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Child Trafficking Update

October 2011



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Executive summary	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Aims	4
3. Methodology and collation.....	5
4. Data overview	6
5. Trends and patterns	13

Executive summary

- In total, 202 children have been identified as trafficked into and within the UK over the period 1 January 2011 to 15 September 2011. This figure includes referrals made to the National Referral Mechanism and referrals received by the Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL), operated by the NSPCC. The data used is current as of 15 September 2011. It should be noted that the data used is a 'snapshot in time' and some outstanding NRM decisions are yet to be made regarding the status of these potential victims of trafficking. Consequently, these figures will be subject to revision in future assessments following NRM decisions.
- 67 children from African countries have been trafficked into the UK over this period. This includes 29 victims from Nigeria, mostly girls trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation.
- 63 children from Asian countries have been trafficked into the UK over this period. This includes 48 victims from Vietnam, mostly boys trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation and cannabis cultivation. However, the number of Vietnamese minors exploited in cannabis farms appears to have decreased slightly from previous assessments. It is likely that Vietnamese organised criminal groups find it increasingly difficult to operate in the UK cannabis market, as a result of continued law enforcement efforts to combat cannabis farms.
- 50 children from Eastern European countries have been trafficked into the UK over this period. This includes 10 victims from Bulgaria, 23 from Romania and 12 from Slovakia, trafficked mostly for the purposes of benefit fraud and criminal exploitation.
- 4 victims from China have been identified. This represents a significant decline in the number of children trafficked from China to the UK.

1. Introduction

Child trafficking is a form of child abuse and modern day slavery. Children trafficked into the UK are exploited for many different purposes, from the cultivation of cannabis and criminal exploitation, to sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.

The UK government has outlined its strategy for tackling human strategy¹, focusing on four key areas:

- (i) improved victim care arrangements;
- (ii) enhanced ability to act early, before the harm has reached the UK;
- (iii) smarter multi-agency action at the border; and
- (iv) better coordination of law enforcement efforts within the UK.

The strategy notes that children trafficked into the UK are particularly vulnerable. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre, the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and the Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL) are jointly committed to tackling child trafficking.

Following previous Child Trafficking Strategic Threat Assessments published by CEOP, this update report gives an overview of the scale and scope of child trafficking in the UK over the period 1 January 2011 to 15 September 2011.

2. Aims

This report provides an overview of trends and patterns in the trafficking of minors into and within the UK from 1 January – 15 September 2011. This data gives a general indication of the scale of child trafficking over this period. Data from CTAIL and the UKHTC has been collated for this purpose by CEOP. The information contained in this report is intended to raise awareness of particular trends and patterns in offending behaviour and victimisation, informing the frontline response to child trafficking and raising awareness among stakeholders of emerging and ongoing issues.

Indicators of child trafficking are well established². However, child traffickers constantly alter tactics to evade detection. Regular assessments of child trafficking data must therefore be undertaken in order to identify the emergence of new modes of entry into the UK, patterns of exploitation, and victim experiences. These assessments therefore ensure that frontline agencies have a contemporary understanding of trends and patterns in child trafficking.

¹ The Home Office Human Trafficking Strategy can be found here:
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/human-trafficking-strategy>

² The London Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit contains a comprehensive list of child trafficking indicators for professionals. The toolkit and guidance can be found here:
http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/2010/trafficking/london_safeguarding_trafficked_children_guidance_mar_2011.pdf
http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/2010/trafficking/london_safeguarding_trafficked_children_tools_mar_2011.pdf

The aims of this assessment can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Provide an overview of child trafficking in the UK over the period 1 January – 15 September 2011
- (ii) Identify trends, themes and patterns in the available data and highlight intelligence gaps that may become evident
- (iii) Inform partner agencies of current and emerging trends in child trafficking, including police forces, the UKBA and Children’s Services.

3. Methodology and collation

This assessment of child trafficking has been produced by CEOP in partnership with the UK Human Trafficking Centre and the NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL).

It is based on (i) referral data collected by CTAIL, and (ii) data received by the UKHTC through National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals.

