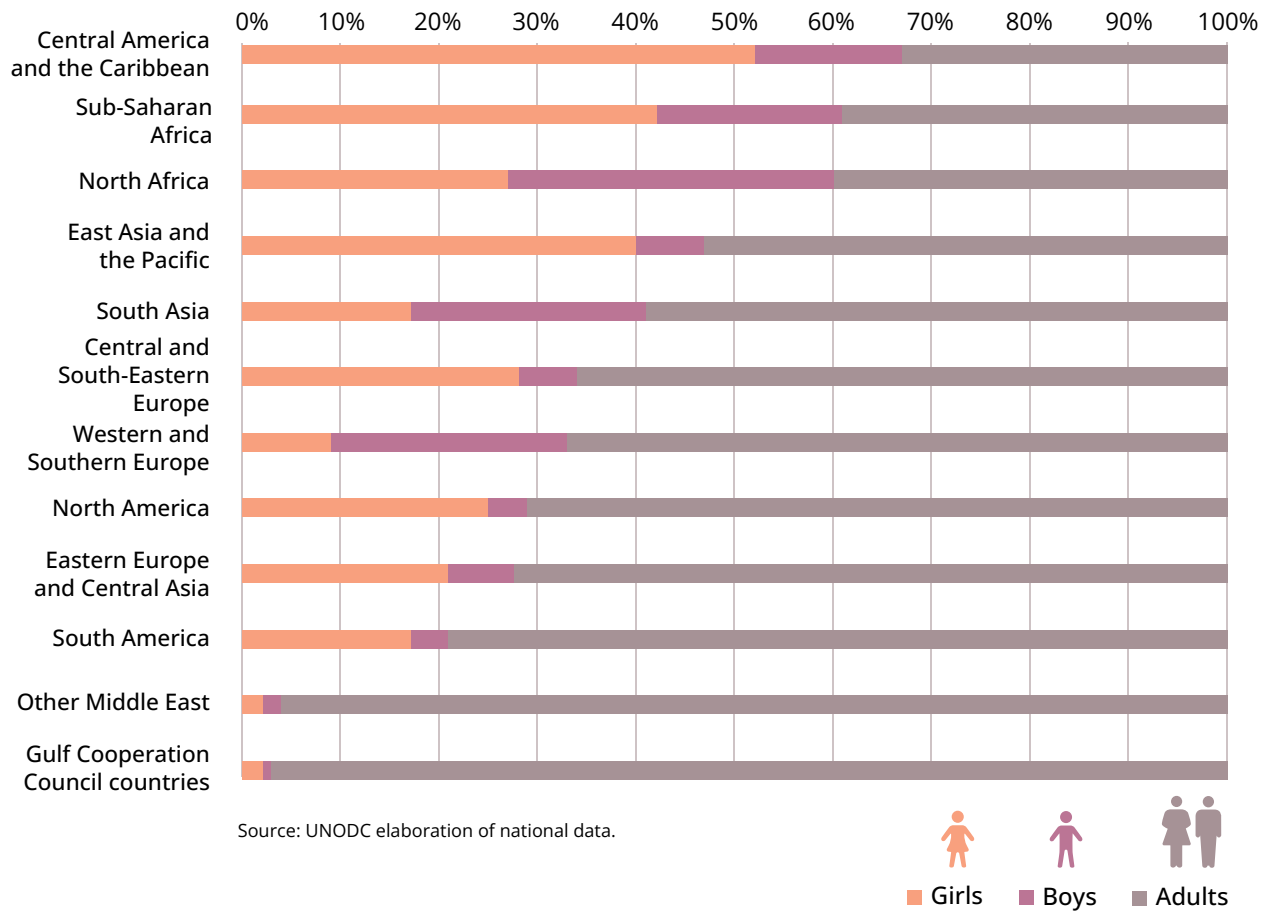
National authorities in North Africa and the Middle East reported about 15 per cent of detected victims being exploited in begging, almost all of them children (45 per cent girls and 54 per cent boys).

Women and girls: most detected victims and exploited for all forms of trafficking

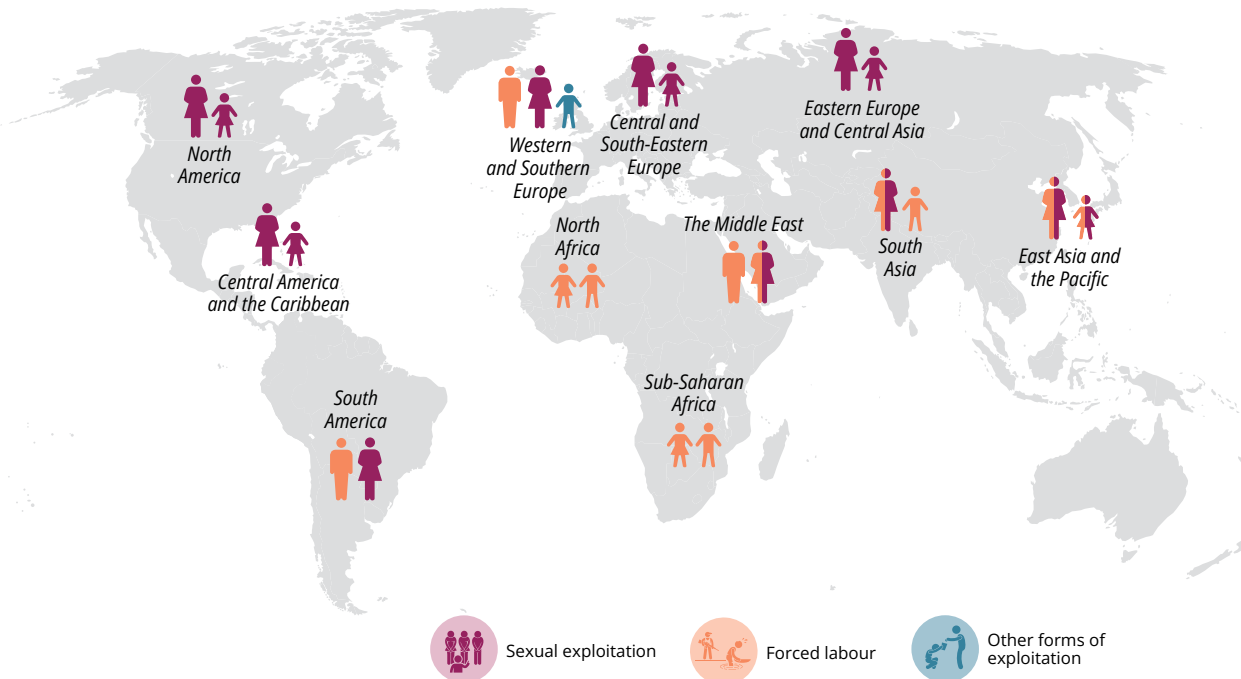
In 2022, most detected victims were females; 61 per cent of victims detected worldwide are women and girls. While more children have been detected since 2019, adults continue to be the most detected age group, and adult females make up 39 per cent of detected victims.

The majority of women and girl victims identified continue to be trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Most court cases collected by UNODC with reference to sexual exploitation concern

Fig. 37 Share of detected victims of trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, by region 2022 (or most recent)



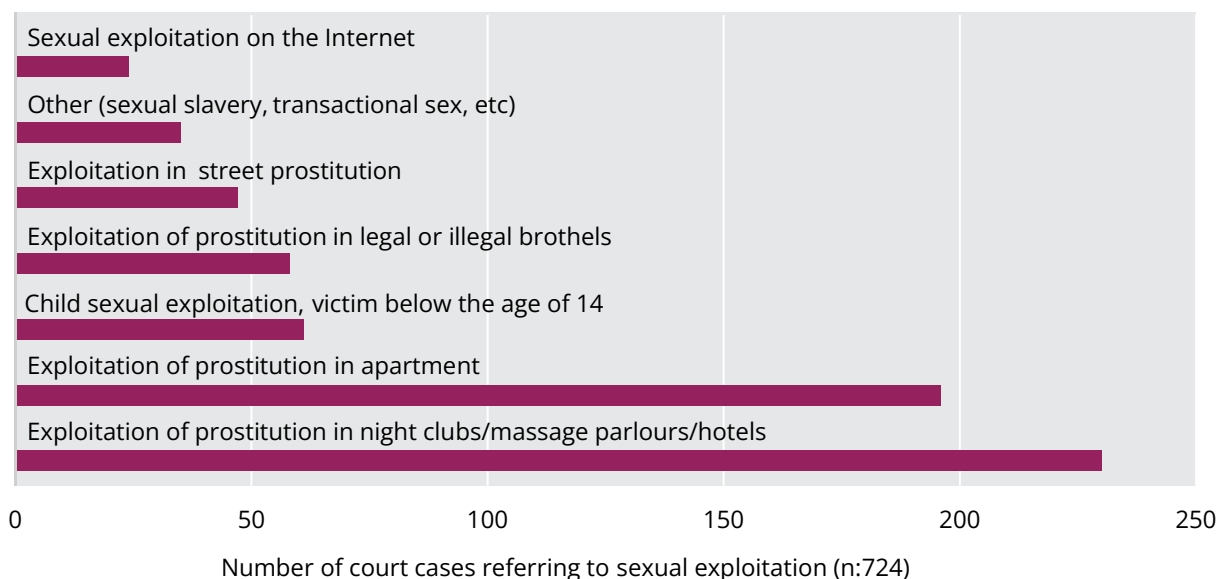
Map. 4 Main detected victims and forms of exploitation



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. 38 Cases of sexual exploitation; by type of setting and exploitation



Source: UNODC court case summaries.

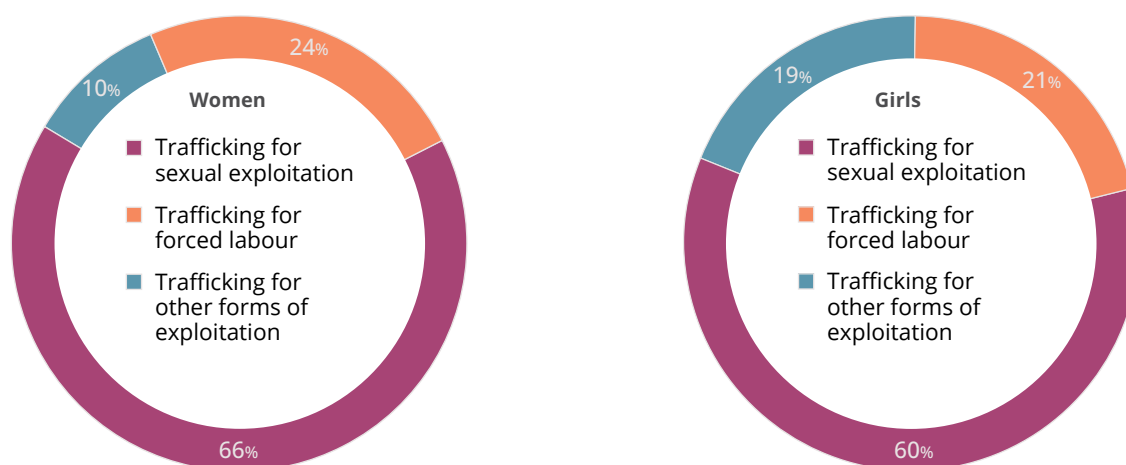
prostitution, either in closed or public settings. Victims of sexual exploitation are also reported to be exploited using the internet or to produce sexual abuse material. A number of cases involved sexually exploited victims who were below the age of 14.

Notably in 2022, women, and especially girls, were detected as trafficked for other purposes. A number of court cases give examples of women and girls trafficked for the purpose of forced marriage,¹³ for forced begging,¹⁴ and for forced criminality, including pickpocketing,¹⁵ shoplifting,¹⁶ or fraud.¹⁷

As far as trafficking for forced labour is concerned, analysis of court cases reported to UNODC refer to women and girls exploited in domestic servitude; foreign victims have been found exploited in domestic work in North Africa and the Middle East,¹⁸ in the Americas,¹⁹ in East Asia and the Pacific,²⁰ and in Europe.²¹ Authorities in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America also report cases of domestic trafficking of girls for domestic servitude.²²

From the analysis of the reported cases, it emerges that domestic servitude as a type of forced labour can be violent, with victims facing extreme physical

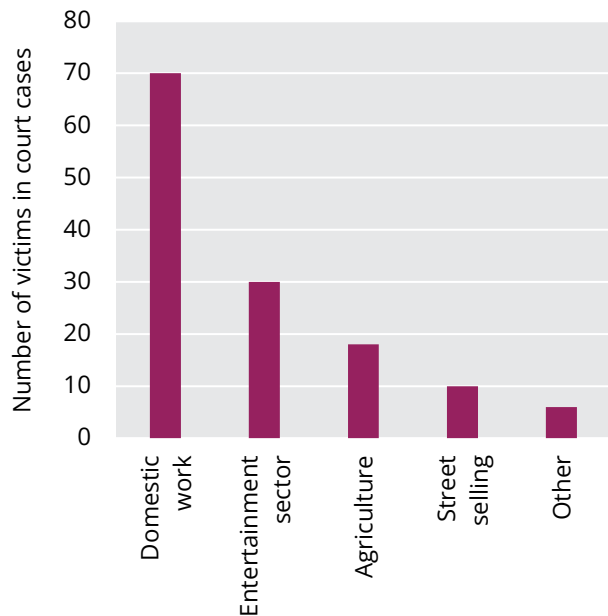
Fig. 39 Share of detected female victims of trafficking, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on a total of 19,621 woman and 9,323 girl victims detected in 81 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent).

Fig. 40 Female victims reported in court cases on trafficking of women and girls for forced labour, by type of exploitation*



Source: UNODC court case summaries.

* Based on a total of 134 victims reported in the court cases collected by UNODC.

abuse while also living in close proximity with their traffickers.²³ Women and girl victims are also reported to be exploited in the entertainment sector, often in combination with sexual exploitation, in agriculture, in roadside selling and in food preparation.

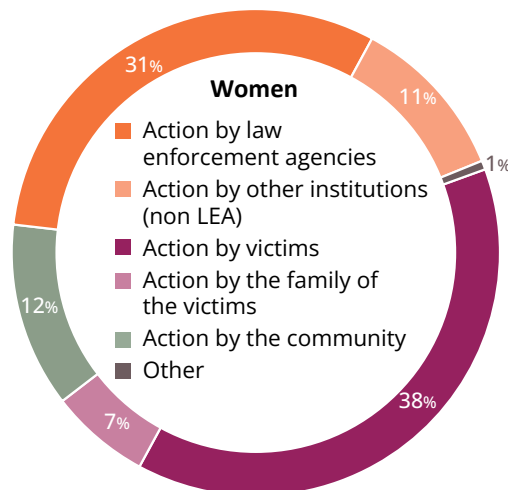
Failing in proactively identifying women and girls

An analysis of 407 court cases including information on 1,453 victims suggests that institutions fail to actively identify the victims of trafficking in persons, with victims often needing to take the first action to contact the authorities. In this context, some difference is found between male and female victims. Female victims seem to be detected as a result of their own action more frequently than male victims (32 per cent of the female victims reported vs 25 per cent of male victims), who more frequently emerge from proactive action from the authorities.

Specifically, women are more frequently detected as result of their own action, while for girls it appears family members play a role, with parents or siblings typically contacting the authorities to report cases of trafficking.

The share of cases where law enforcement authorities and the community triggered the response is similar for both women and girls. Meanwhile, in cases involving male victims, both adults and children are more typically detected by officers of labour inspectors or social services.

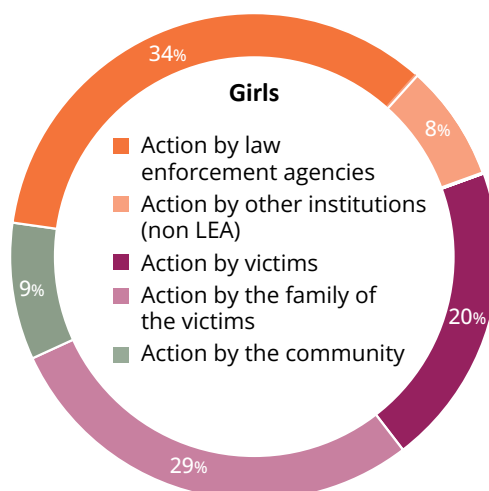
Fig. 41 Share of identified victims by the actor facilitating the detection*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 179 cases involving 676 victims.

Fig. 42 Share of identified victims by the actor facilitating the detection*

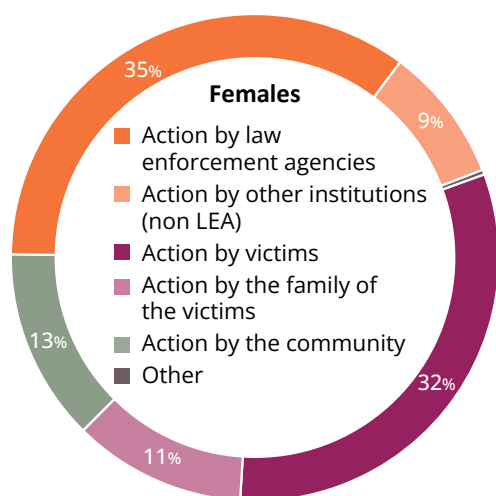


Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 141 cases involving 308 victims.

From the analysis of the cases, it appears that when a counter-trafficking action is initiated as part of a proactive operation by law enforcement agencies, on average, more victims are identified per single case. While operations started by a victim who manages to reach out to the authorities may be able to

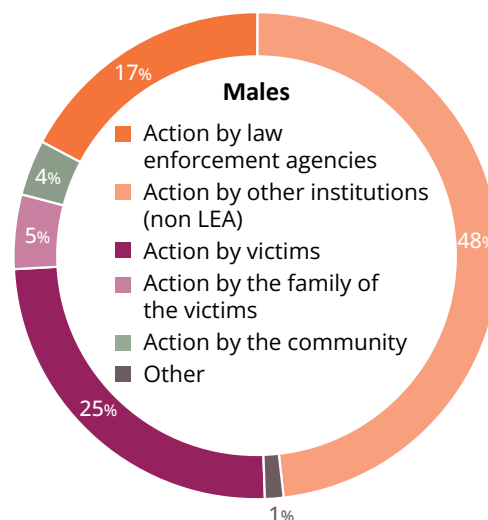
Fig. 43 Share of identified female victims by the actor facilitating the detection*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 368 cases involving 1,291 victims.

Fig. 44 Share of identified male victims by the actor facilitating the detection*

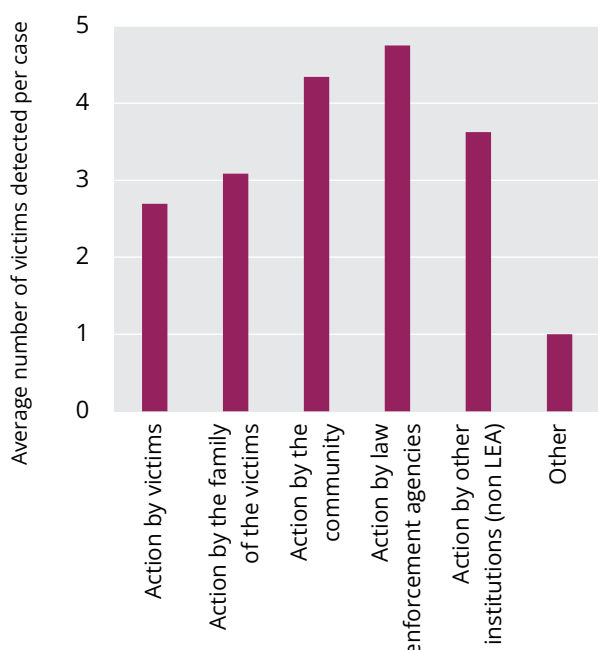


Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 39 cases involving 162 victims.

identify one or two other victims, a proactive institutional intervention tends to have a greater impact, identifying between four and five victims on average. This pattern is similar across both sexes and across age groups.

Fig. 45 Average number of female victims identified per individual case, by the actor facilitating the detection*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 368 cases involving 1,291 victims.

Trafficking for forced labour on the rise: traffickers more sophisticated and fewer convictions

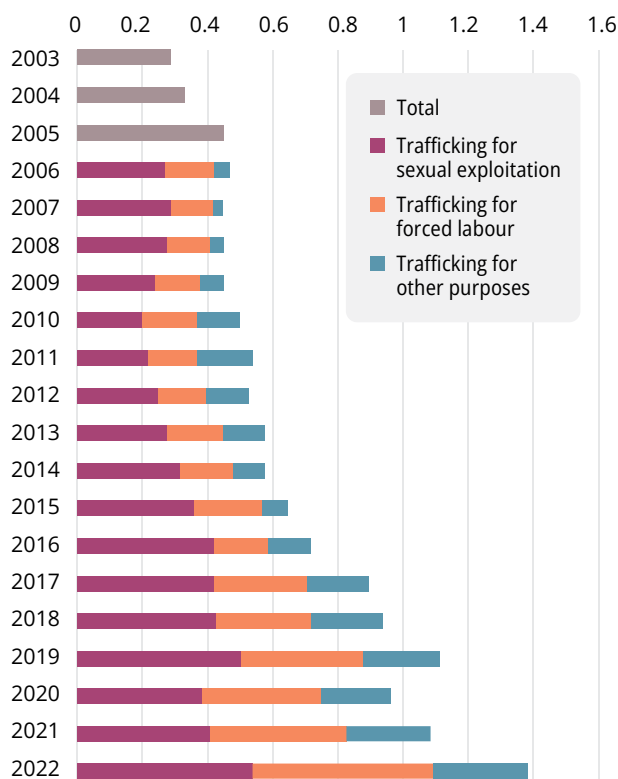
Since 2019, the detection of trafficking for forced labour has recorded greater increases (per 100,000 population) than trafficking for sexual exploitation and for other purposes. The detection of trafficking for forced labour increased by 47 per cent globally when compared to the period prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Significant increases in the detection of trafficking for forced labour (per 100,000 population) in comparison to 2019 were recorded in Western and Southern Europe, North America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Central and South-Eastern Europe, and South America also recorded increases, though not as significant. Trafficking for sexual exploitation also increased compared to 2020, and was slightly higher than the levels recorded in 2019.

Globally, in 2022 42 per cent of the victims detected were trafficked for forced labour, while 36 per cent were trafficked for sexual exploitation. Preliminary data for 2023 collected by 40 countries confirms that the two forms of trafficking continue to be broadly equally detected.

Detected forms of exploitation other than forced labour and sexual exploitation refer mainly to

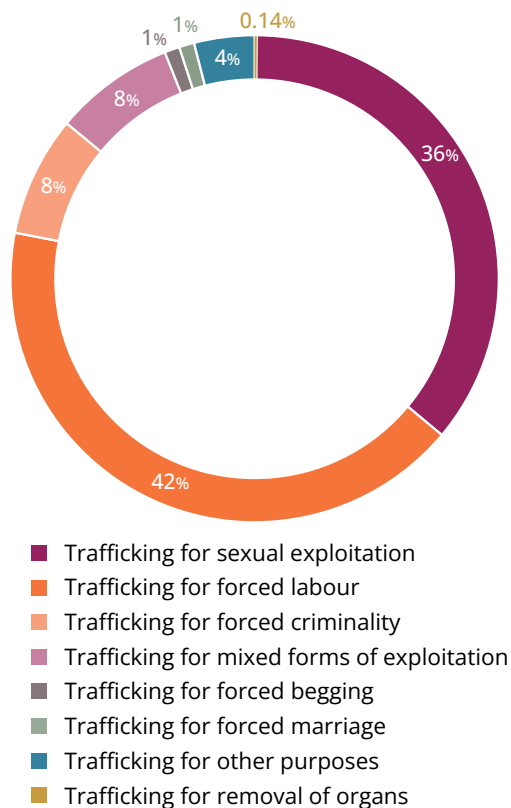
Fig. 46 Global trend in detection rates of trafficking victims, by form of exploitation (per 100,000 population) 2003-2022



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries comprising 61 per cent of the world population reporting on this indicator between 2003 and 2022.

Fig. 47 Share of forms of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on a total of 63,962 victims detected in 133 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent) whose form of exploitation was recorded.

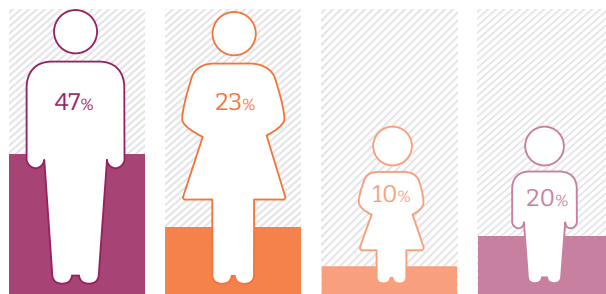
trafficking for forced criminality and trafficking for mixed forms of exploitation.

Trafficking for forced labour is relatively more detected in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, South America and South Asia. Countries in Western and Southern Europe and East Asia and the Pacific also detect more victims for forced labour than for sexual exploitation.

Men are more frequently reported to be trafficked for forced labour, while only about one third of these victims are females, both women and girls. About 20 per cent of total victims of trafficking for forced labour are boys.

In a number of cases reported to UNODC in Sub-Saharan Africa, child victims were typically trafficked domestically or from nearby countries for exploitation in a variety of activities, from domestic work to agriculture and mining.²⁴ Patterns of trafficking of adults and children exploited for forced labour

Fig. 48 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

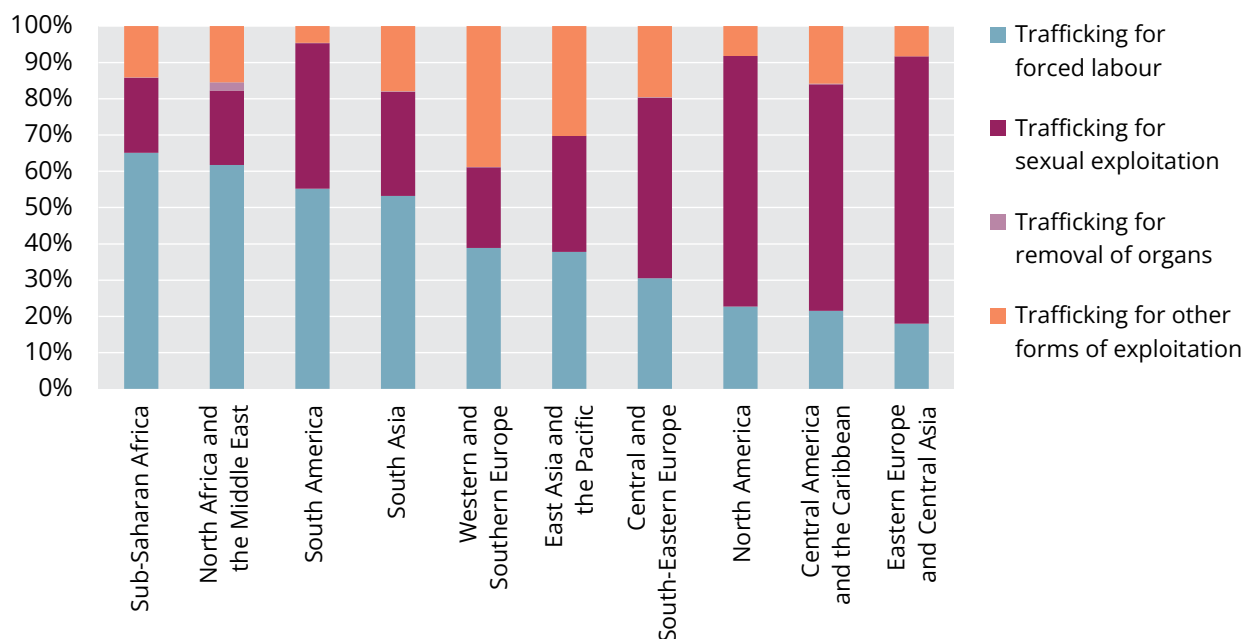


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on a total of 20,483 victims detected whose form of exploitation and profile of the victims was recorded in 108 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent).

in natural resource extraction in Africa, as well as in roles supporting armed groups, such as cooking and acting as guards, are presented in the next chapter of this report (see *Chapter 2: Trafficking in persons in and from Africa; a global responsibility*, page 67).²⁵

Fig. 49 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour, by region, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

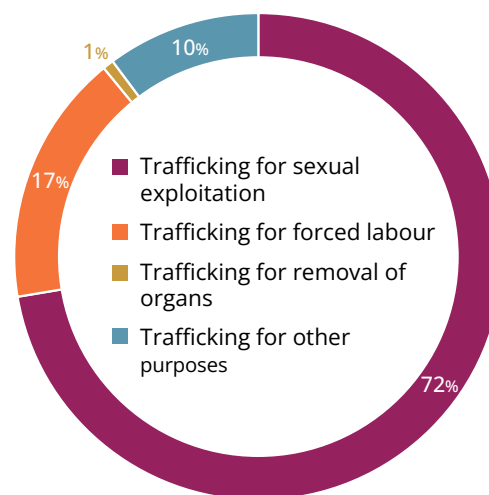
Cases reported by countries in Western and Southern Europe, North America and the Middle East, concern victims from relatively distant regions exploited in domestic work.²⁶ Countries in Western and Southern Europe, North America and the Middle East also record victims from other regions trafficked into agriculture.²⁷ Countries in Central America and the Caribbean reported some cases of domestic trafficking of girls for the purpose of exploitation in low-level work, including street selling or domestic work.²⁸

A limited number of convictions for forced labour are reported

Although trafficking for forced labour is now detected more than trafficking for sexual exploitation, far fewer traffickers are convicted of trafficking for forced labour. In 2022, **over 70 per cent of traffickers were convicted of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation**. A mere 17 per cent were convicted of trafficking for forced labour in contrast to 42 per cent of the victims detected in 2022. The pattern is confirmed for the few countries (16) reporting information for the year 2023. Here, the vast majority of the traffickers convicted in 2023 engaged in trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The inconsistency in the share of detected victims per trafficking type compared with the share of traffickers convicted can be explained in part by the

Fig. 50 Share of convictions for trafficking in persons by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*

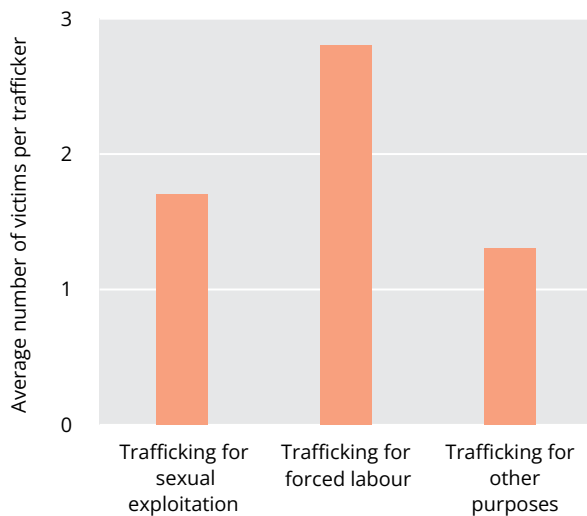


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on the forms of exploitation recorded in the convictions of 3,969 persons in 79 countries.

fact that, according to the available data, forced labour involves, on average, more victims per trafficker than sexual exploitation. Based on an analysis of 920 court cases reported by national authorities, one trafficker, on average, can exploit one to two victims for sexual exploitation, while in forced labour, the number of victims can rise to two to three victims, depending on the sector. In other forms of trafficking, such as forced begging, forced

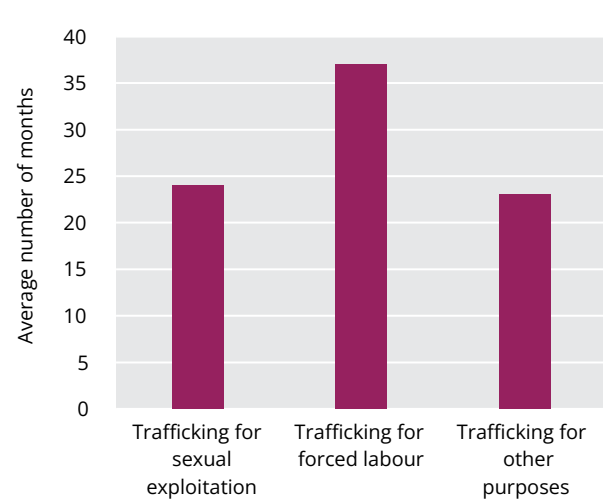
Fig. 51 Average number of victims per trafficker as documented in case narratives, by form of exploitation



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 920 cases of trafficking (658 cases for sexual exploitation, 147 cases for forced labour and 115 cases for other purposes) where the information was available concluded with convictions between 2012 and 2023.

Fig. 52 Average time elapsed from identification of the case to conviction (in months per case), by forms of exploitation*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on 267 cases of trafficking (179 cases for sexual exploitation, 38 cases for forced labour and 50 cases for other purposes) where the information was available concluded with convictions between 2012 and 2023.

criminality, illegal adoption or forced marriage, there is often just one victim per trafficker. In some forms of forced labour, such as in construction²⁹ or the fishing industry,³⁰ traffickers appear to traffic more victims per case compared to other forms such as domestic servitude.³¹

The fact that, as a pattern, trafficking for forced labour records more victims per trafficker can be attributed to the higher level of professionalization of the traffickers involved in forced labour compared to sexual exploitation.

Traffickers engaging in forced labour may create an intricate system of exploitation.³² A court case in Belgium describes a situation where traffickers employed workers as sub-contractors or “self-employed” individuals to distance traffickers from victims.³³ In other cases, criminal organizations may disguise their activity by using the names of non-affiliated existing companies to execute employment contracts, making it more difficult to trace the actual perpetrators.³⁴

The construction industry in particular seems to offer criminal organizations the infrastructure to operate with a legitimate front. Organized crime groups use this setup to exploit workers while staying within the boundaries of seemingly legal

operations.³⁵ Crime groups often operate as umbrella companies, adding complexity and increasing the risk of workers applying to labour exploitation schemes.³⁶

Sophisticated criminal enterprises have been shown to engage in trafficking for forced labour.

Companies operating under a legal facade were identified as perpetrating trafficking, not only in the construction sector,³⁷ but also in the fishing industry,³⁸ in the agriculture sector³⁹ and as placement agencies.⁴⁰ Other cases report of structured criminal organizations involved in trafficking for forced labour in construction,⁴¹ in the cleaning sector⁴² and in the trafficking of large numbers of women for domestic work.⁴³

The complex nature of the criminal operations behind trafficking in forced labour may also explain the low levels of convictions and the greater difficulties in convicting traffickers who operate in forced labour compared to those operating in sexual exploitation.

The time it takes to formulate a conviction once identification of the victims has taken place can be considered a proxy for the challenge of convicting traffickers for forced labour. An analysis of a set of

case narratives suggests that it may take an average of more than three years to convict (in the first instance) a trafficker operating in forced labour. It takes on average two years to convict a trafficker for sexual exploitation.

The resurgence of sexual exploitation and emerging sophisticated forms of forced criminality

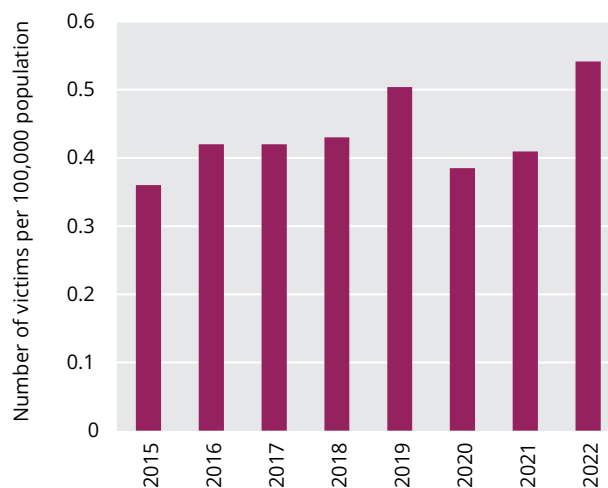
In 2022, the number of victims detected in sexual exploitation increased 41 per cent compared to 2020, returning above the levels recorded in 2019 after a relevant decrease during the pandemic. Female victims are typically more targeted for this form of trafficking, with more than 90 per cent of the total victims detected trafficked for sexual exploitation being women (64 per cent) or girls (28 per cent).

This form of trafficking includes a variety of different typologies of exploitation, from the forced prostitution of adults and the sexual exploitation of children, to sexual slavery. Court cases give examples of boys and girls exploited for the production of child sexual abuse material, webcam shows and cybersex calls.⁴⁴ A number of court cases in different parts of the world reported women and girls as being sexually exploited in the context of the tourism industry,⁴⁵ in hotels,⁴⁶ yoga studios⁴⁷ or tourist resorts.⁴⁸ Court cases reported by countries in Central America and the Caribbean reported traffickers using spas⁴⁹ and restaurants.⁵⁰ Similarly, in East Asia and the Pacific, massage parlours⁵¹ and night-clubs⁵² have been reported as venues for sexual exploitation.

Trafficking for purposes other than sexual and forced labour are also characterized by a wide variety of profiles and forms of exploitation. Of victims detected for other purposes of exploitation in 2022, 37 per cent were boys and 30 per cent were men. Women accounted for 17 per cent of the total and girls 16 per cent.

The ways in which victims are exploited for other purposes varies greatly among regions. About 22 per cent of the total victims identified in Western and Southern Europe are trafficked for the purpose of forced criminality, including for drug trafficking (see *the Drug cartels trafficking children for forced criminality in Western Europe*, page 45). Such cases are also reported by authorities in the Americas.⁵³

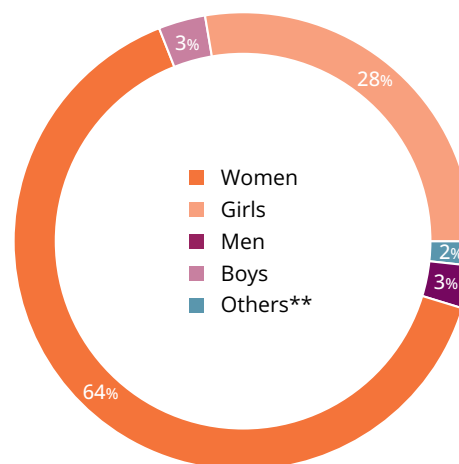
Fig. 53 Global trend in detection rates of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation (per 100,000 population) 2015-2022*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 129 countries comprising 61 per cent of the world population reporting on this indicator over the entire period.

Fig. 54 Share of detected victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



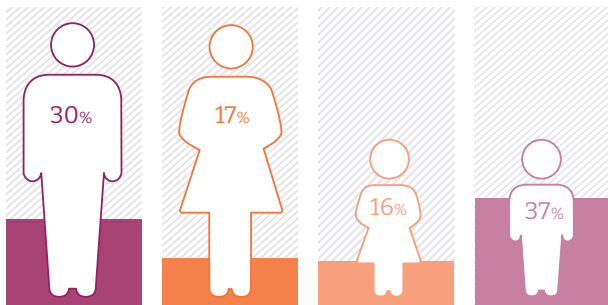
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on a total of 20,167 victims detected in 91 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent) whose form of exploitation and profile of the victims was recorded.

** In 2022, 14 countries reported victims under "other" profiles and eight of these countries provided additional identification data. See the individual country profiles of [Argentina](#), [Canada](#), [Denmark](#), [Greece](#), [Honduras](#), [Italy](#), [the United States of America](#) and [Venezuela \(Bolivarian Republic of\)](#).

Some 8 per cent of the victims trafficked in North America are exploited in mixed forms of sexual and forced labour combined. In 2022, victims trafficked for forced begging were detected in North Africa and the Middle East (about 180 victims), in Western

Fig. 55 Share of detected victims of trafficking for other purposes, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

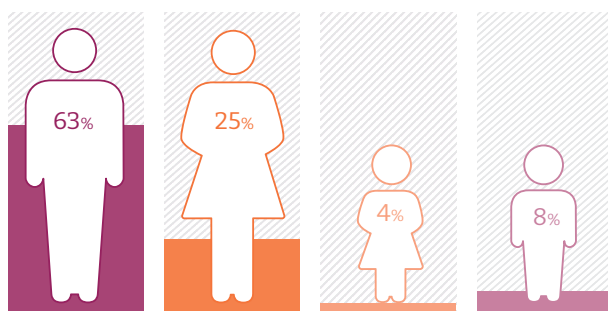
* Based on a total of 11,139 victims detected in 91 countries and territories in 2022 (or most recent) whose form of exploitation and profile of the victims was recorded.

and Southern Europe (about 100 victims), in Central and South-Eastern Europe (about 100 victims), in South America (about 70 victims), in Sub-Saharan Africa (about 60 victims) and documented in other regions. Victims of trafficking for forced marriages were detected in South Asia (about 200 victims), in Western and Southern Europe (about 100 victims) and documented in other regions.

Approximately 175 victims of trafficking for the purpose of organ removal were detected globally by national authorities of some 25 countries from different regions between 2017 and 2023.

The vast majority of the victims detected were adults, mostly men (63 per cent). One in four victims detected is a woman. Most victims of trafficking for organ removal were reported by countries in North Africa and the Middle East (101), followed by Europe and Central Asia (91) as well as East Asia (53) and

Fig. 56 Share of victims of trafficking for organ removal, by sex and age group (2017-2023)



Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

* Based on 175 victims of trafficking for removal of organs detected in 24 countries.

South Asia (40). During the same period, about 152 convictions for trafficking for organ removal were recorded in 10 countries, mainly from North Africa and the Middle East.

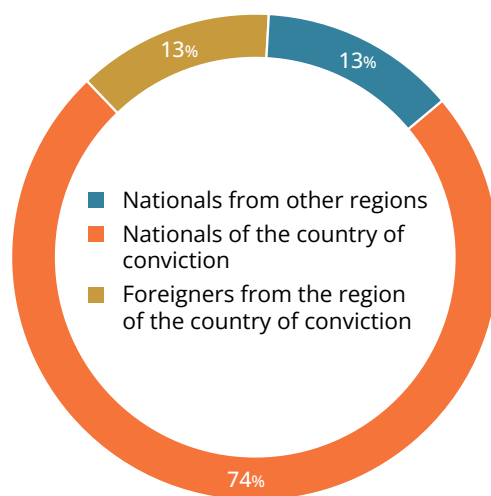
The analysis of the few cases collected by UNODC reveals victims trafficked are in desperate economic and humanitarian need, which enables traffickers to recruit victims by offering organ trades. In all cases reported⁵⁴ the criminal organizations were quite structured and complex. In a number of cases, the trafficking developed across different continents, with victims, traffickers and final recipients of the organ coming from different parts of the world.⁵⁵

Traffickers: organized crime has greater impact than non-organized criminals

In 2022, men accounted for about 70 per cent of those investigated, prosecuted and convicted of trafficking in persons globally. Women accounted for more than a quarter. Children were rarely reported as offenders. Few children were investigated and prosecuted, and fewer were convicted.

Data provided by national authorities indicates that, across the world, traffickers, even those operating in organized criminal groups, are nationals of the country of convictions and less frequently foreigners.

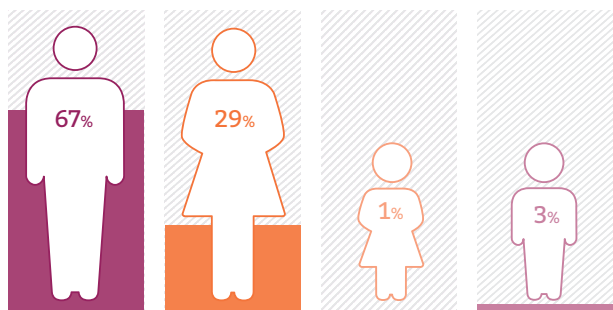
Fig. 57 Share and number of persons convicted for trafficking in persons, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 3,374 persons convicted whose citizenship was reported in 59 countries and territories.

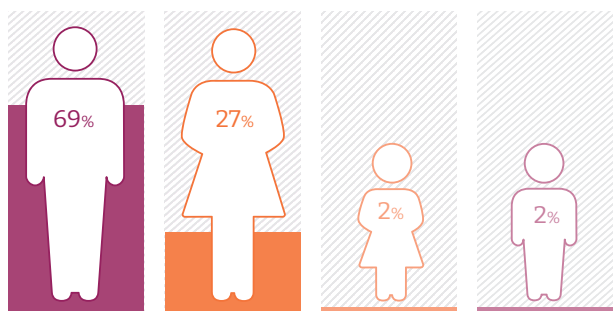
Fig. 58 Share of persons investigated for trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 13,027 persons investigated in 91 countries.

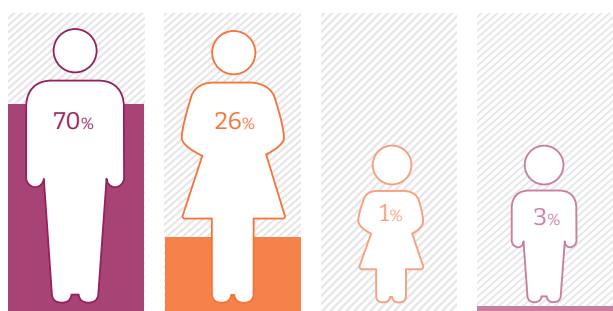
Fig. 59 Share of persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 8,376 persons prosecuted in 98 countries.

Fig. 60 Share of persons convicted for trafficking in persons, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 3,633 persons convicted in 111 countries.

Based on the court case summaries collected, the majority of the traffickers appear to operate as groups and networks loosely connected in a business-type criminal relationship. An analysis of around 921 court cases reveals that on average, a

Definitions

Trafficking in persons is perpetrated by actors with different levels of organizational structures and can be divided into two broad categories: 'organized criminal group'^a and 'non-organized traffickers'.

The international legal definition of 'organized crime group' is of a group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert to commit trafficking in persons. The analysis of the phenomenon, however, requires further categorization.

In the Global Report, for the purpose of in-depth analysis, organized criminal groups engaging in the crime of trafficking in persons are defined as:

1 'Governance-type organized crime groups', which apply security governance in a community or territory by means of fear and violence, and may be involved in multiple illicit markets;^b

2 'Business-type organized crime groups', involving three or more traffickers systematically working together to traffic persons as a core component of their criminal activities and not meeting criteria (1).

Non-organized traffickers are defined as:

3 'Association of traffickers', including two traffickers acting together or more than two but not acting in concert.

4 'Individual traffickers' who typically operate on their own.

The categories so defined are applied in a content analysis conducted on the 1,037 court cases that concluded with a conviction between 2012 and 2023 collected by UNODC.^c

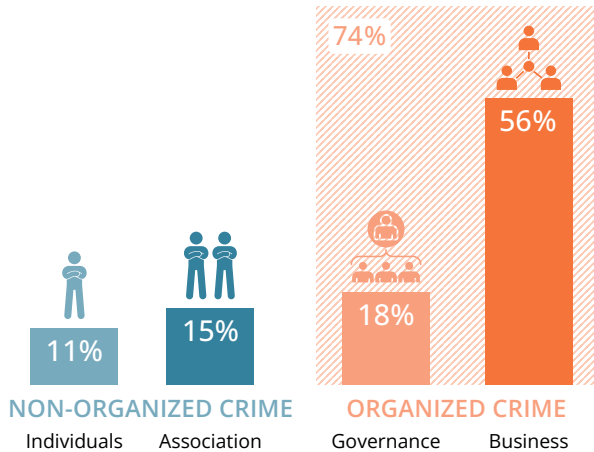
a Article 2(a) of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) contains a definition of 'organized criminal group' as a (I) group of three or more persons that was not randomly formed, (II) existing for a period of time and (III) acting in concert with the aim of committing at least one crime punishable by at least four years' incarceration (IV) in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. It should be noted, however, that in accordance with the UNTOC, countries may apply more stringent definitions by reducing the minimum number of persons to be engaged in the criminal activity in order to form an organized crime group. Some countries consider a group formed by two or more persons as an organized crime group. For the purpose of this analysis, organized criminal group is as defined by Article 2 (a) of the UNTOC. The UNTOC covers only crimes that are 'transnational', a term cast broadly. The term covers not only offences committed in more than one State, but also those that take place in one State but are planned or controlled in another. Also included are crimes committed by groups that operate in more than one State, and crimes committed in one State that has substantial effects in another State.

b When the narrative of the court cases made reference to criminal groups making use of violence, intimidation and fear to ensure social control over a community or a territory, these were categorized as governance-type organized criminal groups. For more on this see Federico Varese, ed., "What is Organized Crime?" in *Organized Crime: Critical Concepts in Criminology*, 1st ed. (London, Routledge, 2010).

c UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*, (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.3); UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, (United Nations publication, Sales no.: E.23.IV.1).

court case involves five traffickers belonging to what can be defined as a business-type organized crime group. Such traffickers may have specialized occupations within this structure, such as would be the case in legitimate businesses.⁵⁶

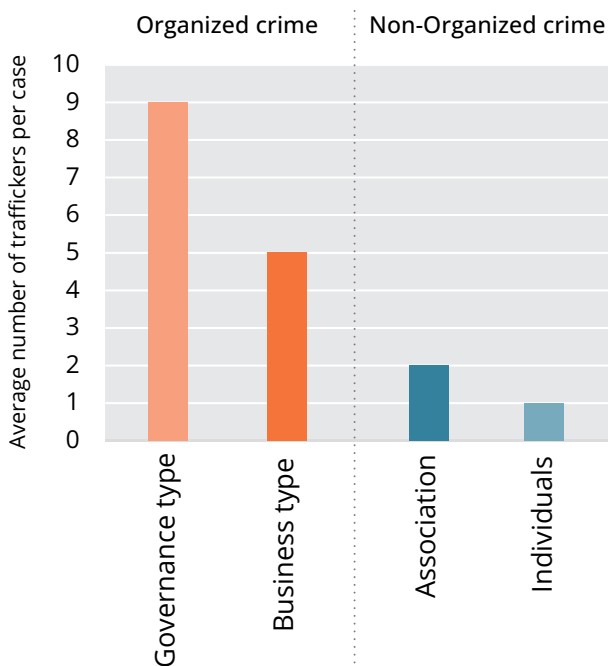
Fig. 61 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries, by type of structure *



Source: UNODC elaboration of court case summaries.