CTAIL offers guidance to professionals throughout the UK on safeguarding victims of child trafficking. It is staffed by experienced social workers and a law enforcement liaison officer experienced in child trafficking investigations and child protection.

The UKHTC administers data collection under the NRM. The NRM is a two-step decision making process for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring that they receive appropriate care. ‘First Responders’, including police forces, the UKBA, social services, the NSPCC and Barnardo’s, are authorised to refer potential child victims of trafficking to designated ‘Competent Authorities’. In the UK, Competent Authorities are the UKHTC and the UKBA. Following receipt of the referral, the Competent Authority will make a ‘Reasonable Grounds’ decision whether the victim has been trafficked within 5 days. If the Competent Authority reaches a positive ‘Reasonable Grounds’ decision, the victim is granted a 45 day reflection period and the Competent Authority will investigate the wider circumstances of the case in order to reach a ‘Conclusive Grounds’ decision. The NRM process encourages information sharing and the development of a multi-agency approach.

The limitations of this dataset can be summarised as follows:

1. CTAIL provides guidance to agencies on the identification of victims and safeguarding procedures. Agencies already confident in the identification and response to victims of child trafficking are unlikely to refer cases to CTAIL for further advice. CTAIL’s referral data is limited to cases where the responding agency has requested further advice and guidance from CTAIL.
2. The UKHTC and UKBA operate the NRM. The NRM is a mechanism for assessing potential cases of trafficking. A decision is made on the basis of available evidence whether the child has been trafficked into the UK. Awareness of the NRM is still limited amongst some agencies and as a result, not all cases are referred to the NRM.

3. Some victims of child trafficking may not be detected by statutory and non-statutory agencies. Where trafficking is not identified, there will be no subsequent referral to either CTAIL or the NRM. Consequently, these victims of trafficking will not be included in the dataset.
4. Some victims of child trafficking may be more effectively concealed from law enforcement and other services than others. Consequently, it is possible that some trends and patterns of child trafficking in the UK do not appear in this report.

The dataset used for this analysis provides a more substantial picture of child trafficking than can be obtained from any single source. This report offers the latest overview of child trafficking in the UK currently available. Cases were dated according to the date of referral to the UKHTC or CTAIL. In some instances, trafficking may have occurred prior to 1 January 2011, though the case was referred to the UKHTC or CTAIL at a later date falling within the period covered by this report.

This dataset is not considered to be representative of the full scale of child trafficking in the UK, but illustrative of particular trends and patterns. It also highlights gaps in knowledge and available data.

4. Data overview

In total, 202 victims of child trafficking have been identified over the period 1 January to 15 September 2011, from 36 countries.

The data used is current as of 15 September 2011. It should be noted that the data used is a 'snapshot in time' and some outstanding NRM decisions are yet to be made regarding the status of these potential victims of trafficking. Consequently, these figures will be subject to revision in future assessments following NRM decisions.

Also, note that some victims may have been over 18 at the time of referral but were trafficked and exploited when they were under 18. The age is shown as unknown where the child does not know their date of birth or age and the Competent Authority has no way of establishing their exact age.

For analytical purposes, victims have been attributed to a regional group:

- 67 victims from **Africa** have been identified. Victims came from Angola (1), Botswana (1), Burundi (1), Congo (8), Eritrea (3), Ethiopia (2), Gambia (2), Ghana (6), Guinea (6), Kenya (1), Mauritius (1), Morocco (2), Nigeria (29), Seychelles (1), Somalia (2), and Uganda (1).
- 63 victims from **Asia** have been identified. Victims came from Afghanistan (1), Bangladesh (3), China (4), India (5), Malaysia (1), Pakistan (1), and Vietnam (48).
- 50 victims from **Eastern Europe** have been identified. Victims came from Albania (2), Bosnia (1), Bulgaria (10), Lithuania (1), Poland (1), Romania (23), and Slovakia (12).

- 22 victims from other regions have been identified. This includes Western Europe, South America and the Caribbean.

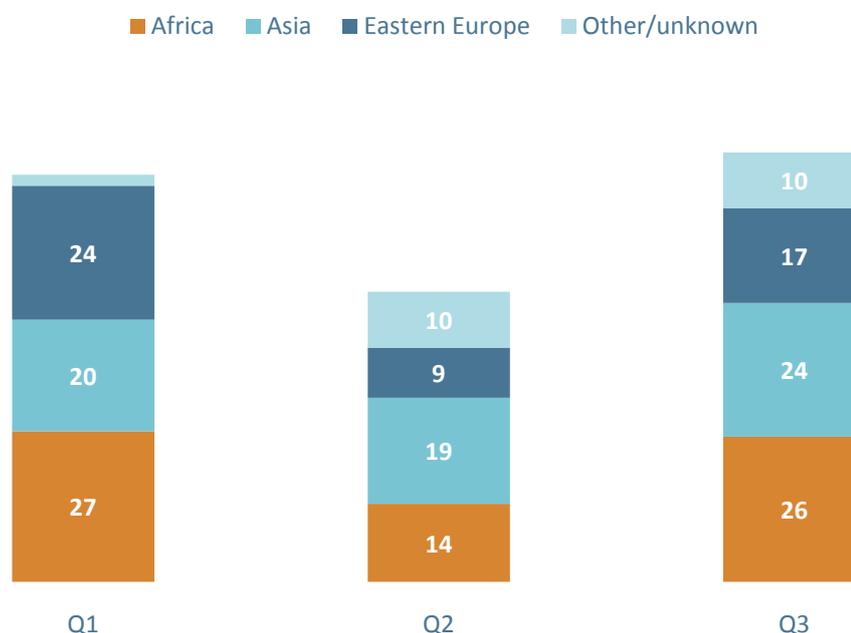


Figure 1 - trafficking trends

The number of victims identified has remained fairly consistent over each quarter, though fewer victims were identified in the second quarter. CEOP's previous Child Trafficking Strategic Threat Assessment identified 24 victims from China³, over a 12 month period from 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2010. However, only 4 victims from China have been identified in the first three quarters of 2011 – this represents a considerable decrease in the identification of victims of child trafficking victims from China. This decrease may reflect a reduction in the trafficking of minors from China to the UK, or a decrease in the rate of identification.

4.1 Gender

As noted in previous child trafficking strategic threat assessments, more female victims of trafficking can be identified than male victims (figure 2). The gender breakdown by region demonstrates a difference in victim profiles. Victims from African countries are mostly female (48 female victims and 19 male victims), and similarly most child trafficking victims from Eastern European countries are female (32 female victims and 18 male victims). In contrast, victims from Asian countries are mostly male (43 male victims and 20 female victims).

³ http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Child_Trafficking_Strategic_Threat_Assessment_2010_NPM_Final.pdf