* Based on information on 3,121 traffickers convicted in 942 court case summaries.

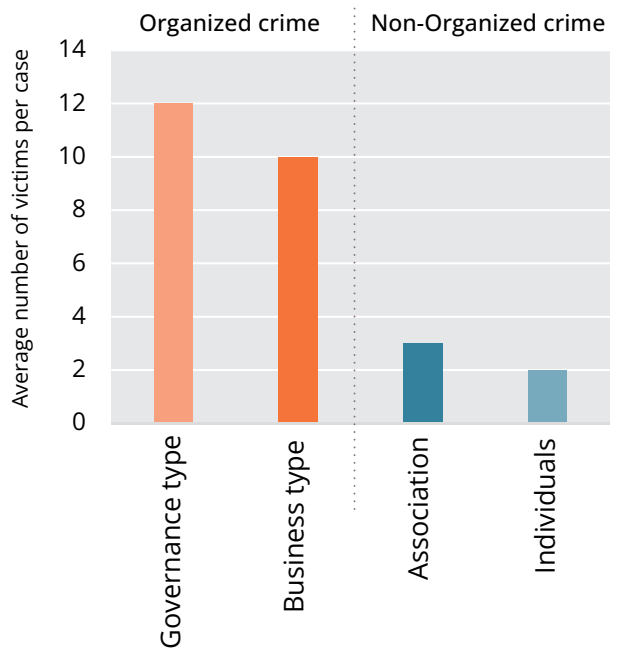
Fig. 62 Average number of traffickers reported in case narratives, by type of traffickers' structure



Source: UNODC elaboration of court case summaries.

* Based on information on 3,142 traffickers convicted in 942 court case summaries.

Fig. 63 Average number of victims reported in case narratives, by type of traffickers' structure.



Source: UNODC elaboration of court case summaries.

*Based on information on 5,451 traffickers convicted in 961 court case summaries.

Compared to non-organized traffickers, business-type organized crime groups tend to traffic more victims (10 vs 2 to 3 for non-organized traffickers). Some court cases from Central America and the Caribbean, for example, illustrate that such groups can traffic up to 50 victims⁵⁷ over a period of time and for different forms of exploitation.⁵⁸ In a case reported in Central and South-East Europe these groups were capable of trafficking more than 100 victims and exploiting them for long periods of time.⁵⁹

Far fewer traffickers (18 per cent) among those represented in the cases collected by UNODC appear to have operated in governance-type organized crime groups, which seek to establish authority over a territory and exert control over the actors and exchanges within it. When engaging in trafficking in persons, these types of groups which typically coordinate activities through smaller cells, such as families, operating independently, tend to be more highly structured and consist of a larger number of traffickers than business-type organized crime groups (9 compared to 5 for business-type).

Some court cases give examples of governance-type groups that engage in multiple types of crime (see

box on *Trafficking in persons for forced criminality into online scams*, page 95) including money laundering,⁶⁰ fraud⁶¹ and smuggling of migrants.⁶² Court cases reported to UNODC from countries in Western and Southern Europe report governance-type organized crime groups trafficking victims from distant regions for the purpose of sexual exploitation, preying on the victims' desire to migrate and exploiting them based on the debt incurred from travel and documents.⁶³ Some of these traffickers are connected through family bonds.⁶⁴

Non-organized criminals account for about 26 per cent of traffickers convicted in the analysed court cases, typically criminals working in pairs or alone. The modus operandi of traffickers working as individual and in pairs are more varied across the court cases related to different regions, but some patterns exist. The non-organized traffickers tend to exploit fewer victims than organized crime groups, and they particularly manipulate vulnerabilities and use deception in their criminal methods. In all regions of the Americas, for example, court case summaries report that individuals and opportunistic traffickers abuse family or intimate partner relationships,⁶⁵ substance addiction⁶⁶ and economic difficulties⁶⁷ to control victims.

In cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation in particular, individuals and opportunistic traffickers may also deceive victims with promises of a well-paying job, only to force them into performing sexual acts.⁶⁸

Trafficking flows: increasing geographical complexity

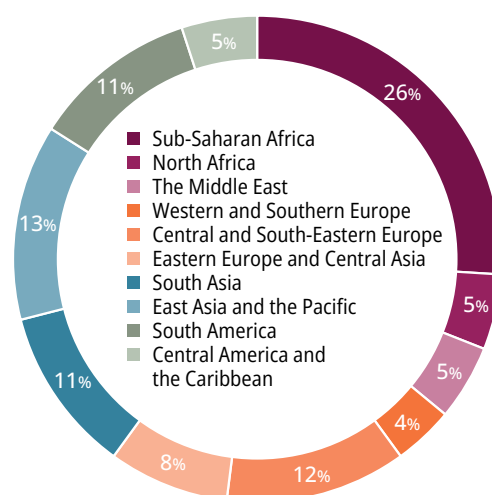
UNODC recorded 436 different cross-border trafficking flows detected in 2022.⁶⁹ Globally, the data collection shows victims of at least 162 different nationalities were trafficked to 128 different countries of destination.

Of the total cross-border flows detected, 112 involved victims from Sub-Saharan African countries (26 per cent) and 5 per cent involved victims from North Africa. With destinations both within and beyond the continent, representing about one-third of global cross-border trafficking flows, more trafficking originates in Africa than in any other region.

Cross-border trafficking originating from other regions was recorded in smaller, but still substantially sized flows of various distances, including 24

per cent from Europe, including Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 13 per cent from East Asia and 11 per cent from South Asia, respectively, 11 per cent from South America, 5 per cent from Central America and the Caribbean and 5 per cent from the Middle East.

Fig. 64 Share of cross-border trafficking flows emerging from UNODC data collection, by origin of victims, 2022 (or more recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on 28,507 victims detected in 128 countries globally.

As well as Africa being the continent where the highest share of cross-border trafficking originates, African victims are found in the highest number of destinations within and outside the region. Sub-Saharan African victims were detected in 60 countries across the world, primarily within the region itself, in Europe and in North Africa and the Middle East. Over the last few years, the identification of victims from Sub-Saharan Africa in Western and Southern Europe has decreased while it has increased in the Middle East.

East Asian victims also reach a high number of destinations outside their country of origin, including Europe, the Middle East, the Americas and Sub-Saharan Africa.

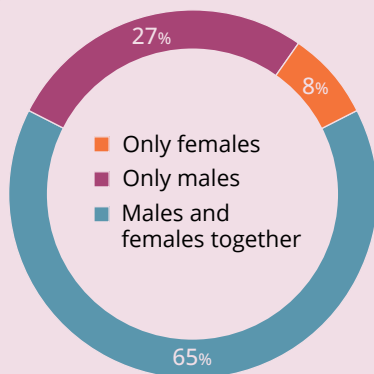
Trafficking flows from South Asia also appear to have a global dimension, as South Asian victims were detected in 36 countries in a wide variety of different regions, including Europe, where they have been increasingly detected over the past few years, the Middle East, where numbers have decreased, as well as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and East Asia and the Pacific.

Sex composition of traffickers and trafficking groups

Given the much larger proportion of men investigated, prosecuted and convicted (over 70 per cent in each category), many court cases and studies outline how male traffickers operate and how they are organized.

The analysis of court case narratives provided to UNODC by national authorities suggests that female involvement in trafficking varies considerably depending on the structure of the criminal organization. In trafficking carried out by organized crime groups, 68 per cent of cases involved both men and women traffickers working together. A total of 32 per cent of organized crime cases involved single-sex groups, mostly male-only traffickers and a few number of groups consisting of only female traffickers.

Share of court cases involving organized crime groups, by sex composition of the members of the group*

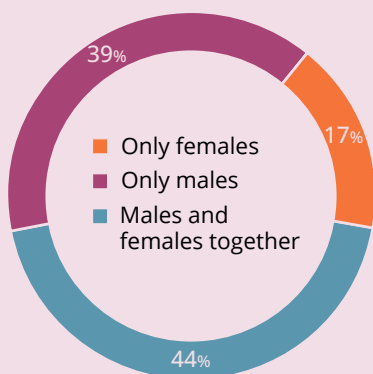


Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

* Based on the narratives of 118 court case summaries reporting on 893 traffickers.

Court cases suggest that non-organized traffickers are more likely to operate in male- or female-only setups compared to the organized crime type of traffickers. Nonetheless, a total of 44 per cent of cases featured men and women working together in trafficking schemes, typically intimate partners acting together.

Share of court cases involving non-organized traffickers, by sex of the traffickers*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

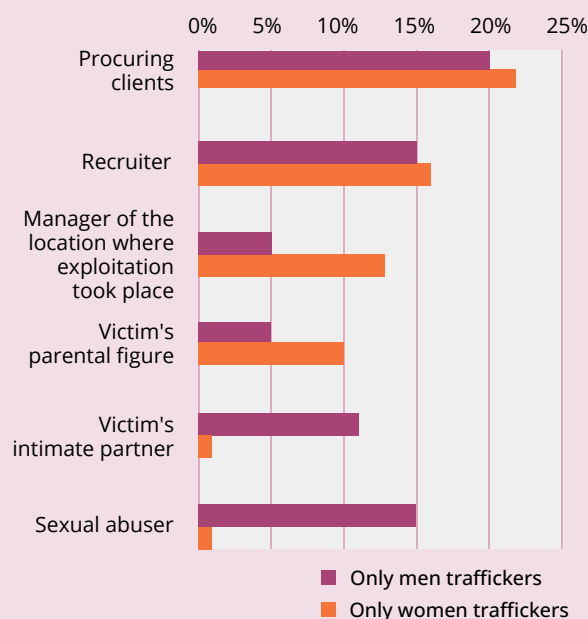
* Based on the narratives of 487 court case summaries reporting on 727 traffickers.

The roles of women as traffickers can be different and have different reasons to those of men. Some studies have highlighted that women perpetrators, particularly those involved in trafficking for sexual exploitation, could have previously been victims themselves.^a Other studies have shown that women can be used and controlled by a male trafficker, often as a result of an intimate partner relationship, have little agency of their own,^b and have very limited roles in the enterprise.^c

The analysis of court cases reveals that women traffickers may also occupy high-level positions within trafficking groups. Based on the study of 749 court cases submitted to UNODC by national authorities, very few trafficking for sexual exploitation operations involved men only, although it was mostly men involved in the actual sexual abuse of the victim. Women, on the other hand, were much more likely to be the owner or manager of the location where the exploitation took place.

When the trafficker was the intimate partner of the victim, it was more likely that the trafficker was man. Women were more likely to be the trafficker when the trafficking was perpetrated by a parent.

Share of court cases on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, by roles and relationships*



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

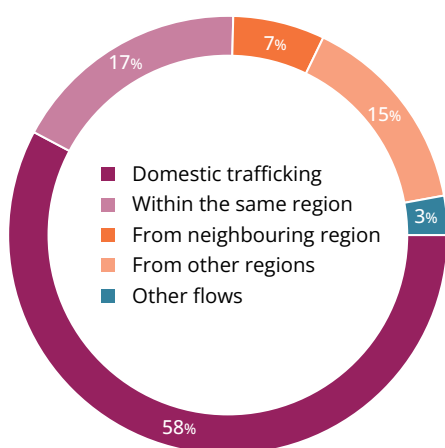
* Based on the narratives of a total 449 court case summaries, 323 cases documenting male traffickers only, 126 cases documenting female traffickers only. The categories indicated are not mutually exclusive and one trafficker may operate different roles.

a Miriam Wijkman and Edward Kleemans, "Female offenders of human trafficking and sexual exploitation," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 72 (May 2019).
 b Jennifer Schwartz and Darrell Steffensmeier, "Can the gender gap in offending be explained?" in Francis T. Cullen and others (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender Into Criminology* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014).
 c Rose Broad, "A Vile and Violent Thing: Female Traffickers and the Criminal Justice Response," *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 55, No. 6 (November 2015).

Conversely, victims from Europe were detected in several countries but mostly within Europe. Similarly, victims from Latin America were mainly detected within the Americas.

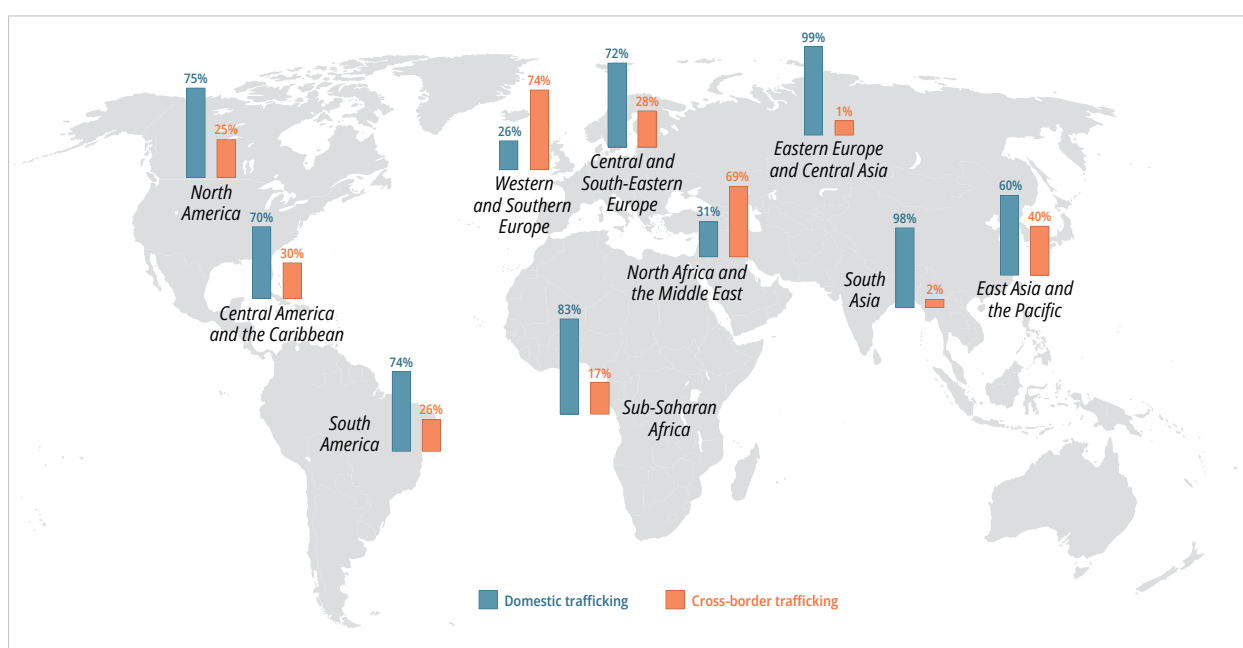
Most victims detected in 2022 overall, however, were recruited and exploited within national borders. Domestic trafficking is prevalent in most regions of the world, with the exception of Western and Southern Europe, the Middle East and the high-income countries of Asia and the Pacific. The analysis of the nationality of victims detected shows that more than 70 per cent of the victims are domestically trafficked in Central and South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in South Asia, in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the Americas.

Fig. 65 Share of detected victims, by trafficking flow distance, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

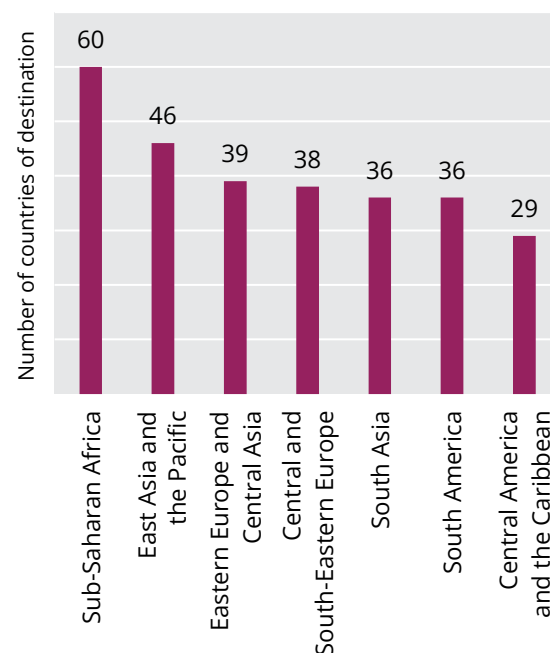
Map. 5 Share of detected victims, by trafficking flow distance and region of detection, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

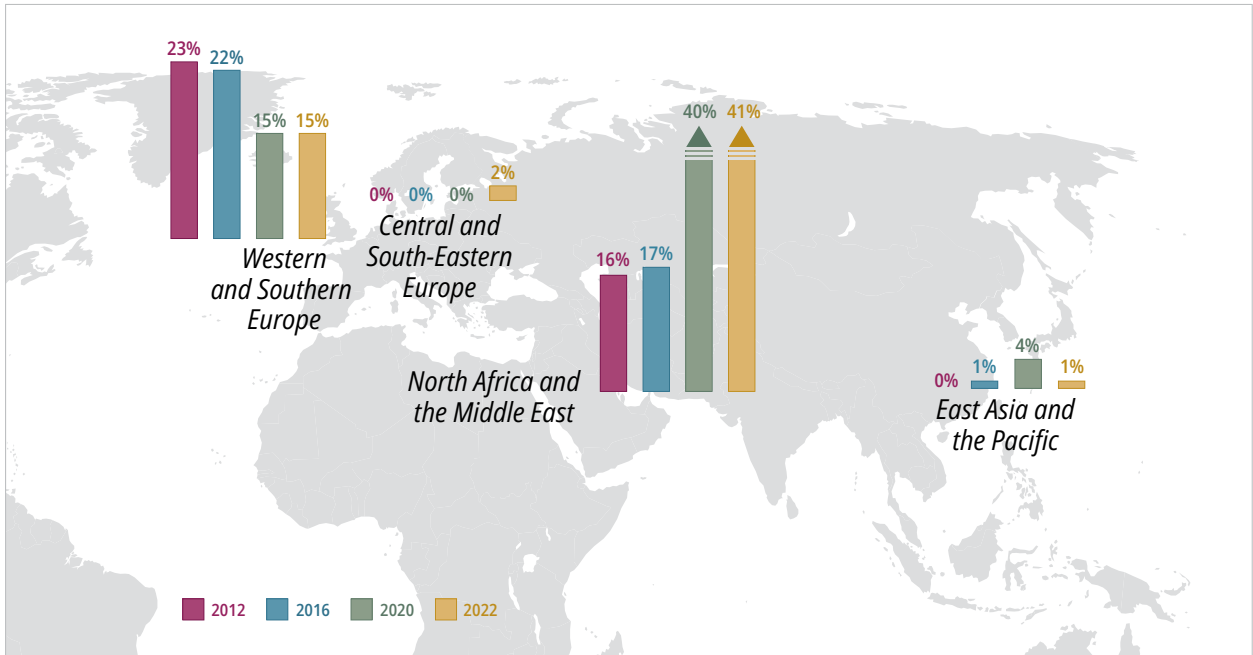
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Fig. 66 Countries of destination, by region of origin of victims, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

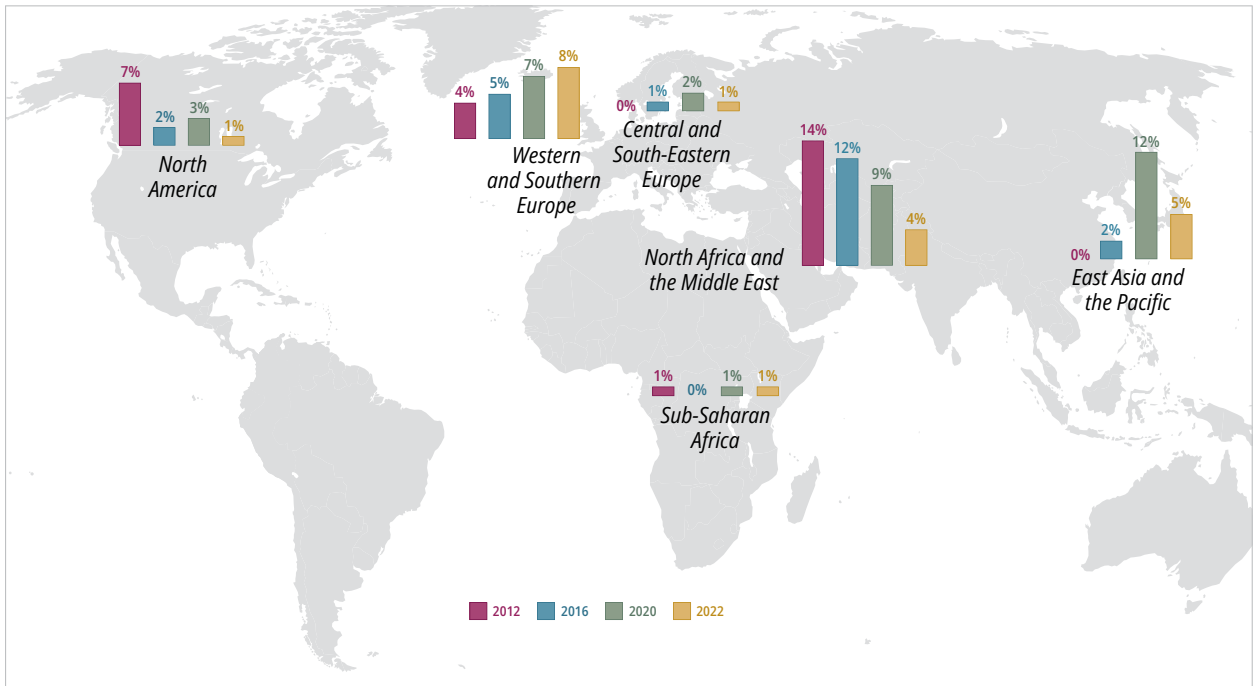
Map. 6 Share of Sub-Saharan African victims among total victims detected in destination regions, 2022 (or most recent)



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.

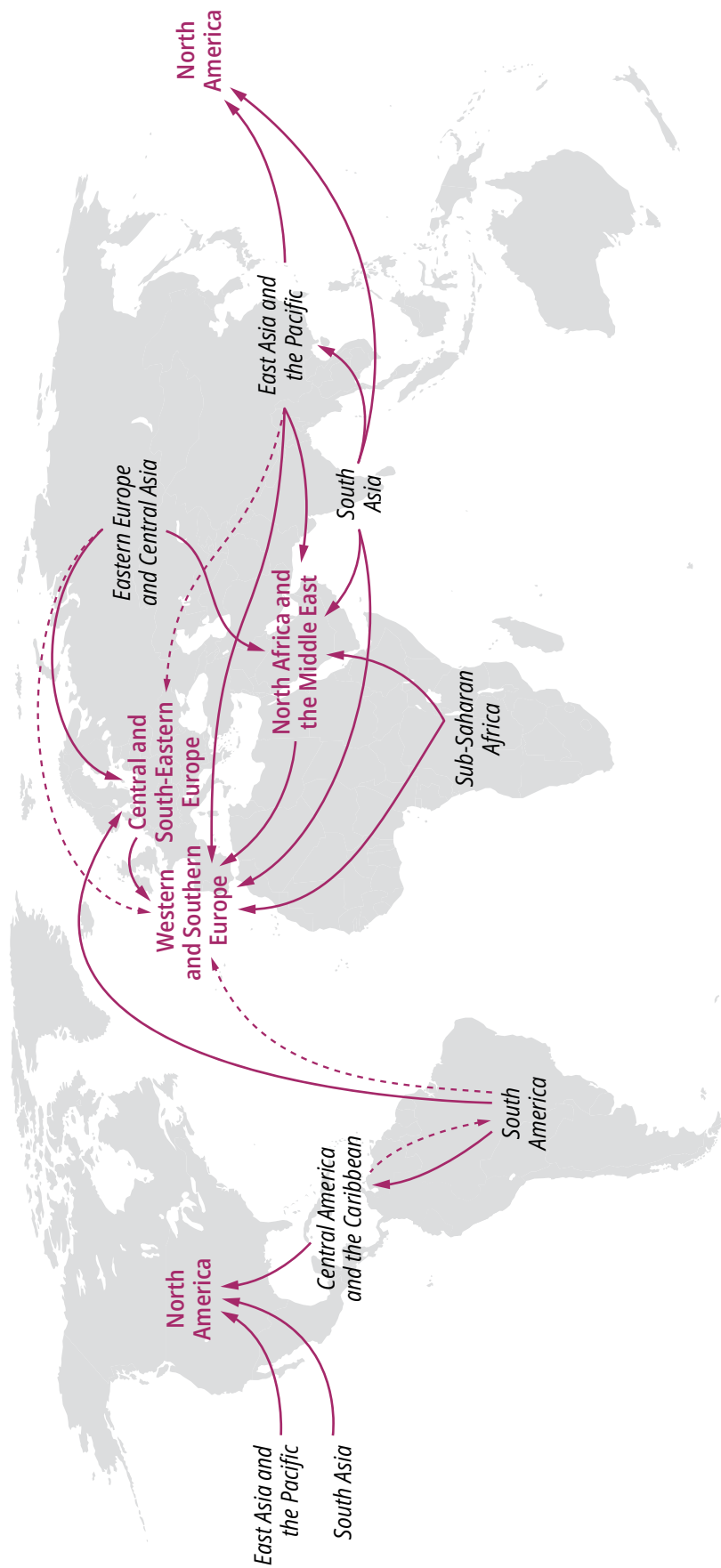
Map. 7 Share of South Asian victims among total victims detected in destination regions, 2022 (or most recent)



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.

Map. 8 Main detected transregional flows, 2022 (or most recent)



- Transregional flows: detected victims in destination countries
- - - Transregional flows: less than 5% of detected victims in destination countries

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.

Endnotes

- 1 Trafficking for forced criminality (or for exploitation in criminal activities) can be understood as trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation of victims through forcing or otherwise compelling them to commit criminal acts for economic or other gains of traffickers or exploiters.
- 2 In most jurisdictions, unaccompanied children are defined as minors under the age of 18 who cross an international border without a parent or guardian responsible for them or who are left unaccompanied once inside the destination country. These children cross borders irregularly without immigration status. In the EU, see for example Directive 2011/95/EU, Article 2(l); In the United States, see for example 6 U.S. Code §279 (g)(2) (2020). The Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on UASC (204) (adopted by inter alia UNHCR and UNICEF) define "Unaccompanied children (also called unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so."
- 3 Eurostat, "Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors by citizenship, age and sex – annual data (2020-2023)", available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyunaa/default/table?lang=en&category=mi.mci.mci_asyum (accessed on 24 July 2024).
- 4 UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM, "Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe 2022", fact sheet, 9 October 2023.
- 5 EUROPOL, Criminal Networks involved in the Trafficking and Exploitation of underage victims in the European Union, Document Ref. No. 1001370.
- 6 Belgian Federal Police, "2022 activity report", available at https://www.police.be/annualreport-federalpolice/sites/jaarverslag/files/files/2024-02/00_AR2021_Federal_Police.pdf.
- 7 Janna Ataiants and others, "Unaccompanied Children at the United States Border, a Human Rights Crisis that can be Addressed with Policy Change," *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, vol. 20, No.4 (August 2018).
- 8 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), "Southwest Land Border Encounters", available at <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters> (accessed on 24 July 2024). Data includes Title 8 Apprehensions and Inadmissible cases and beginning in fiscal year 2020, Title 42 expulsions. Data includes such cases along the southwest land border only.
- 9 In this context, refers to the 27 countries of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Montenegro.
- 10 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 554, El Salvador.
- 11 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 763, Nicaragua.
- 12 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 735, Guatemala; 824, Guatemala; Case 825, Guatemala.
- 13 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 120, North Macedonia; Case 147, South Africa; Case 155, Viet Nam; Case 157, Viet Nam; Case 207, China; Case 265; El Salvador; Case 338 United Kingdom; Case 447; Myanmar; Case 448, Myanmar; Case 450, Myanmar; Case 585, Latvia; Case 596 Myanmar; Case 597, Myanmar; Case 598, Myanmar; Case 613, Slovakia; Case 665, Cyprus; Case 681, Belgium; Case MW1x4, Malawi; Case 753, Myanmar; Case 756, Myanmar; Case 756, Myanmar; Case 757, Myanmar; Case 845, Myanmar; Case 846, Myanmar; Case 848, Myanmar; Case 849, Myanmar; Case 885, South Africa; Case 910; Malawi; Case 915, Uganda.
- 14 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 67, Sweden; Case 175, Serbia; Case 205, Sweden; Case Republic of Moldova (the); Case 300, Republic of Moldova (the); Case 440, Mexico; Case 842, Mexico; Case 61, Norway; Case 595, Montenegro; Case 623, Spain; Case 661, Greece; Case ITA004, Italy; Case 734, Guatemala; Case 866, Thailand; Case 890, South Africa.
- 15 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 311, Norway; Case 471, Sweden.
- 16 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 60, Norway.
- 17 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 414, Denmark; Case 867, Thailand.
- 18 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 282, Israel; Case 40, Israel; Case 648, Qatar; Case 781, Qatar; Case 904 Oman.
- 19 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 70, USA; Case 73, Argentina; Case 98, Canada; Case 344, Paraguay; Case 363, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Case 461, United States of America (the); Case 570, Argentina; Case 631, United States of America (the); Case 637, United States of America (the); Case 638, United States of America (the); Case 774, Paraguay; Case 881, United States of America (the).
- 20 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 9, Australia; Case 21, Brunei Darussalam; Case 22, Brunei Darussalam; Case 465, Malaysia; Case 535, Australia; Case 604, New Zealand; Case 653, Malaysia; Case PHL055; Case 793, Australia; Case 854, New Zealand.
- 21 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 189, Austria; Case 236, Belgium; Case 323, Spain; Case 590, Luxembourg.
- 22 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 606, Nicaragua; Case 733, Guatemala; Case 823, Guatemala, Case 765, Nigeria; Case 909, Kenya.
- 23 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 881, United States of America.
- 24 See Chapter 2 of this report: Trafficking in persons in and from Africa; a global responsibility, page 66.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 See also UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 93, Belgium; Case 236, Belgium; Case 189, Austria; Case 323 Spain, Case 590, Luxembourg; Case 70, United States of America (the); Case 98, Canada; Case 461, United States of America (the); Case 631, United States of America (the); Case 637, United States of America (the); Case 638, USA; Case 881, United States of America (the); Case 40, Israel; Case 282, Israel, Case 648, Qatar; Case 781, Qatar; Case 904, Oman.
- 27 UNODC, Sherloc Case Law Database, Case 285, Israel; Case 307, Netherlands (Kingdom of the); Case 322, Spain; Case 333, United States of America (the); Case 459, United States of America (the); Case 603, Netherlands (the Kingdom of); Case ITA013; Italy; Case ITAx023, Italy; Case 506, Finland; Case 161, Portugal.
- 28 GLOTIP, Court Case Summaries, Case 192, Dominican Republic (the); Case 606, Nicaragua; Case 823, Guatemala; Case 824, Guatemala; Case 825, Guatemala.
- 29 See also UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 24, Canada; Case 101, Czechia; Case 331, Ukraine; Case UZB001, Uzbekistan; Case IRBx037, Azerbaijan.
- 30 See also UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 44, Thailand; Case 116, Indonesia; Case 599, Myanmar; Case 698, Indonesia; Case THA011, Thailand; Case 786, Thailand.
- 31 See also UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 9,

- Australia; Case 21, Brunei Darussalam; Case 22; Brunei Darussalam; Case 40, Israel; Case 70; United States of America (the); Case 73, Argentina; Case 98, Canada; Case 171, Serbia, Case 189, Austria, Case 236, Belgium, Case 282, Israel; Case 323, Spain; Case 344, Paraguay; Case 363, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Case 461, USA; Case 462, Malaysia; Case 465, Malaysia; Case 488, Colombia; Case 489, Colombia; Case 535, Australia; Case 536, Colombia; Case 570, Argentina; Case 590, Luxembourg; Case 604, New Zealand; Case 606, Nicaragua; Case 631, United States of America (the); Case 637, United States of America (the); Case 638, United States of America (the); Case 648, Qatar; Case 650, Malaysia; Case 653, Malaysia; Case 733, Guatemala; Case 765, Nigeria; Case 781, Qatar; Case 792, Argentina; Case 793, Australia; Case 794, Australia; Case 854, New Zealand; Case 881, United States of America (the); Case 904, Oman; Case 909, Kenya; Case 917, Uganda.
- 32 Buckley, M. and others, *Migrant Work & Employment in the Construction Sector*, (Geneva, ILO, 2016), page 9.
- 33 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 93, Belgium.
- 34 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 101, Czechia.
- 35 Jon Davies and Hanna Maria Malik, *The Organisation of Crime and Harm in the Construction Industry* (London, Routledge, 2024).
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case IRBx037, Azerbaijan, Case 101, Czechia.
- 38 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 116, Indonesia, Case 698, Indonesia.
- 39 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 285, Israel; Case 307, Netherlands (Kingdom of the).
- 40 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 117, Indonesia and Case INDx020, India.
- 41 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries; Case 24, Canada; See Cockbain, E., Brayley-Morris. H., "Human Trafficking and Labour Exploitation in the Casual Construction Industry: An Analysis of Three Major Investigations in the UK Involving Irish Traveller Offending Groups", *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 12, Issue 2, June 2018, pp. 129–149.
- 42 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries; Case 69, United States of America (the).
- 43 See UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries; Case 488, Colombia.
- 44 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 716, Colombia; Case 872, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Case 806, Cuba; Case 808, Cuba; Case 819, Dominican Republic (the); Case 832, Guatemala; Case 787, Thailand; Case 720, Egypt.
- 45 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 715, Colombia; Case 780, Peru.
- 46 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 701, Argentina.
- 47 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 701, Argentina.
- 48 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 715, Colombia
- 49 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 727, Guatemala.
- 50 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 818, Dominican Republic (the).
- 51 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 788, Thailand.
- 52 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 789, Thailand.
- 53 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 702, Argentina. UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 541, Costa Rica; Case 717, Costa Rica.
- 54 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 1, Armenia; Case 276, Costa Rica; Case 563, Egypt; EGY013; Case EGY014; Case 719, Egypt; Case 855, Iraq; Case, 856 Iraq.
- 55 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 1, Armenia; Case 276, Costa Rica.
- 56 Niles Breuer and Federico Varese, "The Structure of Trade-type and Governance-type Organized Crime Groups: A Network Study," *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 63, No. 4, (July 2023).
- 57 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 724, El Salvador.
- 58 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 726; Case 817, Dominican Republic (the) (sexual exploitation)
- 59 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 134, Poland.
- 60 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 237, Belgium; Case 514, France.
- 61 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 238, Belgium.
- 62 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 235, Belgium; Case 625, Spain.
- 63 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 270, France; Case 271, France; Case 416, France; Case 417, France; Case 556, France; Case 321, Spain; UNODC, Sherloc Case Law Database, Case ITAx037.
- 64 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 555, France; Case 61, Norway; Case 94, Belgium.
- 65 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 699, Argentina; Case 739, Guatemala; Case 762, Nicaragua; Case 800, Cuba; Case 801, Cuba; Case 802, Cuba; Case 711, Canada; Case 748, Mexico.
- 66 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 775, Paraguay; Case 880, United States; Case 796, Canada.
- 67 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 776, Peru.
- 68 UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 754, Myanmar. UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 759, Namibia; Case 760, Namibia; Case 761, Namibia; Case 148, South Africa; Case 889, South Africa. UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 688, United Arab Emirates (the); Case 903, Oman; Case 904, Oman; Case 905, Oman; Case 906, Oman; Case 907, Oman; Case 908, Qatar. UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 697, Pakistan; Case 783, Sri Lanka. UNODC, GLOTIP Court Case Summaries, Case 385, Russian Federation (the); Case 387, Russian Federation (the).
- 69 For the purpose of this analysis, "flow" has been defined as a combination of one origin country and one destination where at least five victims were detected and repatriated during the period considered





CHAPTER 2

Trafficking in persons
in and from Africa;
a global responsibility

CHAPTER 2
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
IN AND FROM AFRICA

Trafficking in persons in and from Africa; a global responsibility

*This special chapter of the Global Report presents what is known about trafficking to, from and within the continent of Africa, drawing upon the most comprehensive data collection on Africa and trafficking in persons to date, based on information from 40 of the 54 African UN Member States. The analysis looks at patterns, flows and prevalence of trafficking in persons in Africa, alongside the risk factors impacting each of the subregions of North Africa, West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa.**

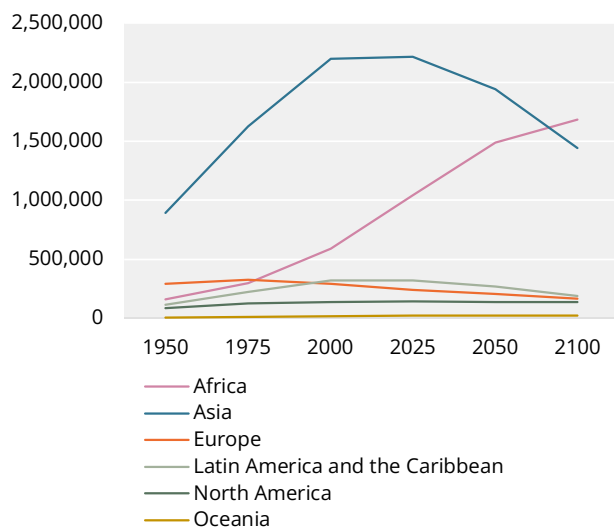
The analysis of the trafficking flows shows that over the past few years, victims trafficked from countries in Africa have been recorded in an increasing number of countries across the world and within the continent – making Africa the region from where the highest share of trafficking flows originate (see *Trafficking flows: increasing geographical complexity* in Chapter 1, page 57).

Africa is home to 1.4 billion people and growing,¹ with 990 million under the age of 30.² By 2050, the African continent is projected to hold a quarter of the world's population.³ Alongside its booming, youthful population, African countries also possess some of the world's largest mineral, precious metal and gem reserves.⁴ The continent contains 65 per cent of the world's arable land, 10 per cent of internal renewable freshwater sources and a significant share of marine and freshwater fisheries.⁵

As discussed in previous editions of the Report,⁶ poverty and social inequality are among the root causes of trafficking in persons, often resulting in victims exploited in their attempts to address their economic needs.⁷ Large segments of the population in poverty⁸ coupled with weak institutional responses⁹ expose more people to the risk of trafficking.

* The large coverage of the African continent for this year's edition of the Global Report is the result of initiatives and joint activities developed with the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the IOM and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Police Division (UNPOL) of the UN Department of Peace Operations - Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions. Enormous support to the data collection was provided by the UNODC Field Offices in Africa. In addition, an extensive review of literature, studies and reports from regional and international organizations was carried out, combined with interviews conducted by UNODC with UNPOL personnel operating in the African missions.

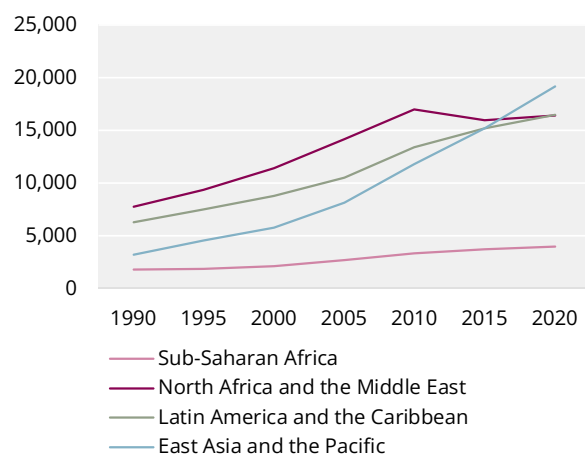
Fig. 67 Projection on population under 30, by region



Source: UN Population data 2021.

Note: the projections from 2022 onwards are based on the UN medium-fertility estimates.

Fig. 68 Gross Domestic Product per capita, PPP, selected regions, 1990–2023¹⁰



Source: World Bank.

Beyond the socio-economic conditions, some specific factors exposing countries in Africa to trafficking in persons are explored in this chapter:

- i. The existence of prolonged conflicts, the resulting large displaced populations¹¹ and use of children in relation to combat.¹² (see *Enduring and expanding conflicts*, page 74).
- ii. An abundance of natural resources, often in areas with weak oversight and governance. (see *Forced labour and the depletion of African natural resources*, page 77).
- iii. The impact of climate change on economic systems still predominantly based on agriculture.¹³ (see *Climate change and lost livelihoods*, page 80).

The following analysis will describe how these three factors are interconnected – conflicts may be linked to disputes over resources, and tensions may be enhanced by climate-induced scarcity or displacement.

Trafficking within and out of Africa; short and long-distance flows

Over the past decade, UNODC has been able to develop a picture of the trafficking patterns impacting Africa. While regular data over time is unavailable

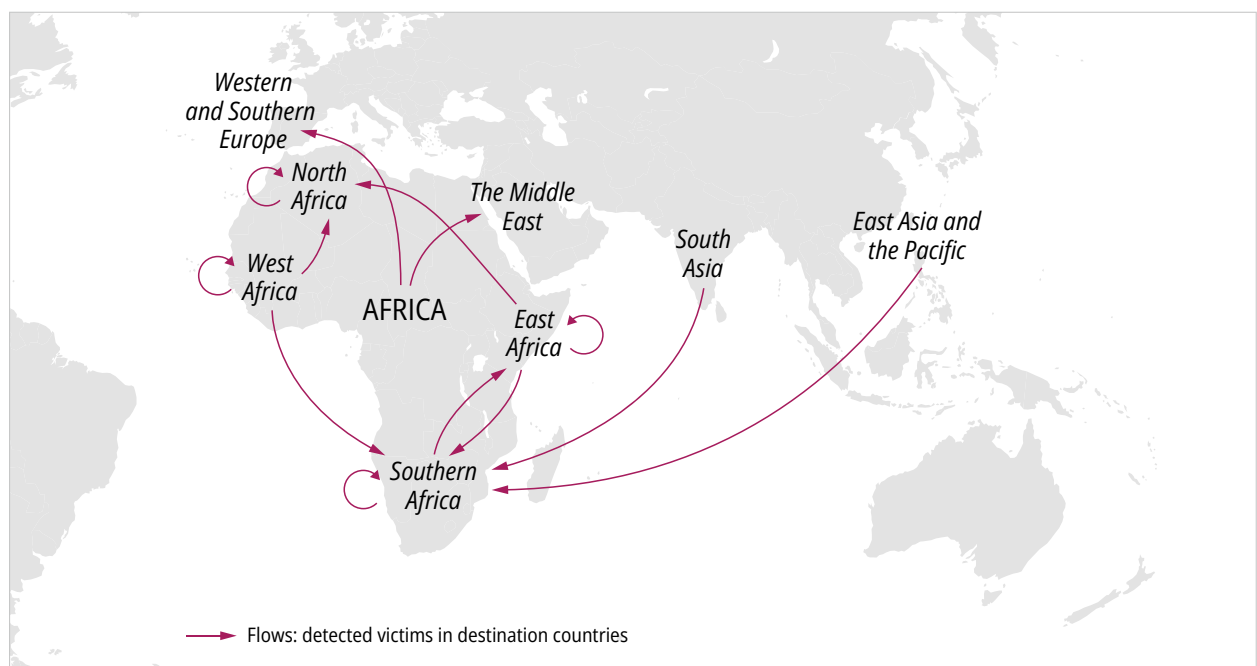
for many countries on the continent, the data on identified victims and court cases shared by national authorities in Africa and from other regions allows for an analysis of the profile of victims and traffickers, of the forms of exploitation, of flows and of the response of criminal justice systems.

Data collected globally draw a picture of trafficking mainly remaining within the African continent, at sub-regional and national levels. Most victims detected in Africa are children exploited for forced labour.

Trafficking of African youth: traffickers and poverty

Child trafficking appears as one of the main challenges for the countries of Africa. Trafficked children are more frequently detected than adults in most parts of the continent. In West Africa and East Africa, both boys and girls are more typically trafficked for forced labour, including domestic work. Girls are also commonly reported as trafficked for sexual exploitation across the whole continent. The trafficking of children for begging is also reported across the whole continent. In North and West Africa, child trafficking for the purpose of begging has been

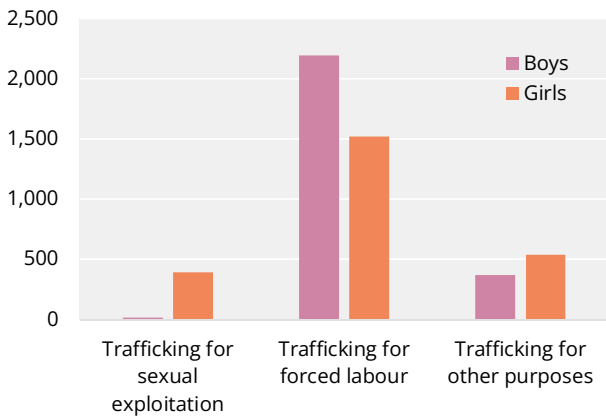
Map. 9 Main trafficking flows within, out and into Africa, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration on 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. 69 Number of trafficked children detected in Africa, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)



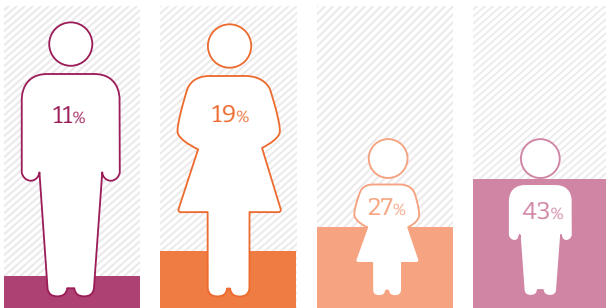
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

linked to the practice of sending boys to residential religious school. Cases of students (*talibe* or *al-majiris*) being exploited for forced begging by their teachers (called *marabouts* or *mallams*) have been reported by international organizations.¹⁴

Child trafficking, particularly for forced labour, must be understood within a socio-economic context where traffickers prey upon the vulnerability of families who rely on sending their children to work. Africa experiences high levels of child labour as compared to other regions with some regional diversity: West Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa record higher levels of child labour compared to North Africa or Southern Africa, for instance.

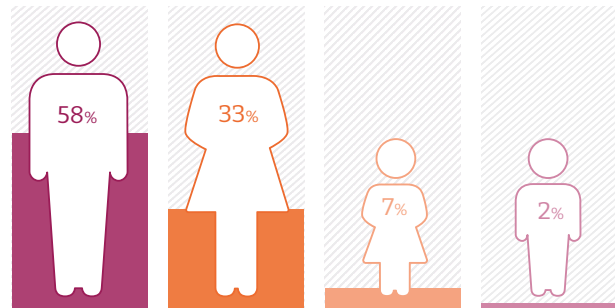
Fig. 70 Regional variations in victim profile and forms of exploitation across the subregions of Africa, 2022 (or most recent)*

Trafficking for forced labour in West Africa



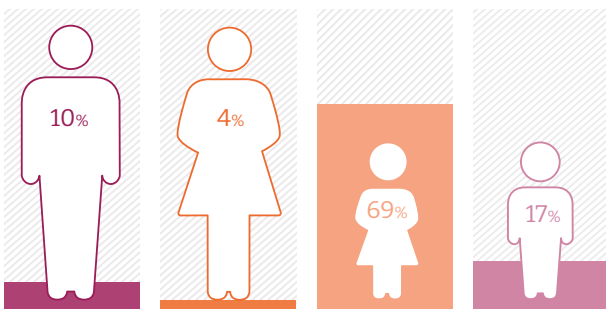
* Based on 4,712 victims of trafficking for forced labour detected by countries in West Africa.

Trafficking for forced labour in Southern Africa



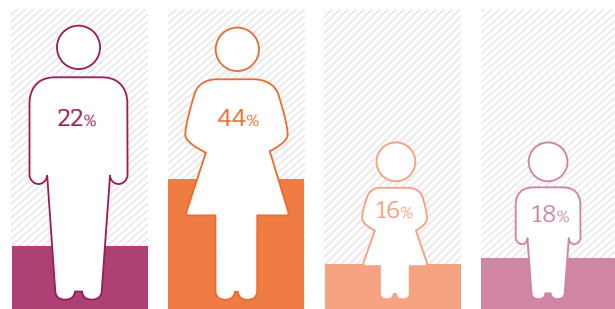
* Based on 124 victims of trafficking for forced labour detected by countries in Southern Africa.