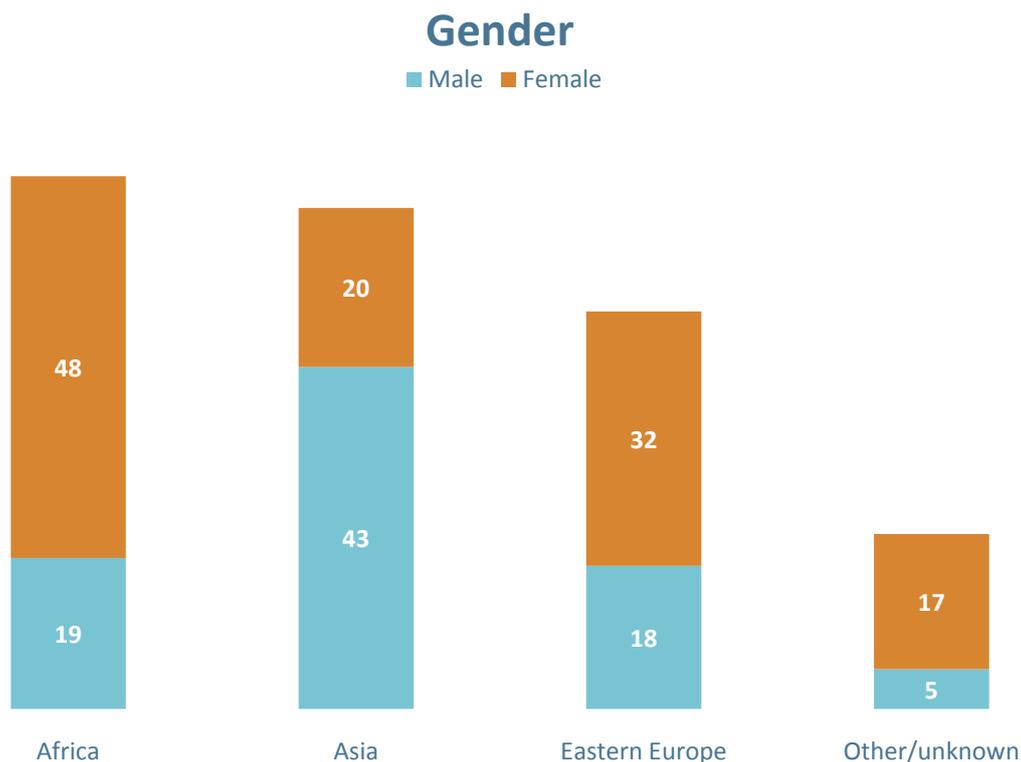


Figure 2 - gender

4.2 Age

The age distribution of child trafficking victims is broadly similar across each region, with most victims aged 14-16 (figure 3). However, there are zero victims from Asian countries under the age of 11 present in the dataset. This is a marked difference from previous assessments of child trafficking, where Chinese minors under the age of 11 have frequently been identified. Most victims falling into the younger age group are from African and Eastern European countries. However, concerns outlined in previous threat assessments over the difficulties of identifying younger victims and their possible under-representation in the dataset remain⁴.

⁴ http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Child_Trafficking_Strategic_Threat_Assessment_2010_NPM_Final.pdf

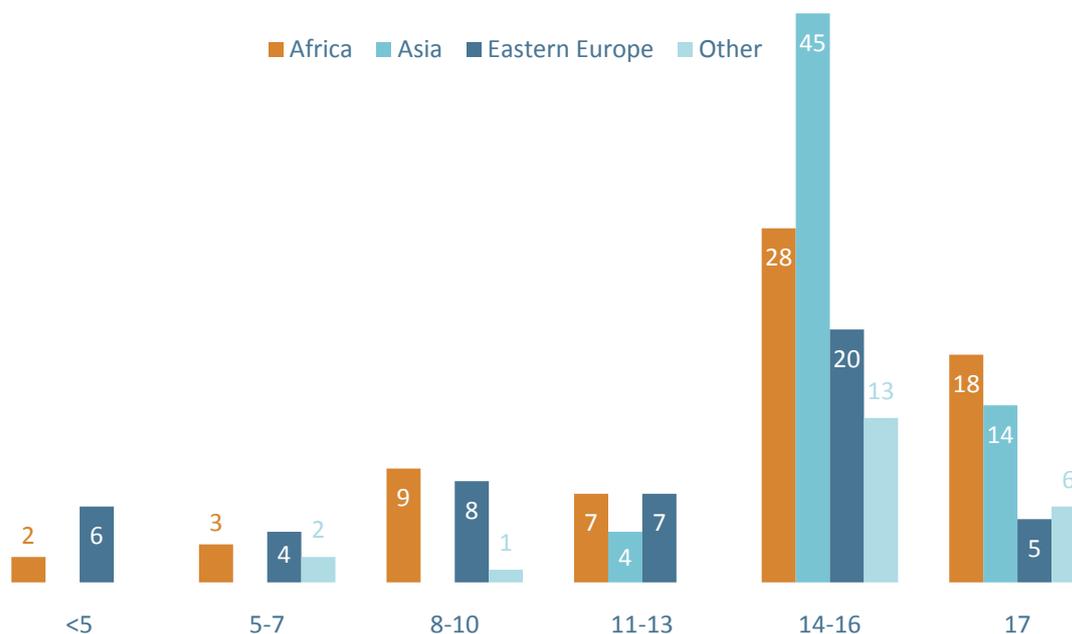


Figure 3 - age

4.3 Exploitation type

Many victims of trafficking are subject to multiple forms of exploitation. For example, some victims of exploitation on a cannabis farm may also have been subject to sexual exploitation, and some victims of domestic servitude may also be exploited for the purposes of perpetrating benefit fraud. Where multiple forms of exploitation are recorded, only the principal form of exploitation has been recorded in the following graphs. Greater detail regarding additional forms of exploitation is given where possible in the accompanying description of each exploitation type.