Trafficking for forced labour in East Africa



* Based on 183 victims of trafficking for forced labour detected by countries in East Africa.

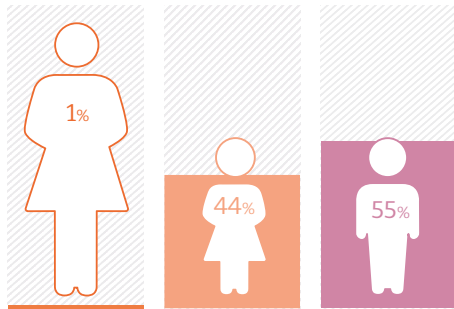
Trafficking for forced labour in North Africa



* Based on 772 victims of trafficking for forced labour detected by countries in North Africa.

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 71 Trafficking for forced begging in North Africa

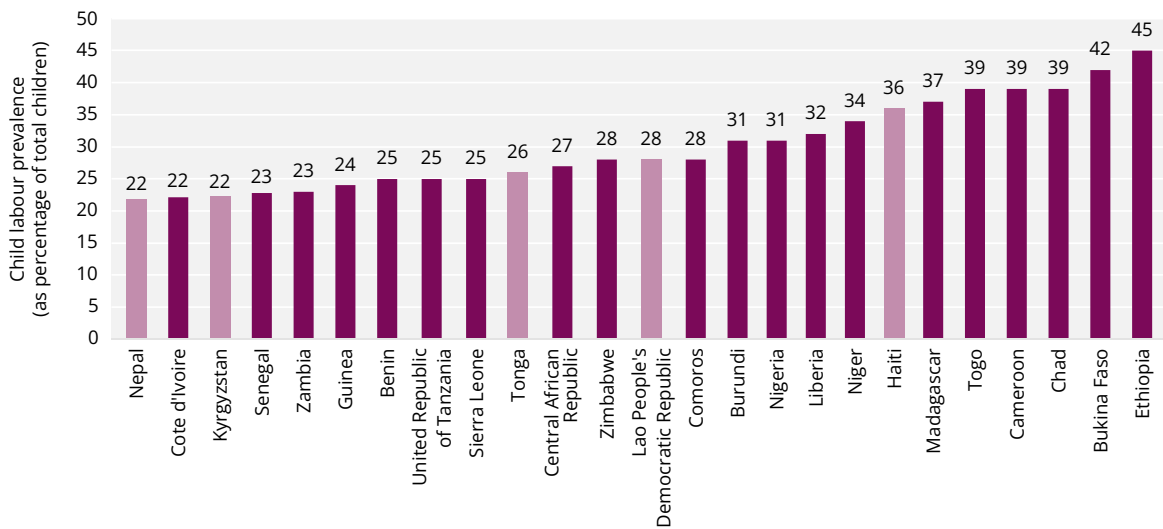


While child labour is not child trafficking, in areas of the world where children are typically sent to work, in connection with community practices and economic needs,¹⁵ traffickers are more likely to find opportunities to operate and traffic children for forced labour.¹⁶ Trafficking for forced labour in agriculture or the mining sector is particularly prevalent on the African continent (see *Forced labour and the depletion of African natural resources*, page 77).

* Based on 186 victims of trafficking for forced begging detected by countries in North Africa.

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

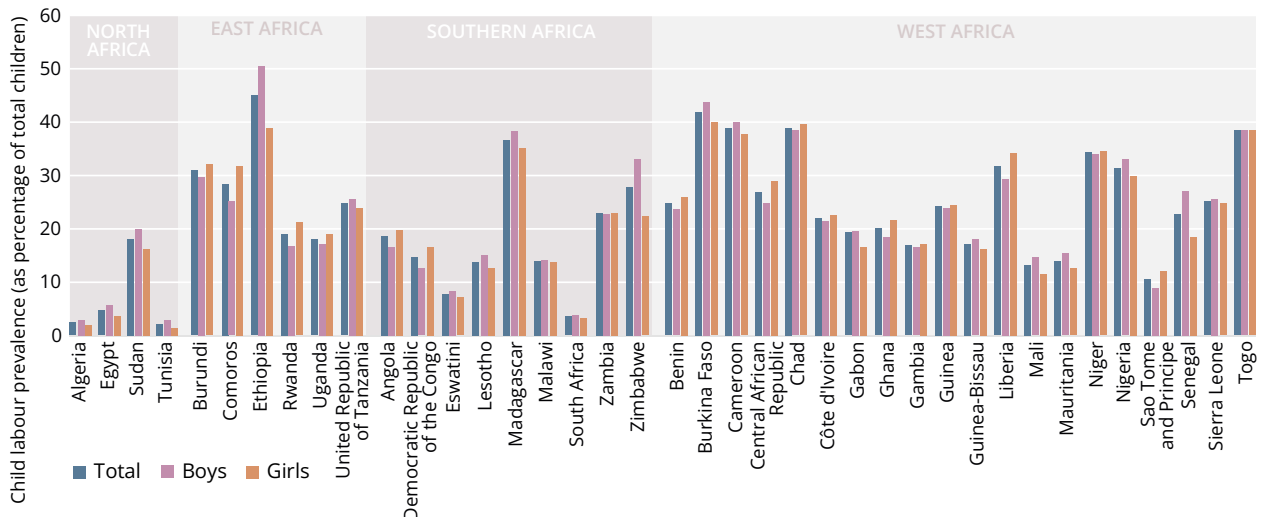
Fig. 72 Prevalence of child labour – top 25 countries globally, 2014–2022*



* The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) are periodic, face-to-face household surveys conducted by a trained fieldwork team on a variety of topics. See <https://mics.unicef.org> for more information.

Source: UNICEF – Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

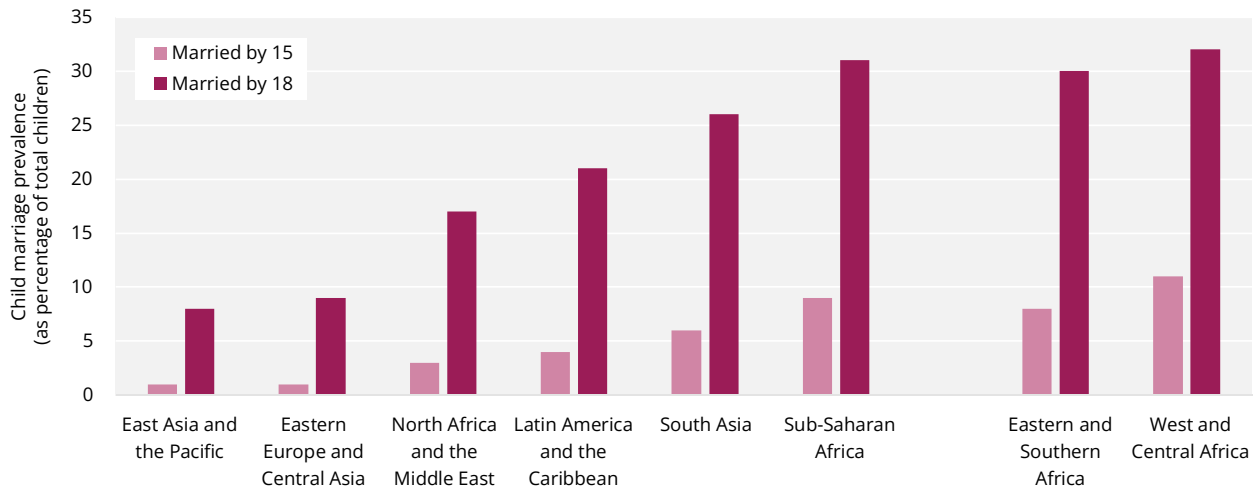
Fig. 73 Prevalence of child labour in Africa, by sex and country, 2024*



* The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) are periodic, face-to-face household surveys conducted by a trained fieldwork team on a variety of topics. See <https://mics.unicef.org> for more information.

Source: UNICEF – Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

Fig. 74 Prevalence of child marriage, by region, 2015–2022*



* The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) are periodic, face-to-face household surveys conducted by a trained fieldwork team on a variety of topics. See <https://mics.unicef.org> for more information.

Source: UNICEF – Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

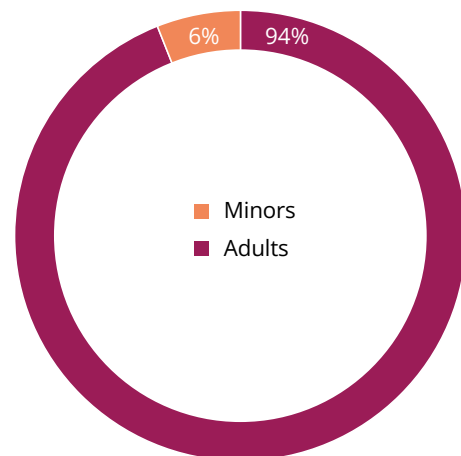
Conditions of extreme poverty could also explain the trafficking of girls for forced marriage in the region.¹⁷ As with child labour, child marriage is also not always the result of trafficking, but in regions where these practices are prevalent, it is more likely for traffickers to find an opportunity to commit their crimes. East and West Africa record more child marriage¹⁸ compared to other parts of the continent, and also have the highest number of identified cases of trafficking of girls for forced marriage.¹⁹

Trafficked while migrating: exploiting hope

In addition to the significant domestic and sub-regional trafficking within the continent, UNODC has mapped a large number of African victims trafficked across continents and for many different forms of exploitation. Between 2019 and 2023, some 15,000 victims from Africa were officially detected outside the African continent, particularly in Europe and in the Middle East, but also in East Asia and North America.

As opposed to the main profile of victims trafficked within the African continent, most African victims detected in Europe are adults, more typically exploited in forced labour.

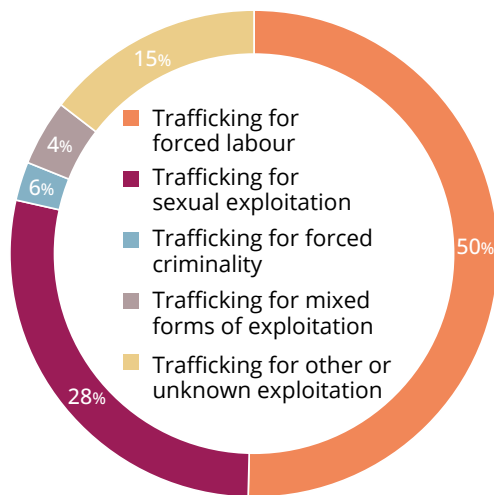
Fig. 75 Share of African victims detected in Western and Southern Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



* Based on 2,619 victims were detected in countries in Western and Southern Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 76 Share of detected victims of trafficking from Africa in Western and Southern Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe, by form of exploitation and subregion of origin, 2022 (or most recent)*



* Based on 772 victims detected in countries in Western and Southern Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

This type of trafficking occurs within the broader context of labour migration. It may start as an attempt by people to reach a better life somewhere else, only for them to fall prey to criminals along the way or at the destination.

According to UNODC field research and interviews with migrants, accounts of kidnappings, “sale of persons” and trafficking in persons are common along African migration routes to North Africa and from there to Europe.²⁰ The practice of selling migrants who have been captured by third parties for forced labour has been widely reported in North Africa.²¹ Same patterns are documented in the Sahel, usually perpetrated by armed groups operating in these territories.²²

Similar trends are reported along the routes that lead migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council across East African land passages and via the Red Sea to the Arab peninsula into Yemen.²³ The route is used by hundreds of thousands of people every year,²⁴ mostly men with smaller numbers of children and minors.²⁵ Once at the destination, migrants are exploited to repay debt accumulated with the smugglers who organized their travel to reach the

countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.²⁶ Female migrants are reported to be sexually exploited by being “rented” to specific “clients” for periods of time, exploited as domestic workers or forced to work in the hospitality industry. Male migrants are reported to be trafficked into the construction sector. In some cases, smugglers have forced migrants to work as “mules” transporting drugs and guns within Yemen.²⁷

Trafficking in persons is also documented on the route from the Horn of Africa to Southern Africa, where refugees and migrants are exploited by different actors. Field studies reported extortion and exploitation as well as torture and physical and sexual violence on this route.²⁸ Further research on the Southern route indicates that smugglers “*may in some instances take advantage of irregular migrants’ weak positions to exploit and engage them in criminal activities.*”²⁹ Smugglers are increasingly using violence and abduction along this route as means to extort money from victims’ families.³⁰

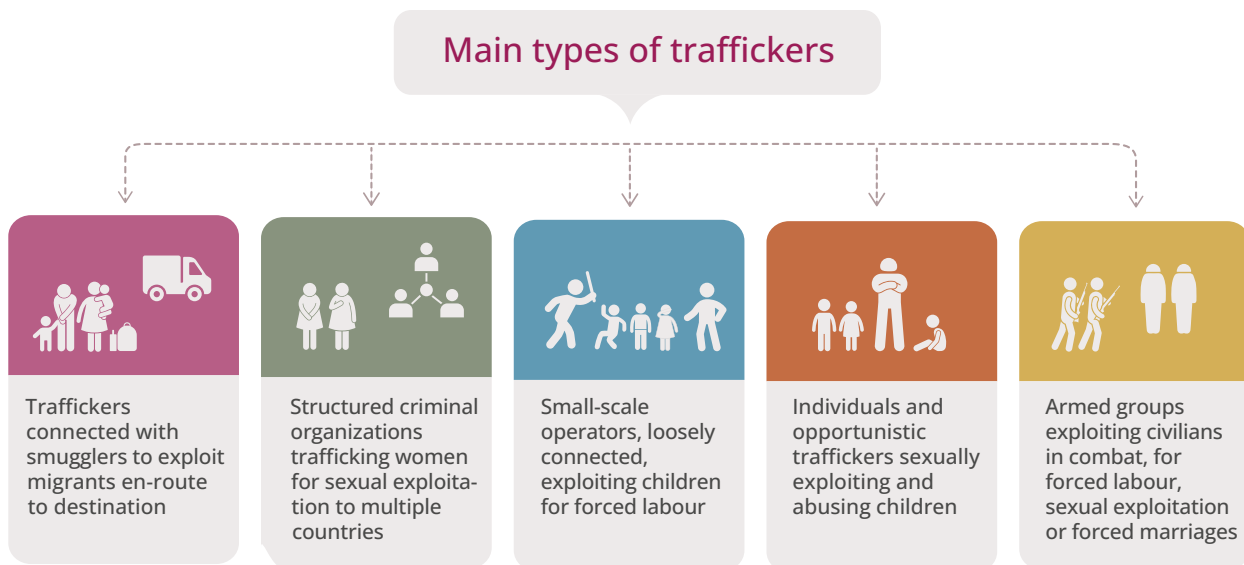
Traffickers: small-scale operators, organized crime groups and militias

Africa has a unique landscape of traffickers, with large-scale and systematic criminal activities carried out by organized crime groups operating internationally, armed groups and small-scale and less organized traffickers, including individual and community-based activities.

In the context of trafficking occurring along migration routes, the same actors involved in the smuggling industry may opportunistically collaborate with, or operate as, trafficking networks aiming at exploiting migrants.³¹ Research on the routes to North Africa or to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council has shown how, in some cases, smuggler-traffickers seem to be part of a broader system that starts with an initial contact with migrants in their community of origin and concludes with exploitation in transit or at the destination.³² Also seen in this context are traffickers who, as opportunistic criminals or individuals, are able to exploit these vulnerable migrants *en route*.³³

Another scenario is the case of large international organized criminal groups based in Africa operating among different continents and involved in the long-distance trafficking of many victims across

TYPE OF TRAFFICKERS' STRUCTURE REPORTED IN AFRICA



multiple countries. A number of court cases describe groups that recruit victims, particularly women and girls, for sexual exploitation within and outside of Africa. Victims are tied to their traffickers by being trapped in debt bondage schemes, the threat of violence on their families back home or through the leveraging of some rituals, such as the *Juju* (see box on *Generation 30 paper*, page 91).³⁴

The most prevalent form of trafficking within the continent – children trafficked into forced labour – is more typically carried out by small-scale operators that provide services through an unstructured connection to those who carry out the exploitation, for example, in mine sites, plantations or other production facilities. Some of these services include recruiting and transporting victims. These operators engage families with the agreement that recruitment or transportation costs can be paid once at destination after the child employment begins. Once at the destination, however, the debt is bought by the exploiters, is inflated, and children are forced to work trapped in a debt bondage scheme.³⁵

National authorities in Africa have also reported a variety of traffickers operating as individuals, in pairs or as occasional groups trafficking victims across short distances.³⁶ These traffickers are to be found in different forms of exploitation. For example, court cases involving individual traffickers trafficking children for sexual exploitation have

been reported by African countries. Typically, they are child sexual abusers leveraging the extreme poverty of the victims or their families in order to exploit them in connection with other abusers.³⁷

Finally, militias and armed groups engage in the trafficking of civilians for a variety of reasons in Africa. In 2023, between 80 and 90 armed groups were counted to recruit children and used them in conflict-related operations in Africa.³⁸ These groups recruit children to use them as fighters, support personnel, or force them to work for generating income.³⁹ Trafficking by armed groups, both non-state and state actors, is carried out in different contexts. In South Sudan, for instance, children have been reported to be directly recruited from their homes across villages.⁴⁰ In other situations, children remain vulnerable to forced recruitment even in refugee camps or similar settings. The methods used to engage children may vary and can range from abductions to the use of threats, force, coercion, deception or exploitation of vulnerabilities.⁴¹

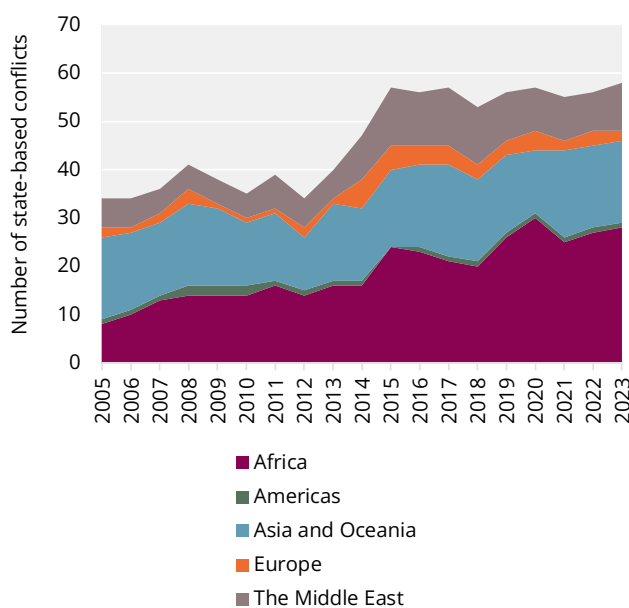
The roots of trafficking in persons in Africa

Enduring and expanding conflicts

Trafficking in persons in conflict situations has been extensively documented by UNODC in previous editions of the *Global Report*.⁴² In Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, field research has found that living in villages that had suffered armed attacks was associated with higher odds of slavery-related abuse⁴³ than living in villages that were not attacked prior to displacement.⁴⁴

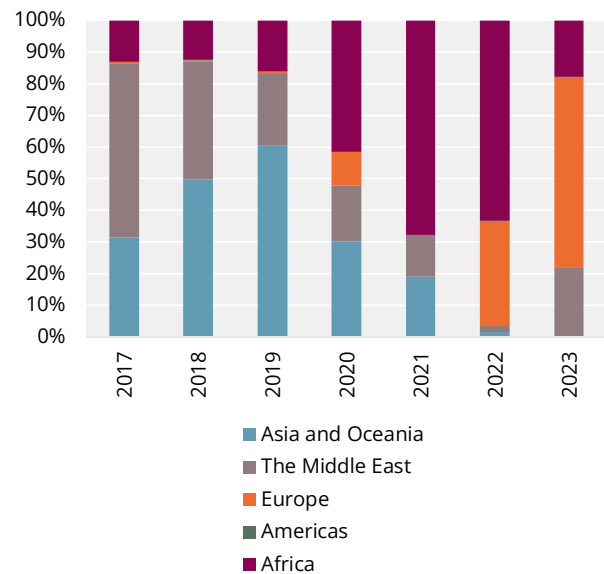
The African continent is the region of the world most affected by armed conflicts. Depending on the criteria and definitions used, approximately 30–35 situations of armed conflict have been identified in Africa as of 2023, as opposed to around 20 in Asia and fewer in other regions.⁴⁵ The degree of violence has considerably escalated since 2019–2020, directly and fatally affecting civilian populations. Reports indicate that the war in Ethiopia alone accounted for more than 100,000 fatalities in 2022.⁴⁶ Other African countries registered high numbers of conflict-related fatalities.⁴⁷

Fig. 77 Number of state-based conflicts by region, 2005–2023



Source: The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).

Fig. 78 Share of fatalities in state-based conflicts by region, 2017–2023



Source: Global Change Data Lab, “Deaths in state-based conflicts by region”.

Displacement and risks of trafficking for those who seek refuge

Globally, at the end of 2023, more than one in three displaced persons was an African national, totaling more than 40 million.⁴⁸ In the same year, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated the displaced population resulting from the conflict in Sudan alone could reach more than ten million in 2024.⁴⁹

Conflict-related displacements exacerbate civilians’ risk of being trafficked as peoples’ support networks collapse (e.g., family ties, community bonds, self-protection mechanisms).⁵⁰ Displaced people often end up being socially and culturally isolated, lacking access to resources and livelihood opportunities.⁵¹ Such circumstances directly place them at severe risk of being trafficked by criminals seeking to profit from their vulnerabilities.⁵²

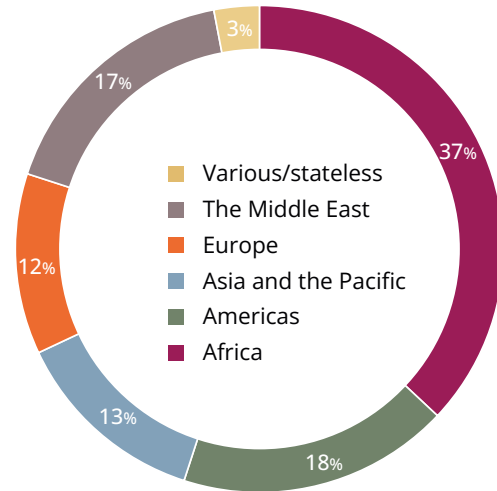
Exploitation of forcibly displaced populations may occur in any place along their journey, in resettlement areas, refugee camps and away from their countries or regions of origin. UNHCR has, for example, documented some internally displaced women in camp settings forced to engage in transactional sex in exchange for food and resources.⁵³

At the same time, the impact of conflict on African nationals can reach distant regions. According to the elaboration of the national data shared with UNODC for the *Global Report*, in 2022, nationals from African countries experiencing conflicts – Sudan, countries in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel, Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – accounted for about 2,000 victims detected in Europe, amounting to 7.5 per cent of total victims detected, a substantial increase from 2017 when victims from the same countries accounted for only 1.5 per cent of all the recorded victims. This increase quantifies the higher level of trafficking risk produced by new or intensified conflicts.

Recruitment of children by armed groups⁵⁴

Trafficking in persons in the context of conflict can take the form of the exploitation of children by groups engaged in armed operations. Children may be recruited for exploitation as combatants or in support roles, such as collecting resources, acting as porters and messengers, or cooking and cleaning. Others may be trafficked for sexual exploitation or for forced marriage. Armed groups and government forces that engage in trafficking of children appear to target more boys than girls.⁵⁵ Following

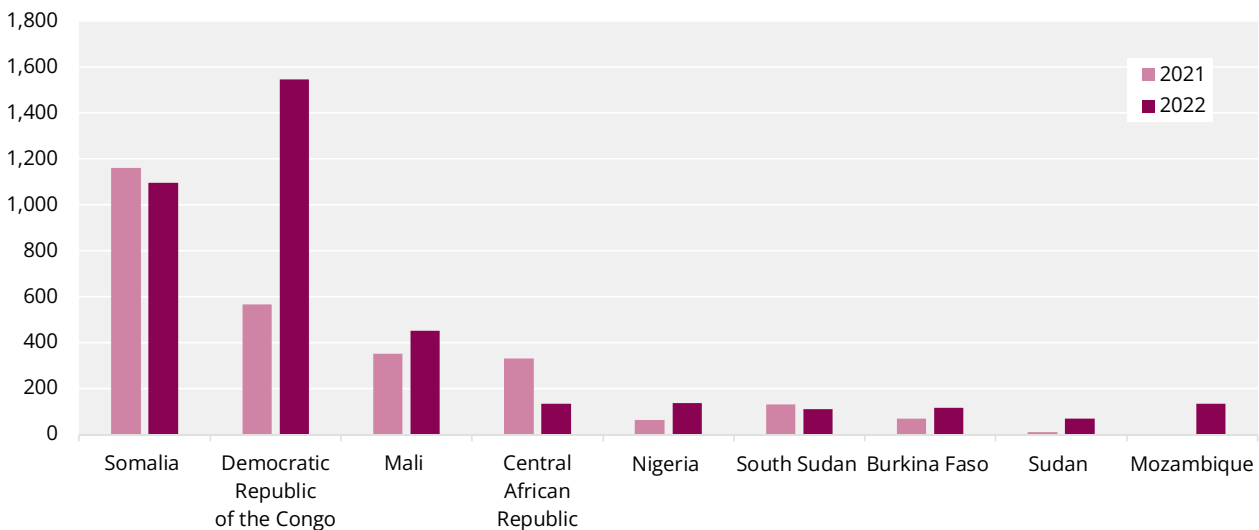
Fig. 79 Share of refugees, people in refugee-like situations,¹⁵⁴ asylum seekers and other people in need of international protection, by area of origin (end of the year-2023)



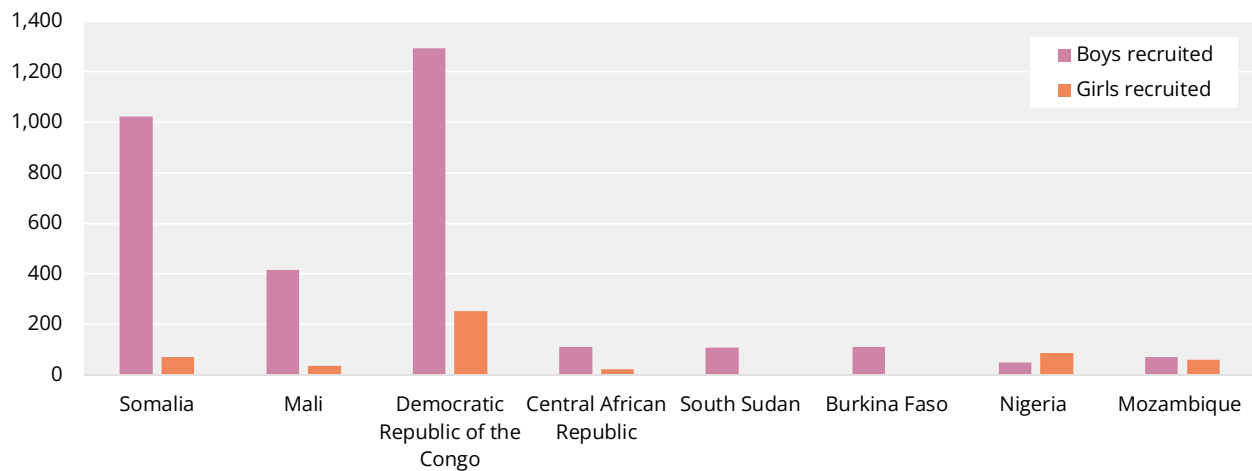
Source: UNODC Elaboration on UNHCR data.

lines of traditional gender roles, boys are generally exploited in combat roles while armed groups traffic girls more commonly for sexual exploitation or forced marriage.⁵⁶

Fig. 80 Number of children recruited and used by armed groups, by top African countries of recruitment, 2021–2022



Source: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict.

Fig. 81 Number of children recruited and used by armed groups in African countries, by sex, 2022

Source: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict.

In 2021 and in 2022, in Somalia, more than a thousand children per year were recruited by armed groups.⁵⁷ *Al-Shabab* has been the main perpetrator, among many others, conducting child recruitment for several years in the country. Use of violence, intimidation and harassment are among the strategies used by some armed groups to threaten parents.⁵⁸

Similarly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is heavily affected by this phenomenon. Between 2021 and 2022, about 2,000 children were recruited by force.⁵⁹ In North and South Kivu, the most active militia groups directly involve children in armed hostilities, with reports of children as young as nine or ten years old being recruited.⁶⁰

Similar patterns have been documented in the Central African Republic and in Mali, with several hundred children recruited by militias and other groups in 2022 in each country. In Mali, between April 2020 and April 2022, 21 different armed groups were involved in systematic child recruitment.⁶¹ Armed groups like *Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM)* and the *Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)* are among the main perpetrators of child recruitment in the entire Sahel area.⁶² *Boko Haram* has also extended its presence to the Sahelian territories.⁶³ It has been held responsible for trafficking children to become child soldiers, for sexual exploitation and for forced labour

In 2023 in Africa, violence against children in armed conflict reached extreme levels with a 21 per cent increase in grave violations compared to the previous year.⁶⁴ Child recruitment by armed groups was documented in 12 different African countries, with between 4,500 and 5,000 children affected. Some 80 to 90 armed groups have been shown to have recruited and used children in armed conflict, in addition to hundreds of children recruited by unidentified or unknown groups.⁶⁵ In 2023, the recruitment and use of children by armed groups has been documented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the countries of the Sahel, the Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan and others.⁶⁶

Armed groups engaging in sexual slavery and forced marriage

Armed groups engage in the trafficking of women and girls to reward their fighters with brides and sex slaves. In 2022 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is estimated that 26 per cent of girls recruited by armed groups were subjected to sexual slavery (for a total of 138 girls), forced marriage (97) and other forms of sexual violence (46) during their association with armed groups.⁶⁷

According to the Office of the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, in 2022, in Nigeria, girls are recruited more than boys by armed groups. Most girls are abducted and used as "wives"

for fighters, thus subjected to sexual slavery. This practice was also reported in Mali,⁶⁸ South Sudan⁶⁹ and Mozambique.⁷⁰ Several armed groups appear to also use sexual violence and trafficking of women as part of their military strategy to terrorize civilians as part of a counter-insurgency tactic.⁷¹

Forced labour by armed groups

While controlling territories and communities, armed groups resort to subjecting captured civilians to forced labour to support their military activities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, research has documented armed groups forcing local communities into compulsory community work including extracting and transporting wood and charcoal or maintaining roads. Failure to perform weekly duties is punished with a fine, jail and whippings.⁷² In the eastern provinces of the country, militias traffic children to exploit in the gold mining sector (see the box below). In 2020, the Group of Experts for South Sudan reported that the *Sudan Liberation Army/ Abdul Wahid* set up a system of extortion and detention targeting Darfurian civilians living in the nearby areas. As a result, men and women were forced to labour in the group's farms.⁷³

Forced labour and the depletion of African natural resources

In contexts where very poor families rely on sending children to work for survival, traffickers find fertile ground to exploit children and young adults in labour intensive, low-skilled work, with little economic relief reaching the community

As discussed above, traffickers operate on the basis of a widespread system of debt bondage. The system takes place through a combination of loans, deductions and other financial penalties to carry out unpaid labour and is the foundation of the exploitative practices that are generally carried out over extensive periods of time. Debt bondage is accompanied by violent treatment, threats and coercion by employers.⁷⁴

Artisanal mining and child trafficking in Africa

One of the areas of labour exploitation for resource extraction is the mining of precious gems, metals and minerals. Besides the involvement of armed groups described in the box *Trafficking in persons, mineral resources and armed groups in the*

Democratic Republic of the Congo, transnational organized crime groups and opportunistic traffickers are involved in different mineral types using similar methods to exploit victims.

Africa is home to the largest numbers of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) miners in the world, close to an estimated 10 million in all regions of the continent, many of them children.⁷⁵ It is estimated that between 20 and 40 per cent of all workers in ASM are children aged 5–14.⁷⁶

UNODC has observed that artisanal gold mining can be implicated in multiple and concurrent types of crime, including the smuggling of mined resources, tax fraud, movement of illicit financial flows,⁷⁷ money laundering and other general organized crime group activities.⁷⁸ Gold is a perfect product for criminals to traffic. Once refined, the origin of smuggled gold is impossible to trace, it is easy to transport and carries large values in small quantities.⁷⁹ Some actors in Africa operate in the gold sector outside legal frameworks and avoid scrutiny, regulation or taxation. Consequently, gold is very attractive and extensively smuggled.⁸⁰

Being a labour-intensive activity surrounded by large criminal interests, trafficking in persons for forced labour is found in gold artisanal mining.⁸¹ As in other types of forced labour in Africa, traffickers operating in ASM appear to target mainly children for work in mines as their age makes them particularly easy to exploit. In 2018, for example, Interpol rescued 100 children who were subjected to forced labour in gold mines in Sudan and were trafficked from a variety of countries from the Sahel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Eritrea.⁸²

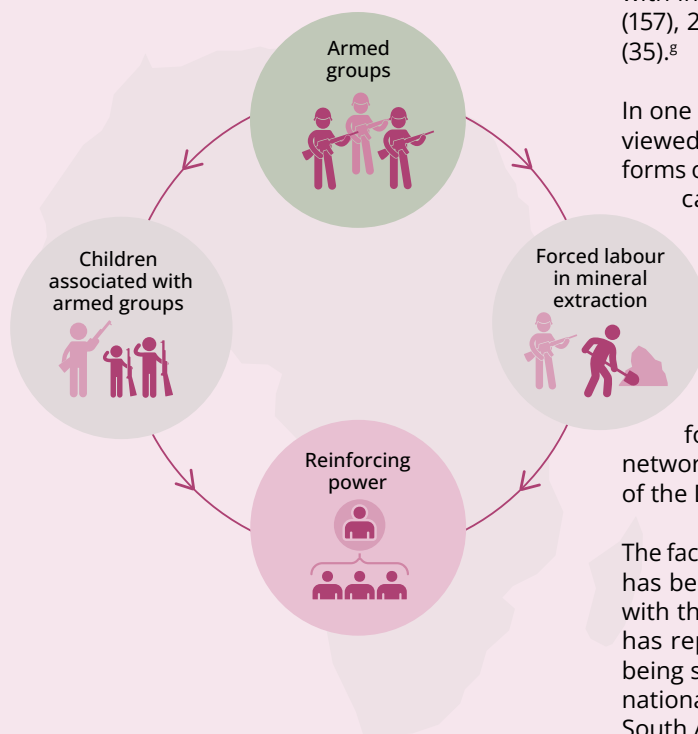
Traffickers active in ASM use debt, finance and lending systems as strategies to exploit and traffic the victims.⁸³ Furthermore, the groups leverage the geographic remoteness of mines as an advantage to traffic and exploit victims.⁸⁴ In recent field research involving interviews conducted among more than 550 miners in northern Chad, about 50 per cent of respondents reported having incurred in a debt with their employer to finance their travel to mine sites and 51 per cent were not paid as agreed before recruitment.⁸⁵ According to a study conducted on the financial system surrounding the gold mines in

Trafficking in persons, mineral resources and armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In 2023, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) reported sustained clashes between *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)* factions and *Zaire militias* for the control over illegal mining sites in the Ituri province of the DRC. Following these hostilities, increased cases of children recruited from villages and exploitation in gold mining sites were reported.^a

From the research carried out, there appears to be a link between the military operations of the many armed groups operating in the Eastern part of the DRC, the natural resources available and the trafficking for forced labour reported in these territories both to extract those resources and to reinforce the military power of these groups.

CONFLICT, MINERAL RESOURCES AND CHILD TRAFFICKING IN EASTERN DRC



The forced recruitment of children in the armed groups active in the country is mainly concentrated in four provinces where military operations are more intense: Tanganyika, Ituri, South Kivu and especially North Kivu.^b The conflict between various groups in these provinces resulted in more than 5.6 million IDPs at the end of 2023.^c As result of more recent clashes in North Kivu, around 1.4 million additional IDPs were recorded as of January 2024.^d

According to field studies, one in five displaced individuals sampled^e experienced forced labour, forced recruitment or were abducted or disappeared during the reference period. Just over 80 per cent of abductions were carried by armed groups, while criminal groups were implicated in eight per cent of cases. The vast majority of the victims were forced to fight for the armed groups or to act as porters and about a quarter were forced to work in economic activities.^f

These provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are rich with precious gems, metals and minerals, attracting armed groups to set up mining operations to finance their activities. A large number of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operations of different valuable metals and gems are in operation, where in many cases child labour and the presence or interference of armed groups has been observed: an estimated total of 2,009 gold mines (940 with interference of armed groups), 727 cassiterite (157), 247 coltan (85) and 350 other mineral mines (35).^g

In one study,^h about seven per cent of miners interviewed in these provinces were victims of different forms of trafficking in persons. In 22 per cent of these cases, armed groups recruited victims for mining work including children.ⁱ

Armed groups traffic children to extract minerals that are then sold and smuggled out of the country. In 2023, several militia forces consolidated their control over the *Rubaya* coltan mines in North Kivu and reinforced their relationships with local criminal networks involved in the smuggling of minerals out of the DRC.^j

The facilitation of mineral smuggling by armed groups has been reported as a criminal activity connected with the phenomenon.^k In addition to gold, the UN has reported cases of tin, tantalum and tungsten being sold by armed groups and smuggled to international markets, particularly in the Middle East and South Asia.^l

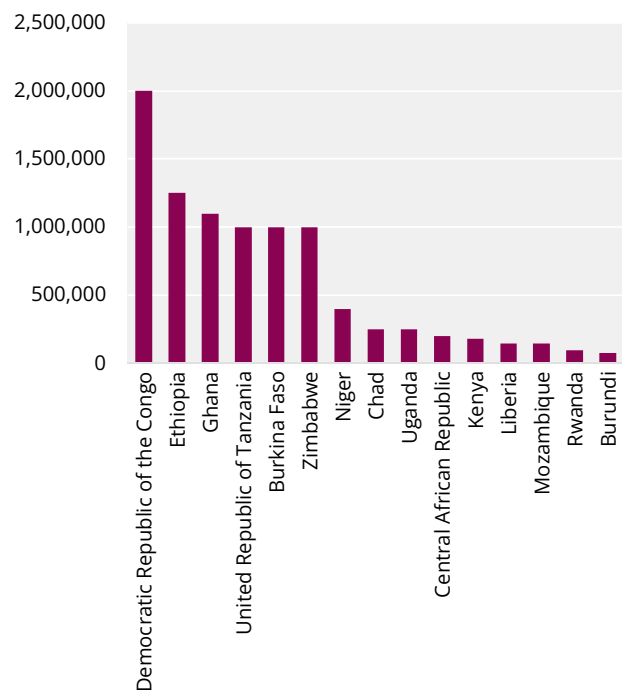
a United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2022/252, 21 March 2022; Letter dated 13 June 2023 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/431) 13 June 2023.

- b Children and Armed Conflict – Report of the Secretary-General in the Republic of the Congo (S/2022/745), 10 October 2022. IOM Displacement Data Matrix M23 CRISIS ANALYSIS – Report #1 February 2024.
- c IOM, *Displacement Atlas: Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo*, Round 3, Displacement Tracking Matrix, November 2023.
- d IOM, Displacement Data Matrix M23 CRISIS ANALYSIS – Report #1 February 2024.
- e The sample comprised 2,403 primary respondents who reported on their own experience and the one of 15,235 individuals.
- f IOM, ILO and Walk Free 2022, “No Escape”.
- g International Peace Information Service (IPIS), “Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in DR Congo”, available at https://ipisresearch-dashboard.shinyapps.io/open_data_app/, (accessed on 15 July 2024). The Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), “DR Congo”, (n.d.) available at https://www.bgr.bund.de/EN/Themen/Min_rohstoffe/CTC/Mineral-Certification-DRC/CTC_DRC_node_en.html, (accessed 15 July 2024).
- h Jocelyn Kelly and others, “Artisanal Mining Towns in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo”, (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), August 2014). The survey is intended to measure human trafficking in the artisanal mining industry in two Eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sampling was conducted in Kalehe, Walungu, and Mwenga territories in South Kivu Province and in Kalemie and Nyunzu territories in North Katanga. Absent more accurate population figures, we cannot be completely sure of the generalizability of the results; however, the findings presented here are the product of a systematic approach to both random site and random respondent selection. The final sample included 1,522 respondents across 32 sites, which included 1,129 males (74.2%) and 393 females (25.8%). The survey results were also complemented by qualitative data collection activities in five sites.
- i Jocelyn Kelly and others, “Artisanal Mining”; Kara Siddarth, *Cobalt Red, How the blood of the Congo powers our lives*, (St Martin’s Publishing Group, 2023).
- j Letter dated 13 June 2023 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2023/431.
- k Bali Barume and others, “COVID-19 crisis threatens responsible mineral supply chains – a case study based on the DR Congo”, (The Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), June 2020).
- l United Nations Security Council. “Letter dated 6 June 2019 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council.” June 7, 2019; Marcena Hunter, “Pulling at golden webs: Combating criminal consortia in the African artisanal and small-scale gold mining and trade sector”, *Enhancing Africa’s response to transnational organized crime (ENACT)*, Issue 8, (April 2019).

West Africa, nearly all miners on the sites work to pay back debt incurred for transportation, to use the tools required to work or for other reasons.⁸⁶

The number of children trafficked in mining in Africa is difficult to determine but according to some estimates, in 2015, between 60,000 and 100,000 children worked in ASM under exceptionally

Fig. 82 Estimated number of workers in ASM, by country, 2022



Source: World Bank, 2023 *State of the ASM Sector*.

exploitative conditions in Burkina Faso alone.⁸⁷ That would account for about 6 to 10 per cent of the total estimated population working in ASM in the country.⁸⁸

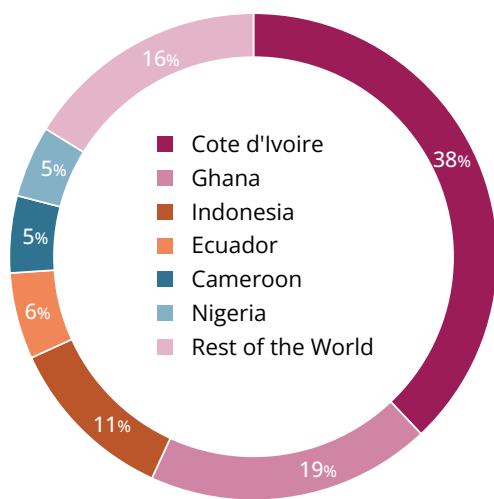
Trafficking for forced labour is not the only form of trafficking that occurs at ASM sites, with trafficking for sexual exploitation typically taking place in the surrounding areas.⁸⁹ Sexual exploitation can be driven by the presence of a large male labour force in mining areas.⁹⁰ According to one study, it is estimated that between 13 and 30 per cent of women engaged in commercial sex in the mining area of Kédougou in Senegal are victims of trafficking.⁹¹ Victims are trafficked from other countries and recruited by intermediaries who deceive them about employment in the destination area to lure them into sexual exploitation.⁹²

ASM represents a double-edged sword for people in Africa. While ASM is an economic sector associated with a high risk of trafficking,⁹³ it also provides economic relief for large communities in Sub-Saharan Africa experiencing loss in productivity in the agricultural sector,⁹⁴ highlighting the challenges in addressing the problem.⁹⁵

Trafficking in agriculture: the case of cocoa industry

Africa’s vast agriculture sector is of primary economic importance and involves intensive labour. Just over half of employed people in Sub-Saharan Africa are active in agriculture.⁹⁶ While it is an important source of economic revenue, forced labour and trafficking have been reported in the agricultural sector, particularly in cocoa production,⁹⁷ as well as in the cultivation of cotton⁹⁸ and rice.⁹⁹

Fig. 83 Share of global cocoa bean production, 2022



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

One study conducted in 2017¹⁰⁰ estimated tens of thousands of people experienced forced labour in the cocoa plantation in West Africa in the previous 12 months. These estimates, although largely varying, suggest trafficking in agriculture appears less prevalent compared to the level estimated in ASM, although more extensive considering the number of people employed; just over half of employed people in Sub-Saharan Africa are active in agriculture.¹⁰¹

Cocoa production and its economic market size have increased steadily over the past 40 years, with most cocoa beans traded on international commodity markets.¹⁰² Similar to ASM, studies conducted in West Africa focusing on child trafficking into cocoa plantations have documented victims being moved across borders by intermediaries, recruiters and exploiters operating in business-like types of engagement, each with a different role along the trafficking chain.¹⁰³ Recruiters contact families or

vice versa, and facilitate connections with brokers in the destination country. The brokers facilitate the placement of the worker with a cocoa farmer. In some cases, a member of the trafficker’s group may supervise the child’s transfer to the production sites or act as a “dispatcher”, potentially posing as a child’s parent to evade police detection.¹⁰⁴

Traffickers exploit victims by enforcing debts accrued through recruitment, transportation or for other reasons that they are required to repay through labour.¹⁰⁵ In addition to debt enforcement, field research in West Africa has documented the practice of deceptive recruitment and withholding of salaries among adult and child workers.¹⁰⁶

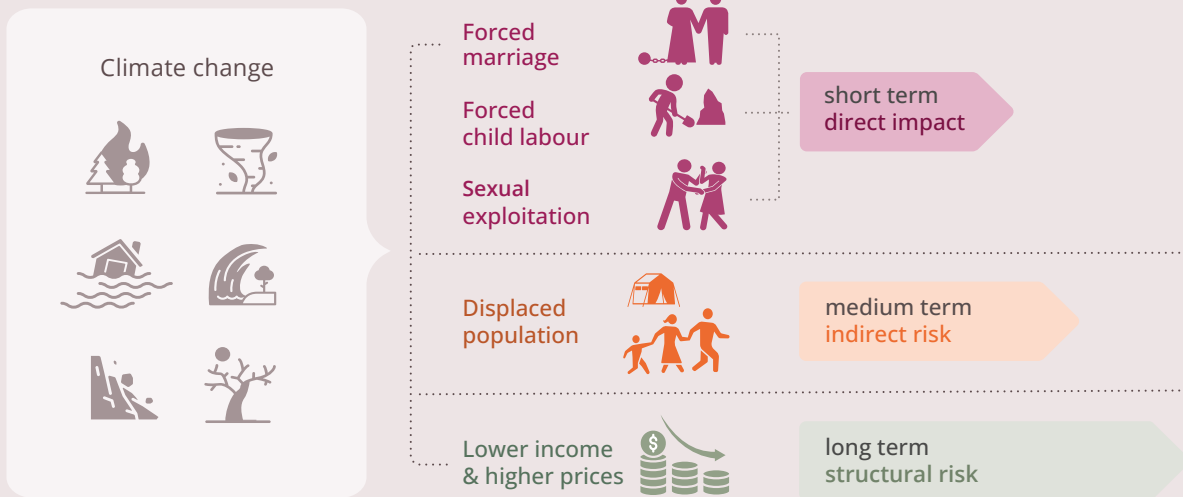
Like ASM, cocoa production in West Africa is at risk of infiltration by traffickers, and could be connected with a broader criminal context, such as illegal deforestation of protected areas in order to exploit more fertile lands¹⁰⁷ and illegal smuggling of cocoa beans across borders.¹⁰⁸ Over the last few seasons climate change has drastically reduced the productivity of traditional cocoa production,¹⁰⁹ pushing some farmers to engage in exploitative practices to compensate for the economic losses, and prompting workers and families to engage in ASM¹¹⁰ or to migrate to other regions.¹¹¹

Climate change and lost livelihoods

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Sub-Saharan Africa records the highest incidence of rural poverty. This also means that the devastating impact of climate change on agricultural production can affect the lives of Africans more severely than in other parts of the world.¹¹² Furthermore, the continent of Africa has been one of the areas hardest hit by climate change in general and specifically the resulting uptick in climate-related natural disasters over the past decade.¹¹³

In 2022 alone, weather-induced fall in agriculture productivity and natural disasters affected all African sub-regions;¹¹⁴ the Horn of Africa experienced its worst drought in 40 years with farming in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia severely affected.¹¹⁵ Somalia alone recorded 1.2 million internally displaced people due to the catastrophic effects of drought on pastoral farming.¹¹⁶ During the same period, flooding in West and Central Africa swept away crop areas and homes, leading to food insecurity and displacement.¹¹⁷

Climate change can affect human trafficking in Africa on different levels:



- › **Short term and direct risks:** communities moving away from farming due to loss of productivity resulting from climate change engage in activities at risk of trafficking in an attempt to compensate for their economic loss. These include artisanal mining, prostitution, increased child labour and child-hazardous work. Proliferation of coping mechanisms such as selling children into forced labour and forced marriages.
- › **Medium term and indirect risks:** loss of productivity and disasters result in displacement and forced migration, rupture of consolidated livelihoods and community ties, exposing the forced displaced population to traffickers.
- › **Long term and structural risks:** high food prices, aggravated pauperization and rapid urbanization increases the socio-economic vulnerabilities and intra-communitarian tensions for the entire continent.

As some people increasingly face displacement and loss of agricultural and livestock-based livelihoods, their risk of falling victim to trafficking increases as they seek ways to keep themselves and their families adequately housed, fed and supported. In other regions across the world, negative socio-economic impacts caused by climate change have been shown to create desperation and push many people to accept risky job offers for little pay in informal and dangerous sectors while others resort to transactional sex for food or money.¹¹⁸ In Africa, these consequences are only exacerbated by conflicts.

Short term and direct risks: farming communities engaging in trafficking-prone activities

Climate-adverse conditions have an immediate impact in terms of increasing labour-intensive activity to compensate in the loss of land productivity.¹¹⁹ A FAO study carried out in Côte d'Ivoire found that farmers increase both the number of working hours for children and the number of child labourers in hazardous farm work in order to keep the sector

viable during dry periods.¹²⁰ The same study conducted in Ethiopia shows that heavy rains can result in an approximately 20 per cent increase in child labour for both boys and girls, including hazardous work.¹²¹ This can result in a heightened risk of exploitative work and trafficking for forced labour. Similarly, it has been documented how immediately after natural disasters, boys in Malawi are trafficked within the country and to Zambia for forced labour on commercial farms.¹²²

A study in Ghana found that in extreme scenarios resulting from climate-related loss of livelihood, children in some rural communities have been trafficked into marriage or forced labour as coping strategies.¹²³ In South Sudan, IOM has noted that environmental fragility has exacerbated social, economic and security issues and heightened the risks of child marriage.¹²⁴ Similarly, research has shown how during droughts in Zimbabwe families marry off their young daughters as a source of cash.¹²⁵ In surveys conducted in rural communities in East

Example of indirect risks: Women *Kayayie* in Ghana

Communities in the North of Ghana rely heavily on agriculture and natural resources to support households. One study summarized that, “African women are more reliant on subsistence farming and are over-represented in poorly paid parts of the informal economy. Consequently, women and women-headed households are at greater risk of poverty and food insecurity from the impacts of climate hazards on informal economies.”^a At the same time, social norms, traditions, legal frameworks and institutions limit African women’s autonomy and agency, as well as access to property rights and economic resources.^b

Women affected by loss of agriculture-supported livelihoods and seeking employment in cities may face a higher risk of exploitative labour. One such common exploitative practice often associated with trafficking in Ghana is known as *kayayie*. This word refers to the practice of exclusively employing women, and sometimes girls, as porters in cities. They are tasked with carrying heavy loads for shoppers and merchants in markets,^c working long hours for little to no pay and sleeping on the streets or in makeshift camps.^d Some agents who operate *kayayie* businesses traffic women via debt bondage, paying for their transportation to large cities from the north, food and accommodation, if any.^e

To illustrate, one woman working as a *kayayie* in Ghana stated that, “the decision to migrate to Accra was influenced by the lack of job opportunities in my village. Farming, the main livelihood, is carried out by men while women only support with their labour. My village suffered flooding in each of the past three seasons – farmlands were submerged and eventually destroyed. I use my earnings as a *kayayie* to fend for myself and support other family members, including buying food for them during the dry season. Working as a *kayayie* has not been easy for me. When I came here, I did not know anything about the work. I was told that the woman providing our pans will also feed us and give us accommodation. However, all my earnings go to her and only sometimes will she give me a small part of the money I’ve earned. Before you can leave her camp, you have to work and pay for the pan and also the accommodation she provides. So basically, I am not getting anything from my hard work. The woman who controls me pays on condition that I work and repay that amount to her. I have been working endlessly and have not been able to repay.”^f

a Africa Climate Mobility Initiative, African Shifts: The Africa Climate Mobility Report: Addressing Climate-Forced Migration & Displacement (Global Centre for Climate Mobility, April 2023).

b Ibid.

c Kellisia Hazlewood, ‘Ghana’s Invisible Girls: The Child-Kayayei Business and its Violation of Domestic and International Child Labour Laws,’ *Journal of Global Justice and Public Policy International Human Rights Scholarship Review*, vol. 77 (2016).

d Ritu Bharadwaj and others, “Case study: drought-related vulnerability”.

e Ibid.

f Ibid.

Africa, 17 per cent of respondents cited child marriage as a coping mechanism in their community in response to environmental shock, while 13 per cent mentioned child labour outside the ward as a way that people cope with the economic consequences of climate change.¹²⁶

Further, in the fallout caused by natural disasters, displaced persons face acute, immediate risks of trafficking in persons.¹²⁷ One study conducted by UN Women in rural parts of Southern Africa found that, because of food insecurity, girls in particular may be pressured by their families to turn to prostitution as a means of accessing cash or food; this risk is heightened in a post-disaster context.¹²⁸ The study reports a rapid increase of women and girls trafficked to cities and across borders for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the aftermath of natural disasters.¹²⁹

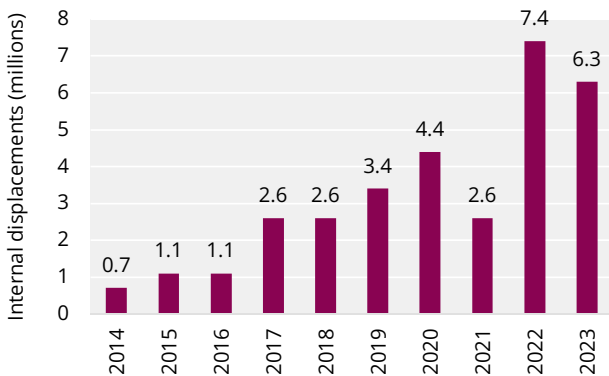
Indirect risks: unsafe labour migration and displacement

Weather-induced disaster and loss of productivity in agriculture has resulted in food insecurity for millions of Africans just in the past few years. The FAO reported that prolonged drought affecting agricultural production in 2023 and in 2024 is the cause of food insecurity for millions in East Africa and that floods have had a significant negative impact on food prices and production, limiting access to food in different parts of the continent.¹³⁰

In such a context, human mobility becomes the only hope for millions of people to escape starvation. Already in 2015, FAO described labour migration as “a common strategy in the face of climate risk and environmental degradation”.¹³¹ One recent study in Kenya found that, in the five eastern provinces, drought-affected households resort to temporary migration to cities in search of casual labour.¹³² In Ghana, it has been shown that north-to-south migration, particularly of men, is increasingly common in farming communities during dry seasons.¹³³ Once at the destination, they work as farm labourers in large cocoa, cashew and other cash crop production operations or in other jobs, at risk of exploitative conditions and in debt bondage.¹³⁴

Furthermore, weather-induced disasters in Africa have resulted in sudden displacement of millions of people. Unlike labour migration due to climate change, which occurs progressively, displacement

Fig. 84 Internal displacements caused by natural disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2014–2023



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

generally entails rapid escape.¹³⁵ In 2023, displacement from natural disasters were the cause of an estimated 6 million displacements in Sub-Saharan African countries, decreasing from a 7.4 million peak recorded in 2022.¹³⁶

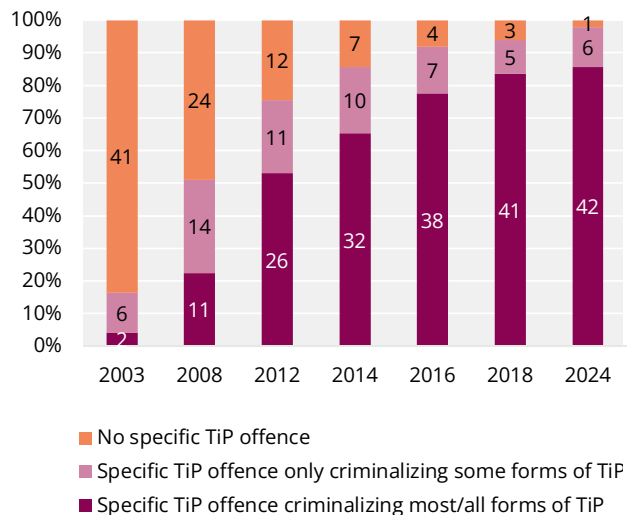
In a 2016 study conducted in Kenya, a large percentage of the climate-displaced population interviewed stated that they were willing to accept risky work offers, with 37 per cent of respondents reporting that they had had witnessed or experienced human trafficking.¹³⁷ Authorities in Burkina Faso reported in 2020 that weather-induced disasters have increased the displacement of populations towards larger cities, where they are at risk of falling prey to traffickers.¹³⁸ In other studies, it has been found that climate-displaced people have had to accept hosting arrangements that expose them to conditions of forced labour or sexual exploitation.¹³⁹ People displaced as a result of climate-related disasters often find themselves in camps and other informal settlements where women and girls especially can face the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and other human rights violations.¹⁴⁰

The impact of climate change and weather-induced disasters may extend beyond trafficking in persons within the African continent, into regions as distant as Europe. According to statistical analysis carried by UNODC, the number of displacements resulting from climate change recorded in Africa is correlated with the number of African victims of trafficking detected in Europe: the increase in people internally displaced in a country in Africa has gone up in parallel with the increase in victims from that country identified in Europe.¹⁴¹

Important advancements in criminal justice responses but measures to target organized crime still lacking

The progress of Africa in combating trafficking in persons is tangible and measurable. Over the last 20 years, most African countries have introduced legislation addressing all aspects of trafficking in persons as defined in the United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

Fig. 85 Criminalization of trafficking in persons with a specific offence covering all or some forms of trafficking as defined in the United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol in Africa, 2003–2024 (in 49 African countries)



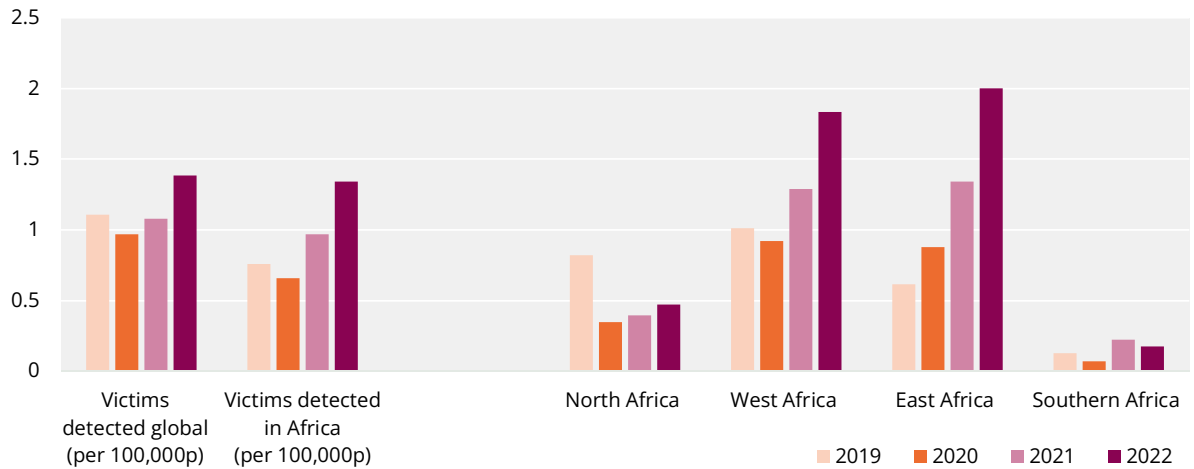
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Reflecting the increased efforts of national authorities, the number of detections has increased over time, from very few detections to rates that are broadly similar to the world average. In 2022, the number of victims detected per 100,000 population almost doubled from 2019.

At the same time, African countries reported staggering improvements from the criminal justice response angle with the number of convictions recorded in the continent quadrupling compared to 2017, particularly after the pandemic period. Countries in North Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa recorded more convictions compared to 2017, accelerating in 2022.

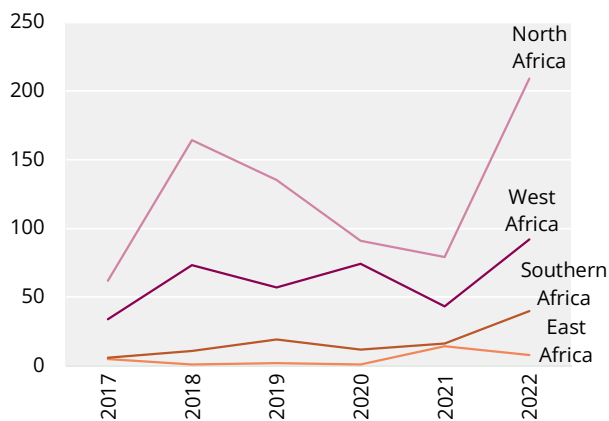
The number of convictions is reaching figures similar to those recorded in other parts of the world.

Fig. 86 Trend: Victims detected per 100,000 population, by African subregion, 2019–2022



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 87 Number of persons convicted in Africa, by subregion, 2017–2022



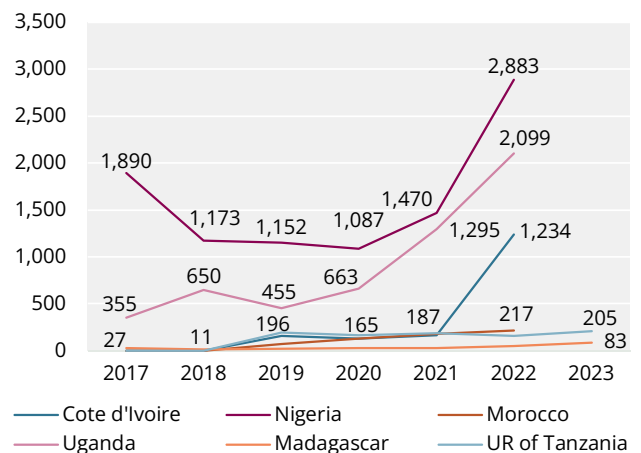
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

While the trend is showing a rapid increase, the total number of convictions for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are still below the global average.

The number of people convicted in 2022 represents only 10 per cent of the people investigated in 2020, suggesting prosecution and sentencing face challenges in concluding the investigative work.

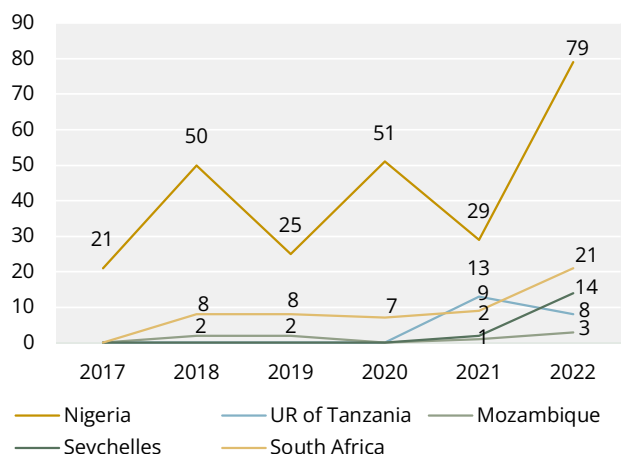
Aside from the increasing numbers of convictions, African criminal justice systems seem to concentrate their responses on small-scale trafficking actors, while they remain weak in targeting large and structured criminal organizations. The total court case summaries collected by UNODC over the

Fig. 88 Number of detected victims of trafficking in persons, by selected countries, 2017–2023



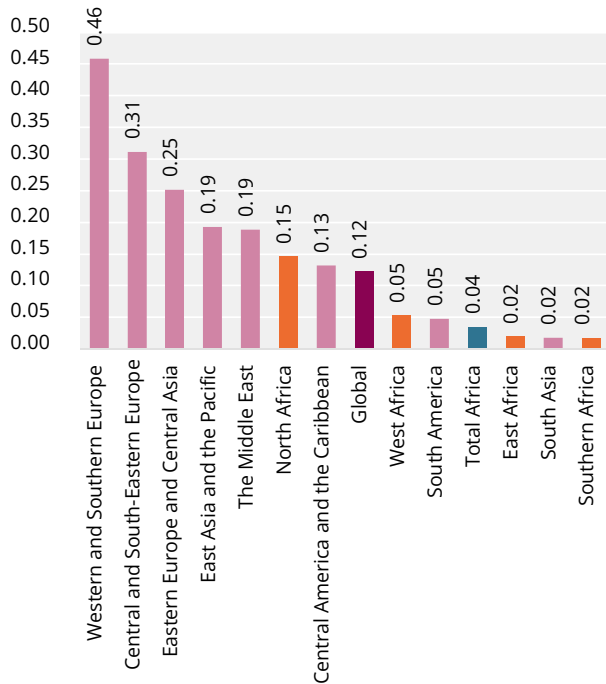
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 89 Number of convictions for trafficking in persons, by selected countries, 2017–2023



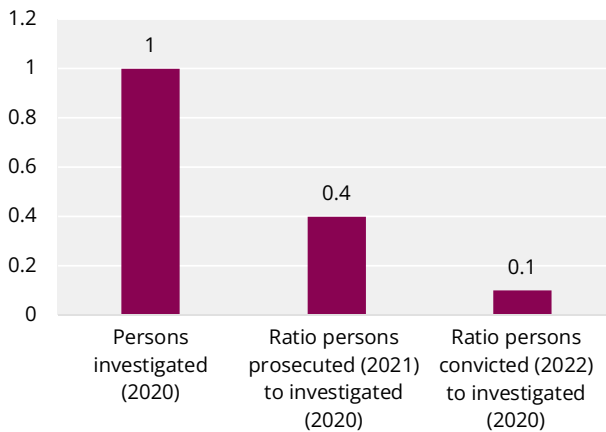
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 90 Persons convicted per 100,000 population, by region, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Fig. 91 Persons convicted in 2022, prosecuted in 2021 on total persons investigated in 2020, in Africa



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

years report on about 3,140 traffickers, about 550 of whom are part of governance-type organized crime groups (see *traffickers structure definitions*, page 73). About one third of these traffickers (170) refer to groups based in Africa that traffic victims to high income countries, another third refer to European traffickers, while the remaining cases report on structured criminal organizations from Asia and the Americas. Cases reporting of

Fig. 92 Share of traffickers operating in organized crime group of governance-type reported in court case summaries, by geographical reach involved (n: 535)

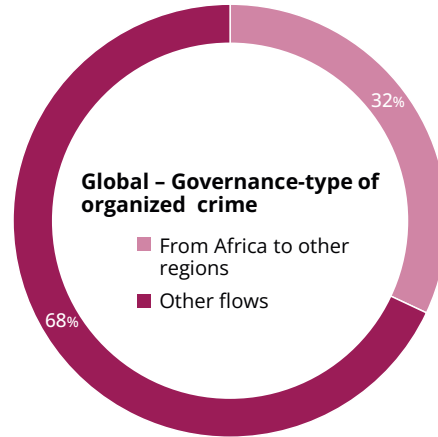
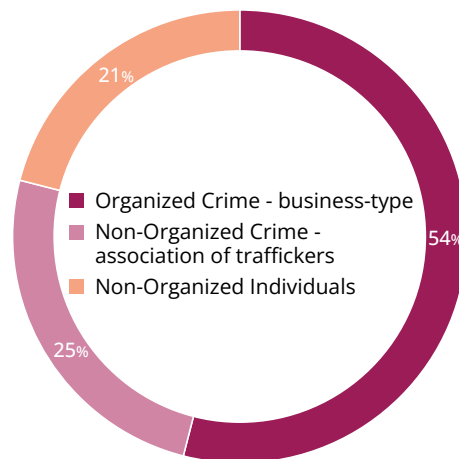


Fig. 93 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in Sub-Saharan Africa, by type of structure (n: 200)



Source: UNODC GLOTIP Court Case Summaries.

transnational organized crime groups operating in Africa are, however, in the vast majority related to convictions in non-African countries, typically in the destination countries. At the same time, cases reported by African countries more typically report convictions of small groups or individuals operating locally.

While the examples of court cases submitted to UNODC are not a representative sample of all convictions, this striking difference suggests that structured criminal organizations based in Africa only risk convictions outside of Africa. The challenges faced by African countries in bringing to justice structured criminal organizations require further research.

Assessing the prevalence of trafficking in persons in Africa

While increasing numbers of African victims of trafficking in persons are identified every year, there remains limited understanding about the true extent of the number of victims who remain undetected. There are a growing number of studies that have looked at the estimates of the number of victims of trafficking, particularly within the African continent, testing new methodologies and tools for empirical studies examining hard-to-reach and marginalized populations. UNODC reviewed 130 of these studies carried in the African continent after 2010. Of these, 17 applied survey methods to estimate the prevalence of trafficking in persons. These studies have assessed the prevalence of trafficking in persons in limited geographical contexts, in specific hotspots, and among population groups who have been considered most at risk.¹⁴²

Key takeaways from studies that have estimated the number of trafficking victims among specific groups in Africa

1. While the reviewed studies applied different methodologies to estimate the hidden number of victims, many of them noted that the provided total size of the phenomenon was still an underestimation of the total number of victims.
2. Estimates have been provided for some local populations documenting some specific forms of trafficking and victim profiles: trafficking among returning migrants, among internally displaced persons, trafficking for forced labour within domestic workers, agriculture and mining sectors, minors in situation of extreme poverty and other vulnerable people.
3. The studies were limited in scope and cannot be used to extrapolate a total number of trafficking victims beyond the geographical areas or the population considered by the study.
4. The results presented show large differences among the populations considered that can be explained only to a certain extent by the differences in the severity of the phenomenon. Results diverge also because of the different methodologies and definitions used, highlighting the need for a universal standard on prevalence estimates.

A broad range of prevalence estimates on trafficking in persons for different population and in different settings

Prevalence studies conducted in 2020 and 2021 in a number of provinces in West Africa characterized by high rates of child labour resulted in estimates ranging from 26 to 67 per cent of children between

5 and 17 experienced child trafficking.¹⁴³ Considering the characteristics of these provinces the results cannot be generalized or extended for other parts of West Africa.

Similar considerations for other studies conducted in 2021 found that the level of sexual exploitation among older children in some districts in East Africa could range between 1.6 and 11 per cent of the sampled children aged 13 to 17 years. The highest prevalence is estimated in territories identified by the authors as of particular concern for the high rate of child poverty and material needs.¹⁴⁴

Social norms and beliefs present within hyper-masculine environments, such where large populations of men are concentrated in isolated areas, may result in normalizing the sexual exploitation of women and girls.¹⁴⁵ As such, trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is frequently reported in mining areas. A 2022 study undertaken in two gold mining areas in West Africa found that victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation could account for between 13 and 30 per cent of young women (age range 18–30) in prostitution in the areas surroundings of these mining sites.¹⁴⁶

As far as trafficking for forced labour in domestic servitude is concerned, studies conducted in limited urban settings in North Africa resulted in estimates ranging between one quarter and one third of women in domestic work in these areas showing indications of having been trafficked.¹⁴⁷ Also in this case, the results cannot be generalized beyond the very limited geographical areas covered.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) can be at a heightened risk of trafficking in persons. A study conducted in 2017-2018 with IDPs aged 15 and over and residing in some selected camps or host communities found estimates ranging between 0.3 and 21 per cent of those interviewed had been subjected to forced labour.¹⁴⁸ The wide range of the prevalences across the studied areas depended on the characteristics of the conflict.¹⁴⁹

Studies have also looked at emerging vulnerabilities to trafficking in the context of forced mobility beyond conflict settings. Research on trafficking in the context of migration conducted in 2016 found extremely high levels of victimization among returnees, as one out of every two people interviewed had been trafficked during their journey or at destination.¹⁵⁰ The study found young

individuals and female respondents reported more risks of trafficking compared to older people and males.¹⁵¹ Socio-economic factors often play a pivotal role in victimization dynamics.¹⁵² One study conducted in the urban areas of Southern Africa

found a lifetime prevalence rate of 17 per cent and past 12-month rate of 2.9 per cent among unhoused people and other marginalized groups, were trafficked for the purpose of forced labour or for sexual exploitation.¹⁵³

Trafficking of migrants and refugees on African routes: Evidence from the UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants

Trafficking in persons is committed against people who travel on migration routes by land and sea through, from and to Africa. UNODC, through its Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants,^a has been conducting research on smuggling along migration routes in North and West Africa since 2019, which provides indications of how trafficking in persons is committed in this context.

It is important to keep in mind that smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons are distinct crimes.^b The UNODC research presented below indicates that migrants and refugees who are smuggled along African migration routes are at high risk of trafficking.

Trafficking in the context of mixed migration can manifest in a number of possible scenarios that involve different combinations of criminal offences and violations of individual rights. In some of these cases, the perpetrator of smuggling offences also victimizes the smuggled migrant. In other cases, actors other than smugglers may take advantage of the vulnerable situation of the migrant being smuggled in order to exploit them, which could constitute trafficking in persons in many instances.

a UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/observatory_som.html.

b The smuggling offence is defined in the relevant Protocol supplementing the United Nations Transnational Organized Crime Convention as “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident consisting of facilitating the irregular entry of another person into a country for a profit”. The Protocol also requires the criminalization of producing, procuring, providing or possessing fraudulent travel or identity documents for the purpose of enabling smuggling of migrants, and of enabling a person to remain in a country without complying with the necessary requirements for legal stay, in both cases when committed intentionally and in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. Smuggling offences include document fraud committed to enable smuggling of migrants, for a profit; and enabling another person to irregularly stay in a country, for a profit. The smuggling offence involves a material, usually financial, voluntary transaction between a person who seeks to enter or stay in a country irregularly, and a smuggler. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000): www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html.

Extent

Data and analysis indicate that the extent of smuggling of migrants from North Africa to Europe has increased in recent years. On all sea routes from Africa to Europe, UNODC estimates that at least 230,000 people were subject to smuggling or attempted smuggling during 2023, an increase of around 80% compared to 2022. This increase was mostly recorded on the Central Mediterranean route (175,000–228,000),^c as well as on the Northwest African (Atlantic) route. Some 39,800 people arrived on the latter route during 2023, most of whom were smuggled.^d

Most people smuggled to Europe from Africa in 2023 were West and North African.^e On the other hand, smuggling of Nigerians by sea to Europe significantly decreased in recent years.^f As of the beginning of 2024, transregional smuggling through North Africa of people from Syria, Bangladesh and Pakistan to Europe continues to increase. During the first eight months of 2024, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis comprised 25 per cent and Syrians 17 per cent of all those arriving irregularly by sea from North Africa to Italy, while during the same period in 2023 these three citizenships comprised together less than 20 per cent.^g This is indicative of a gradual increase in the use of North Africa as a hub for migrant smuggling from Asia into Europe.

c UNODC (2024). “The Migrant Smuggling Market on the Central Mediterranean.” UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants Update #2 - October 2024: www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glosom/Observatory/2024/CMRUUpdate_Oct2024.pdf.

d UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Northwest African (Atlantic) route: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/adc4bbd2969849d1b6be9792e9b7bf4f>.

e Calculations based on figures provided in: Italian Ministry of Interior “Cruscotto Statistico al 3 Maggio 2024”: www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2024-05/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_03-05-2024.pdf.

f See: UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.

g UNHCR Italy, Weekly Snapshot, 23 September – 29 September 2024.

People on mixed migration routes are vulnerable to trafficking in persons

Research by the UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants indicates that in the context of migrant smuggling, serious crimes are committed against migrants, from trafficking in persons for forced labour and sexual exploitation to sale of a person, and deprivation of liberty for extortion. For example, one in five of the 746 Nigerians surveyed in 2021 for the Observatory's research experienced deprivation of liberty for the purposes of extortion. Almost half (48%) of Nigerian adults surveyed considered trafficking and exploitation a significant risk for Nigerian children on mixed migration routes.^h Research by the Observatory on the Western Mediterranean route from North Africa to Spain also identified instances of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and sale of a person.ⁱ

Trafficking in persons may also take place in the context of armed conflicts and related cross-border displacement. The deteriorating security situation in Sudan and in the Horn of Africa, for example, have led to significant cross-border displacement, in some cases involving smuggling of migrants offences, and increased risks of trafficking in persons.

In 2022, 100 interviews were conducted for UNODC in Sudan with people from countries in the Horn of Africa, as well as from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The research suggests that, in the absence of legal channels for movement, some people fleeing conflicts and violence use smugglers to facilitate their movement to place of safety, making them more vulnerable to trafficking in persons. Many interviewees stated that they had been intentionally misled by their smuggler in terms of travel routes, modes of transportation and fees.

Some non-state armed groups in the Central Sahel benefit from migrant smuggling by recruiting migrants and refugees into their ranks.^j UNODC conducted 154 interviews with actors involved at various levels in the migrant smuggling industry in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in 2021. Interviewees indicated that actors involved in smuggling of migrants were

in some cases also involved in committing drug trafficking, sexual exploitation and labour exploitation.

Trafficking in persons offences in the Central Sahel are perpetrated by various actors, including private citizens, state officials, smugglers and non-state armed groups.^k UN entities have also reported a number of cases of migrants recruited for forced labour in mines or by armed groups along routes from West to North Africa.^l

The same offenders committing multiple offences: smuggling and trafficking

Trafficking in persons can be committed by the same offender who perpetrates smuggling of migrants, and in respect of the same person. The most common manifestations of this phenomenon on mixed migration routes through African countries are deprivation of liberty for extortion, forced labour, sexual exploitation and forced criminality (whereby smuggled migrants are coerced or deceived into committing migrant smuggling offences).

According to UNODC research on migrant smuggling in the Central Sahel, smugglers perpetrate trafficking offences directly or connect people on the move with traffickers. A higher percentage of smuggled people among the 2,005 surveyed in the region experienced trafficking in persons (10 per cent) compared to those who did not use a smuggler (4 per cent).^m UNODC's research on smuggling from Nigeria also revealed indications of abuses perpetrated by smugglers, ranging from deception and preventing access to means of communication, to violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons.ⁿ

Deprivation of liberty for extortion

One of the most prevalent crimes perpetrated by smugglers is deprivation of liberty and extortion of their clients. From a number of in-depth interviews (82) with migrants for UNODC's research in North and West Africa, there are indications that migrants are isolated in warehouses or private houses by

^h See: UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.

ⁱ See: UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West Africa, Morocco and Western Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>.

^j UNODC (2023). Smuggling of Migrants in the Sahel. Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment - Sahel. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta_sahel/TOCTA_Sahel_som_2023.pdf.

^k UNODC (2023). Smuggling of Migrants in the Sahel. Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment - Sahel. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta_sahel/TOCTA_Sahel_som_2023.pdf.

^l UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West Africa, Morocco and Western Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>.

^m UNODC (2023). Smuggling of Migrants in the Sahel. Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment - Sahel. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta_sahel/TOCTA_Sahel_som_2023.pdf.

ⁿ See: UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.

smugglers or other actors affiliated with the smugglers. The smugglers either demanded a ransom or detained them at 'credit houses' until they paid the full smuggling fee.^o

Sexual exploitation

Some women smuggled in the Central Sahel are also trafficked for sexual exploitation in the course of their journeys. This may be linked to goldmining sites where women are trafficked for sexual exploitation by smugglers or other actors.^p

According to UNODC's research on the Western Mediterranean route, sexual exploitation of women who have arrived irregularly in North Africa may start when the smuggler introduces women – or 'sells' them – to a local community leader ('chairman'). In some cases, the chairman then hands them over to a pimp, for a fee. Examples were cited by interviewees of victims of sexual exploitation who are reportedly forced to repay the equivalent of up to US\$2,250 for the smuggling fee, suggesting that smuggling fees are inflated as a means of controlling trafficking victims through debt bondage.^q

Key informants for UNODC's research on smuggling along the Northwest African route to the Canary Islands, Spain, highlighted the risk that the route may be used for trafficking of women and girls from West Africa for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Europe.^r

Finally, though not necessarily indicative of trafficking in persons, some smugglers interviewed for UNODC research in the Central Sahel reported that sex can be a form of payment for smuggling services in some instances.^s

- o UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West and North Africa and Central Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>; UNODC (2023). Smuggling of Migrants in the Sahel. Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment - Sahel. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta_sahel/TOCTA_Sahel_som_2023.pdf.
- p IOM, Etude sur la Traite des Êtres Humains – Etat des Lieux (2021), pp. 34–39.
- q UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West Africa, Morocco and Western Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>.
- r UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). North-west African (Atlantic) route: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/adc4bbd2969849d1b6be9792e9b7bf4f>.
- s UNODC (2023). Smuggling of Migrants in the Sahel. Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment - Sahel. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta_sahel/TOCTA_Sahel_som_2023.pdf.

Forced labour

In North Africa in particular, there is evidence that some migrant smugglers collaborate with traffickers who subject migrants to forced labour in agriculture and other sectors. Some situations emerged from interviewing 49 people for the Observatory research, where exploitative labour was used as an advance payment for subsequent sea smuggling to Europe; this can take the form of working without being paid for a smuggler, or for an employer intermediated by the smuggler.^t

Trafficking by other actors

Trafficking in persons is also committed against people on the move by perpetrators other than those who facilitated their irregular entry. The victims of trafficking may have been smuggled, but the perpetrator of the trafficking offence is not the same as the perpetrator of the smuggling offence. Migrants are vulnerable to trafficking by other actors because of factors linked to their being the object of smuggling.

UNODC's research indicates that abduction, deprivation of liberty for extortion and trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation are committed against migrants and refugees by various actors other than smugglers. The perpetrators take advantage of the irregular status of smuggled migrants in countries of transit and destination and their consequent fear of coming into contact with the authorities, as well as dependency on smugglers in dangerous territories crossed along the routes.^u

Deprivation of liberty for extortion

Deprivation of liberty and extortion are perpetrated by actors other than smugglers on migration routes by land through West and North Africa. Almost all of the 49 migrants and refugees interviewed for UNODC's research in West and North Africa reported being kidnapped by non-state actors along the routes from West Africa to North Africa, particularly in border areas in the Central Sahel, and while working in agricultural fields in Libya or living in Tripoli.^v

- t UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West and North Africa and Central Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>.
- u UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.
- v UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West and North Africa and Central Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>; UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.

Abductions and kidnapping for ransom have been linked with the presence of militias and armed groups in Northern Mali.^w Migrants abducted manage to continue their journey when a ransom is paid on their behalf by family members or when they are able to escape. In another scenario they are ‘sold’ by a prison guard to third parties who exploit men for forced labour in agriculture or construction and women in domestic work or prostitution.^x

Forced labour

There is often a connection between deprivation of liberty on migration routes and forced labour, particularly in North Africa. UNODC research indicates that some people who travelled on migration routes and were then detained were subjected to forced labour in exchange for being released from detention. There is also intermediation of forced labour from detention centres to private businesses and private citizens who may pay a ransom for detainees and then force them to work in order to pay off what was paid. Limited accountability and rule of law in certain areas has contributed to the proliferation of this type of forced labour.^y

Sexual exploitation

Among the 20 West African women interviewed for UNODC research on smuggling, the majority reported indications of sexual exploitation after being abducted on migration routes. Cases of women who were sexually exploited in North Africa, and were subsequently ‘freed’ by a local man were documented.^z

w UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West Africa, Morocco and Western Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>; UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf-411c8d8edd061c6c9460>; UN Panel of Experts Established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) on Mali and renewed pursuant to resolution 2484 (2019). (2020). Final Report of the Panel of Experts: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3876820?v=pdf>.

x UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West and North Africa and Central Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>; UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf-411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.

y UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West and North Africa and Central Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>.

z UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2021). West and North Africa and Central Mediterranean: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5d-dae6aa5af1da3>; UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (2022). Focus on Migrant Smuggling from Nigeria: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf-411c8d8edd061c6c9460>.

Generation 30 Research on Trafficking in Persons

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

Family involvement, juju rituals, physical and sexual violence and stigma and labelling: The convoluted experiences of young Nigerian victims trafficked to Italy

A Generation 30 contribution to the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024

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Rationale and background

Nigeria is one of the African countries that identifies the highest numbers of human trafficking victims, of which about 83 per cent are women and girls (2021).^a In 2019, Nigeria was also one of the top countries of origin of victims of human trafficking identified in the European Union.^b This research was conducted from 2018 to 2020 to document the experiences of female Nigerian victims who were trafficked from Nigeria into Italy between 2016 and 2018. The research involved interviews with Nigerian victims whose travel was organized by smugglers and traffickers, who all travelled to Italy irregularly, and whose journeys began in the South West of the country from where they were taken up North to cross the border into Niger. They travelled through the dangerous Sahara desert, crossed the border into Libya, were put on rubber dinghies and pushed out to the Central Mediterranean Sea where they were rescued by Search and Rescue ships and taken to Italy.

Methodology and limitations

The study adopted a victim-centred approach in which the participants were empowered to tell their own stories with their wellbeing and safety prioritized throughout the research process.^c

The findings of this longitudinal study were gathered from the experiences of 31 female Nigerian victims of

trafficking, interviewed in Italy and exploited in a number of countries along the route in transit or destination, who had escaped the trafficking networks. This does not presume that they are a homogeneous group and fully represent the experiences of all Nigerian victims of trafficking.^d

Key findings

1. The role of family members in trafficking in persons.^e Family involvement in trafficking in persons was one of the key findings of the study;

^d Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 31 recruited participants over three measurement (interview) moments (M1, M2, and M3) with at least six months between each measurement. In M1, there were 31 participants, 22 participants in M2, and 16 participants in M3. The main reason for the drop out was that the participants although keen on seeing the researcher again, did not wish to revisit painful past experiences. Employing a longitudinal approach crystallized the participants' experiences and the changes that they went through over the two years' timeframe allotted for the study. The majority of the participants in this study (28) were recruited by NGOs based in the regions of Sicily, Piemonte and Campania, while three were recruited directly by the researcher based on her previous encounters with them in her work as a practitioner. However, all the participants arrived in Italy between January 2016 and June 2018, and they originated from Edo (65 per cent), Delta (19 per cent) and other (16 per cent) states in Nigeria. During M1, 30 of the 31 participants were in shelters for victims of human trafficking, with 20 participants being adults, and 11 being children. Although the researcher only recruited adult participants, 10 confided in the researcher either after their interview, or a few months later during the longitudinal study, that they were actually under the age of 18. Research also shows that the experiences of children and adult victims of trafficking travelling through this route are very similar with children receiving no preferential treatment, as confirmed by our participants. Moreover, some of the participants who left Nigeria as children arrived in Europe as adults or had become adults by the time the first set of interviews were conducted.

^e Adeyinka, S., Lietaert, I. and Derluyn, I., "She said this might be God's way of taking care of us. Family involvement in human trafficking", *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, Vol. 19 No. 3/4, (2023), pp. 157-172. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMHS-11-2022-0116>

^a National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Annual Report 2021.

^b European Union Agency for Asylum, Country Guidance Nigeria/ Victims of human trafficking, including forced prostitution (2019). Available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-nigeria/215-victims-human-trafficking-including-forced-prostitution#:~:text=Nigeria%20is%20the%20top%20nationality,affects%20women%2C%20but%20also%20children.>

^c Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium and the Commissione per L'Etica della Ricerca e la Bioetica, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy

Type of family involvement in participants' trafficking experience

Group	Type of involvement	Quote
Group 1	Family members who were aware of their children and wards travelling with a trafficker and were actively involved in their recruitment and/or journey. They encouraged and/or forced it.	<i>When they told him [uncle], we are coming here for prostitute, he said I should be the one to go. So, I have no choice, I have to go, because things get [. . .] Please, I can't say it. [bursts into tears] [her uncle raped her]. (M1)</i> <i>My sister took me to Mali... they [sister and traffickers] forced me to do prostitution work, and I did it for two and a half years. (M1)</i>
Group 2	Family members who were aware of their children and wards traveling with a trafficker and were passively involved in their recruitment and/or journey. Did not initiate the travel but did not discourage it.*	<i>I knew the work was prostitution work and my mum knew, but we believed that it would benefit our family well if I go and do the work. (M1)</i> <i>My mum knew about the journey [before departure] and was happy about it, because she believed that I would be able to send money home to support her. (M1)</i>
Group 3	Family members who were aware of their children and wards traveling but were deceived, and thought it was for other purposes – vocational jobs, education, etc.	<i>My mum was really excited about the journey and encouraged me to go, because she felt that I would be able to make good money as a nanny in Germany for myself and to send home, but my mum did not know it was for prostitution work. (M1)</i> <i>My grandmother said someone is coming to take me to France. She said that it's one of my aunties who travelled out of the country [. . .] and has promised to pay for my education, so I can finish school.</i>

* Group 2 consisted of family members who clearly knew that their children's or ward(s)' travel would result in prostitution because their children or wards would be working for a madam; however, they did not recruit their children for the madams nor actively encourage them to go, but they also did not discourage their children from going or do anything about it.

during analysis, family involvement in the participants' migration journey and trafficking experiences was evident in one way or the other. However, there were different types of family involvement, and family involvement did not always mean family approval of trafficking in persons. Three main groups emerged from the analysis:

In the first group, participants' family members were part of the recruitment, and enforcement of exploitation. Working on or with family members is a tactical strategy used by traffickers who understand the key aspects of respecting and obeying elders in the Nigerian society, and use that to their advantage.

In the second group, although family members were not explicitly pushing the participants to embark on the journey, they did not stop them and/or were supportive of the idea that they were going with a trafficker, as it meant some remittances would come their way.

The common factor in group three was deception: the participants' parent or guardian was deceived about the purpose of the trip.

2. The role of juju rituals as a tool of control and liberation for Nigerian victims of human trafficking^f

A vast body of literature^g refers to how traffickers have used the traditional practice of *Juju* rituals to blackmail victims and force them into exploitative conditions. In 2018, the *Oba* (King) of Benin in

f Adeyinka, S., Lietaert, I., & Derluyn, I., "The Role of Juju Rituals in Human Trafficking of Nigerians: A Tool of Enslavement, But Also Escape", *SAGE Open*, (2023) 13(4), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231210474>

g Achebe, N., "The road to Italy: Nigerian sex workers at home and abroad", *Journal of Women's History*, (2004). 15(4), 178–185, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2004.0002>; Ikeora, M., "The role of African traditional religion and 'juju' in human trafficking: Implications for anti-trafficking", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, (2016) 17(1), 1–18; Nagle, L., & Owasanoye, B., "Fearing the dark: The use of witchcraft to control human trafficking victims and sustain vulnerability", *Southwestern Law Review*, (2016) 45, 561.

Nigeria made a public declaration against traffickers in which he revoked the curses traffickers place on victims through *juju* rituals, and cursed traffickers who refused to stop the illicit trade.^h This was unprecedented, and participants interviewed in this study, confirmed that the *Oba's* declaration was the help that they needed to escape the trafficking networks. Therefore, *juju* which is utilized as a tool of control over victims, was in this case, a tool of liberation.

I asked for help from some of my girlfriends who ran away from their madam, they told me about what Oba said. So, I called my mum to ask if it was true and my mum said yes... my friend then said Oba told us not to pay and that she is a Benin girl [from Edo state] so she herself will not pay again. So, I asked her to help me. (M1)

Since our Oba said we should leave, I have peace of mind, I have not afraid for myself or my [unborn] child and I will give birth in peace. If not for that [declaration], I don't know where I would be now or what would have happened to me. (M2)

I ended up going to court to testify against her [madam]. In court, I looked my madam in the eye, and I said: "You, you are the one who brought me here and forced me to do ashawo [prostitution] work" and she was found guilty and sentenced. I think she is under arrest now. (M1).

The far-reaching effect of the *Oba's* declaration against traffickers was another key finding of this study. This finding highlights the importance of including community-based approach to address international issues and utilizing effective strategies that may be deemed as unconventional while tackling an issue as global, yet local, as human trafficking.

3. The continuous violence experienced by victims of trafficking during their trajectories.ⁱ

The participants' experiences of physical and sexual violence happened during their migration journeys and continued after arrival in the European Union. The actors changed, but the violence remained.

h Ibileke, J., "Human trafficking: Oba places curses on offenders, collaborating sorcerers, cultists", *PM News*, (2018), <https://www.thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2018/03/09/human-trafficking-oba-places-curses%E2%80%8B-on-offenders-collaborating-sorcerers-cultists/>.

i Adeyinka, S., Lietaert, I., & Derluyn, I., "It happened in the desert, in Libya and in Italy: physical and sexual violence experienced by female, Nigerian victims of trafficking in Italy", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2023c 20(5): 4309, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054309>.

Niger: *So, one guy tried to save me, but the boga [trafficker] shot him and killed him. So, I had no choice but to give in; the man raped me, and I also saw him killing the person that tried to help me. (M1)*

Libya: *They raped me again, and eventually just dumped me in the desert to die. I really thought I would die this time, but again, I didn't die . . . I got pregnant. (M1)*

Italy: *The new camp is ok; they have adults and minors there and the people working there are nice. One of the staff there tried to have sex with me, but I refused, and I warned him that if he tries again, I will break his head. (M1)*

This third key finding highlights the physical and sexual violence that the participants were forced to experience. The experiences of violence that they had themselves, and witnessed being done to others were so many and so common that no participant was excluded from it. These strongly impacted their physical, mental, and emotional health as described in the excerpts below.

I beat my child [conceived through rape] because sometimes, I see something in her, or one look on her face that I don't know, and I think is from her father, I feel very bad. (M2)

When I think about it [the experiences of sexual violence], I feel chest pains. (M2)

Sometimes I can't even eat when I think about it. I sometimes feel dizzy. Something has changed in my brain since then [the experiences of sexual violence]. I don't reason well. Sometimes I just panic and then try to calm myself down. (M1)

If I close my eyes, I see horrible things that make me fear or I feel as if somebody is in the room, but I cannot see them. Sometimes, I will see a shadow but there is nobody else in the room, so who is the owner of the shadow? (M2)

These excerpts highlight the lasting impact of the participants' experiences of violence, the weight of the trauma that they carry, and one can only anticipate the long road to recovery ahead of them.

4. The continuous experiences of stigma, specifically sexual stigma, and labelling.^j Similar to the experiences of violence, the actors changed, but the participants' experiences of stigma and labelling continued.

People always say bad things about Nigerians here [Italy], it is mostly about prostitution when you are a girl, and if you are a Nigerian boy here, then you are a criminal. (M1)

j Adeyinka, S., Lietaert, I., & Derluyn, I., "You are merely a Nigerian prostitute": Sexual stigma and labeling of Nigerian victims of trafficking in Italy," *Stigma and Health*, (2023) 8(3), 279–288, <https://doi.org/10.1037/sah0000441>

*I have been at the bus stop [in Italy] several times and older men stopped to offer me a ride, I asked how much it would cost, and they said *** [sexual act]. I told them ... I had money to pay for the trip, but they told me that was the fare and that I should better get used to it because that was what my people did... (M1).*

*In the NGO, the people sometimes talked about Nigerians as if we are all bad people and troublesome. If something happened, the first person they would blame are the Nigerians. So, when the woman I was living with started behaving funny as if I wanted to steal her old husband, I was happy to leave that house and go to *** [another NGO's housing]. (M1)*

The continuous experience of stigma, specifically sexual stigma and discrimination was so prevalent that one of the participants told the researcher that “it is normal”. It happened to them so frequently, that they no longer saw it as something strange, it had become normal. The participants described experiences of stigma and labelling in different spaces including on the bus, in the shelter, on the street, etc. They felt that they were only seen as Nigerians who did prostitution work, nothing else; and they perceived this “prostitution label” as an obstacle to find a job or integrate into the local society, so they isolated themselves and stayed within their own networks. Noteworthy, was the unwavering loyalty that the participants had towards their family members, including those who were part of their exploitation and trafficking. They still regularly sent them money and had a sense of loyalty to them regardless of what they had done.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

In conclusion, the participants’ experiences during their migration trajectories while being trafficked from Nigeria to Italy were both complex and violent. They highlight the dangers encountered along the way as well as the role played by different actors including family members. The study shows that:

1. Family involvement in different capacities is prevalent in human trafficking. It highlights the key roles that family members play, and power that they have.
2. There are other strategies to consider when tackling trafficking in persons – such as how the *Oba’s* declaration against traffickers was a tool that supported several participants in escaping their traffickers.
3. Physical and sexual violence continues even after arrival in the destination country and is sometimes perpetuated by caregivers. This leaves the participants in a cycle of multiple violent experiences and stigma which can be linked to what Orsini et al^k refer to as “loops of violence”.

4. Stigma, especially sexual stigma and labelling are highly prevalent and in turn, cause the participants to ostracize themselves from the society they live in. However, research^l shows that this type of self-isolation has a negative impact on wellness and quality of life.

To support victims of trafficking in persons in a lasting manner, relevant and tailored forms of support are highly recommended, and these include:

- › Involvement of willing and safe family members not involved in their exploitation, in aftercare. Since the advice and decisions of family members are highly respected in this context, possibly linked to the belief that parents/ caregivers make decisions that are in their children/wards’ best interests,^m then involvement of family members with the participants’ wellbeing at heart would allow for lasting rehabilitation and possibly prevent re-trafficking.
- › Involvement of the victims’ communities of origin and seemingly unconventional tools may be quite effective in tackling human trafficking. This supports Lederach’s three principles necessary for establishing peace constituencies – *indigenous empowerment, cultural sensitivity and a long-term commitment.*ⁿ
- › The need for long-term support structures that factor in the types of violence experienced by victims of trafficking, and understanding that these experiences may negatively impact their other relationships,^o including with caregivers.
- › Recognizing the mental health (and other) effects of (sexual) stigma, labelling, and treatment of the participants as the ‘problematic other’ and providing relevant long-term care and support.

k Orsini, G. and others, “Loops of violence within Europe’s governance of migration and asylum: Bottom-up perspectives on the experience of everyday bordering for refugees transiting/ settling in Libya, Italy, Greece and Belgium. *Politics and Governance*”, (2022) 10(2), 256–266, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v10i2.5183>.

l Benoit, C. and others, “Stigma and Its Effect on the Working Conditions, Personal Lives, and Health of Sex Workers”, *Journal of Sex Research*, (2018), 55(4-5), 457-471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1393652>.

m Iversen, V. and Ghorpade, Y., “Misfortune, misfits and what the city gave and took: the stories of South-Indian child labour migrants-1935–2005”, *Modern Asian Studies*, (2011) Vol. 45 No. 5, pp. 1177–1226; Kakar, S. *The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, 4th ed., (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2012).

n Lederach, J. P., “Conflict transformation in protracted internal conflicts: The case for a comprehensive frame- work”, in K. Rupesinghe (ed.), *Conflict transformation*, (St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp. 201–222.

o Classen, C.C, Palesh, O.G., Aggarwal, R., “Sexual Revictimization: A Review of the Empirical Literature”, *Trauma Violence Abus.* (2005), 6, 103–129.