Overall, when broken down by exploitation type, it is evident that all sexually exploited trafficking victims in the dataset are female, and most victims exploited in cannabis cultivation are male. All other forms of exploitation are roughly equally weighted between victims of each gender. Specific forms of exploitation are explored in greater detail below.

Benefit fraud

In total, 23 children and young people were trafficked into the UK in the first three quarters of 2011 for the purposes of benefit fraud. This appears to be an increase on the rate of child trafficking for the purposes of benefit fraud identified in previous threat assessments. In these cases, exploiters traffic children into private fostering arrangements in order to claim benefits, or claim benefits

under several fraudulent identities for a child, moving a child between addresses and entering the care of various adults. Eight children trafficked into the UK from Eastern Europe, all from the same family, were subject to benefit fraud and labour exploitation. Four victims of trafficking from a west African country for the purposes of benefit fraud were also from the same family. The number of children exploited for benefit fraud is therefore inflated by large numbers of individuals from single families being trafficked into the UK.

Cannabis cultivation

21 children and young people were trafficked into the UK for the purposes of cultivating cannabis, often working as 'gardeners' in converted residential houses. This type of exploitation is predominantly associated with children trafficked from Vietnam. Some children identified during police raids have been subject to criminal proceedings.

Criminal exploitation

15 children were trafficked into the UK for forced criminality, other than cannabis cultivation. In general, victims of criminal exploitation are coerced into committing crimes, including shoplifting and pick-pocketing, for the financial gain of their exploiter. All trafficking victims involved in this form of criminality were from Eastern European countries. Four victims of criminal exploitation were also sexually exploited.

Domestic servitude

23 victims of trafficking were found to be exploited through domestic servitude. CEOP recently published an assessment of this form of exploitation, noting that victims of domestic servitude are often kept away from school and health services, limiting possible interactions with professionals who are in a position to identify safeguarding concerns⁵. This form of trafficking may be particularly hidden from view.

Labour exploitation

56 children and young people trafficked into the UK have been subject to labour exploitation from 1 January to 15 September. This includes exploitation in agriculture, construction, hospitality and in nail bars. Eight victims of criminal exploitation, 1 victim of domestic servitude and 8 victims of benefit fraud exploitation were also subject to labour exploitation.

⁵ http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/CEOP_Hidden_Children_report_2011.pdf

Sexual exploitation

53 trafficking victims were sexually exploited. This includes 15 victims of UK nationality trafficked for sexual exploitation within the UK. Child sexual exploitation is a complex crime – perpetrators often act in networks, grooming victims to believe that they are in a genuine romantic relationship before sexually exploiting them⁶. Some cases of sexual exploitation involve an element of trafficking, where a victim is taken from their place of residence by perpetrators to another town or city within the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Victims of sexual exploitation who have been trafficked may be referred to the NRM – these victims are included in this analysis.

Overall, sexual exploitation is the most prevalent form of exploitation in the dataset. All victims in the dataset are female, though previous assessments have identified males trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. As noted previously, four victims of sexual exploitation were also forced into criminality.

Figure 4 gives an overview of types of exploitation and gender. This graph includes both primary and secondary exploitation types. For example, where a female victim was reported to have been subject to sexual and labour exploitation, both incidences of exploitation against a female are recorded in the graph.