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality to commit online scams in Southeast Asia

Contribution from the UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific^a

Trafficking for fraud and online scams

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities is a form of trafficking that has risen in numbers and is gaining increased attention in different parts of the world. The detection of this form of trafficking has increased over the last 10 years, passing from about 1 per cent of the total victims detected in 2016,^b to 6 per cent in 2018,^c to 8 per cent in 2022 (see Chapter 1, page 53). This form of trafficking has been detected in about 25 countries in all regions of the world. A particular form of this trafficking that has emerged in the last few years is trafficking for committing cyber-enabled frauds. The phenomenon has surfaced in Southeast Asia where well-established transnational organized groups have trafficked young professionals and forced them to commit cyber-enabled crimes.

Victims from a range of low- and middle-income countries from the region and beyond have been found trafficked to commit these crimes in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Southeast Asia, mostly located along the borders of Mekong region countries. SEZ are specific areas of industrial development that benefit from simplified regulatory regimes and infrastructure to encourage investment.^d SEZ have also been identified as areas with less stringent regulations and limited oversight of law enforcement authorities.^e High-profile organized crime groups have been increasingly involved in SEZs as owners, developers and investors.^f Human rights abuses such as child trafficking and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation had already been reported in such areas prior to the pandemic.^g Moreover, these areas have drawn international attention for housing large scale

cyberfraud operations and money laundering schemes, in effect serving as parallel underground banking systems for organized crime in the region and beyond.^h

Since 2021, such groups have started recruiting young professionals from several countries to exploit their skills in the commission of highly sophisticated online scams. Victims have been kept in casinos, resorts, hotels, large office buildings and residential developments established in or around SEZs in the region. Due to the mix of favourable regulatory frameworks and availability of IT technology, setting up an online casino has been relatively easy and profitable.ⁱ

The risk factors

The progressive expansion of this form of trafficking in the Southeast Asian SEZs is linked to the relatively recent growth of the number of casinos and junket operators^j established in the Mekong region.^k Online gambling is banned to varying extents in many countries in Southeast Asia,^l and many operators and players relocated to SEZs, where regulations allow for complicated schemes of transactional activities. For instance, the same group may be physically located in one country, run websites hosted somewhere else, while being licensed in a third country and targeting potential customers in multiple countries around the world.^m

What had previously been designed as hotels and in-person gambling platforms were turned into operation centres managing large numbers of hybrid or online gaming transactions.

Online casinos, and junket operators and virtual asset service providers (e.g. high risk unregulated exchanges, payments services) now serve as integral components of the regional underground and unregulated, or poorly regulated financial/banking

a This box draws upon UNODC, "Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia Policy Report", (Bangkok, September 2023).

b See UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*, p. 31.

c Ibid, p. 34.

d Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Online Scam Operations and Trafficking into Forced Criminality in Southeast Asia: Recommendations for a Human Rights Response*, (2023).

e Jespersen, S. and others, *Trafficking for Forced Criminality: The Rise of Exploitation in Scam Centres in Southeast Asia*, ODI Thematic brief, (London, 2023).

f UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

g Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on Cambodia under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*. CRC/C/OPSC/KHM/CO/1, (26 February 2015).

h UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

i UNODC, *Casinos, Money Laundering, Underground Banking, and Transnational Organized Crime in East and Southeast Asia: A Hidden and Accelerating Threat* (Bangkok, January 2024).

j The term 'junket' refers to a short-term gambling program arranged by an operator for one or more high-wealth players at a chosen casino, in conjunction with the relevant casino operator.

k UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

l OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on Cambodia* (2015); Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell* (October 2023).

m United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia Policy Report*, (Bangkok, September 2023).



infrastructure allowing organized crime syndicates in the Mekong region to launder billions of dollars of illicit profit. The infrastructure originally built to launder money through online gaming platforms is used to commit financial frauds in different currencies including cryptocurrency, trading fraudulent shares in companies or romance-investment scams.ⁿ

In search of a workforce to operate such scams, criminal groups started targeting workers in Southeast Asia and as the business expanded, looked for workers beyond the countries' borders under the pretence of well-paid and interesting jobs.^o

The context where these organized crime groups operate is characterized by large-scale corruption and alliances with non-state armed groups active in the region,^p with collusion between organized crime groups and senior government officials, politicians, local law enforcement and influential businesspersons.^q

The sophisticated organized crime behind it

The limited number of ongoing investigations into and convictions for trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality in Southeast Asia makes it difficult to draw a comprehensive profile of the organized crime groups involved. However, evidence resulting from investigative files suggests that groups involved in this type of trafficking are sophisticated and well organized. Ongoing investigations into money laundering and online fraud indicate that leaders of these groups are typically men from Southeast Asia, often high-profile, presenting themselves as legitimate business owners, while forming alliances with high-ranking government officials and private corporations.^r

These leaders are, or are connected with, the owners and managers of the scam sites and operate shell companies for the money laundering operations. Different types of "personnel" operate in the compound where scam operations are managed and implemented. While some of the people who operate

scams are coerced, others are willing participants as "controllers" and "agents" or as simply part of the scam work force and are either part of criminal operations, or aiding criminal groups running scamming facilities. Directors who manage the scam compounds live in close proximity and oversee the day-to-day running of the online scams, managing the operations and people involved. Controllers, for instance, ensure that "operators" meet their financial objectives through threats and use of physical force. Some of the offenders acting in the system may have formerly been victims, and later agreed to take the role of controller in the scam compound in exchange for their own release, or other privileges.^s

Agents on the other hand are often nationals of the countries in which the scam compound is located, reporting directly to the directors, and are mostly responsible for organizing the transportation of the victims. There have been instances where agents have mediated with national authorities (including immigration services) to ensure the release of those victims who have managed to escape but were not recognized by national authorities as victims of trafficking and were instead held in detention facilities. Once released, these victims were re-trafficked into a similar situation of exploitation in the same region/province or another country. Outside the compound, there are hierarchical networks that connect the compounds to individual recruiters and agencies, transporters and, in some cases, non-state armed groups. Various border areas in the Mekong region remain under the control of a number of non-state armed groups operating numerous casinos and running other illicit business.^t

Available research suggests that the nationalities of the offenders serving at the lowest level of the hierarchy tend to correspond with the nationalities of the victims, while the leading positions are occupied by nationals from the broader East Asian region.^u

Victims from all over the world

Victims from Asia, Africa, Middle East and South America have been identified in Southeast Asia to commit various types of online scams, often controlled and manipulated through debt bondage and threat.^v

Both men and women have been targeted by organized crime groups and forced into conducting cyber-enabled crimes, but the majority are men, aged between 20 and 30, and are not citizens of the

ⁿ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*; UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime and the Convergence of Cyber-Enabled Fraud, Underground Banking and Technological Innovation in Southeast Asia: A Shifting Threat Landscape* (Bangkok, October 2024).

^o OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on Cambodia (2015); Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell*.

^p United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Casinos, Money Laundering, Underground Banking, and Transnational Organized Crime in East and Southeast Asia: A Hidden and Accelerating Threat* (Bangkok, January 2024).

^q OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on Cambodia (2015).

^r UNODC, *Casinos, Money Laundering*.

^s Ibid.

^t UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*.

^u Ibid; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims in forced scam labour* (2023).

^v UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*.

country of exploitation.^w Victims identified in the region in 2022 were mostly described as having tertiary level education, or higher, being media savvy and multilingual, and originating mostly from countries in Southeast Asia.^x

The modus operandi

Attracting the victims

Available evidence suggests that victims are recruited through deceptive online advertisements managed by individual recruiters or private agencies; in some cases recruitment is initiated from the scam centre. Following investigative operations in the region, a minority of the victims rescued in 2022 reported that they were recruited face-to-face through acquaintances following traditional trafficking dynamics, and to a lesser degree through kidnapping.^y Some trafficking victims are used by the organized crime group to recruit other people they know into situations of forced criminality, including family members and friends, through a payment of, for example, USD300, for each person recruited.^z There are reports of victims forced to stay and work in the compound until a ransom is not paid.

Some victims have been recruited through online advertisements that initially targeted university graduates fluent in multiple languages (especially English and Mandarin), skilled in Information Technology (IT) or having familiarity with social media, and occasionally some working knowledge of cryptocurrency. These young men and women were lured by job advertisements offering high pay and interesting professional work. The pay reportedly offered was the equivalent of around USD 1,000 – 1,500 per month with benefits including free food, housing and travel costs covered. Jobs included working in digital marketing, customer services, construction, translation,^{aa} hotel, and online gaming companies.^{ab}

Through the use of scam manuals, artificial intelligence tools and other IT solutions that have defined the modus operandi for the online scams, scam scripts and methods can eventually be easily replicated across compounds and even be used by less skilled cohorts of victims.^{ac}

Automatized tools have also been used to create deceptive job advertisements mostly promoted through messaging apps and social media. Some advertisements have fraudulently used the names, logos and other branding of existing and legitimate companies to lure victims.^{ad}

Some recruitment is also conducted face-to-face or through established recruitment agencies used for legitimate employment in the past. Cases of recruitment agencies based in the Middle East had been reportedly paid approximately USD 2,500 by the organized crime group for each recruitment.^{ae}

Some victims that were exploited in scam centres in Southeast Asia reported transiting the Middle East after recruitment for an IT training.^{af} While these victims finally reached the scam compounds in Southeast Asia, they reported that some of their fellow trainees were destined to scam compounds based in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.^{ag}

While most criminal groups in the Golden Triangle focus on the manufacturing of synthetic drugs, particularly methamphetamine, other types of illicit activities include online financial scams, wildlife trafficking, illegal resource extraction, trafficking in persons and money-laundering.^{ah} Within the same compounds for instance, there is evidence of people being trafficked for the purpose of forced labour, in order to provide cleaning or cooking services, or for the purpose of sexual exploitation.^{ai}

Confined and in fear

While in trafficking in persons deception is mostly used at the recruitment stage, other means of control are typically employed during the exploitation phase.

Victims of trafficking for forced criminality into scam centres in Southeast Asia are confined in armed compounds, which typically include both dormitories and office space. Victims' movements are limited by metal bars on windows and balconies, high fences, and

w UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*.

x Ibid.

y Ibid; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*; Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell*.

z UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*.

aa Jespersen, S. and others, *Trafficking for Forced Criminality*.

ab Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell*.

ac UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*.

ad UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*.

ae UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*; Humanity Research Consultancy, "Cyberslavery in the scamming compounds", HRC briefing (2022). Available at: https://humanity-consultancy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/HRC-Briefing_Cyber-Slavery-in-the-Scamming-Compounds.pdf

af UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*.

ag Ibid.

ah UNODC, *World Drug Report 2024*.

ai Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell*.

security staff positioned at the building entrance/exit. Their screens are linked to a central screen so that their online activities are always monitored.^{aj}

Coercive methods may start upon arrival, or when the victims refuse to commit the scams. Victims are controlled through isolation and restriction of movement, confiscation of personal documents and mobile phone, threats, and debt bonding.^{ak}

The first method to control the victims is the debt bondage scheme, and the victims are asked to pay back the money “invested” by the employer/organized crime group in their travel and training. Victims are also subject to long working hours and unrealistic sales targets. It becomes impossible for the victims to repay the initial debt which increases with time, often compounded by fines for violations. In some cases, such debts become the basis of demands for ransom.^{al} Rescued victims have reported that ransoms may range from USD3,000 to USD30,000 and seem to have increased since the beginning of 2023. In most cases, when the family pays the ransom the victim is released, but victims’ testimonies also included cases in which the victims was then forced to continue working in the compound.^{am}

Threats are also widely used as a means to traffic and exploit victims. Organized crime groups reportedly threatened victims with harming their family and friends or with selling them into sexual exploitation, for organ removal, or to another scam compound in case of underperformance.^{an}

Rescued victims also reported having suffered from physical and sexual violence.^{ao} Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary detention, torture, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation are used as control mechanisms.^{ap} Access to medical care is limited, and living conditions can be cramped and unsanitary.^{aq}

aj UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*; Humanity Research Consultancy, “Cyberslavery in the scamming compounds.”

ak UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims in forced scam labour* (2023). Humanity Research Consultancy, “Cyberslavery in the scamming compounds”.

al Ibid.

am OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on Cambodia (2015); Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell*.

an UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*; Humanity Research Consultancy, *Guidance on responding to victims*; Humanity Research Consultancy, “Cyberslavery in the scamming compounds”.

ao Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Trapped in Hell*.

ap Ibid.

aq Ibid.

Set-up to fraud globally

Victims that are trapped into forced scams are asked to find and recruit potential new victims through interaction with social media users and make a certain number of ‘friends’ each day. These potential victims are targeted by using data bought and sold on various web platforms.^{ar} Established online friends are then enticed into various activities that will result in their financial loss through illegal online gambling or fraudulent investments and other things. Victims’ testimonies report that scam victims are generally approached with offers of small profit opportunities, such as buying and selling of cryptocurrency, perspective of online gaming, or romantic encounters. Fake websites are built to showcase fraudulent data showing the profit opportunities for the scam victims, who may even receive small amounts of money at the beginning to strengthen their trust. Several weeks or months are often needed to build a trusted relationship with the victim.^{as} Recent reports also highlighted the rising use and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in scamming operations. Generative AI has been used to create phishing messages in multiple languages, chatbots are used to engage and manipulate victims, and deepfakes are used to bypass KYC (know your clients) security checks. Further, it has been reported that polymorphic malware capable of evading security software to identify ideal targets has been used by scammers and organized crime.^{at}

ar UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud*.

as OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on Cambodia (2015).

at UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime*.

Voices from civil society; protecting the victims, assisting the survivors

The initiative

Non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs and CSOs) are at the forefront of efforts to protect and assist victims of trafficking in persons around the world. For its 2024 edition, the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons has collected opinions and views of civil society to gain a clearer insight into the needs of trafficking victims.

Between July 2023 and March 2024, members of civil society active within UNODC anti-trafficking networks were invited to respond to an online survey. A total of 87 people working for anti-trafficking organizations in 37 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas completed the survey.^a

NGOs AND CSOs ON THE TOP-FIVE MOST NEEDED SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING



Source: UNODC NGO Survey.

Note: 85 respondents answered the question "In your experience, what are the five services most needed for victims of trafficking, after being trafficked?" by ranking a closed set of categories^b

a Between July 2023 and March 2024, the UNODC Research and Analysis Branch, in cooperation with the UNODC Civil Society Unit, the UN Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking, and the UNODC Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Section, conducted an online survey to assess the challenges of anti-trafficking responses from the perspective of NGOs working with victims of trafficking. Members of civil society active within UNODC anti-trafficking networks were invited to respond to an online survey. 87 people working for anti-trafficking organizations in 37 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas answered the survey, with a higher concentration of respondents in North America (21 per cent, 18/87). Mitigation measures were taken in the data analysis phase to account for the higher proportion of respondents from North America. Among the survey respondents, 59 were women, 26 men, one preferred not to answer and one reported other identity. Nine persons had lived experience of being trafficked. The survey results were analysed through a mixed-methods approach drawing on qualitative and quantitative techniques. Results are indicative only and despite being generalizable, they are not representative of the experience of the whole population of victims of trafficking. While the survey achieved almost global coverage, it did not receive any responses from East Asia and the Pacific, and nearly 20 percent of the respondents were based in North America. The results have been analysed using relevant literature to triangulate emerging findings and account for the geographical distribution of respondents.

b Respondents were asked to rank the answer options from the most (1) to the least (5) needed, answers were as follows.

- (1) Medical assistance = 33, Reintegration services = 15, Legal support = 12, Child protection = 15, Repatriation services = 3, Other = 6, Language course = 1, Prefer not to say = 0, I do not know = 0;
- (2) Medical assistance = 25, Reintegration services = 17, Legal support = 20, Child protection = 10, Repatriation services = 4, Other = 5, Language course = 2, Prefer not to say = 2, I do not know = 0;
- (3) Medical assistance = 12, Reintegration services = 16, Legal support = 26, Child protection = 17, Repatriation services = 5, Other = 6, Language course = 3, Prefer not to say = 2, I do not know = 0;
- (4) Medical assistance = 9, Reintegration services = 22, Legal support = 13, Child protection = 14, Repatriation services = 8, Other = 6, Language course = 9, Prefer not to say = 3, I do not know = 0;
- (5) Medical assistance = 3, Reintegration services = 13, Legal support = 6, Child protection = 13, Repatriation services = 16, Other = 5, Language course = 24, Prefer not to say = 3, I do not know = 2.

NGOs and CSOs key suggestions on how to improve the ability of victims to report the crime and press charges against the trafficker

<p>NGOs and CSOs suggestions on improving the chances of victims reporting to law enforcement</p>	Application of the non-punishment principle for victims of trafficking
	Recognition of the victims' status not dependent on the willingness to report the crime
	Presence of NGOs/independent actors while reporting to law enforcement
	No risk of forced repatriation for victims of trafficking; voluntary and compensated repatriation pathways
	Safe and anonymous reporting lines for victims of trafficking

Source: UNODC NGO Survey.

Views of civil society organizations on some of the challenges of crime prevention

Misinformation

The organizations surveyed perceive misinformation, particularly through awareness raising campaigns, as one of the key challenges in tackling trafficking in persons. According to the respondents, information campaigns may fail in their crime prevention purposes, while reiterating instead stereotyped images of victims and traffickers.^c One NGO from North America, for instance, points out that child trafficking campaigns have typically failed to inform the public about the fact that children are often trafficked by family members or known acquaintances, shifting public perception of the typical perpetrators towards the ideal image of a stranger. A person with lived experience from the same region observes that boys and men victims are still invisible. He reports how boys and men are often stigmatized for their conduct during exploitation, rarely recognized as victims of trafficking, and prevented from accessing protection services.

Criminalization of the victims

Application of the non-punishment principle,^d access to legal channels for migration and residence permits,^e emerge among the key normative

developments that CSOs believe can help to prevent the crime and protect victims.^f

Despite clear international obligations to protect victims and a commitment to not consider them as criminals, most of the interviewed NGOs observe that victims of trafficking are in practice often criminalized for their illicit conduct. Their assessment corroborates the evidence gathered by academic and UN reports stating that victims are often arrested and criminalized for illicit conduct linked to their trafficking experience.^g The protection and non-criminalization of trafficked victims is particularly relevant for those victims that are exploited for forced criminality where victims are forced to engage in illegal activities. About 8 per cent of the victims detected globally in 2022 were trafficked for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities. Detected cases have increased steadily in recent years, signaling a potential uptick in this form of trafficking in persons.^h

trafficking in persons to remain in its territory, temporarily or permanently, in appropriate cases."

c Amy Farrell & Rebecca Pfeffer, "Policing Human Trafficking: Cultural Blinders and Organizational Barriers", 653 ANNALS AM.ACAD.POL.&SOC.SCI. 46, 52-53 (2014); E O'Brien and H Berents, "Virtual Saviours: Digital games and anti-trafficking awareness-raising", *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 13, 2019, pp. 82-99, <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201219136>.

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e Article 7.1 of the United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons reads: "In addition to taking measures pursuant to article 6 of this Protocol, each State Party shall consider adopting legislative or other appropriate measures that permit victims of

f The United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol particularly urges States Parties to "consider adopting legislative or other appropriate measures that permit victims of trafficking in persons to remain in [their] territor[ies], temporarily or permanently, in appropriate cases." See Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/55/25, art 7(1) (2000).

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Conversely, access to financial compensation, voluntary and compensated repatriation options and the presence of civil society actors facilitating interactions with law enforcement authorities are, in the views of CSOs and NGOs, factors typically increasing reporting rates.

Inequality and marginalization

Article 9, paragraph 4 of the United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol requires that “States Parties shall [...] alleviate the factors that make persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity.” Economic determinants are frequently cited among the most important risk factors affecting victims’ susceptibility to trafficking in persons and “abuse of a position of vulnerability” is one of the means listed in the definition of trafficking. Court cases have shown that the majority of victims were in a condition of economic need at the time of recruitment, often characterized by an inability to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter and healthcare.ⁱ

Similar to the findings from academic research, civil society considers trafficking in persons to be rooted in poverty, gender inequality, discrimination, and the dynamics of marginalization.^j When asked what is needed to better protect people from being trafficked, interviewed civil society stressed the urgency to tackle the root causes of vulnerability and promote more equal societies.^k

approaches to offences committed in the process of such trafficking, Background paper prepared by the Secretariat, Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (Vienna, 27-29 January 2010); Amy Farrell and others, “Failing Victims? Challenges of the Police Response to Human Trafficking”, *Criminology & Public Policy*, Vol. 18 issue 3, 649 (2019).

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j The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). The Role of the Sustainable Development Goals in Combating Trafficking in Persons. Issue brief No. 5.

k Trafficking in persons is specifically mentioned in three targets under three Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) relating to justice and strong institutions, access to decent work and housing and gender equality – all of which are directly related to the prevention and protection of potential and actual victims. SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Peace Justice and Strong Institutions) specifically mention trafficking in persons. Further, the United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol urges States Parties to adopt protection measures for victims of trafficking – including access to appropriate housing, medical, psychosocial and legal support and employment opportunities – and to address underlying factors that create vulnerability. See: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/55/25, art 9(4) (2000).

Civil society organizations’ experience in protecting victims

Awareness of victims’ rights

Greater awareness of victims’ rights and the measures adopted to ensure these rights can protect people from coming under the control of traffickers. Similarly, recent academic studies have argued that such awareness actively prevents the normalization of workers’ exploitation and allows victims to build social connections outside of the trafficking space.^l Slightly more than 60 per cent of interviewed practitioners from civil society organizations agree with the idea that most victims are not aware of the rights granted by their status in certain jurisdictions.

Practical information on how to identify and rescue victims

According to UNODC research, only about 9 per cent of the cases of trafficking come to the attention of authorities as a result of an action by the community.^m

NGOs and CSOs, on the issue of the importance of information campaigns, also add that they are only effective where trustworthy and functioning services are available to victims of trafficking. In their experience, when such services are unavailable, information campaigns have limited impact on the anti-trafficking response and can even negatively affect trust in public authorities. Their concerns echo emerging findings in the anti-trafficking literature, signaling that the most sensitized members of the community may be the most reluctant to report a potential case of trafficking, due to concerns about the adequacy of support for victims and the risk of criminalization.ⁿ

When specifically asked about systems that can support victims to exit exploitation, CSOs mention the valuable role of hotlines. They stressed, however, the need to ensure that such hotlines can provide multilingual services, and guide and refer victims towards trustworthy and accessible services.

Exposure of civil society and NGOs to retaliation

Consistently over the years, the Global Report has shown how organized crime groups involved in trafficking in persons are able to traffic ever greater numbers of people, for longer times, in more violent manners. Many NGO workers and survivors surveyed (39 out of 86) live in fear of retaliation of organized crime groups and other actors with stakes in

l K Sharapov, S Hoff and B Gerasimov, “Editorial: Knowledge is Power, Ignorance is Bliss: Public perceptions and responses to human trafficking”, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, issue 13, 2019, pp. 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201219131>.

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trafficking. In total, 25 respondents mentioned “security” among their most pressing non-financial needs and 39 said that they need help to keep safe from retaliation of organized criminal groups and other actors. The lack of access to safe and anonymous ways to assist prosecution can be a strong deterrent to reporting the crime.

Experience on victim re/integration

Victims’ needs

The United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol urges States Parties to adopt protection measures for victims of trafficking – including access to appropriate housing, medical, psychosocial and legal support and employment opportunities – and to address the underlying factors that create or exacerbate vulnerability.^o

According to the 85 interviewed practitioners, the top five services most needed by victims of trafficking when exiting exploitation are:

- i. provision of medical assistance, especially counselling, mental health services, drug treatment, and psychosocial support for all victims;
- ii. reintegration services focusing on economic empowerment, compensation and income support, income support, job placement, education and vocational training;
- iii. (free) legal support securing access to rights;
- iv. child protection services;
- v. and voluntary and compensated repatriation services.

When asked to describe the type of services needed, the answers of CSOs concentrate on the need to ensure effective services to all victims. They note that when available, services rarely come free of charge and may not be affordable for victims at the time when they are most needed. Provision of free legal support was especially mentioned as an essential service that is too often lacking.^p

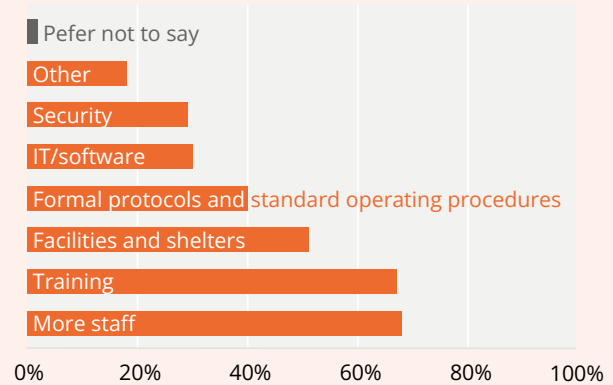
NGOs point to the lack of shelter or affordable housing as being among the main barriers for victims to exit exploitation.

Respondents from different regions emphasize the importance of ensuring access to a safe shelter for rescued victims. Some specify that shelters should accommodate all types of victims regardless of their

^o Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, GA/RES/55/25, art 9(4) (2000).

^p Julia Einbond, Kaitlyn Zedalis and Hanni Stoklosa, “A Case of Mistaken Identity: The Criminalization of Victims of Labor Trafficking by Forced Criminality,” *Criminal Law Bulletin*, vol 59, no 1, 2023, pp 60-77.

What are your organization’s most pressing non-financial needs to support victims of trafficking?



Source: UNODC NGO Survey, based on 87 answers.

profile, such as age, sex or form of exploitation, while also providing dedicated services for certain categories such as people affected by substance-use disorders or living with dependent children.

The risk of revictimization

For many victims, exiting trafficking situations means the simultaneous loss of accommodation and income, which in most settings represents a life-threatening risk. In order to be successful, respondents add, anti-trafficking initiatives need to provide viable alternatives to exploitation by, and dependence on, traffickers. If sustainable solutions are not provided to victims, there is the risk that they fall victim again.

When asked to report on the revictimization rate, most CSO members did not know how many of the victims they had supported ended up being trafficked or exploited more than once in their life (37 per cent or 32/87).

How many victims supported by you/your organization, were trafficked or exploited more than once in their life?



Source: UNODC NGO Survey, based on 87 answers.

The ECOWAS Commission's initiatives in addressing the lack of data on trafficking in persons

Contribution from the ECOWAS Commission Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs

Within the last two decades, ECOWAS has scaled up efforts to improve the availability of information and data on trafficking in persons in the region. In 2007, the Network of National Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Focal Institutions, and the Annual Review of Implementation of the ECOWAS Plans of Action to Combat Trafficking was instituted by the ECOWAS TIP Unit as an annual flagship report, based on annual reporting by Member States, and as a peer review mechanism. This results from a first legal assessment conducted by the ECOWAS TIP Unit of Member States legislation in 2005/2006.

The first ECOWAS Annual Synthesis Report (ASR) on trafficking in persons was issued in 2008, based on a reporting template aligned with the ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. More recently, further cross referencing and triangulation have become a feature of the ASR. The ASRs are a tool enabling ECOWAS Member States to determine the levels of compliance of their respective legal, policy and institutional frameworks with the ECOWAS Plan of Action. They also serve as a barometer for determining progress achieved and challenges encountered operationally in combatting human trafficking, including levels of arrests, prosecutions and convictions and victims rescued.

The Annual Review Meeting (ARM) is the institutional platform for consideration and validation of the ASR and supports experience sharing, planning and identification of priorities in ECOWAS Member States. The ASR has been compiled continuously since 2008 with the latest report adopted by Member States TIP Focal Institutions in Accra Ghana in 2023 with reports submitted by the 15 Member States. At the Accra meeting, Member States also agreed to extend the current ECOWAS Plan of Action (2019 to 2023) until 2027.

The ASR lies at the centre of the coordination mandate of ECOWAS and intervention programmes devised in ECOWAS countries have been informed by this analysis for close to two decades, with a majority of key intervention initiatives based on the output of this process. The ASR serves also as an important advocacy tool and for the provision of targeted technical support. The reporting template has since been upgraded in 2018 and used by member states to reflect on contemporary and new developments and serves as a programmatic tool to address gaps they have identified in the respective countries.

Currently, the Trafficking in Persons Program of ECOWAS has expanded its approach to human trafficking in recognition of the complex linkage of

trafficking in persons with related forms of violence against persons who might be especially vulnerable to victimization, including women, children, disabled persons, vulnerable migrants and the elderly. The ASR collects information on possible precursor offences and events and results of human trafficking as well as victimization which occurs within the same context. These might be offences constituting sexual and gender-based violence, domestic violence, violence against children, etc.

This is part of ECOWAS' broader approach to TIP: 'Trafficking in Persons Plus', responding to the phenomenon of human trafficking as a part of a larger complex set of vulnerabilities and victimization. Responding to associated or related crimes and victimization is especially important from the West African perspective, where institutions and services remain generally weak.

One of the deliverables of the TIP component of the Project is the development of a Regional Crime Against the Person Prevention Policy (RCAPPP) providing further clarification and concrete implementation measures for the ECOWAS TIP Plus (TIP+) approach. The RCAPPP limits itself to crimes with clear linkages with TIP and also responds to common indicators of vulnerability to TIP and related offences; dealing with gender-based violence, offences that could be connected with irregular migration and related issues. The approach is also focused on risk factors that move vulnerable persons closer to labour and sexual exploitation and employs a proactive, 'joined up' strategy.

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CHAPTER 3

Regional overviews

Africa and the Middle East

North Africa and the Middle East*



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

KEY FINDINGS FOR NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



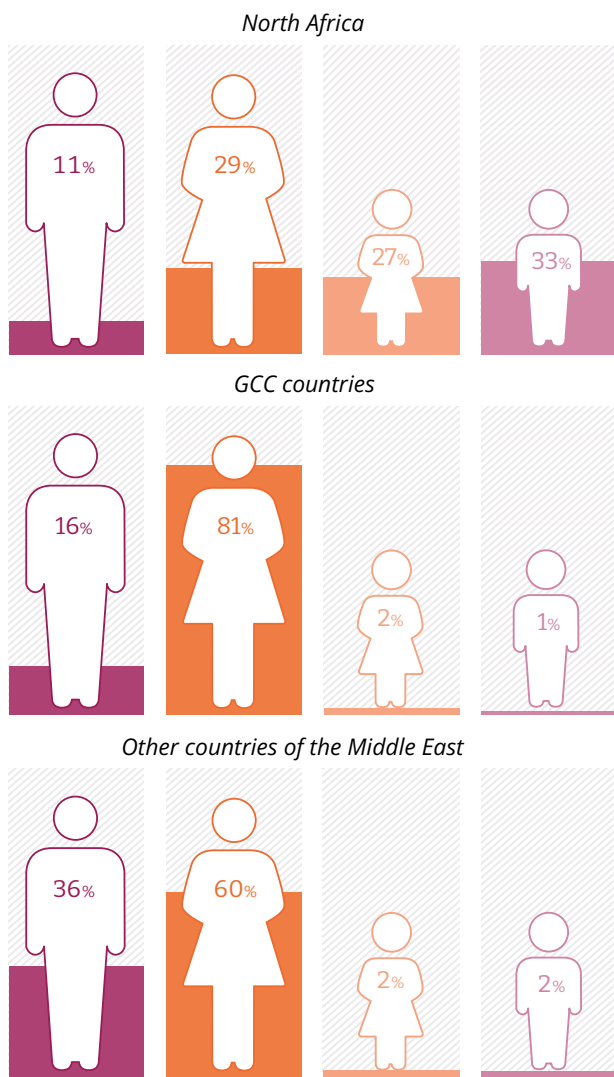
Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



Victims

There is great diversity in terms of victim profile across the three subregions of North Africa and the Middle East. In North Africa, boys, girls and women were detected in near equal shares with boys comprising the largest by a slim margin (33 per cent of the total) in 2022. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) report a majority of women trafficked while children were rarely detected (3 per cent). The other countries of the Middle East report a majority of women trafficked and a significant share of detected victims were men.

Fig. 94 Share of detected victims of trafficking in North Africa and the Middle East, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

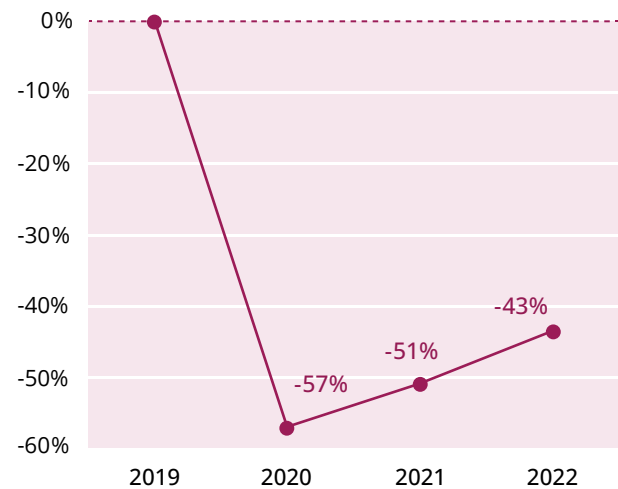


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 2,077 victims detected in 14 countries and territories in North Africa and the Middle East.

After a significant decline between 2019 and 2020, detections of victims in North Africa and the Middle East have risen gradually. In 2022, the detection rate was still below that of 2019.

Fig. 95 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in North Africa and the Middle East, base year 2019*

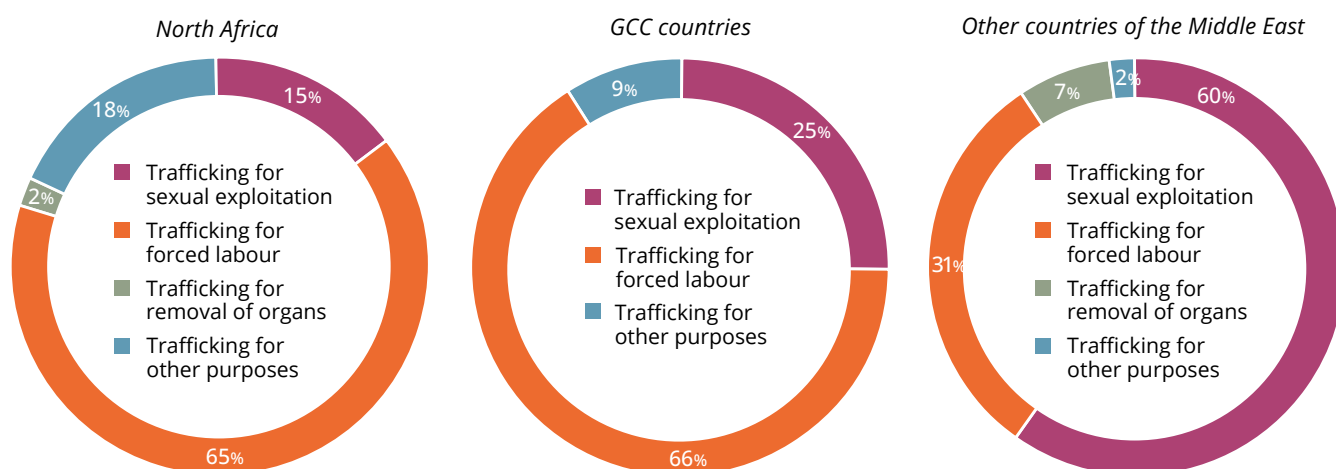


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on 14 countries in North Africa and the Middle East reporting on this indicator during the period considered.

As it is the case with the profile of the victims, the forms of exploitation detected across the three subregions in North Africa and the Middle East differ. In North Africa and in the countries of the GCC, forced labour accounted for around 65 per cent of all detected trafficking in 2022. Conversely, in other countries of the Middle East, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation comprised 60 per cent of the total, while just over 30 per cent of all trafficking was for forced labour. North Africa recorded the greatest share of trafficking for other purposes (18 per cent of the total), typically child begging. The other countries of the Middle East recorded the largest share of trafficking for the purpose of organ removal.

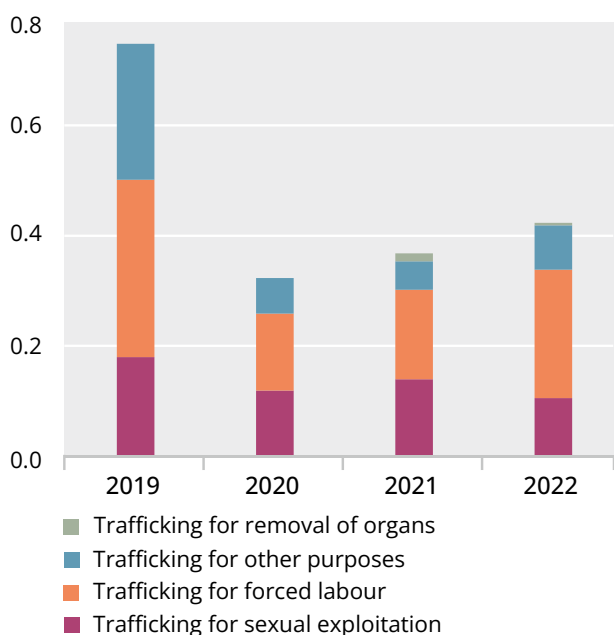
Fig. 96 Share of detected victims of trafficking in North Africa and the Middle East, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 2,254 victims detected in 14 countries and territories in North Africa and the Middle East.

Fig. 97 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in North Africa and the Middle East, by form of exploitation, 2019–2022*

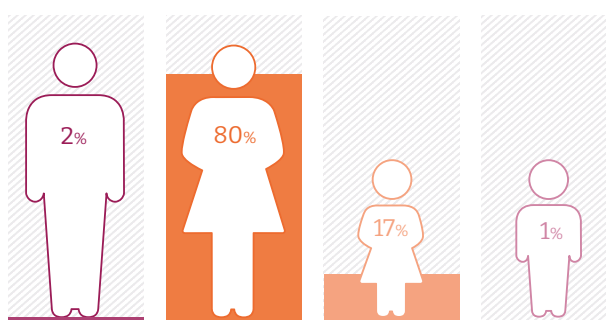


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on 14 countries in North Africa and the Middle East reporting on this indicator during the period considered.

As in many regions, trafficking for sexual exploitation is detected as almost exclusively involving female victims.

Fig. 98 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in North Africa and the Middle East, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

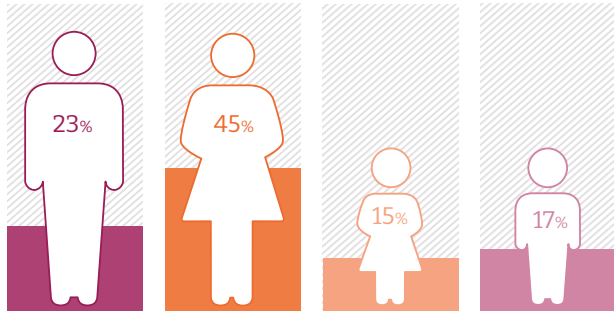


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 253 victims detected in 11 countries and territories in North Africa and the Middle East.

In contrast to many other regions, women comprised the greatest share of those detected as trafficked for forced labour in 2022. A significant share of children (32 per cent of the total) were also trafficked for forced labour in 2022.

Fig. 99 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour in North Africa and the Middle East, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

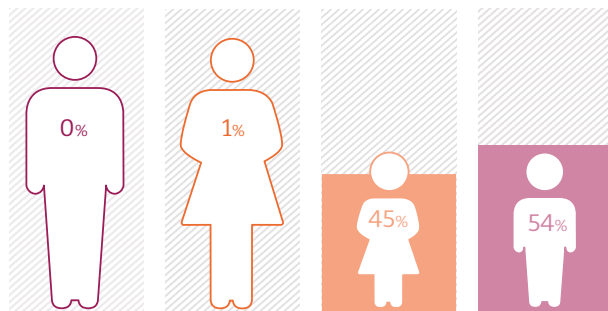


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 853 victims detected in 11 countries and territories in North Africa and the Middle East.

Virtually all victims detected as trafficked for other purposes in 2022 in North Africa and the Middle East were children mainly exploited in forced begging – near equal shares of boys (54 per cent) and girls (45 per cent). Trafficking for organ removal (a total of 41 victims detected in 2022 or more recent), on the other hand, mostly involves adult victims, particularly men.

Fig. 100 Share of detected victims of trafficking for other purposes in North Africa and the Middle East, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

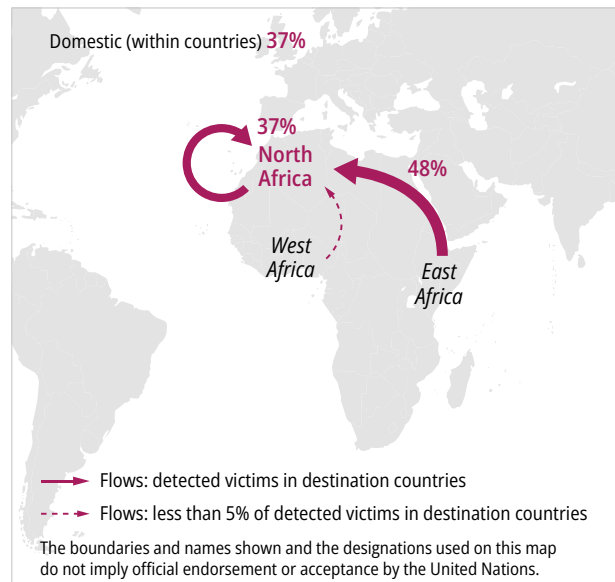
* Based on data on sex and age of 853 victims detected in 11 countries and territories in North Africa and the Middle East.

Trafficking Flows

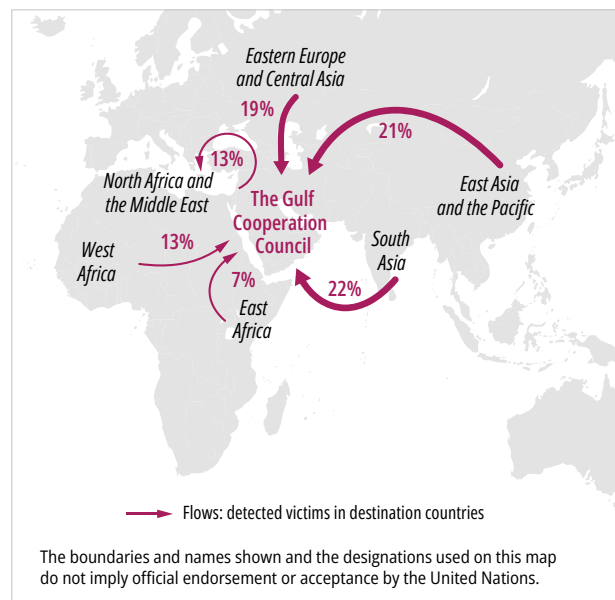
All three subregions of North Africa and the Middle East recorded a great diversity of flows in 2022. While some domestic and intra-regional trafficking was recorded, it was more limited in comparison to other regions. The countries of the GCC and other countries of the Middle East in particular recorded a wide variety of flows, including from distant regions such as East Asia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and South America.

Map. 10 Share of detected victims of trafficking in North Africa and the Middle East, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*

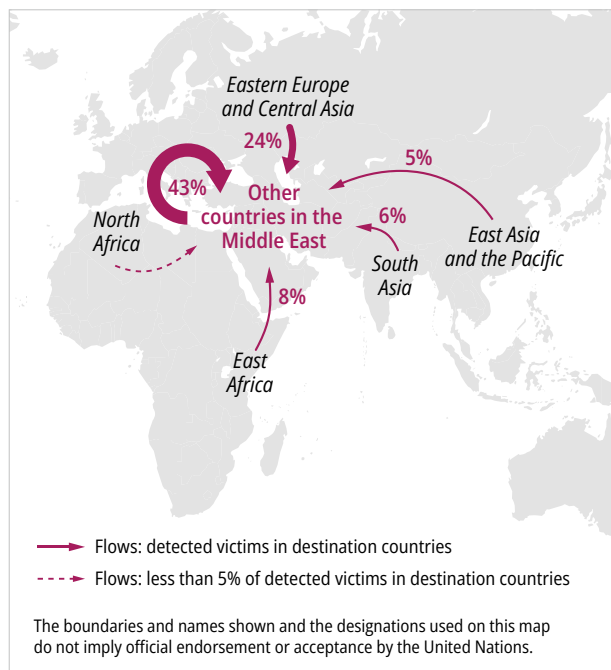
North Africa



Gulf Cooperation Council countries



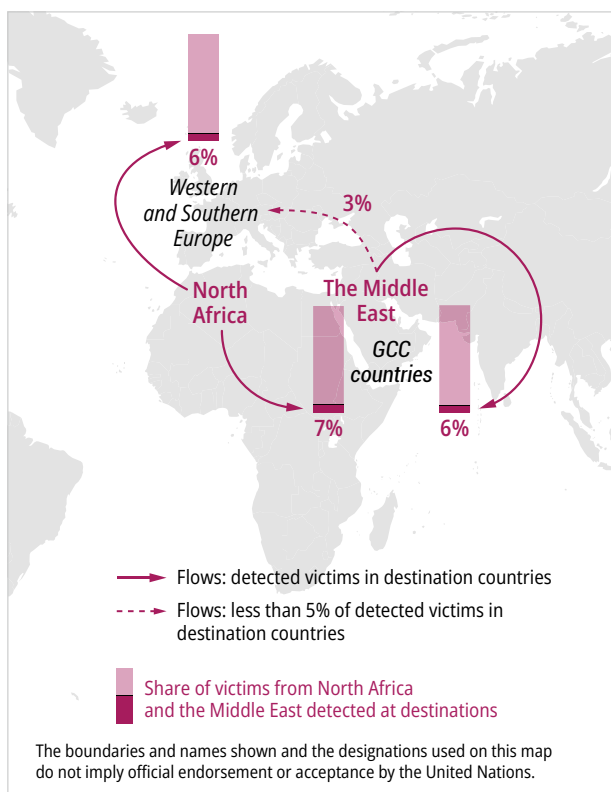
Other countries of the Middle East



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 1,580 victims detected in 14 countries and territories in North Africa and the Middle East.

Map. 11 Trafficking flows from North Africa and the Middle East to other regions, by share of the victims from the region detected at destination, 2022 (or most recent)



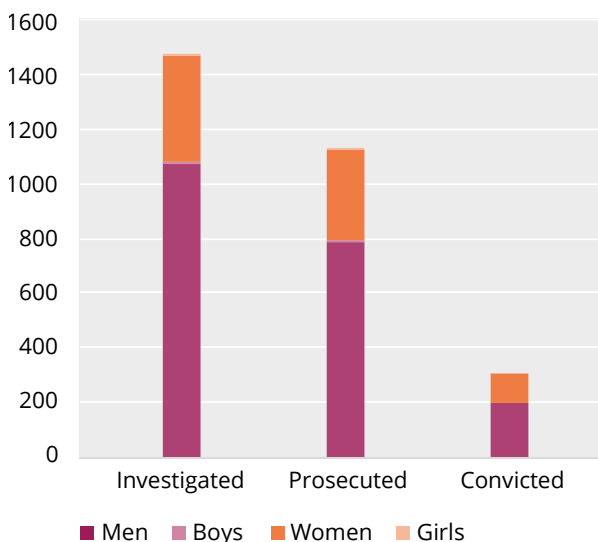
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Victims from North Africa and other countries of the Middle East were detected in both Western and Southern Europe and the countries of the GCC. In Western and Southern Europe, North Africans comprised 6 per cent of all victims detected while victims from the Middle East accounted for 3 per cent. Meanwhile, in the neighboring countries of the GCC, victims from North Africa comprised 7 per cent of all victims detected in 2022, and victims from other countries of the Middle East made up 6 per cent.

Traffickers

The majority of those investigated, prosecuted and/or convicted for trafficking in persons in North Africa and the Middle East in 2022 were men. However, a relatively large number of women also were processed through the criminal justice system for the crime. A small number of children were investigated and prosecuted while an even smaller number were convicted.

Fig. 101 Persons investigated, prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in North Africa and the Middle East, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*

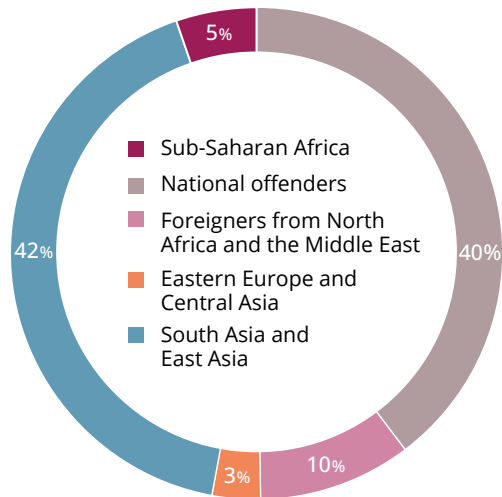


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 1,468 persons investigated in eight countries, 1,130 prosecuted in 11 countries and 306 convicted in 11 countries in North Africa and the Middle East where sex and age were recorded.

While a little under half of all offenders in 2022 were citizens of the countries in which they were convicted, North Africa and the Middle East recorded a large share of traffickers from other regions.

Fig. 102 Traffickers convicted in North Africa and the Middle East, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*

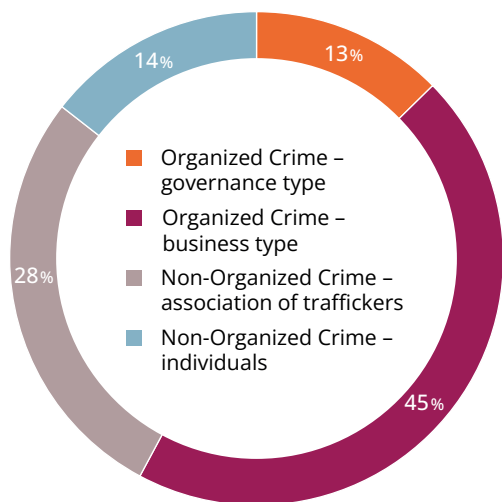


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 189 persons convicted in five countries where citizenship was recorded.

On the basis of the court cases collected, it appears trafficking is committed by a variety of actors, from individual traffickers to criminal organizations, more typically in small groups operating in a business-type of structure.

Fig. 103 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in North Africa and the Middle East, by type of structure*



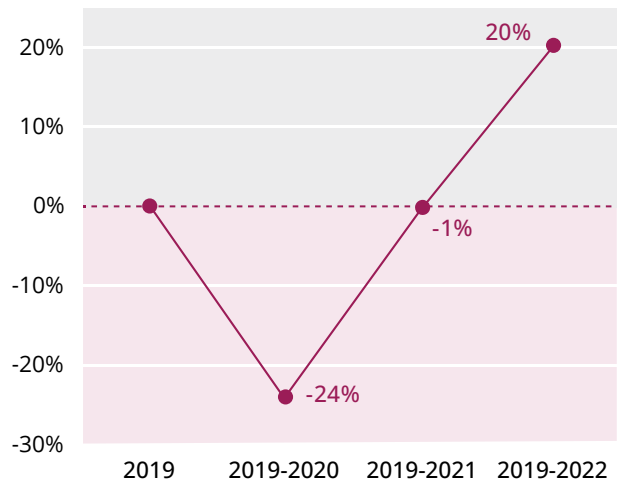
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 189 persons convicted in five countries where citizenship was recorded.

Criminal Justice Response

The number of convictions dropped by 24 per cent between 2019 and 2020 in connection with pandemic-related restrictions on the activities of law enforcement. However, between 2020 and 2021 the trend was reversed. As such, convictions have increased in comparison to 2019 prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fig. 104 Trend in the number of persons convicted in North Africa and the Middle East, base year 2019*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information provided by 10 countries in North Africa and the Middle East reporting about this indicator for the period considered.

Sub-Saharan Africa*




* This region comprises of East Africa (Kenya, Mauritius, Somalia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania), Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).


KEY FINDINGS FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)

+98%

 in the detection
of victims

+79%

 in the number
of convictions

Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)

61%

are children



42%

are girls



19%

are boys



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)

65%

of trafficking is
for forced labour



Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



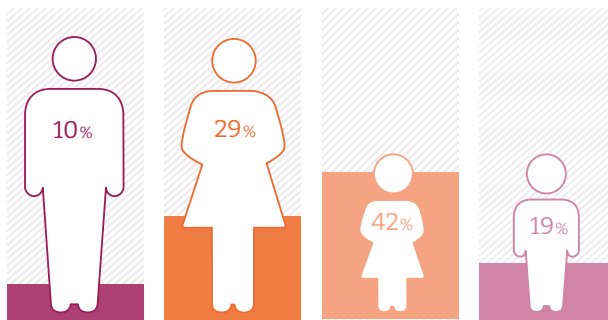
As a region of destination, 98% of all victims detected in the region are trafficked from within Sub-Saharan Africa.

As origin, victims from Sub-Saharan Africa are trafficked to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Victims

Unlike other regions of the world, the largest share of victims detected in 2022 were children (61 per cent total). In particular, 42 per cent of all victims detected were girls. Adults comprised 39 per cent of total detected victims, mostly women (29 per cent of the total).

Fig. 105 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

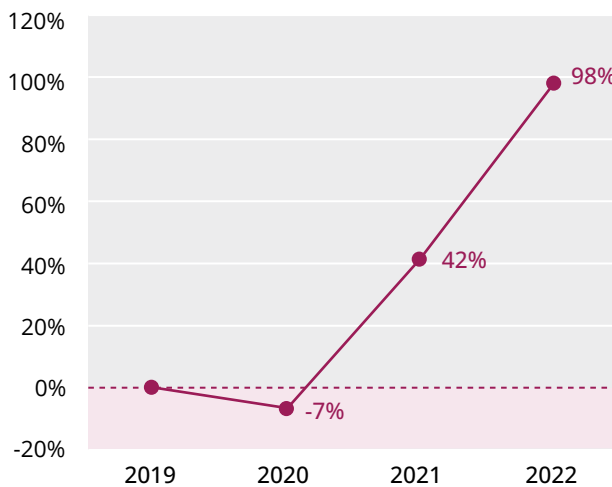


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 11,222 victims detected in 26 countries and territories in Sub-Saharan Africa.

After a limited decline in 2020, between 2020 and 2022, the number of victims detected almost doubled compared to 2019. Over the same period, there was an increase in the detection of all profiles.

Fig. 106 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Sub-Saharan Africa, base year 2019*

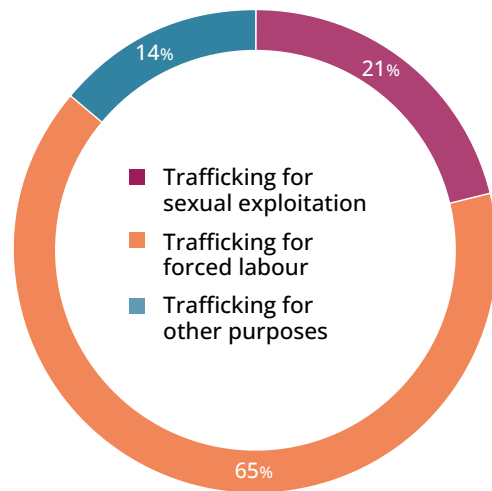


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* This result is based on victims detected in 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reporting on this indicator over the entire period.

Victims detected as trafficked for forced labour comprised 65 per cent of the total. Slightly more victims were detected as trafficked for sexual exploitation (21 per cent) than for other purposes (14 per cent). However, between 2020 and 2022, trafficking for sexual exploitation and for other purposes was increasingly more detected.

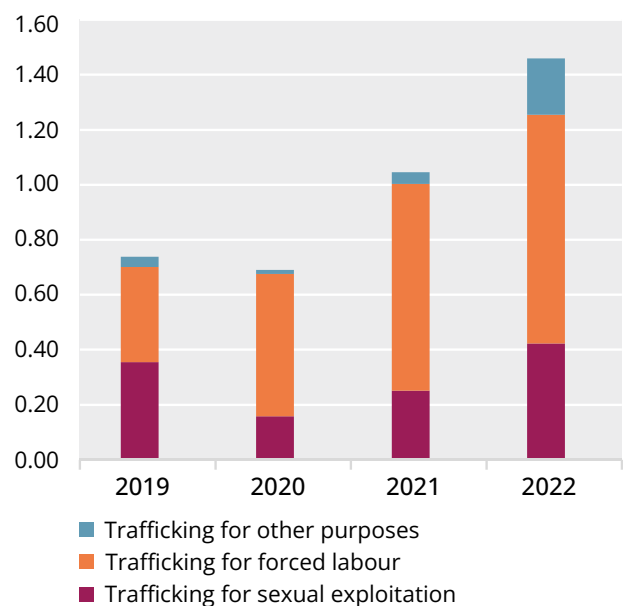
Fig. 107 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 9,660 victims detected in 26 countries and territories in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Fig. 108 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Sub-Saharan Africa, by form of exploitation, 2019-2022*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

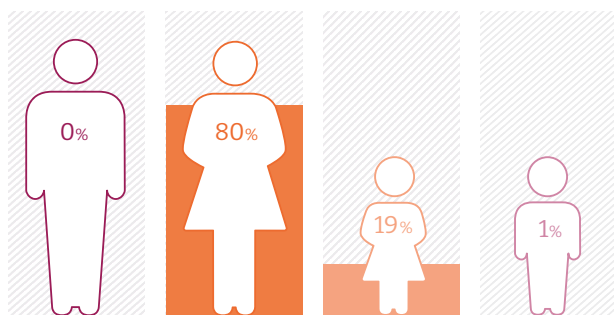
* This result is based on victims detected in 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reporting on this indicator over the entire period.

In terms of how different forms of exploitation impact specific profiles, trafficking for sexual exploitation was almost exclusively detected among women (80 per cent) and girls (19 per cent) with very few men and boys detected in 2022.

Trafficking for forced labour appears to impact a wider variety of profiles. However, children were particularly affected, with boys and girls comprising 41 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, of those detected as trafficked for forced labour in 2022. More women (19 per cent) were detected than men (12 per cent).

Children made up a large proportion of victims detected for other purposes, with 94 per cent of the total – girls making up 59 per cent and boys, 35 per cent – in 2022. Other purposes reported by authorities include forced marriage (67 victims detected in 2022) and forced begging (59 victims detected in 2022).

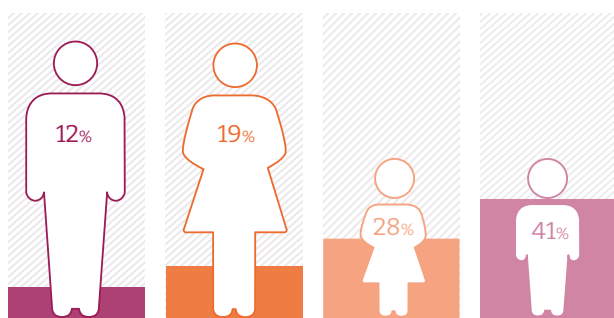
Fig. 109 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 1,828 victims detected in 21 countries and territories in Sub-Saharan Africa.

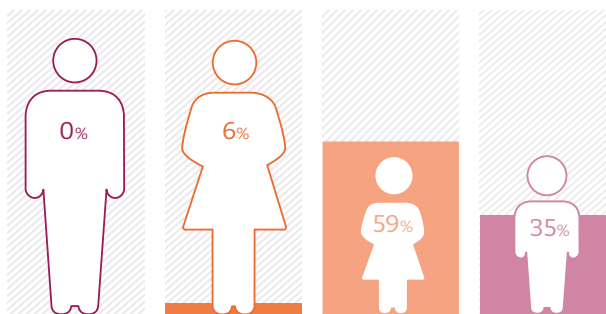
Fig. 110 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 5019 victims detected in 21 countries and territories in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Fig. 111 Share of detected victims of trafficking for other purposes in Sub-Saharan Africa, by age and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

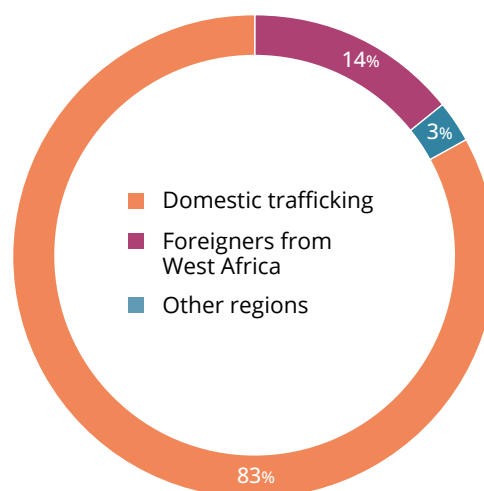
* Based on data on sex and age of 776 victims detected in 20 countries and territories in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Trafficking Flows

Countries in the region report mainly victims trafficked domestically. In Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, 83 per cent of all victims detected in 2022 were trafficked within national borders. While domestic trafficking made up the largest flow in all three subregions of Sub-Saharan Africa – West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa – in 2022, there was some subregional variety in flow origin.

Victims detected in West Africa were primarily nationals of the country of detection (83 per cent), and secondarily, within the subregion (14 per cent). A small share of flows originated in other regions.

Fig. 112 Share of detected victims in West Africa, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Victims detected in East Africa were either internally trafficked or originated from other countries in East Africa (4 per cent) and in Southern Africa (2 per cent).

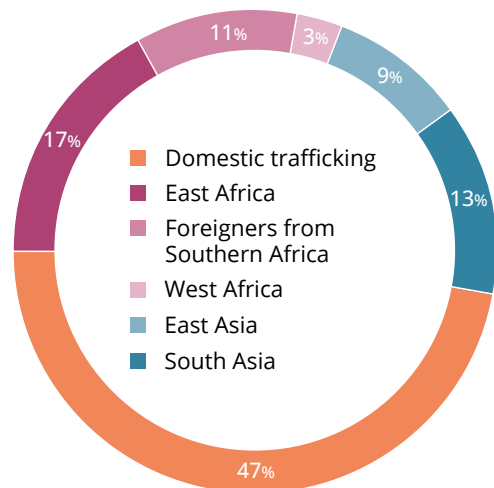
Fig. 113 Share of detected victims in East Africa, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Flows affecting Southern Africa in 2022 were more diverse than those of the other two subregions. The proportion of domestic trafficking was lower than the other subregions (47 per cent), while cross-border flows from other parts of Africa and other regions was larger. A total of 31 per cent of flows originated in other Southern African countries, West Africa and East Africa. Outside of Sub-Saharan Africa, 13 per cent of flows originated in South Asia and 9 per cent from East Asia.

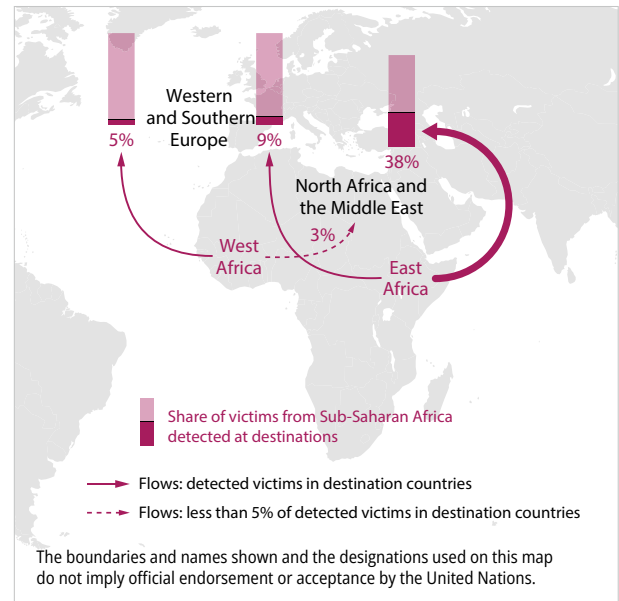
Fig. 114 Share of detected victims in Southern Africa, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

In terms of region of origin, flows from Sub-Saharan Africa and repatriation data suggest that there was a significant flow to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 2022. Victims from Sub-Saharan Africa were detected in Europe and North Africa and other parts of the Middle East.

Map. 12 Trafficking flows from Sub-Saharan Africa to other regions, by share of the victims from the region detected at destination, 2022 (or most recent)

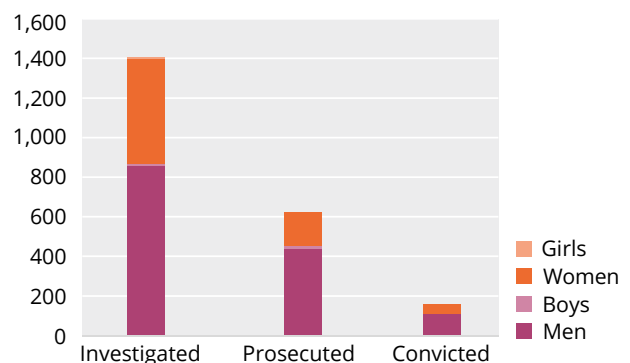


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

Over twice as many men were convicted in 2022 as women. Similarly, the proportion of men was much higher in terms of persons investigated and/or prosecuted for trafficking in persons. Very few children were investigated or prosecuted and none were convicted.

Fig. 115 Persons investigated, prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in Sub-Saharan Africa, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*

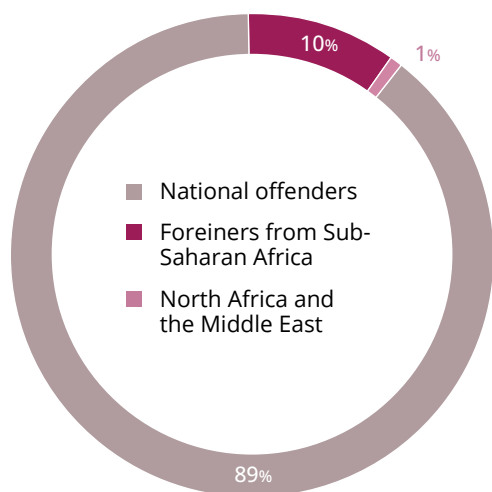


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 1,405 persons investigated in 13 countries; 622 prosecuted in 15 countries; and 161 convicted in 16 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Traffickers who are citizens of the country of conviction comprise the vast majority of traffickers convicted in 2022.

Fig. 116 Traffickers convicted in Sub-Saharan Africa, by region of citizenship 2022 (or most recent)*

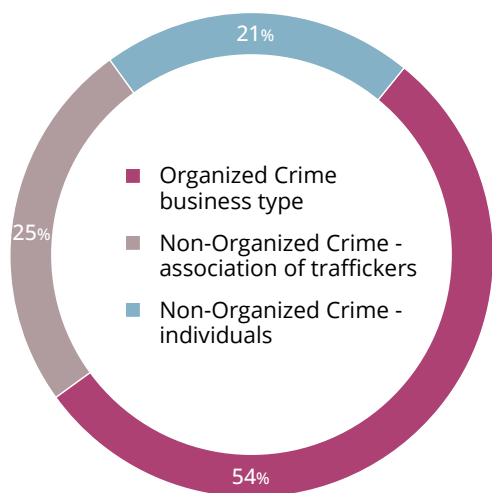


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 254 persons convicted in 6 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Case narratives reported by national authorities suggest traffickers tend to operate as small groups or non-organized crime associations. Unlike in other regions, no cases involving governance-type organized crime groups were reported from countries in these regions. However, countries from other regions reported relevant number of convictions for structured groups operating in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Fig. 117 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in Sub-Saharan Africa, by type of structure *



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

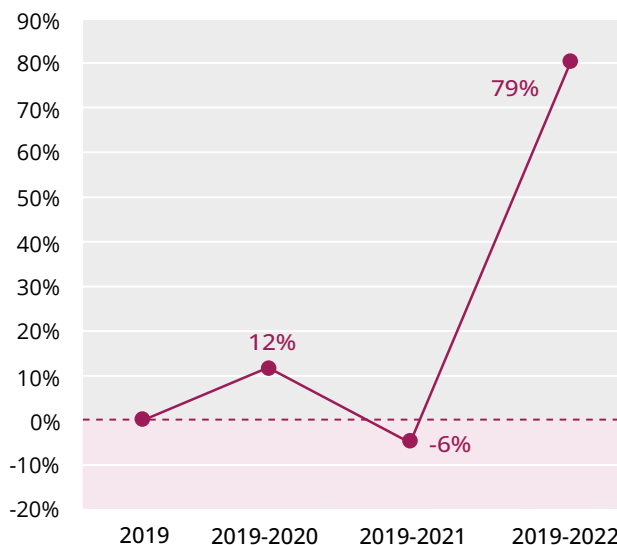
* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 73 cases of trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in Sub-Saharan Africa, for a total of 206 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

The criminal justice response in Sub-Saharan Africa continues to improve, albeit with some limiting features. While the total number of convictions continue to rise, it remains relatively low. Furthermore, the number of convictions in proportion to the total number of investigations was minimal in 2022.

Moreover, convictions appear to be isolated to a small number of countries in the region. Seven of the 21 countries reporting recorded no convictions while another five recorded between one and five convictions in at least one year over the period 2020-2022. Seven countries in the region recorded more than 10 convictions per year over the period 2020-2022.

Fig. 118 Trend in the number of persons convicted in Sub-Saharan Africa, base year 2019*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on 13 countries reporting the number of convictions for the entire period considered.

The Americas

Central America and the Caribbean*



* This region comprises of the Bahamas, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

KEY FINDINGS FOR CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



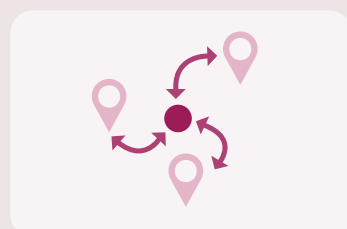
Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



As a region of destination, 80% of the victims detected in the region are trafficked from within the region and 20% are trafficked from South America.

As a region of origin, victims from the region are detected in North America and Europe.

Victims

Over half of all victims detected in Central America and the Caribbean in 2022 were girls (52 per cent). Indeed, over 80 per cent of all detected victims were female, with women comprising 30 per cent of the total.

Fig. 119 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

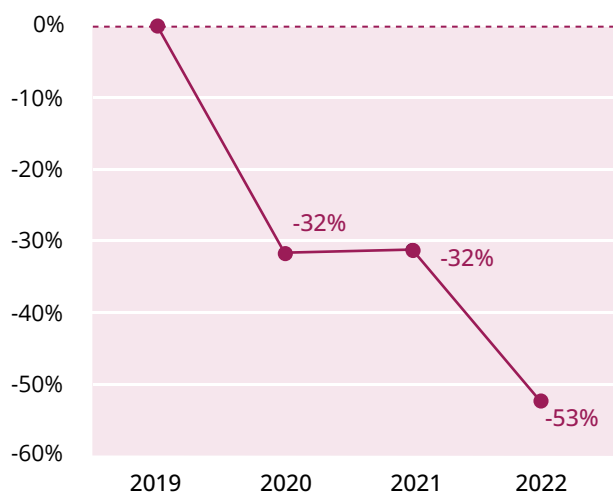


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 777 victims detected in 12 countries and territories in Central America and the Caribbean.

Following a drop in the detection rate recorded in 2020, the number of victims detected has further decreased between 2021 and 2022.

Fig. 120 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Central America and the Caribbean, base year 2019

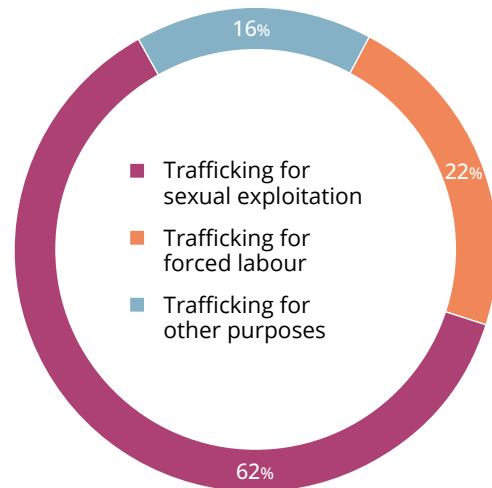


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on 14 countries in North Africa and the Middle East reporting on this indicator during the period considered.

The most detected form of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean is for sexual exploitation (62 per cent).

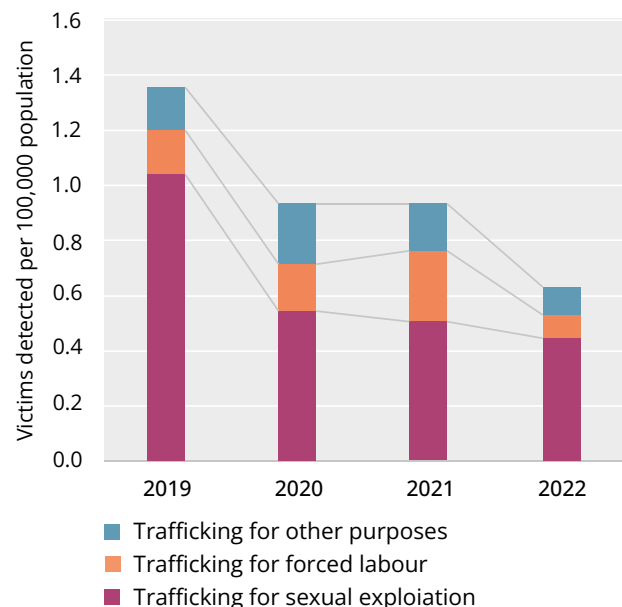
Fig. 121 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 531 victims detected in 12 countries and territories in Central America and the Caribbean.

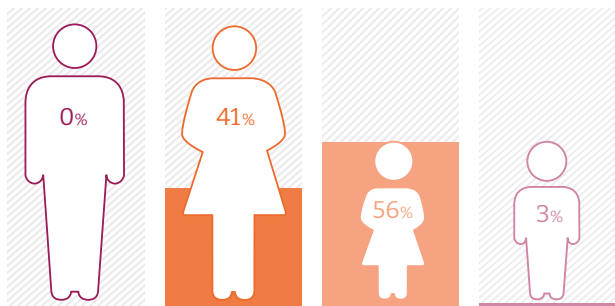
Fig. 122 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Central America and the Caribbean, by form of exploitation (2019–2022)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation almost exclusively involves female victims – slightly more girls (56 per cent) than women (41 per cent).

Fig. 123 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

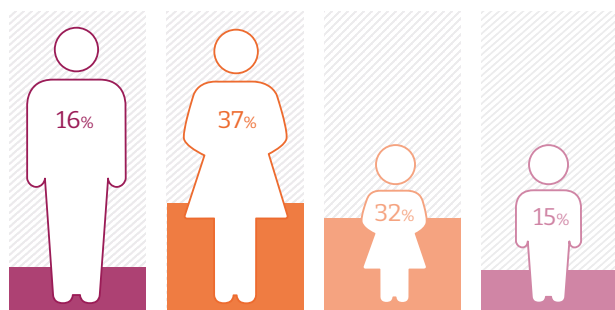


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 326 victims detected in 10 countries and territories in Central America and the Caribbean.

Women and girls also make up a large proportion of victims trafficked for forced labour. In 2022, female victims comprised 69 per cent of all those detected as trafficked for this purpose.

Fig. 124 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour in Central America and the Caribbean, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



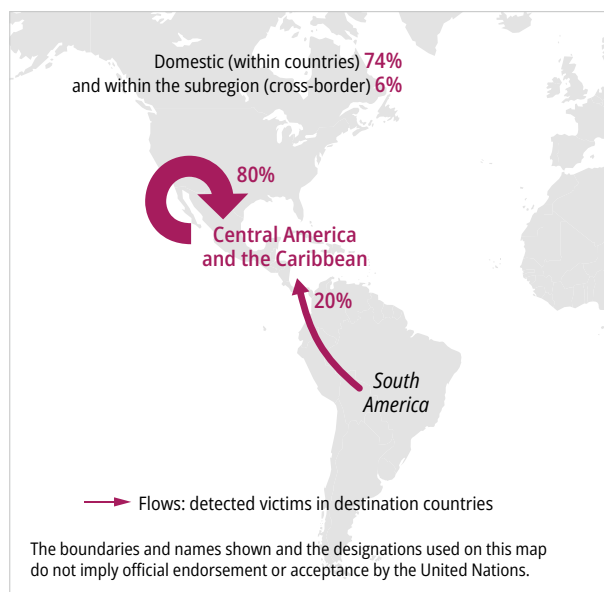
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 115 victims detected in 10 countries and territories in Central America and the Caribbean.

Trafficking Flows

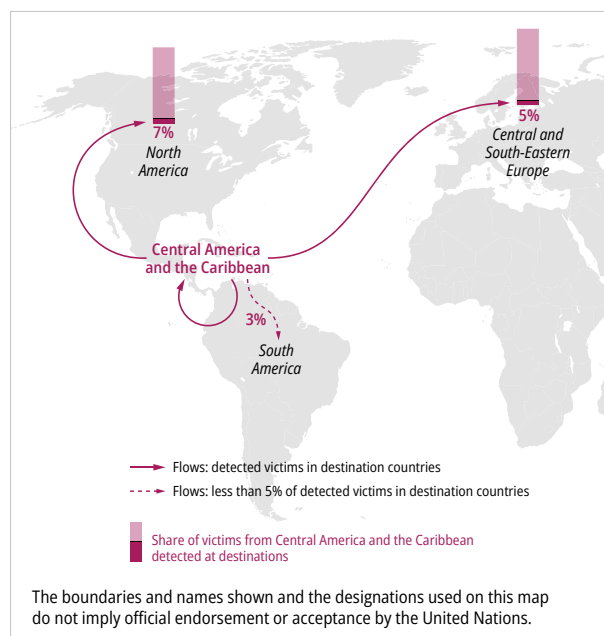
Most victims detected in Central America and the Caribbean in 2022 were either own nationals or from neighboring countries. A relevant number of victims are trafficked from South America. Victims from the region are detected in North America and South America, as well as in Europe.

Map. 13 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Map. 14 Trafficking flows from Central America and the Caribbean to other regions, by share of the victims from the region detected at destination, 2022 (or most recent)

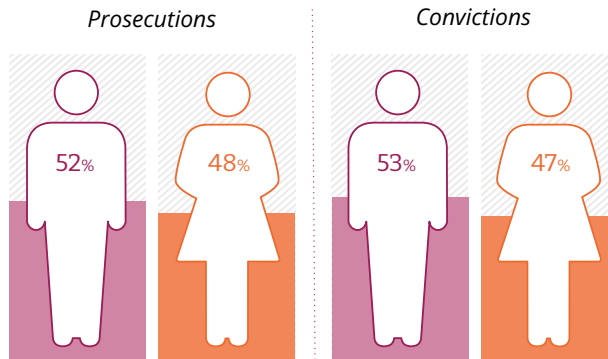


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

While men and women were investigated, prosecuted and convicted in near equal-shares in Central America and the Caribbean in 2022. About 50 per cent of those investigated were women.

Fig. 125 Persons prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in Central America and the Caribbean, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*

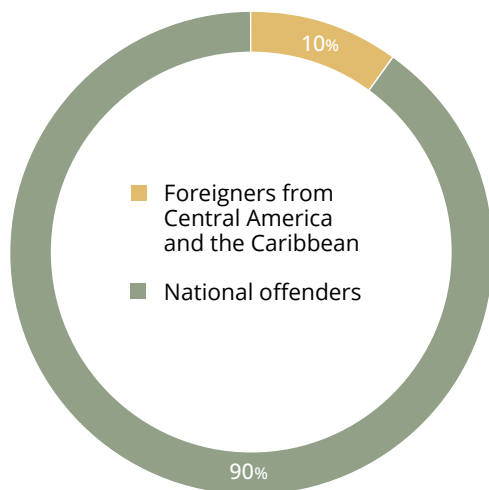


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 348 persons prosecuted in 9 countries; and 90 persons convicted in 11 countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

Much like in other regions of the world, the majority of those convicted were citizens of the country of conviction. The remaining 10 per cent convicted were citizens of other countries in the region.

Fig. 126 Traffickers convicted in Central America and the Caribbean, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*

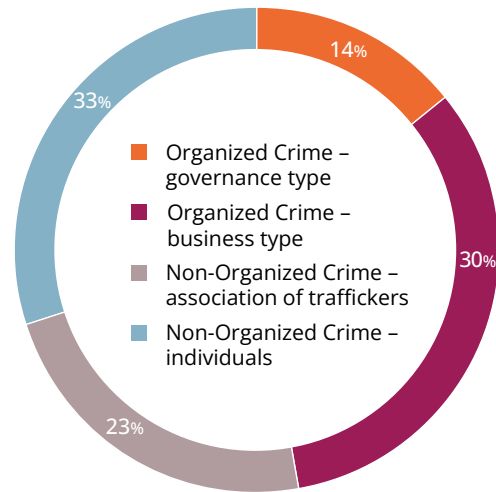


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 63 persons convicted in 5 countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

As regards the structure of traffickers in Central America and the Caribbean, based on a number of court cases reported by national authorities in the region, a wide range of actors operate in the region, from individual traffickers to people working in pairs and business-type organized crime groups.

Fig. 127 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in Central America and the Caribbean, by type of structure *



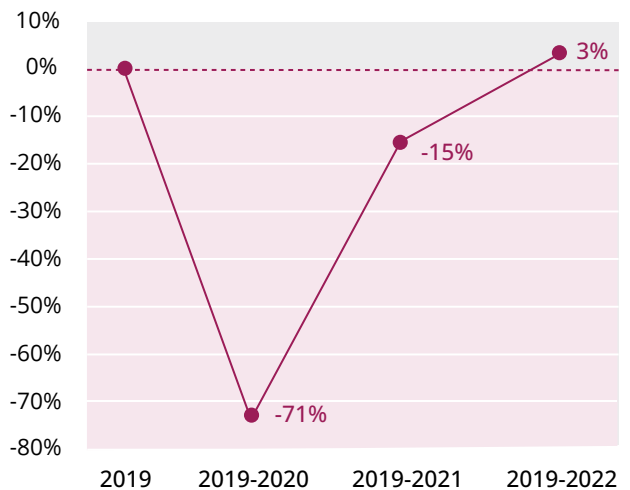
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 129 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in Central America and the Caribbean, for a total of 235 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

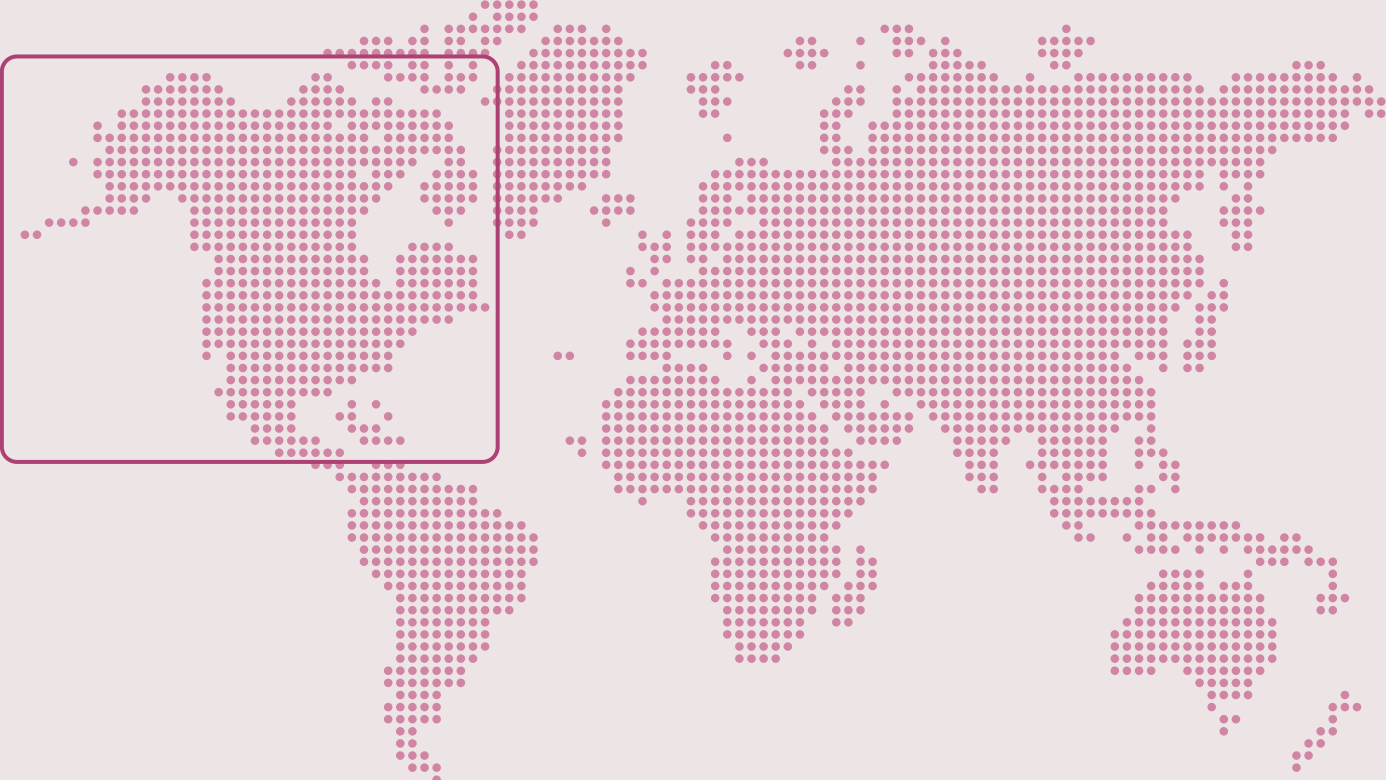
The criminal justice response in Central America and the Caribbean has gone through many increases and decreases over the past few years. From 2019 to 2020, the number of convictions fell by 71 per cent before rising beyond the pre-Covid rate.

Fig. 128 Trend in the number of persons convicted in Central America and the Caribbean, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

North America*



* This region comprises of Canada, Mexico and The United States of America.

KEY FINDINGS FOR NORTH AMERICA, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



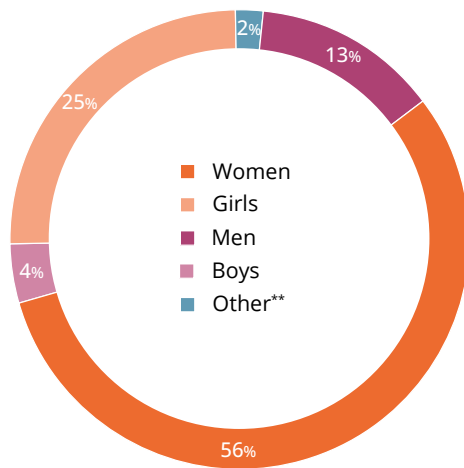
Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



Victims

In 2022, women continue to make up the largest share of victims detected in North America. The number of female victims – both women and girls – has increased substantially over the period considered.

Fig. 129 Share of detected victims of trafficking in North America, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

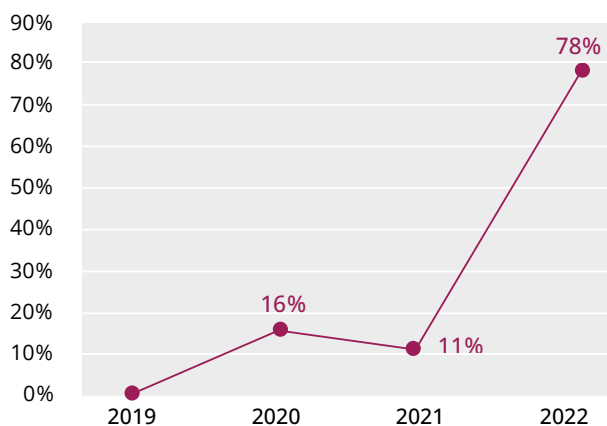


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 16,999 victims detected in 3 countries in North America.

** In 2022 (or most recent), two countries in this region reported victims under "other" and provided additional identification data. See the individual country information of Canada and the United States of America.

Fig. 130 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in North America, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

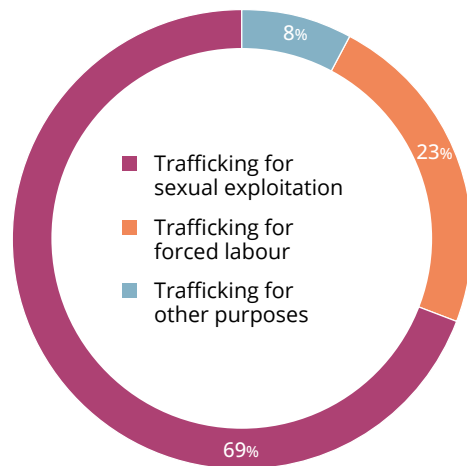
* This result is based on victims detected in 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reporting on this indicator over the entire period.

While women and girls were the most common detected victim profiles trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the region, the increase in victim detections was recorded in all forms of trafficking. In particular, a large share of women was

detected in 2022 as being trafficked for forced labour (38 per cent) and for mixed forms of exploitation (59 per cent), respectively. Detected victims of sexual exploitation were women (63 per cent) and increasingly girls (29 per cent).

It should be noted that in 2020, 72 per cent of detected victims of sexual exploitation were women and 22 per cent were girls, suggesting a reduction in the average age of the victims trafficked for sexual exploitation between 2020 and 2022.

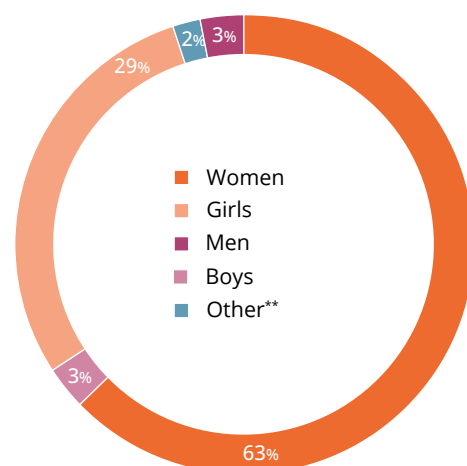
Fig. 131 Share of detected victims of trafficking in North America, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 15,465 victims detected in 3 countries in North America.

Fig. 132 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in North America, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

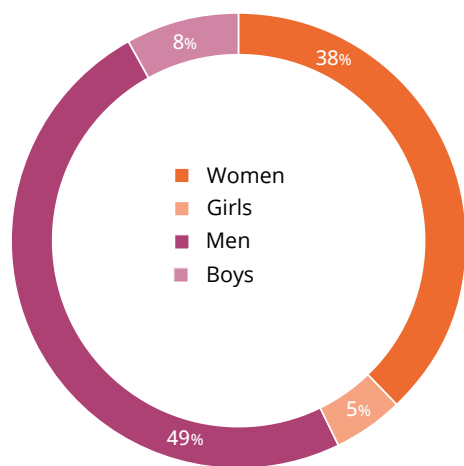


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 10,285 victims detected in 3 countries and territories in North America.

** In 2022 (or most recent), two countries in this region reported victims under "other" and provided additional identification data. See the individual country information of Canada and the United States of America.

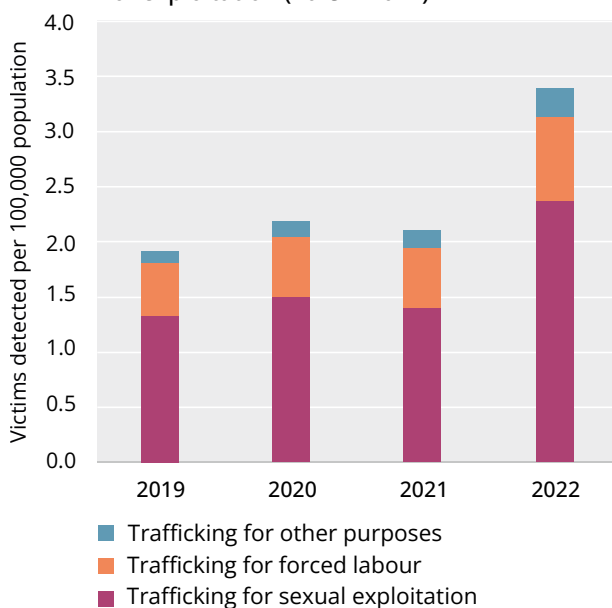
Fig. 133 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour in North America, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 3,411 victims detected in 3 countries and territories in North America.

Fig. 134 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in North America, by form of exploitation (2019 – 2022)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

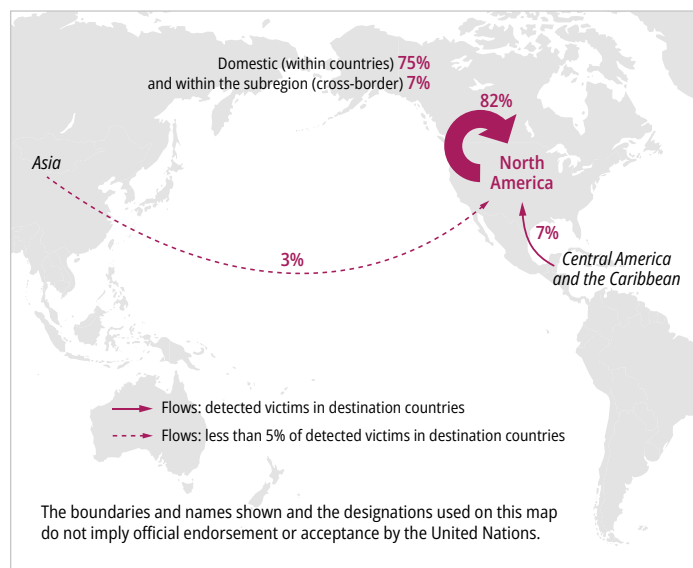
* This result is based on victims detected in 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reporting on this indicator over the entire period.

Court case summaries collected from the region suggest that while trafficking for forced labour involves a sizeable amount of cross-border trafficking, trafficking for sexual exploitation concerns largely those internally trafficked.¹

Trafficking Flows

As in previous years, the majority of trafficking in North America is increasingly of a domestic nature.

Map. 15 Share of detected victims of trafficking in North America, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

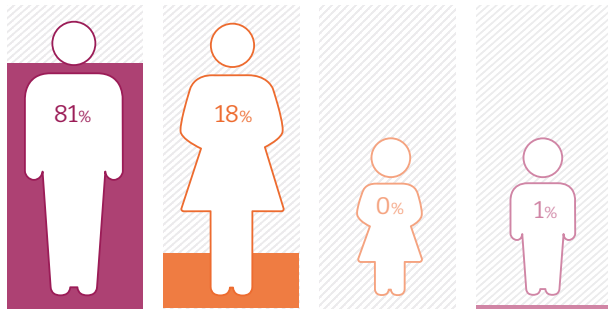
* Based on data on sex and age of 14,097 victims detected in 3 countries and territories in North America.

However, in 2022 there was an increase in cross-border flows of a broader variety with victims trafficked from countries beyond the typical origins for detections in North America in previous years. For victims trafficked across borders into North American countries, the greatest share originated from relatively close origins – other countries in North America (7 per cent), Central America and the Caribbean (7 per cent) and South America (1 per cent) – comprising 15 per cent of all flows.

Traffickers

The majority of those investigated, prosecuted and/or convicted in North America in 2022 were men.

Fig. 135 Persons investigated for trafficking in persons in North America, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

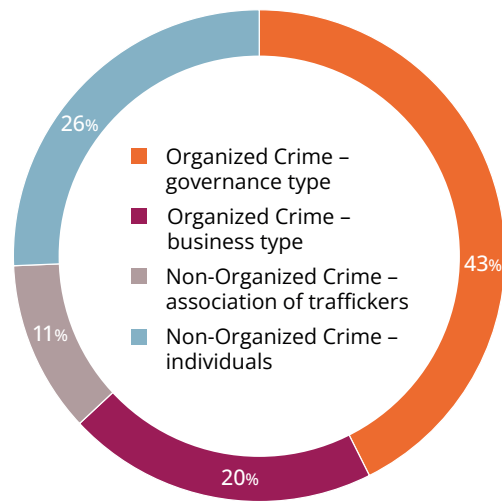
* Based on data on sex and age of 343 persons investigated in Mexico and Canada.

Information concerning the nationality of those convicted is also limited. However, based on data from Mexico and a number of court cases from the United States of America and Canada, it appears that the majority of traffickers are citizens of the country in which they were convicted.

Given the many cases reported to UNODC concerning trafficking for sexual exploitation in the region, the means used by traffickers in North America to recruit, exploit and control victims for this particular form are well-documented. As a pattern emerging from the cases, traffickers seem to abuse their established relationships – familial or romantic – to gain victims’ trust before using more violent means to exploit and control.² Cases where traffickers abuse victims’ vulnerabilities, including drug use disorders, homelessness and extreme poverty, are also reported.³

Based on a selection of cases submitted by national authorities, trafficking in 2022 in North America appears to have been carried out by a variety of organized structured groups and less-organized opportunistic and individual traffickers.

Fig. 136 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in North America, by type of structure*



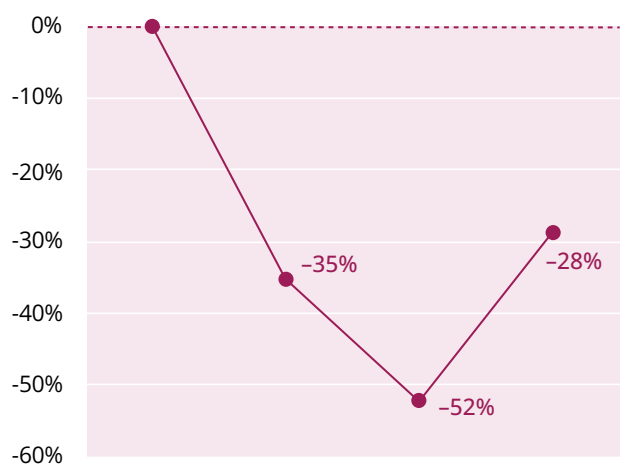
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 86 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in North America, for a total of 230 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

All three countries in North America have enacted comprehensive legislation addressing trafficking in persons.