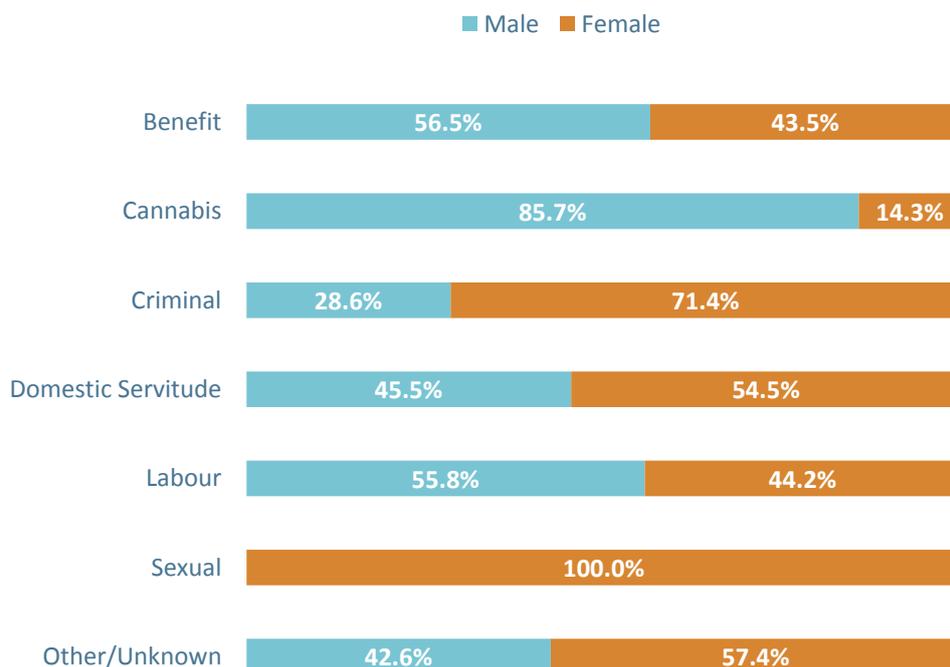


Figure 4 – gender and exploitation type

⁶ http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/ceop_thematic_assessment.zip

4.4 Region of origin

When broken down by region, there are clear differences in the primary forms of exploitation experienced by trafficking victims. Figure 5 breaks down exploitation type and region of origin. Again, all experiences of exploitation are recorded. For example, if a victim has been subject to both domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, both incidences of exploitation are recorded in the graph. All trafficking victims known to have been exploited through cannabis cultivation come from an Asian country. Furthermore, the majority of trafficking victims exploited through benefit fraud were trafficked into the UK from Eastern Europe, and 92.9% of trafficking victims exploited for criminal purposes other than cannabis cultivation were also from Eastern European countries. Over two thirds of children trafficked into the UK for domestic servitude and just over half of all children trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation were from an African country.