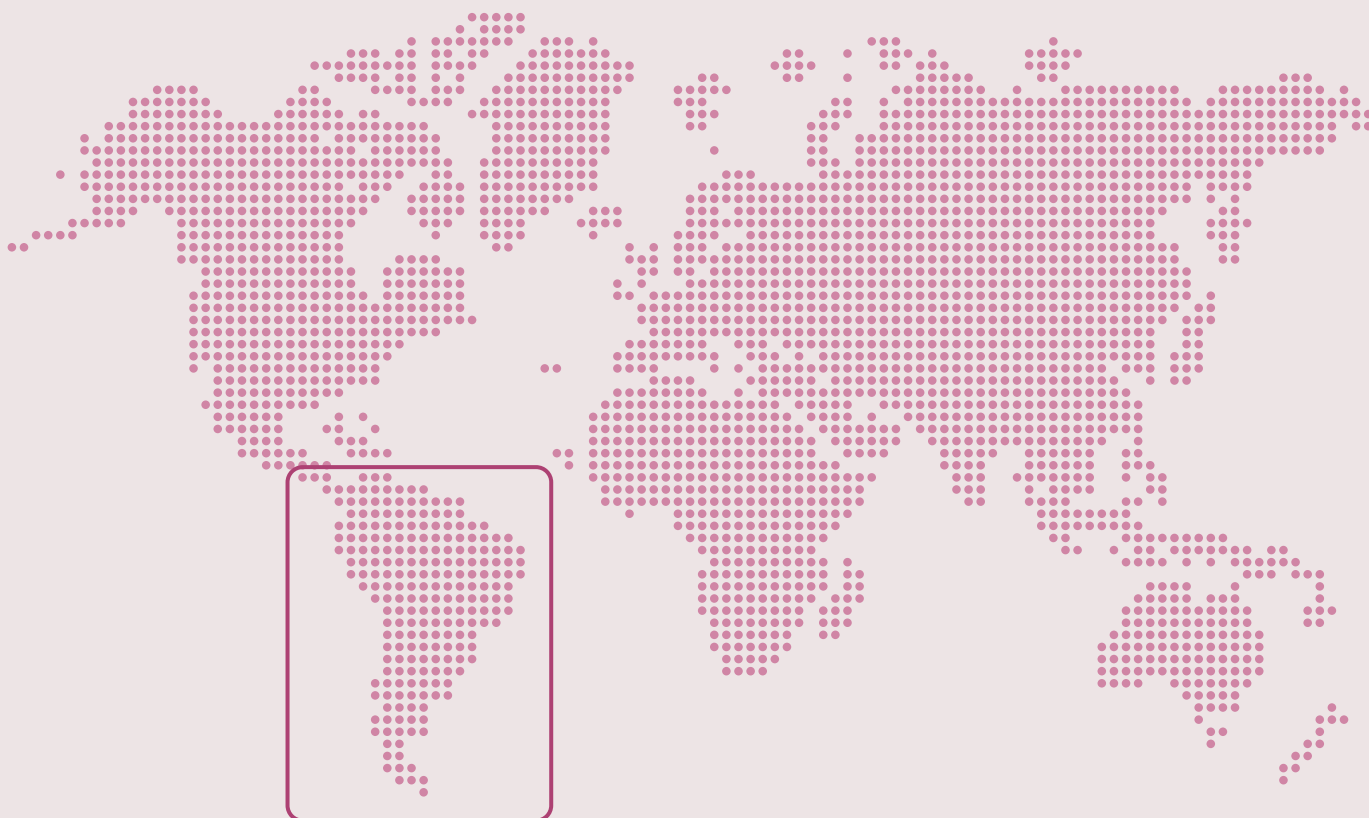
Fig. 137 Trend in the number of persons convicted in North America, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

After a period of decline, in 2022 the number of convictions has increased. Preliminary data for 2023 seems to confirm a continued increase in the number of convictions.

South America*



* This region comprises of Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

KEY FINDINGS FOR SOUTH AMERICA, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



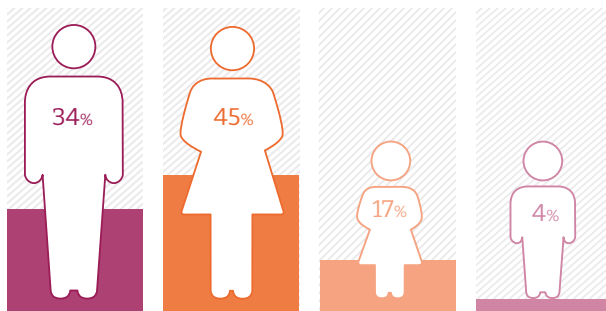
Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



Victims

Women and girls together comprised the largest victim profile in South America in 2022, making up 62 per cent of all detected victims.

Fig. 138 Share of detected victims of trafficking in South America, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

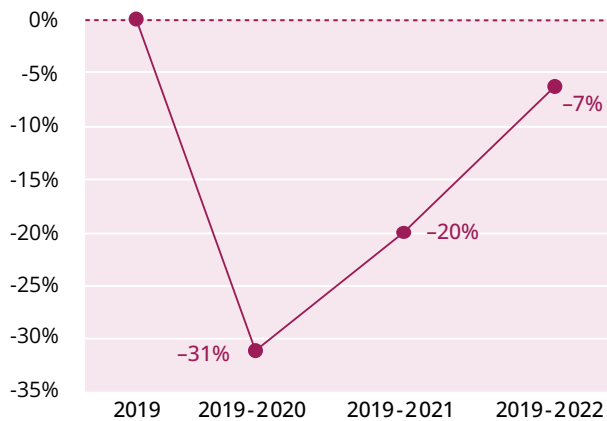


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 3,734 victims detected in 12 countries and territories in South America.

As in many countries, the rate of victim detection fell greatly in 2020 due to pandemic related restrictions on law enforcement and other anti-trafficking actors. The change in the detection rate compared to 2019 slightly increased from -31 per cent in 2020 to -20 per cent in 2021, up to -7 per cent in 2022.

Fig. 139 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in South America, base year 2019

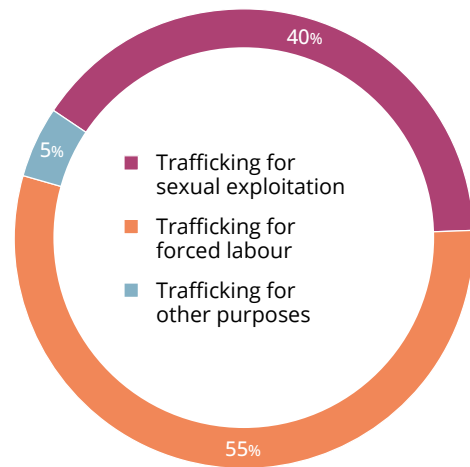


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 11 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

In 2022, the most commonly detected form of exploitation in South America was trafficking for forced labour (55 per cent).⁴ Trafficking for sexual exploitation was detected in a slightly smaller share (40 per cent).

Fig. 140 Share of detected victims of trafficking in South America, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*

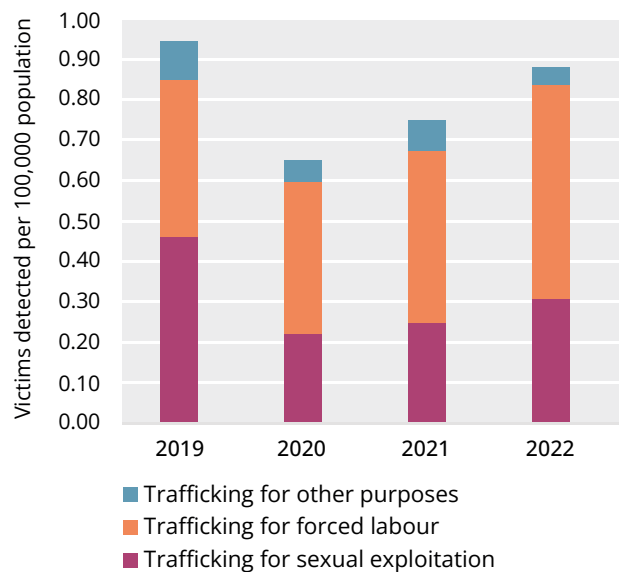


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 3,710 victims detected in 7 countries and territories in South America.

In 2020, as in other regions of the world, the significant decrease and subsequent stagnation in victim detections may be attributed to the decline in the detection of trafficking for sexual exploitation. In 2019, the majority of trafficking detected in South America was for sexual exploitation but had fallen below detections for forced labour. Trafficking for forced labour was detected in 2022 at levels higher than before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fig. 141 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in South America, by form of exploitation (2019-2022)

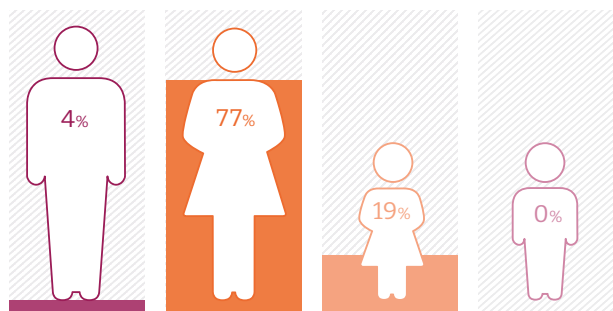


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 11 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

Men and boys were rarely detected as victims of sexual exploitation in 2022. Women were the predominate profile, making up 77 per cent of all victims detected for this purpose.

Fig. 142 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in South America, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

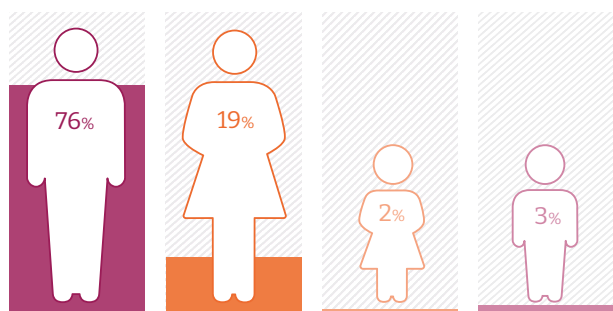


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 693 victims detected in 8 countries and territories in South America.

Conversely, men comprised most of all victims detected as trafficked for forced labour in South America in 2022. However, women (19 per cent) are also detected for this form of exploitation.

Fig. 143 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour in South America, by age and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



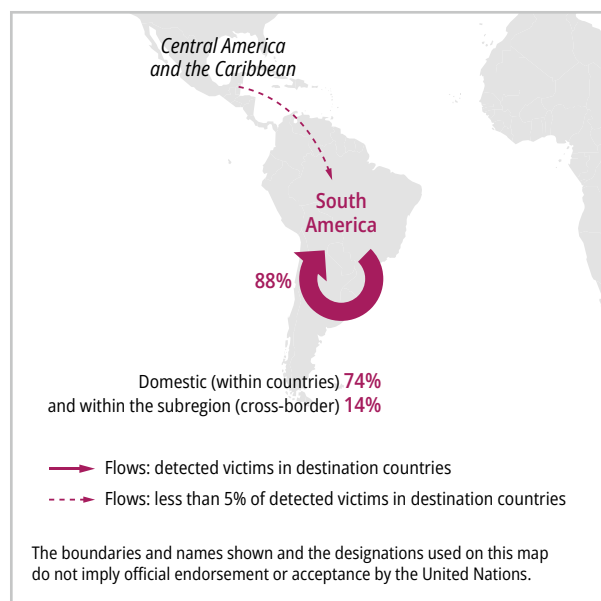
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 1,603 victims detected in 8 countries and territories in South America.

Trafficking Flows

Domestic trafficking comprised nearly three quarters of all flows detected in South America in 2022. Outside of this flow, victims were trafficked across relatively short distances, particularly from other countries in the region (14 per cent).⁵ Victims from other regions, including Asia and Africa, were less commonly detected.

Map. 16 Share of detected victims of trafficking in South America, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*

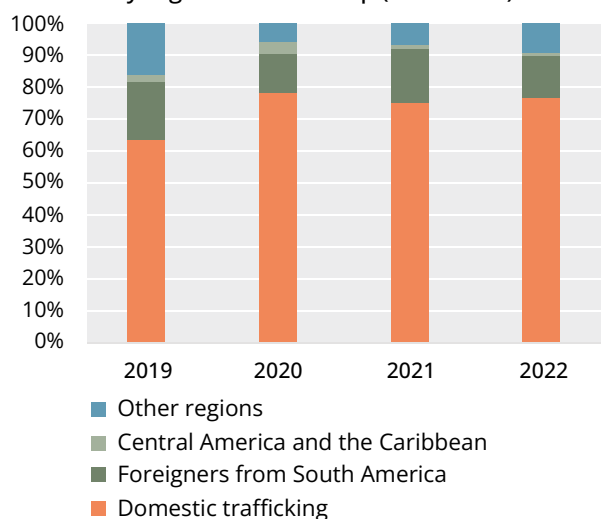


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 3,531 victims detected in 11 countries and territories in South America.

Between 2019 and 2020, there was a reduction in the detection of victims from other regions of the world. Since 2020, the share of foreign victims has largely not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Fig. 144 Trend in victims detected in South America, by region of citizenship (2019–2022)

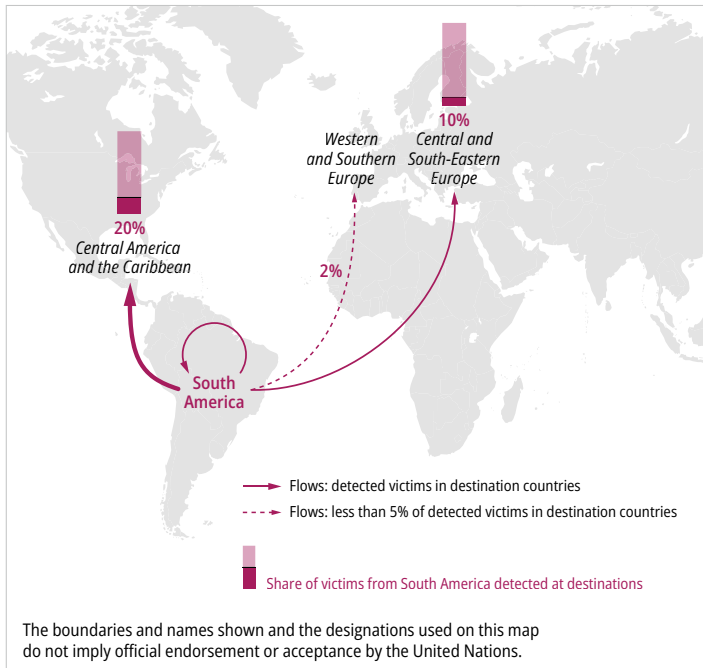


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

The majority of trafficking flows remain confined to the Americas. Aside from the flows within the region, a sizeable flow appears to exist from South America to Central America and the Caribbean. A fifth (20 per cent) of all flows to Central America

and the Caribbean originated in South America in 2022. Victims from South America were detected in various regions in Europe.

Map. 17 Trafficking flows from South America to other regions, by share of the victims from there region detected at destination, 2022 (or most recent)

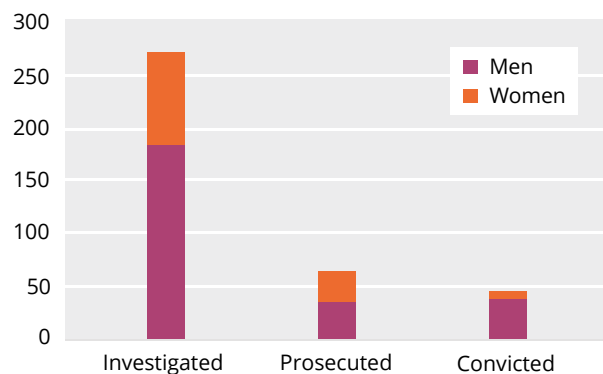


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

In 2022, men made up the vast majority of those investigated and convicted in South America. Data regarding the citizenship of those convicted is limited, but appears to suggest most, if not all, were citizens of the country of conviction.

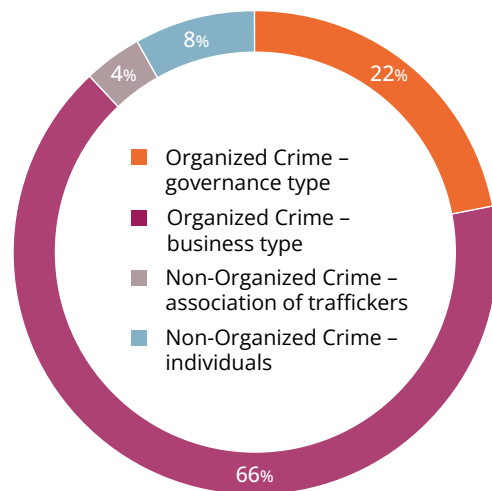
Fig. 145 Persons investigated, prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in South America, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 336 persons investigated in three countries; 58 prosecuted in four countries; and 48 convicted in five countries in South America.

Fig. 146 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in South America, by type of structure*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

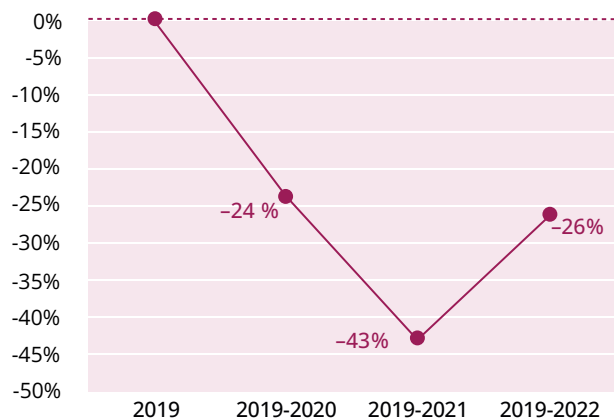
* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 91 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in South America, for a total of 248 persons convicted.

According to the court cases reported by countries in this region, traffickers seem to operate more frequently in an organized crime group, although it does not appear that members of structured criminal organizations are convicted for this crime.

Criminal Justice Response

The convictions in South America registered a significant drop between 2019 to 2020, and decreased further between 2019 and 2021, before regaining some ground between 2021 and 2022. However, in 2022, the convictions recorded by countries in South America were still 26 per cent less than in the pre-pandemic period.

Fig. 147 Trend in the number of persons convicted in South America, base year 2019*

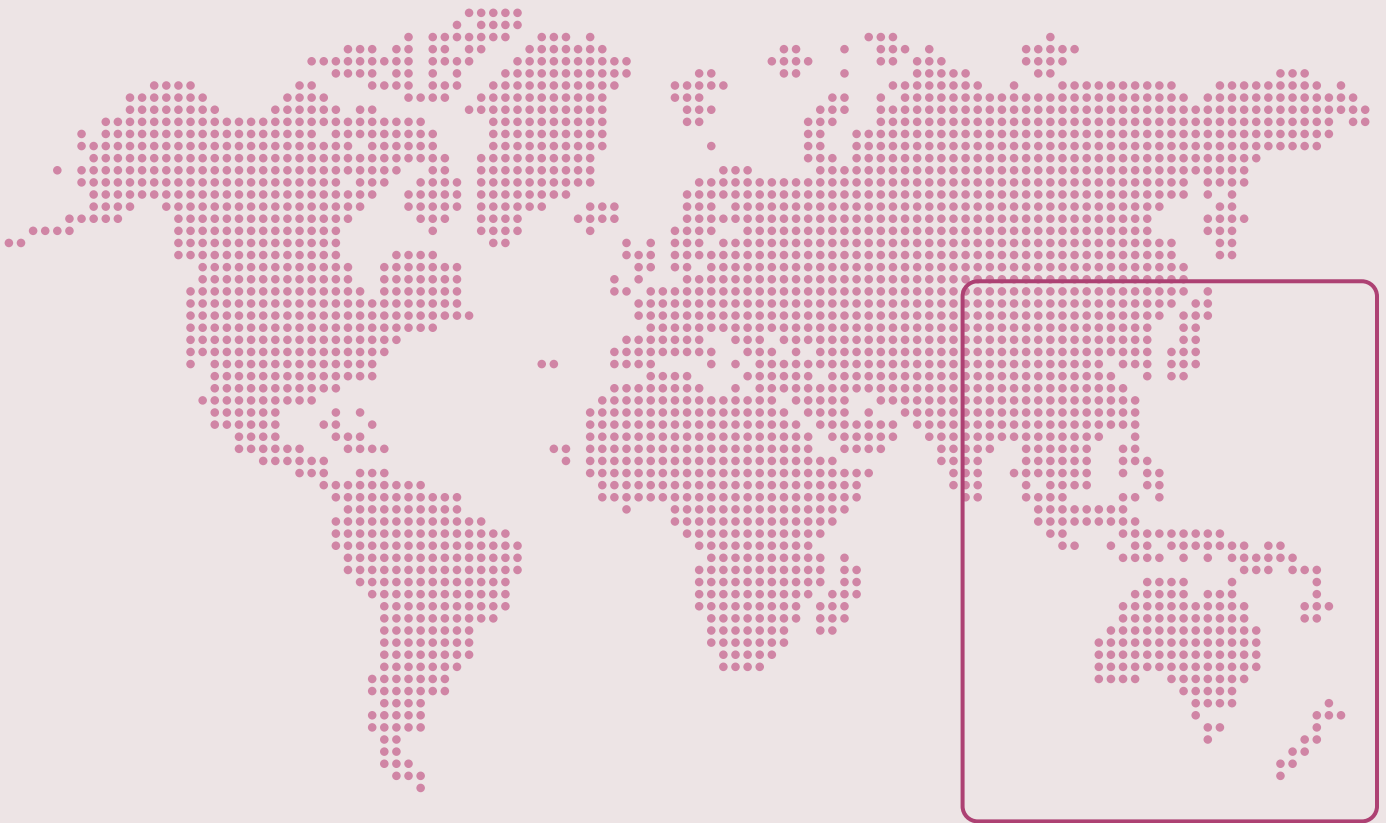


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 5 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific

East Asia and the Pacific*



* This region comprises of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands (the), Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Marshall Islands (the), Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines (the), Republic of Korea (the), Singapore, Thailand and Tonga.

KEY FINDINGS FOR EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



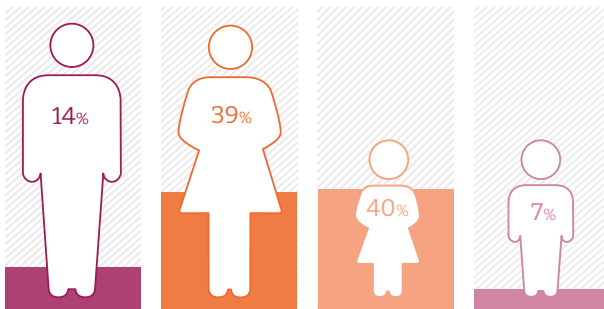
60% of the victims detected in the region are trafficked domestically.

As a region of origin, victims are detected in all continents.

Victims

Females made up about 80 per cent of detected victims in East Asia and the Pacific in 2022. **Women and girls were detected in near-equal shares.** More men were detected than boys, who accounted for 7 per cent of the total.

Fig. 148 Share of detected victims of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

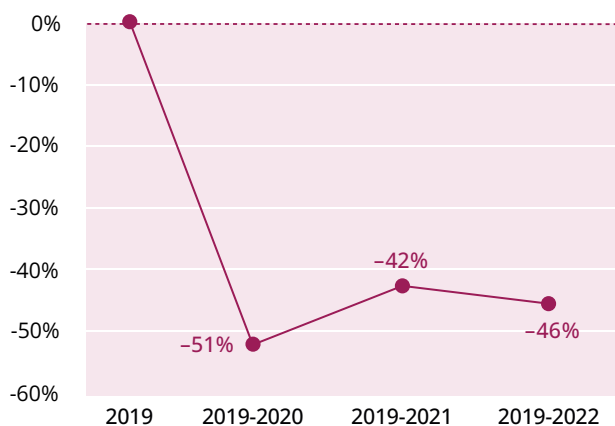


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 3,170 victims detected in 24 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

The number of victims detected dropped drastically in 2020. The detection rate has remained overall stable in 2021 and 2022.

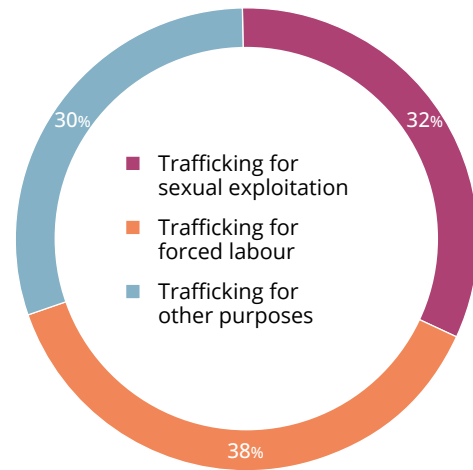
Fig. 149 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in East Asia and the Pacific, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

The different forms of exploitation are nearly equally detected in the region, with trafficking for forced labour representing 38 per cent of the total victims detected in 2022, sexual exploitation 32 per cent and other forms of exploitation 30 per cent.

Fig. 150 Share of victims detected in East Asia and the Pacific, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*

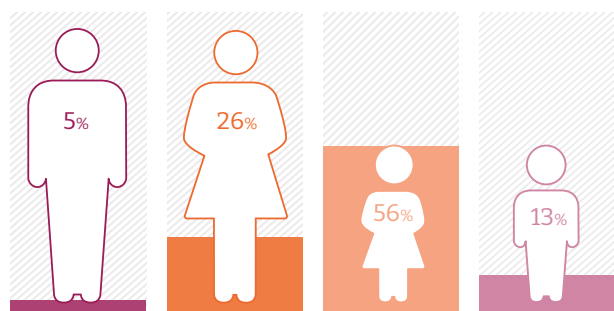


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 2,891 victims detected in 19 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

As is the case in many regions, women and girls made up a large proportion of victims trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (82 per cent). Nevertheless, a relatively significant share of detections in 2022 were boys trafficked for this purpose, comprising 13 per cent of the total.

Fig. 151 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

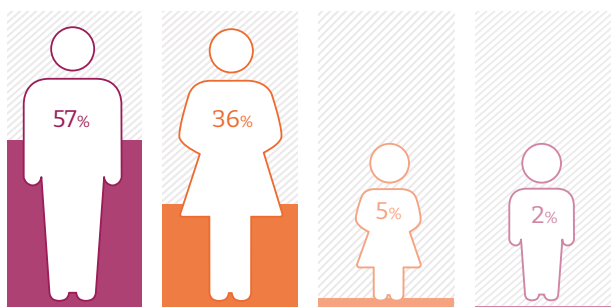


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 326 victims detected in 16 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

While men made up just over half of all detected victims for trafficking for forced labour in 2022, women made up a significant share (36 per cent). Children in general were much less commonly detected.

Fig. 152 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour in East Asia and the Pacific, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

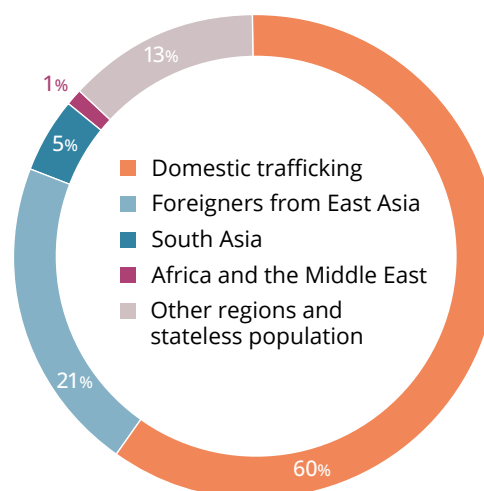
* Based on data on sex and age of 206 victims detected in 16 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

As far as trafficking for other purposes, victims were primarily trafficked for the production of child sexual abuse material (350 victims detected in 2022), for forced marriage (25 victims detected in 2022) along with some other exploitation types. More recently, trafficking for forced criminality into online scams has been reported (see box *Trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality to commit online scams in Southeast Asia* in Chapter 2, page 95).

Trafficking Flows

While a little over half (60 per cent) of all trafficking detected in East Asia and the Pacific in 2022 was domestically trafficked, the region also recorded a relatively significant amount of cross-border trafficking between countries in the region.⁶

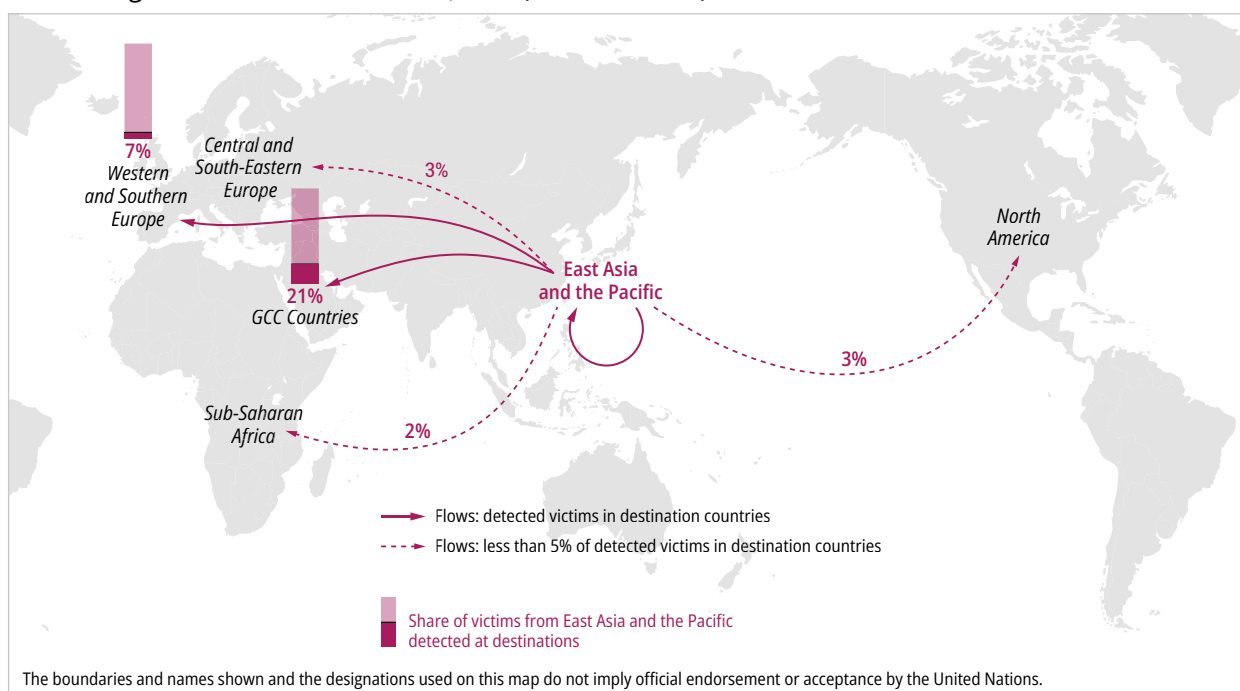
Fig. 153 Share of detected victims of trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on information 895 victims detected in 11 country and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

Map. 18 Trafficking flows from East Asia and the Pacific to other regions, as share of the victims from the region detected at destination, 2022 (or more recent)



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

Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Flows from outside the region were more limited with 5 per cent originating from South Asia.⁷

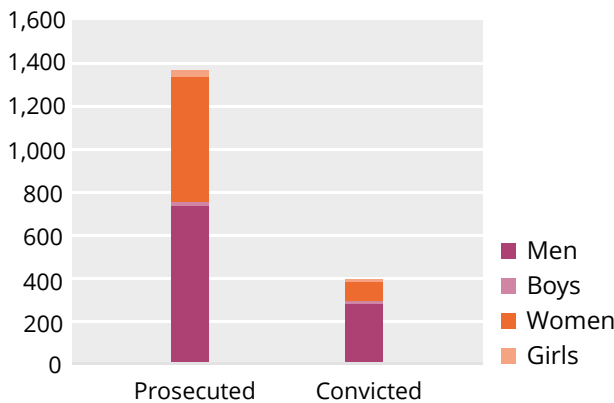
While cross-border trafficking stagnated in 2020 due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, in 2021 and 2022, it has increased, particularly within the region itself.

Outside the region, victims from East Asia and the Pacific are detected in a wide variety of regions across the world. In Western and Southern Europe, victims from the region make up 7 per cent of the total victims detected in that region, and in the GCC countries, East Asian victims make up 21 per cent of the victims detected.

Traffickers

Women and men were both prosecuted and convicted in similar proportions in 2022 in the region.

Fig. 154 Persons prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in East Asia and the Pacific, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*

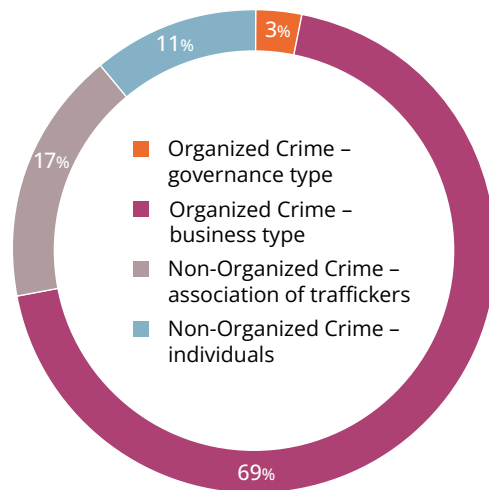


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 1,351 prosecuted persons in 11 countries and territories and 409 convicted in 15 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

According to the court cases collected, it appears traffickers convicted in East Asia and the Pacific typically operate as organized crime groups.

Fig. 155 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in East Asia and the Pacific, by type of structure*



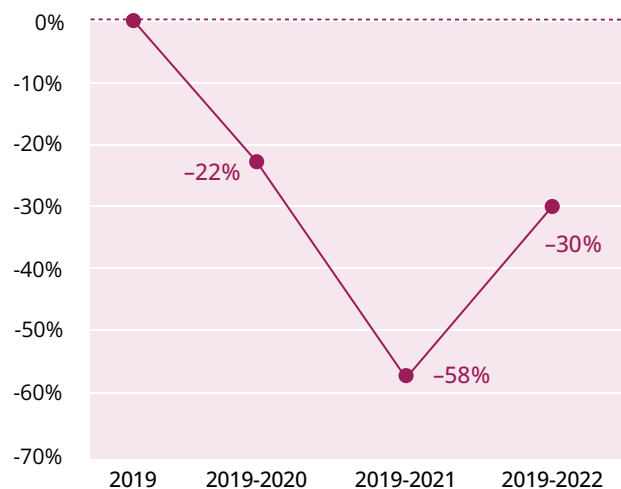
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 149 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in East Asia and the Pacific, for a total of 479 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

Between 2019 and 2021, the number of convictions in East Asia and the Pacific significantly fell, by 58 per cent in 2021. In 2022, the rate increased but still, the number of convictions remain 30 per cent below the levels recorded in 2019.

Fig. 156 Trend in the number of persons convicted in East Asia and the Pacific, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

South Asia*



* This region comprises of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

KEY FINDINGS FOR SOUTH ASIA, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



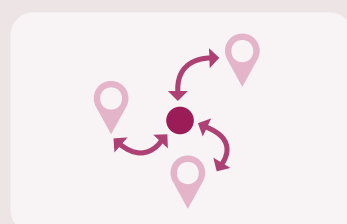
Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)

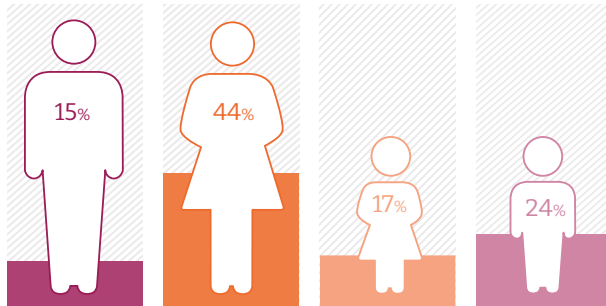


As a region of destination, victims detected in the region are either trafficked domestically or within the region.

As a region of origin, victims are detected in a significant number of destinations in many regions of the world.

Victims

Fig. 157 Share of detected victims of trafficking in South Asia, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*



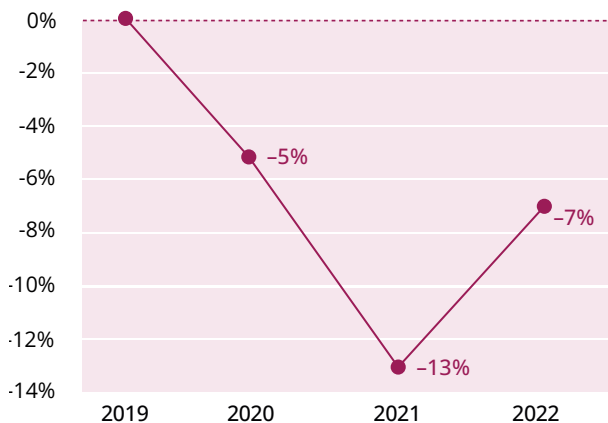
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 8,059 victims detected in 5 countries in South Asia.

The majority of victims detected in 2022 were women. Boys comprised a quarter of all detected victims while men and girls were detected in near-equal shares (15 and 17 per cent, respectively).

The rate of detections of victims of trafficking in the region recorded a reduction in 2020 and 2021, before increasing again in 2022.

Fig. 158 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in South Asia, base year 2019*

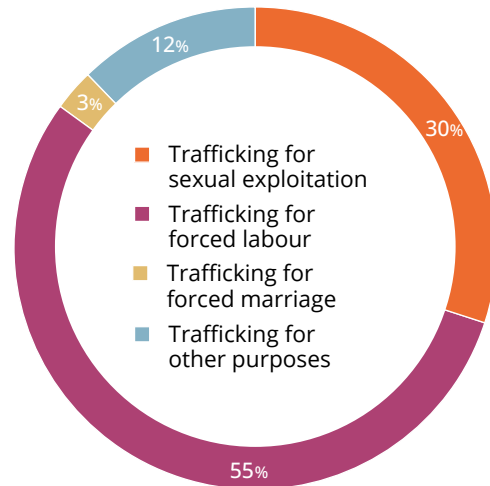


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data from 5 countries reporting on the indicator for the entire period.

The majority of all victims detected in 2022 were trafficked for forced labour and about a third were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, a relatively significant share of victims were trafficked for other purposes (12 per cent) or for forced marriage (3 per cent).

Fig. 159 Share of detected victims in South Asia, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



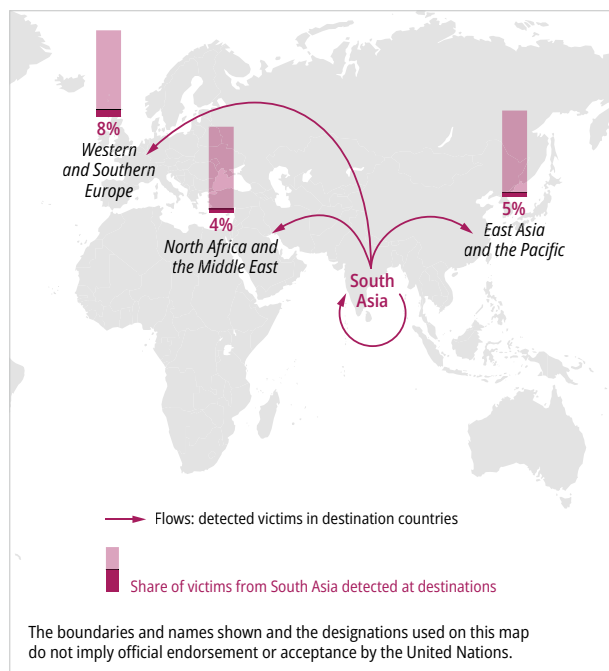
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 7,738 victims detected in 7 countries and territories in South Asia.

Trafficking Flows

In 2022, countries in South Asia mainly reported victims trafficked within the national borders. Besides being trafficked domestically, victims from South Asia were found in a diverse number of countries globally. In 2022, victims from South Asia were detected in 36 countries in Western and Southern Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe, East Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and in other countries in South Asia. In Western and Southern Europe in particular, victims from this region comprised 8 per cent of the total of all victims detected in 2022.

Map. 19 Trafficking flows from South Asia and to other regions, by share of victims from the region detected at destination, 2022 (or most recent)

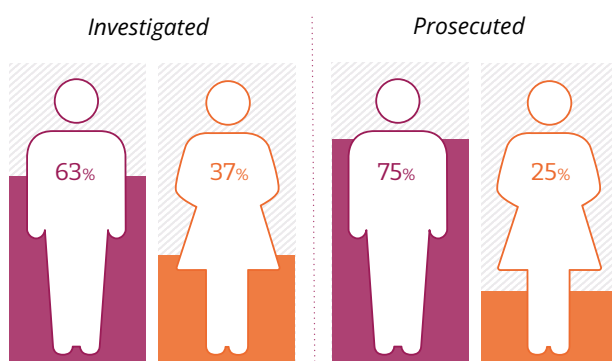


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

Data and information regarding the profile, structure and modus operandi of traffickers in the region is limited. However, based on data from three countries from 2020, it appears that males are more frequently investigated (63 per cent) and prosecuted (75 per cent) for trafficking in persons.

Fig. 160 Persons investigated, prosecuted for trafficking in persons in South Asia, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



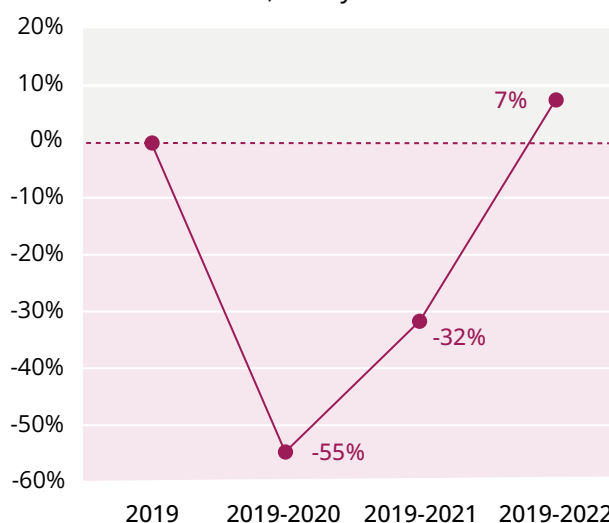
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 228 persons investigated in 3 countries and territories where sex was recorded; 327 prosecuted in 3 countries and territories where sex was recorded in South Asia.

Criminal Justice Response

As in many regions, the rate of conviction in South Asia significantly decreased during the pandemic due to related restrictions affecting law enforcement and the criminal justice system. However, within two years, the conviction rate reversed to that of pre-2020.

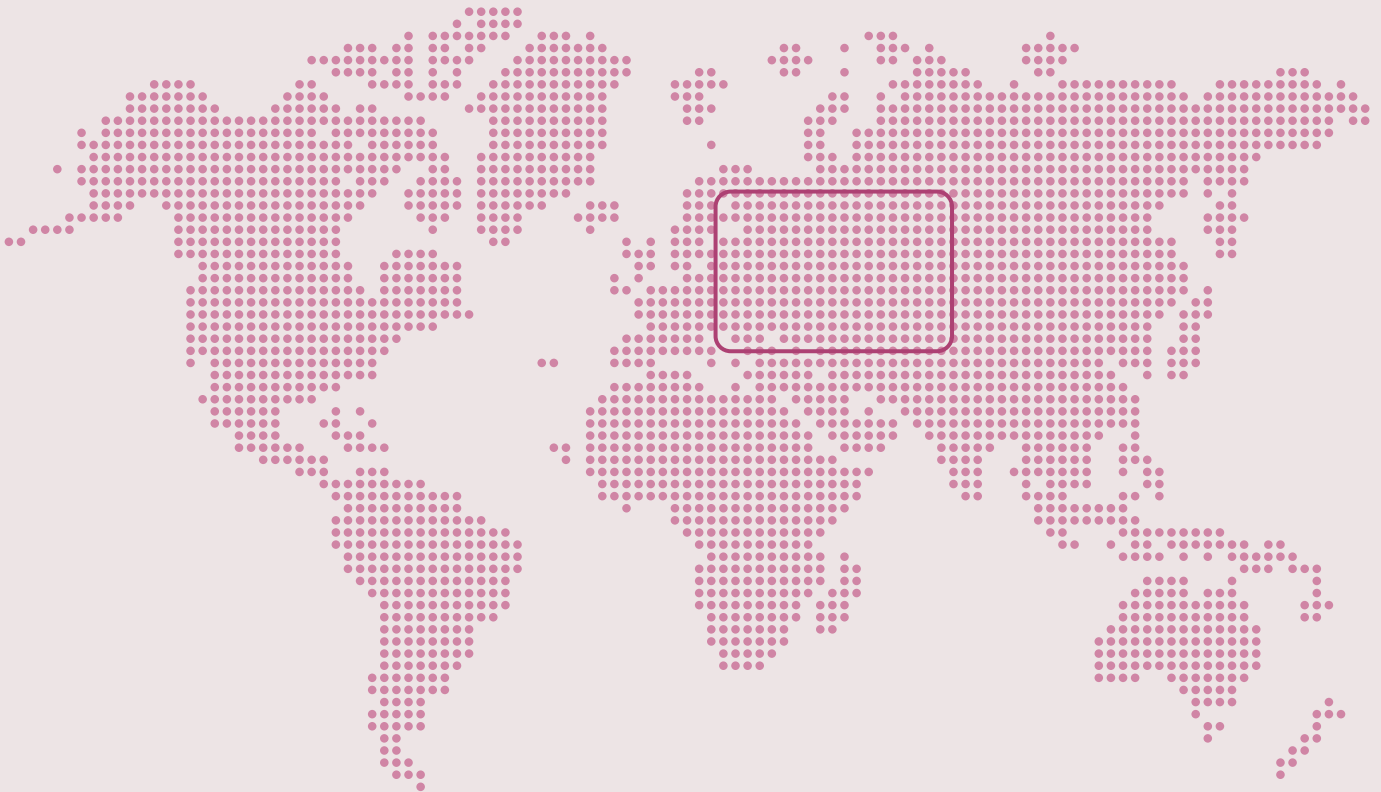
Fig. 161 Trend in the number of persons convicted in South Asia, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Europe and Central Asia

Eastern Europe and Central Asia*



* This region comprises of Eastern Europe (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) and countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

KEY FINDINGS FOR EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



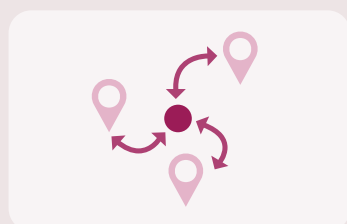
Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



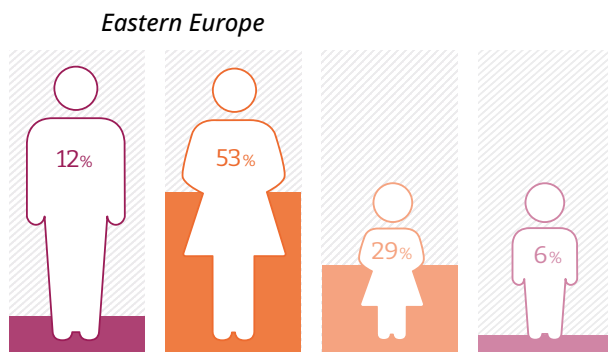
As a region of destination, most of the victims detected in the region are internally trafficked.

As a region of origin of cross-border trafficking, victims are detected in the Middle East, Western and Central Europe.

Victims

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia as a whole, more than 50 per cent of detected victims in 2022 were women, with countries in Central Asia reporting 61 per cent of victims being either women or girls, and countries in Eastern Europe reporting 82 per cent of victims being women or girls. Countries in Central Asia detected a much greater share of men than those in Eastern Europe.

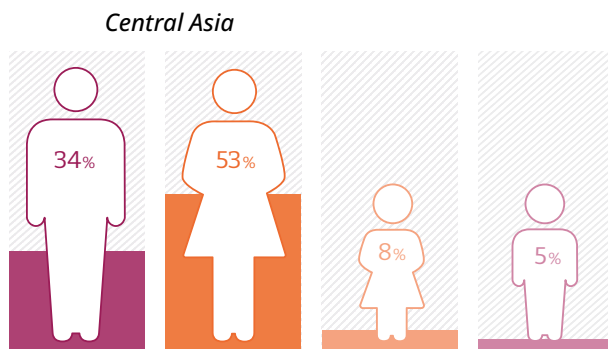
Fig. 162 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe, by age group and sex 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 430 victims detected in 6 countries in Eastern Europe.

Fig. 163 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Central Asia, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

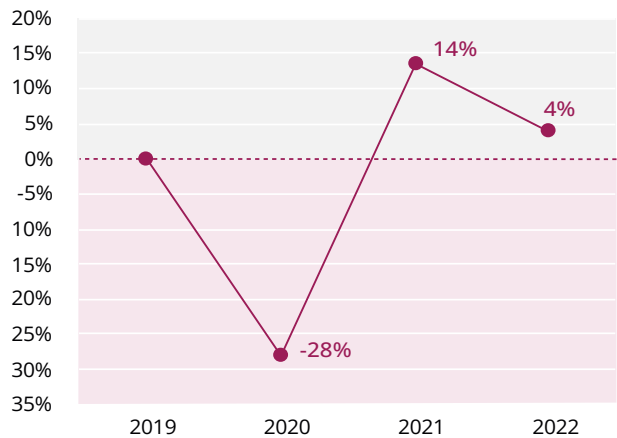


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 347 victims detected in 4 countries in Central Asia.

The victim detection rate increased rapidly by 45 per cent between 2020 and 2022 after a significant drop recorded in 2020.

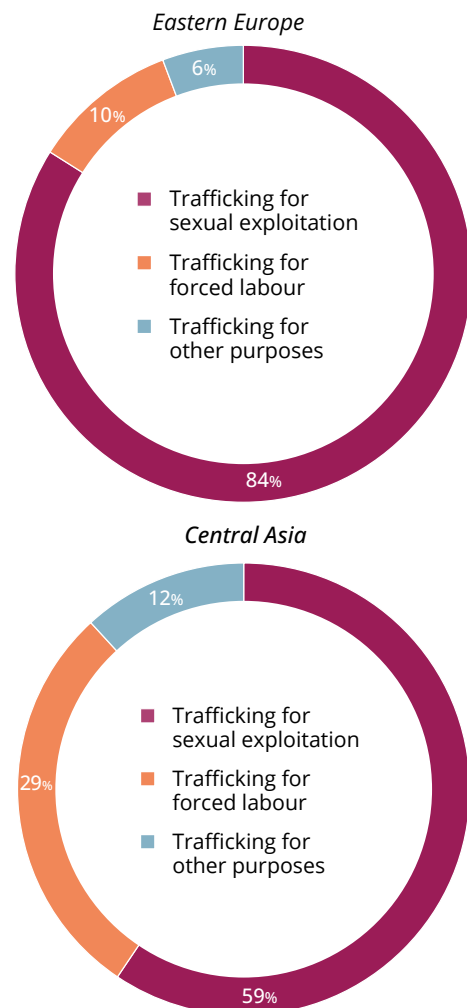
Fig. 164 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, base year 2019*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information on 11 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

Fig. 165 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 436 victims detected in 5 countries in Eastern Europe and of 313 in 4 countries in Central Asia.

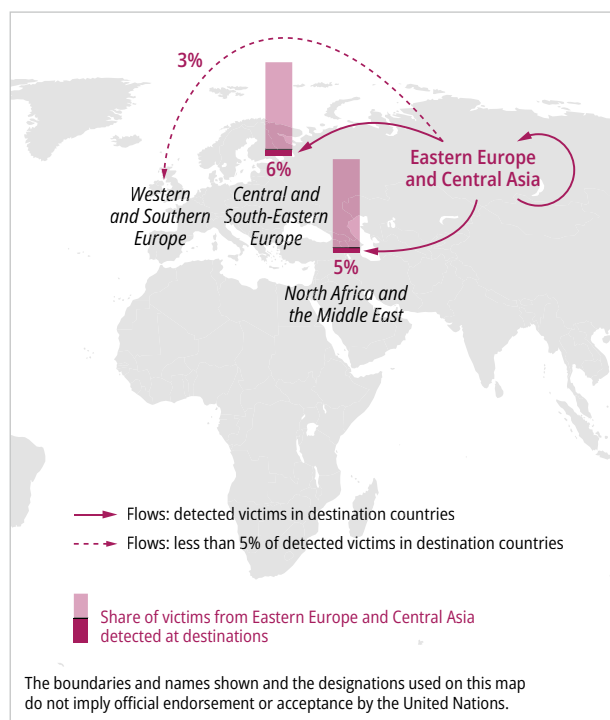
Forms of exploitation were roughly similar between Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In 2022, trafficking for sexual exploitation was the most commonly detected form in Eastern Europe and Central Asia as a whole. Countries in Central Asia, however, reported a significant share of victims trafficked for forced labour.

Trafficking Flows

As region of destination, most victims detected in the countries of the region were trafficked within the region, mostly domestically.

Data provided by other regions suggests that flows from this region are more diverse. In 2022, victims from Eastern Europe and Central Asia made up 5 per cent of the total victims detected in North Africa and the Middle East, 6 per cent in Central and South-Eastern Europe and a little over 3 per cent in Western and Southern Europe.

Map. 20 Trafficking flows from Eastern Europe and Central Asia to other regions, by share of the victims from the region detected at destination, 2022 (or most recent)

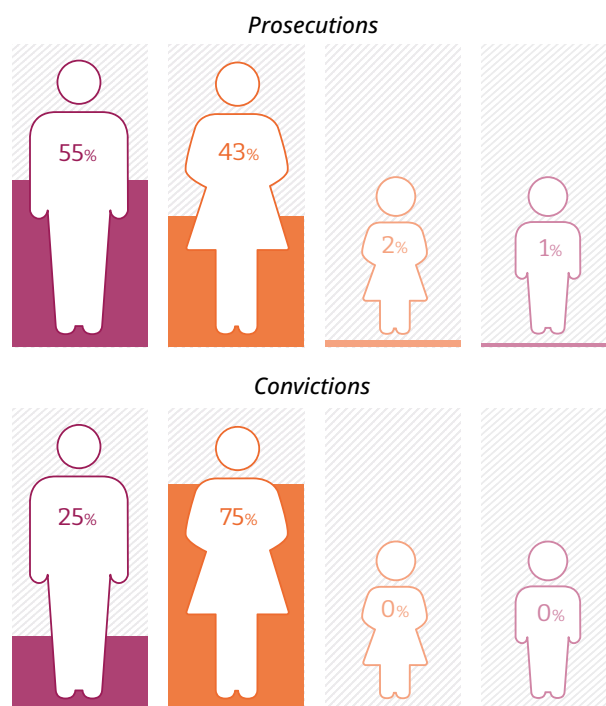


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

Unlike in other regions, nearly three times as many women than men were convicted of trafficking in persons in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2022. However, men and women were prosecuted in similar shares.

Fig. 166 Persons prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*

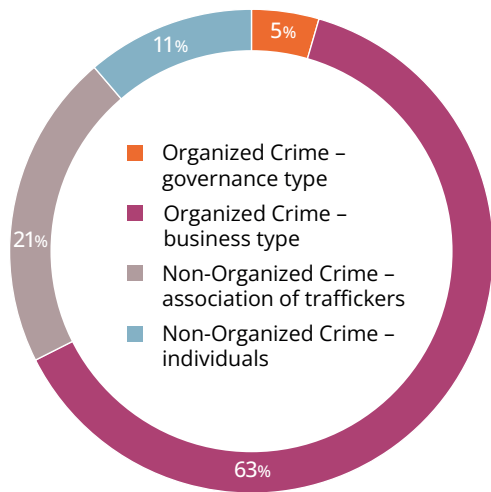


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 159 prosecuted in 7 countries; and 276 convicted in 8 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

On the basis of the court cases collected from the region, most traffickers convicted seem to operate in organized crime groups.

Fig. 167 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, by type of structure *



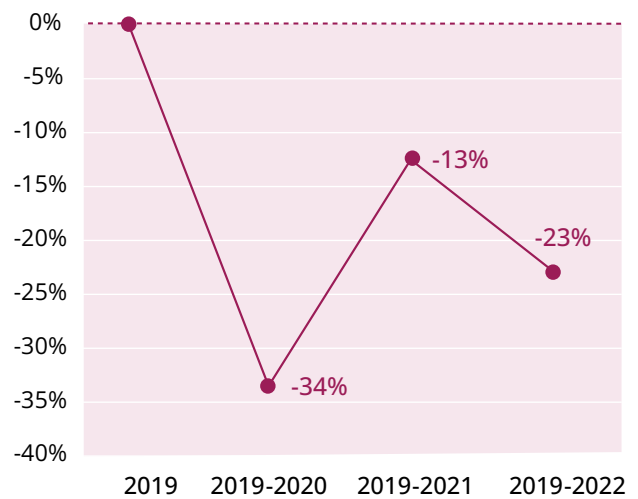
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 78 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, for a total of 222 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

The number of convictions in Eastern Europe and Central fluctuated between 2020 and 2022 but overall fewer convictions were recorded compared to 2019.

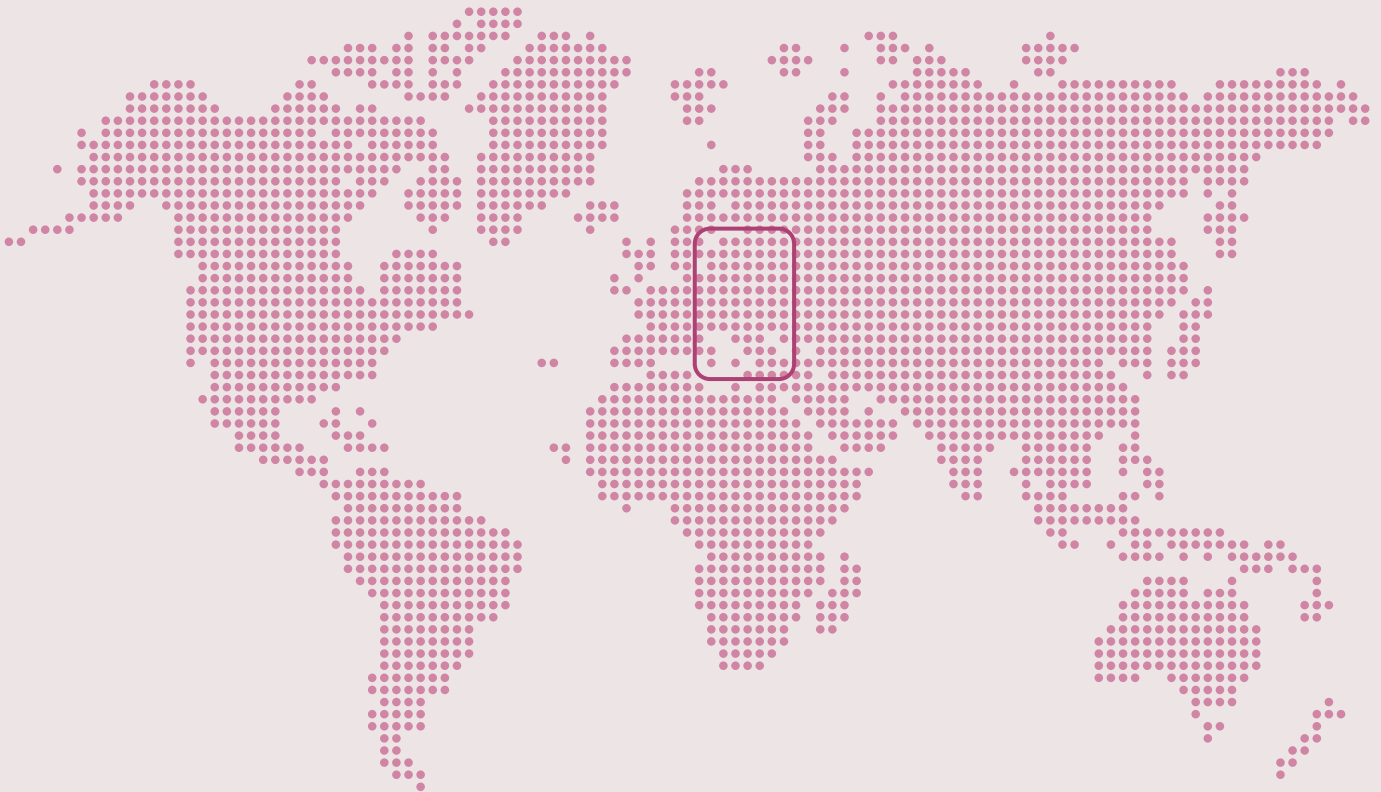
Fig. 168 Trend in the number of persons convicted in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information on 5 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

Central and South-Eastern Europe*



* This region comprises of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

KEY FINDINGS FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



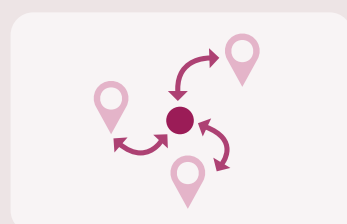
Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



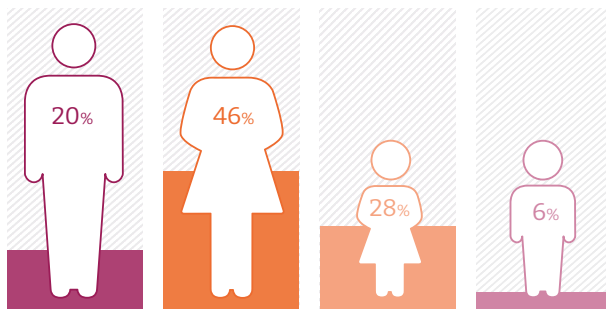
As a region of destination, 73% of the victims detected in this region are trafficked from within the region.

As origin to other regions, victims from the region are mainly trafficked to Western and Southern Europe.

Victims

Nearly half of all victims detected in 2022 were women. More girls (28 per cent) were detected than men (20 per cent) while boys were far less detected.

Fig. 169 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

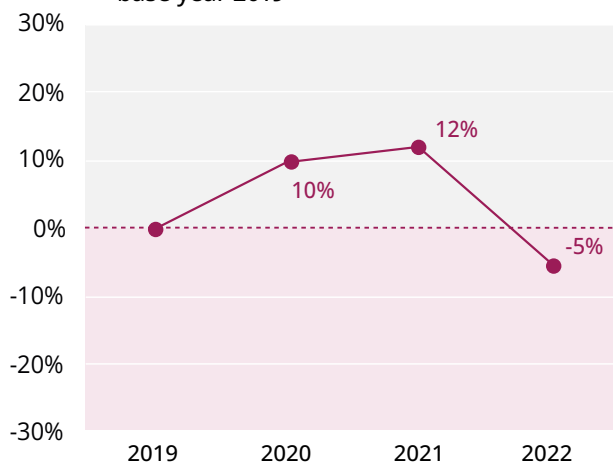


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 1,498 victims detected in 16 countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Unlike some other regions, the rate of detection of victims has remained overall similar to 2019, with slight variations between 2020 and 2022.

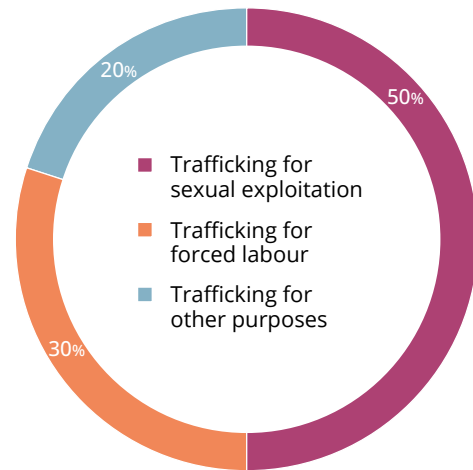
Fig. 170 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Central and South-Eastern Europe, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

While trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation accounted for nearly half of all detected cases in Central and South-Eastern Europe in 2022, its detection decreased greatly between 2021 and 2022. At the same time, a significant number of victims were detected as trafficked for forced begging (7 per cent), mixed exploitation (7 per cent) and forced criminality (3 per cent), respectively.

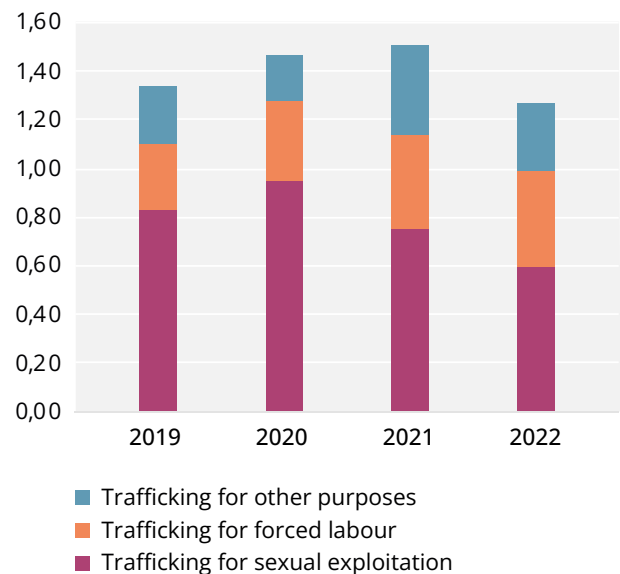
Fig. 171 Share of victims detected in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by form of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 1,375 victims detected in 16 countries and territories in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Fig. 172 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by form of exploitation (2019–2022)*



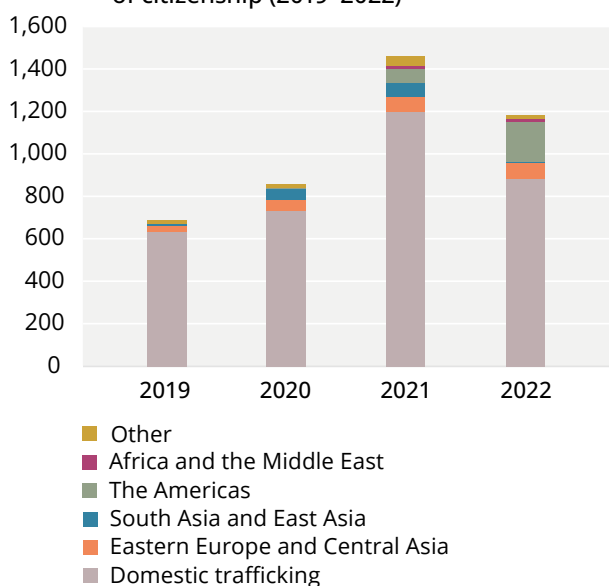
Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 16 countries reporting on this indicator over the period considered.

Trafficking Flows

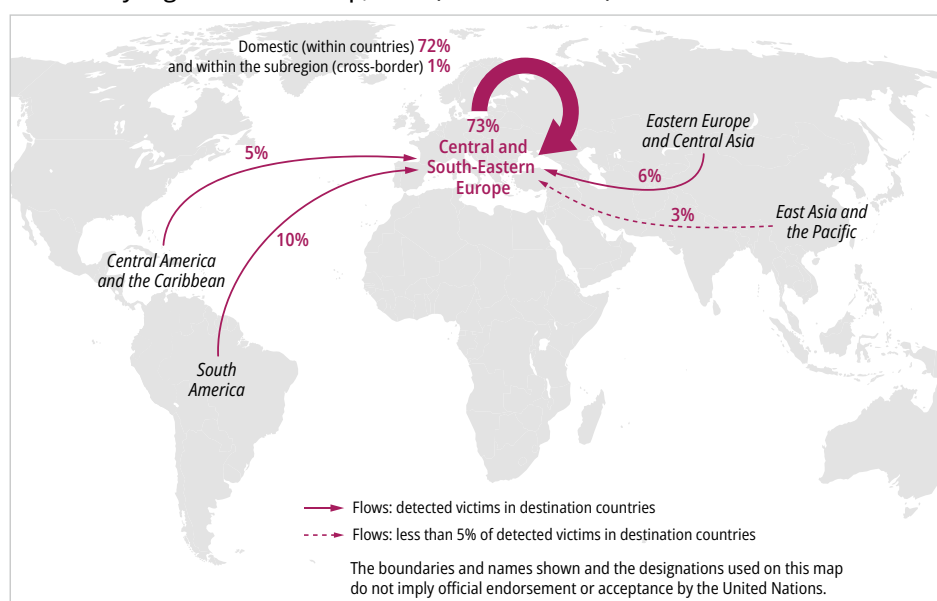
While domestic trafficking remains the largest flow in Central and South-Eastern Europe, over the past few years there has been an increase in cross-border trafficking into the region from a broader variety of origins. In particular, victims from the Americas, East and South Asia and Eastern Europe and Central Asia were increasingly detected in 2021 and 2022.

Fig. 173 Number of victims detected in Central and Southern-Eastern Europe, by region of citizenship (2019–2022)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Map. 21 Detected victims of trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

In addition to domestic trafficking, there was a significant flow of victims from Central and South-Eastern Europe trafficked to Western and Southern Europe. As such, the majority of flows from this region were confined within Europe in 2022.

Traffickers

In 2022, most of those investigated, prosecuted and convicted in Central and South-Eastern Europe were men, by a significant margin. In addition, a small number of children – more boys than girls – were investigated, prosecuted and convicted in the region.

Fig. 174 Persons investigated, prosecuted, convicted for trafficking in persons in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*

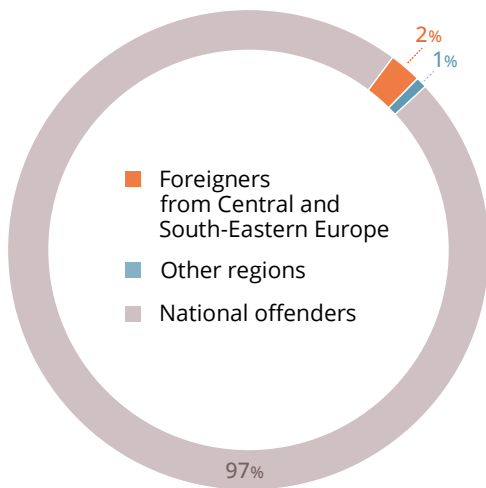


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on sex and age of 1,227 persons investigated in 13 countries; 1,299 prosecuted in 14 countries; and 341 convicted in 16 countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The vast majority (97 per cent) of traffickers convicted in Central and South-Eastern Europe were citizens of the countries in which they were convicted, with a small share (2 per cent) foreigners from other countries in the region. Other nationalities were convicted in far smaller percentages.

Fig. 175 Traffickers convicted in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*

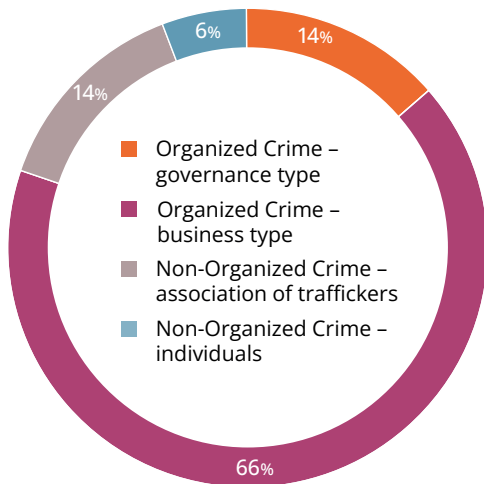


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data on the citizenship 341 convicted in 14 countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Case narratives reported by national authorities suggest that the traffickers largely operate as organized crime groups. Some court cases referring to large structured criminal organizations are reported.

Fig. 176 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in Central and South-Eastern Europe, by type of structure*



Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

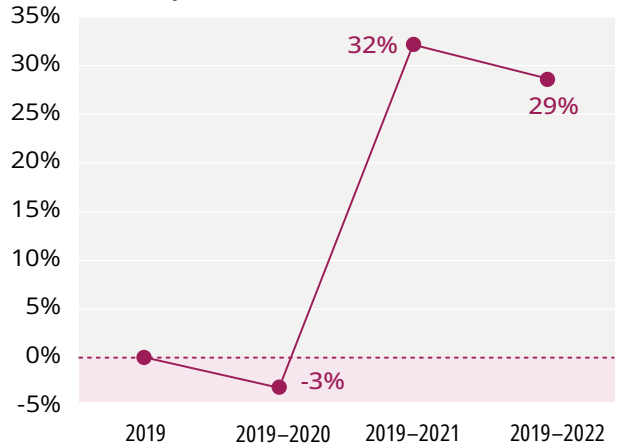
* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 74 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in Central and South-Eastern Europe, for a total of 941 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

All countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe have dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons.

Between 2019 and 2022, the conviction rate first fell by 3 per cent then rose by above 30 per cent compared to its 2019 baseline, reflecting the lifting of pandemic-related restrictions.

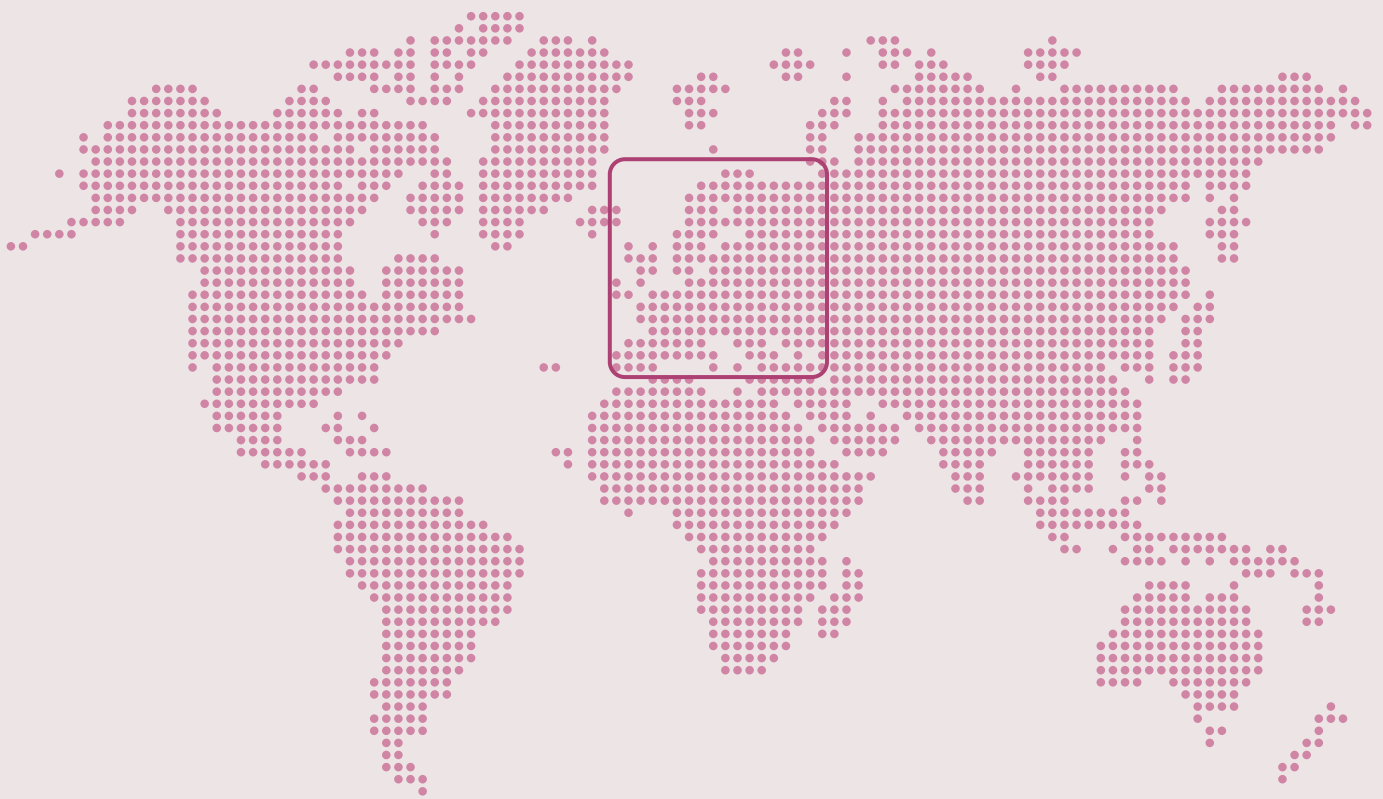
Fig. 177 Trend in the number of persons convicted in Central and South-Eastern Europe base year 2019*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 14 countries reporting on this indicator over the period considered.

Western and Southern Europe*



* This region comprises of Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Türkiye and the Holy See.

KEY FINDINGS FOR FOR WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE, 2022

Trends compared to 2019 (pre-Covid)



Main profile of the victims detected (2022 or most recent)



Main forms of exploitation detected (2022 or most recent)



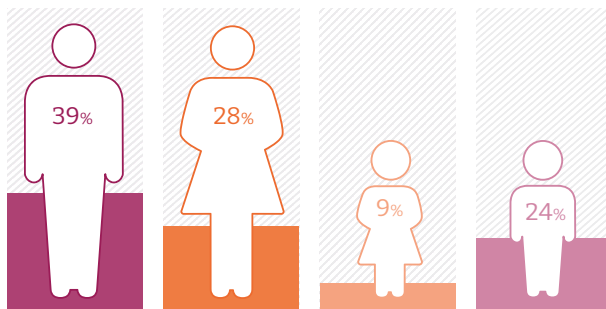
Main flows detected (2022 or most recent)



Victims

As in 2020 and 2021, most victims detected in Western and Southern Europe in 2022 were adults, with a higher share of men than women detected. Of the children detected, boys were detected in a much larger share than girls.

Fig. 178 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

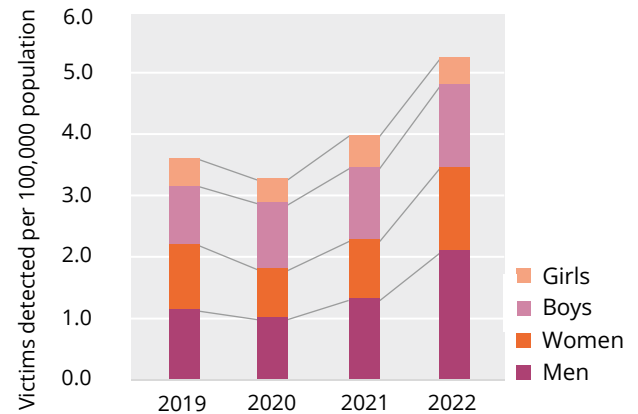


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on 24,834 victims detected in 23 countries in Western and Southern Europe where information on the sex and age profile of the victims was reported.

The decline in victim detection in 2020 can be attributed to the sharp decrease in the detection of women trafficked in sexual exploitation in connection with pandemic-related restrictions. During the pandemic, traffickers moved victims in sexual exploitation to more private locations, making them more difficult to detect. Since pandemic-related restrictions have lifted, the level of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation has largely returned to that of 2019. At the same time, however, the number of detected victims trafficked in forced labour greatly increased (from 1.2 per 100,000 population to 2.1 per 100,000 population). Similar trends are to be found for trafficking for other purposes, mainly for forced criminality (from 1.1 per 100,000 population to 2.1 per 100,000 population), determining the total increase in the victims detected in 2022.

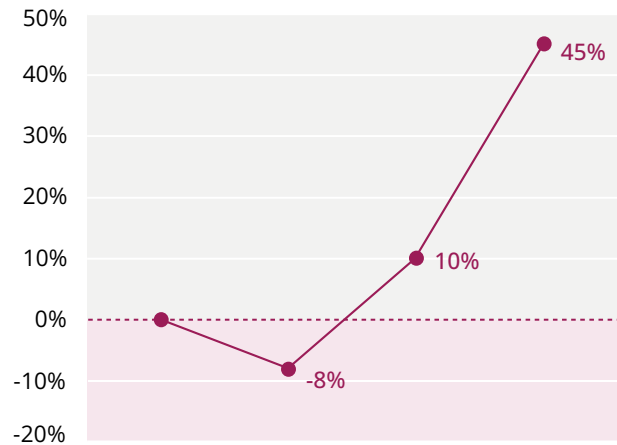
Fig. 179 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Western and Southern Europe, by age group and sex (2019–2022)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 22 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

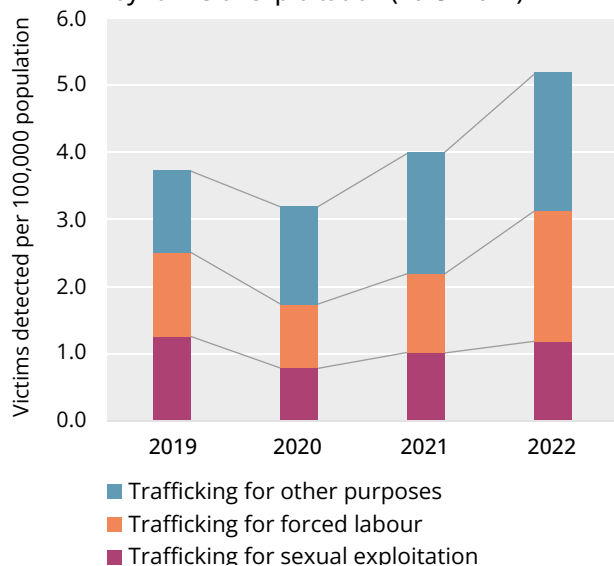
Fig. 180 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Western and Southern Europe, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 22 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

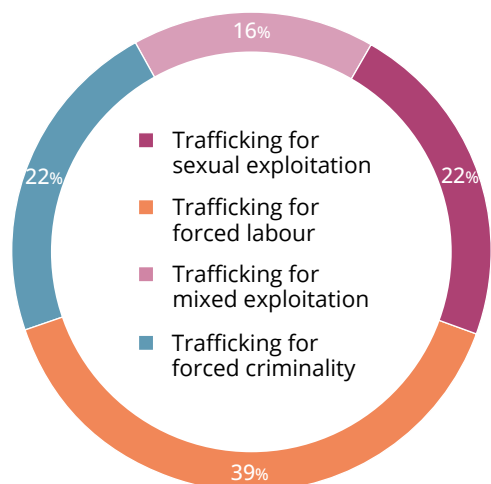
Fig. 181 Trend in victims detected per 100,000 population in Western and Southern Europe, by forms of exploitation (2019–2022)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information from 22 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

Fig. 182 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

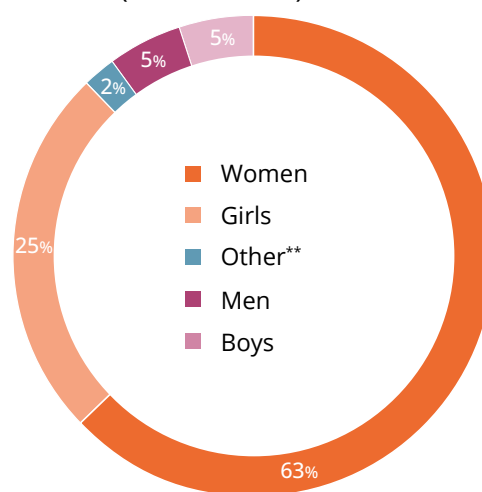
* Based on 22,718 victims detected in 23 countries in Western and Southern Europe where information on forms of exploitation was reported.

Victims trafficked for forced labour account for the majority victims detected in this region. Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation and for forced criminality were detected in similar shares. A relatively small number of cases of trafficking for the purposes of forced begging, forced marriage, and organ removal were recorded along with other forms of exploitation.

Men victims made up 64 per cent of all victims in forced labour detected, while women and boys were detected in near equal shares (16 and 18 per cent, respectively).

From the analysis of the court cases from the region it appears that victims are cross-border trafficked into the agriculture, restaurant and cleaning/domestic work sectors.⁸

Fig. 183 Share of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)*

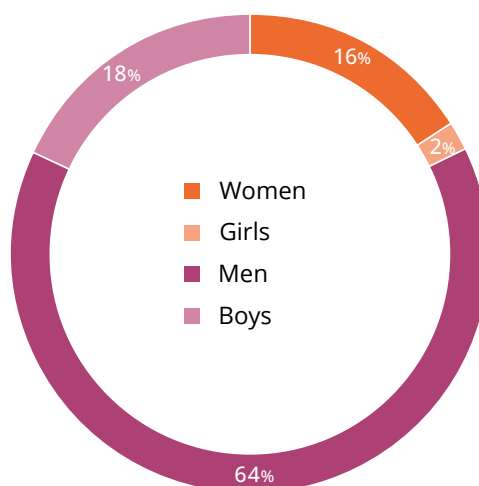


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data of 4,959 victims detected in 22 countries and territories in Western and Southern Europe.

** In 2022 (or most recent), five countries in this region reported victims under "other" and three provided additional identification data. See the individual country profiles of Denmark, Greece and Italy.

Fig. 184 Share of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour, by age group and sex, 2022 (or most recent)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on data of 7,974 victims detected in 22 countries and territories in Western and Southern Europe.

A large number of victims detected in Western and Southern Europe who were trafficked for sexual exploitation in 2022 were women (63 per cent) and to a lesser extent girls (25 per cent).

Trafficking for forced criminality in the region, which amounted to a little under a quarter of all detected cases, appears to largely impact children, particularly boys, more than adults.⁹

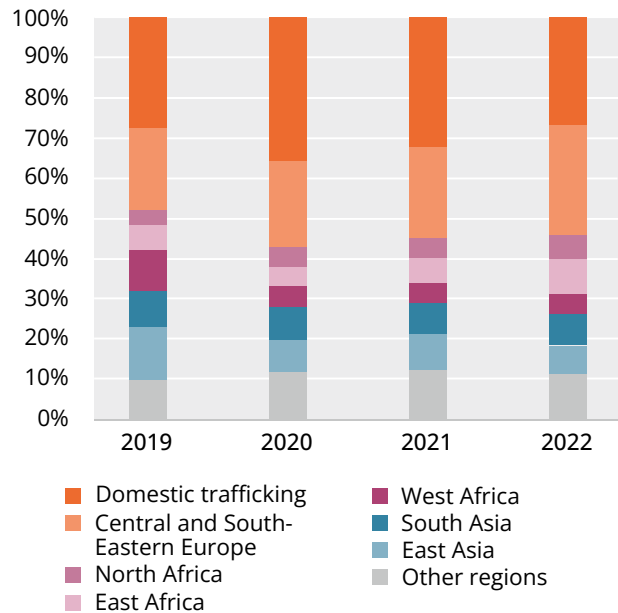
Trafficking Flows

In Western and Southern Europe in 2022, there was an increase in incoming cross-border trafficking when compared to 2020. With pandemic-related travel restrictions and border closings lifted, the level of cross-border trafficking largely returned to that of 2019.

In 2022, more than half (56 per cent) of all flows detected in the region were domestic or directed from South-Eastern Europe in near-equal shares or from other parts of Europe. Compared to previous years, more detected victims were trafficked across relatively long distances to Western and

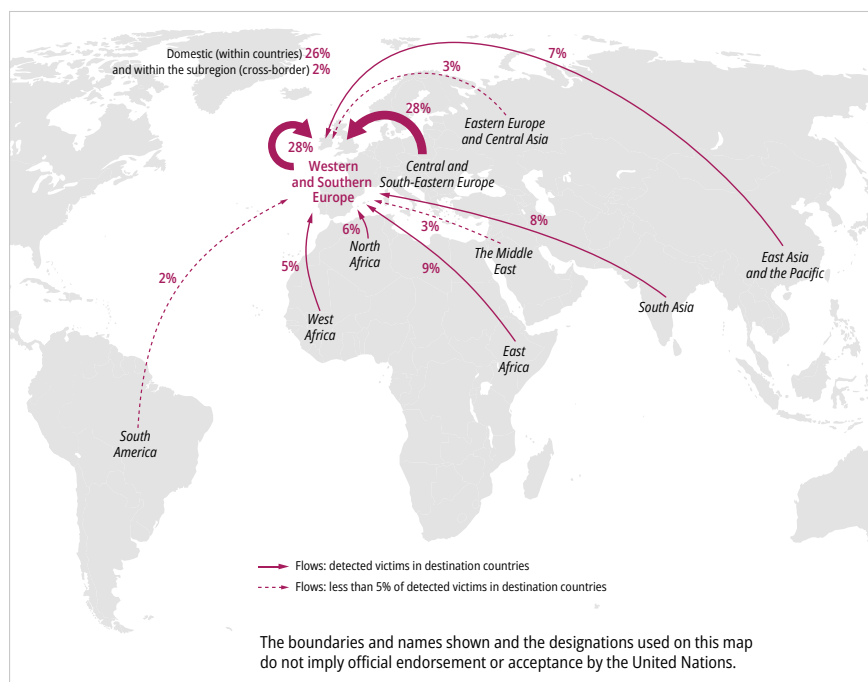
Southern European countries. Other significant shares of detected victims were trafficked from Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, South Asia and East Asia. Over the last few years, an increasing share of victims from East Africa and fewer from West Africa were detected.

Fig. 185 Share of victims detected in Western and Southern Europe, by region of citizenship (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Map. 22 Share of detected victims of trafficking in Western and Southern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)

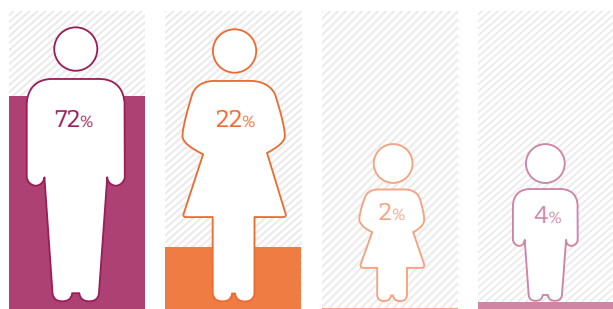


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Traffickers

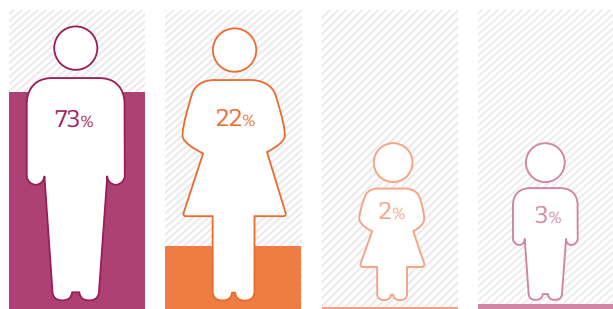
Men comprised over 70 per cent of those investigated, prosecuted, and convicted of trafficking in persons in Western and Southern Europe in 2022. Women made up 19 per cent of those convicted. Children were also convicted in small shares, with slightly more boys than girls.

Fig. 186 Persons investigated for trafficking in persons in Western and Southern Europe, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



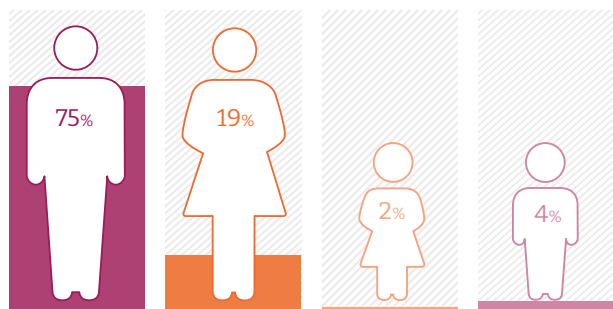
* Based on data on sex and age of 7,181 persons investigated in 21 countries and territories in Western and Southern Europe.

Fig. 187 Persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons in Western and Southern Europe, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



* Based on data on sex and age of 3,701 persons prosecuted in 18 countries in Western and Southern Europe.

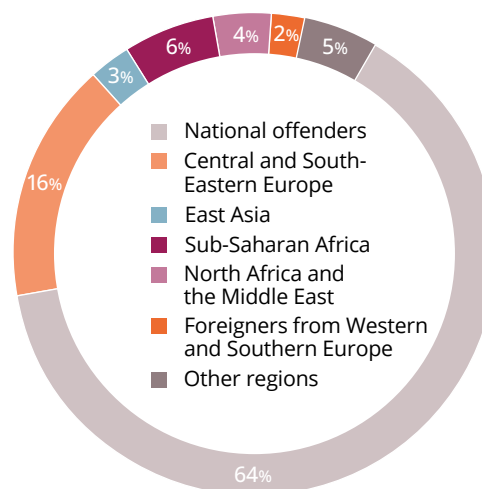
Fig. 188 Persons convicted for trafficking in persons in Western and Southern Europe, by sex and age group, 2022 (or most recent)*



* Based on 2,249 persons convicted in 22 countries in Western and Southern Europe.

In terms of nationality of those convicted, over 60 per cent were citizens of the countries in which they were convicted in 2022. Smaller shares of convicted traffickers came from South-Eastern Europe (15 per cent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (6 per cent).

Fig. 189 Traffickers convicted in Western and Southern Europe, by region of citizenship, 2022 (or most recent)*

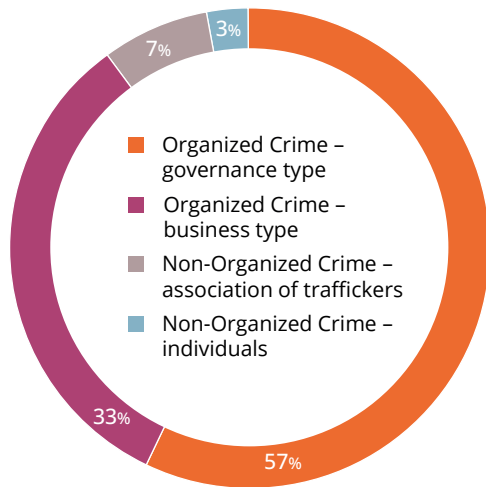


Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

* Based on 1,810 persons convicted in 16 countries in Western and Southern Europe where information on citizenship of persons convicted was available.

Based on information provided by national authorities in court case narratives, traffickers appear to primarily operate in organized crime groups. In particular, many court case summaries report structured transnational criminal organizations. The narrative of the cases reported by authorities suggest many of these groups operating in the region also engage in multiple types of crime in addition to trafficking in persons, including but not limited to, money laundering,¹⁰ financial fraud¹¹ and smuggling of migrants.¹²

Fig. 190 Share of traffickers reported in court case summaries in Western and Southern Europe, by type of structure*



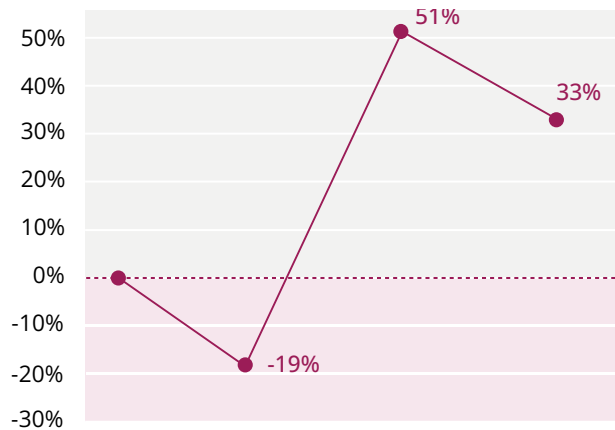
Source: GLOTIP collection of court case summaries.

* Based on information emerging from the narrative of 180 cases on trafficking in persons concluded with a conviction in Western and Southern Europe, for a total of 945 persons convicted.

Criminal Justice Response

All countries in Western and Southern Europe have dedicated legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons.

Fig. 191 Trend in the number of persons convicted in Western and Southern Europe, base year 2019



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Based on information on 14 countries reporting on this indicator for the entire period.

After a period of decline due to restrictions connected to the pandemic restrictions, the number of convictions in the region increased in 2021 and stabilized in 2022.

Endnotes

- 1 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 442, Canada; Case 443, Canada; Case 444, Canada; Case 445, Canada; Case 710, Canada; Case 711, Canada; Case 712, Canada; Case 440, Mexico; Case 748, Mexico; Case 749, Mexico; Case 751, Mexico; Case 640, United States of America (the); Case 880, United States of America (the); Case 882, United States of America (the).
- 2 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 711, Canada; Case 748, Mexico.
- 3 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 880, United States of America (the); Case 796, Canada.
- 4 In this region, some cases of trafficking for forced labour may not appear in criminal records because they are handled solely at the administrative level. This can happen when the case does not meet the threshold for criminal prosecution, or when the authorities decide to address the matter through administrative procedures, such as labour inspections or regulatory sanctions. As a result, although the exploitation may be identified and addressed, it may not be formally prosecuted as a crime, leaving gaps in the criminal justice system's ability to fully reflect the extent of trafficking for forced labour in the region.
- 5 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 774, Paraguay; Case 699, Argentina; Case 869, Venezuela; Case 533, Chile.
- 6 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 753, Myanmar; Case 754, Myanmar; Case 756, Myanmar; Case 786, Thailand; Case 854, New Zealand.
- 7 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 793, Australia; Case 864, Thailand.
- 8 See UNODC, *Sherloc Case Law Database*, Case ITx023; UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 506, Finland; Case 161, Portugal; Case 307, Netherlands (Kingdom of the); See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 235, Belgium; Case 510, Finland; Case 433, Norway; UNODC, *Sherloc Case Law Database*, Case FIN010; See also UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 189, Austria; See also UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 93, Belgium; Case 236, Belgium.
- 9 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 60, Norway; Case 61, Norway; Case 311, Norway; Case 267, France; Case 404, Austria. See the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – National Referral Mechanism Statistics on the sex and age group profile of the victims trafficked for forced criminality.
- 10 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 237, Belgium; Case 514, France.
- 11 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 238, Belgium.
- 12 See UNODC, *GLOTIP Court Case Summaries*, Case 235, Belgium; Case 625, Spain.



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The 2024 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons is the seventh of its kind mandated by the General Assembly through the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. It covers 156 countries and provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at global, regional and national levels, based on detected cases of trafficking.

The accompanying statistical annexes and court case summaries are published on the UNODC website:

www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/glotip.html