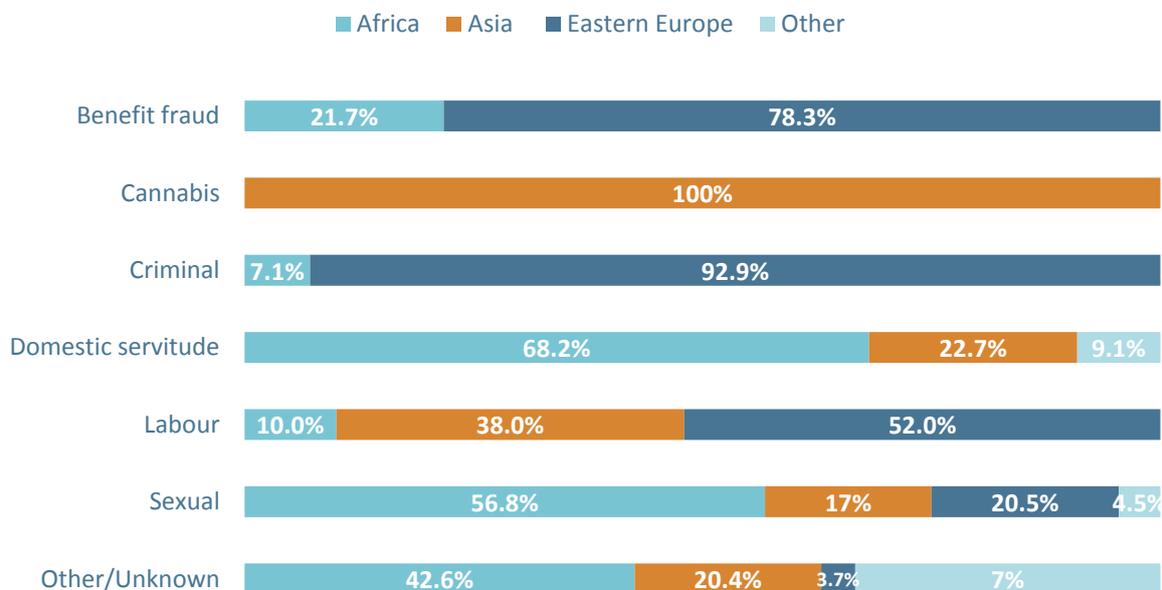


Figure 5 – exploitation and region of origin

4.5 Region of identification

Most child trafficking victims in the first three quarters of 2011 were identified in London. The large number of trafficking victims in London can be attributed to (i) travel links, as many victims will enter the UK via an international flight to a London airport and will be identified as a trafficking victim at the border controls; and (ii) many victims will be exploited in London. In general, most victims are identified in London, the South-West and South-East, though it is evident that child trafficking affects all regions of the UK.

Overall, the breakdown of region of identification is a reflection of several factors, including the awareness of child trafficking and ability to identify victims among frontline practitioners, the routes taken by traffickers into the UK, and the final location of exploitation.

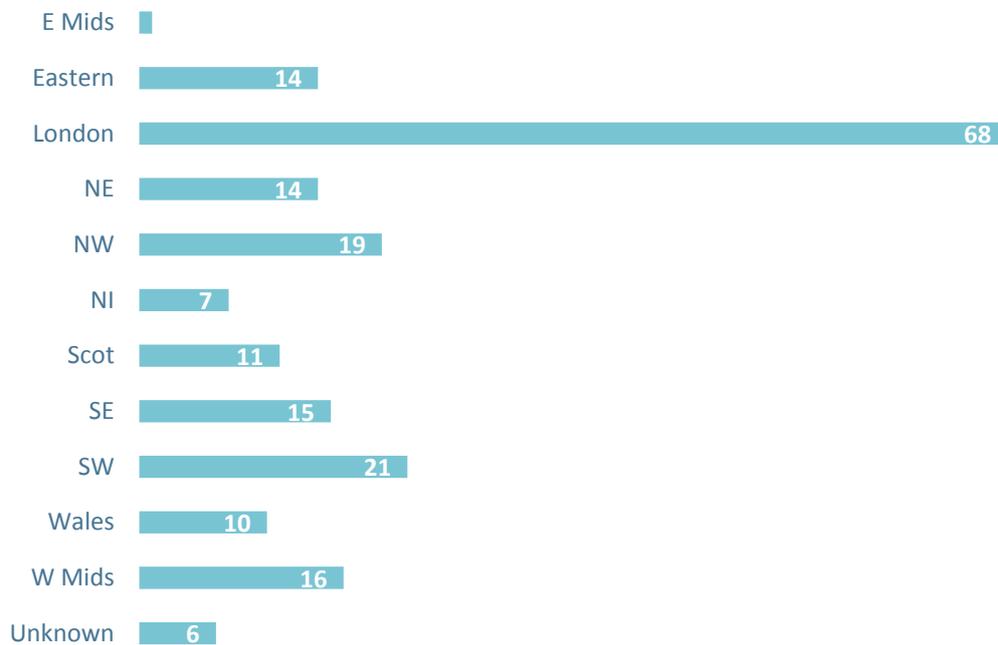


Figure 6 – region of identification

5. Trends and patterns

Prominent trends in the profile of trafficking victim are outlined in greater detail below.

Nigerian victims and sexual exploitation

In total, of the 67 victims from African nations in the dataset, 29 are from Nigeria. The remaining African victims come from a wide range of countries. After Nigeria, the next most prominent source country for African victims of child trafficking is Congo with 8 victims.

Of the 29 victims from Nigeria, 23 are female. These victims range in age from 6-17. However, 18 of the female Nigerian victims are aged 16 and 17, and 14 of these victims were trafficked into sexual exploitation.

Nigerian victims of trafficking often report that they met a western individual in Nigeria, who offered to facilitate their travel to the UK with the promise of employment, accommodation or education. Many of these victims are vulnerable and susceptible to grooming by an agent, often on account of poverty or a dysfunctional family life. Agents obtain forged passports or make fraudulent visa applications and arrange travel on behalf of the victim, sometimes accompanying them on the

journey. Upon arrival in the UK, agents often remove travel documentation from the victim. Victims may be taken into local authority care, but go missing shortly after. In some cases, victims have been given SIM cards or address books so that exploiters can contact them after they are taken into care.

Debt bondage and voodoo are often used as means of controlling and coercing victims into exploitation. Victims have reported that they have been forced to take part in witchcraft ceremonies prior to being trafficked from Nigeria. These victims are informed that they and their family will be cursed or harmed if they do not comply with the instructions of their exploiter or if they do not pay back a debt to their exploiter.

Victims in sexual exploitation may be locked in a property and forced to have sex with strangers in exchange for money. This money is taken from the victim by their exploiters to pay off debts.

Vietnamese victims and exploitation on cannabis farms

Forty-eight Vietnamese child trafficking victims are in the dataset. Thirty-three are male, ranging in age from 14-17, and 15 are female, ranging in age from 11-17.

The most frequent type of exploitation experienced by male Vietnamese victims was exploitation in cannabis farms. In total, 18 male victims are known to have been exploited in cannabis cultivation.

Victims are generally vulnerable in Vietnam. For example, a victim may report being orphaned, living on the streets, or being in a private fostering arrangement in Vietnam. In some victim reports, agents have promised victims work overseas. Some victims report being taken to China, from which they take a plane to Russia. Their journey to the UK continues via lorry, though in many victim accounts, the journey is punctuated with episodes of exploitation. Some victims have reported being subject to labour exploitation in restaurants, being forced into domestic servitude and to work on cannabis farms in Russia and France. These circuitous routes and long history of traumatic exploitation may disorientate victims and undermine their ability to recall the details of their route of entry to the UK in detail. For example, victims have reported being passed between agents at various stages of their journey, but may be unable to recall these events in detail.

Victims generally enter the UK clandestinely and are forced into working as 'gardeners' in private residences converted into cannabis farms. Some victims have reported being locked in these residences and prevented from leaving. These victims are not paid for their work, and often claim that they are coerced into working on cannabis farms through violence. Victims have also reported being sexually exploited whilst working on a cannabis farm.

Eastern European victims and benefit fraud

Eighteen victims of child trafficking from Eastern European countries were trafficked into the UK for the purposes of benefit fraud, including 10 from Romania and 8 from Slovakia. This number is made up of large numbers of children trafficked as a single group to the South-East region, and a group trafficked to Scotland. The victims in these cases were family members, both male and female and

of a variety of ages. It is not possible to observe any particular age/gender profile associated with trafficking for the purposes of benefit fraud.

In one case, a family was approached in a village and groomed for trafficking by a group of men travelling from village to village, claiming that they could arrange travel documents, work, accommodation and transport to the UK. The family were trafficked by bus to London, and then onto another city in the UK. From there, control of the family passed to another group of men who forced them to work in a factory. They were not paid for their work, and were told that their wages would be confiscated to cover the costs of their accommodation and food. They were threatened with violence if they attempted to leave their accommodation or did not comply with instructions. This group of men also withheld their identity documents, claiming to arrange for benefits on their behalf.

In another case, a Romanian gang trafficked a family to the UK, including a mother, son and daughter, taking advantage of the mother's long term health condition by promising work and health care in the UK. Upon arrival, the mother was coerced into prostitution and both children were forced to shoplift on behalf of their exploiters.

Contacts

Agencies with concerns over child trafficking should immediately alert local children's services and their local police force.

If responding agencies have any concerns about a particular case, or require any guidance on identifying and safeguarding a trafficking victim, they can contact CTAIL for advice on 0800 107 7057.

Should any agency wish to submit information to CEOP for the purposes of intelligence only and inclusion in future child trafficking reports, please contact strategic.unit@ceop.gsi.gov.uk.

The UKHTC maintain a 24/7 support line for those agencies and organisations involved in the rescue and recovery of victims of human trafficking, and for providing advice and guidance to investigating officers within law enforcement agencies.

The UKHTC can be contacted at any time on 0844 778 2406 or UKHTC@soca.x.gsi.gov.uk.