University of **Nottingham**
Rights Lab

The top 20 source countries for modern slavery victims in the UK

Comparative report

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About this report

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The **Rights Lab** is a University of Nottingham "Beacon of Excellence" and home to the world's largest and leading group of modern slavery researchers. Through its five research programmes, impact team, and INSPIRE project, the Rights Lab is underpinning antislavery with an advanced research agenda, collaborating with civil society, business, and government, and elevating survivor-informed research as a key part of knowledge production to help end slavery.

The **Wilberforce Institute** at the University of Hull aims to advance fundamental knowledge of slavery and emancipation, informing policy, business practice and public debate at local, national and international levels. The Wilberforce Institute brings together experts in humanities, law and social sciences to help tackle this global problem head on.

The **Centre for the Study of International Slavery** at the University of Liverpool supports and shares leading research about human enslavement and its legacies. Founded as a partnership between the University of Liverpool and National Museums Liverpool, the Centre works together with other universities and organisations to develop scholarly and public activities related to slavery in its historical and contemporary manifestations.
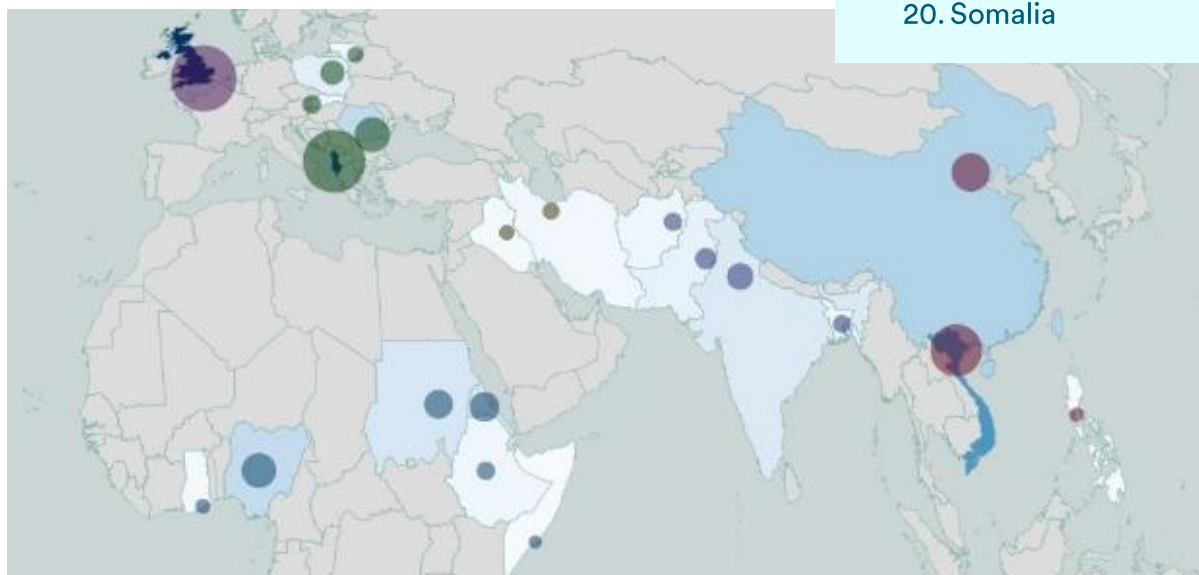
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1. Introduction

This report considers the top twenty non-UK countries of origin for potential victims of modern slavery referred into the UK's National Referral Mechanism (NRM), exploring trends, potential explanatory factors, and implications for policy and practice in the UK and internationally.[1] It explores key demographic features of those experiencing modern slavery in the UK from these twenty source countries, considering the different profiles of potential victims across these different nationality groups, as well as the different journeys and experiences of modern slavery survivors in the UK. This is combined with consideration of decision making in the NRM and in UK immigration and asylum processes, which show significantly diverging outcomes for potential and conclusive victims from the different source countries.

National modern slavery profiles, contextual conditions, and antislavery governance frameworks are interrogated to shed light on these trends. In some instances, local conditions in source countries help to explain trends in the evidence and data on different experiences of survivors' journeys, experiences, and interactions with officials and UK institutions. In other cases, however, local contextual factors appear to be poorly understood and inadequately addressed within the UK—in both NRM, immigration, and asylum decision making and in international programming. This has implications for UK policy and programming, both within the UK and internationally. This report therefore highlights key areas that require tailored programming and strengthening to help prevent modern slavery, protect vulnerable populations, and support survivors' recovery and reintegration, with relevance for source country governance and UK policy.

The top 20 non-UK source countries

By total referral numbers 2013-2019

1. Albania
2. Viet Nam
3. China
4. Romania
5. Nigeria
6. Eritrea
7. Sudan
8. India
9. Poland
10. Pakistan
11. Slovakia
12. Ethiopia
13. Afghanistan
14. Bangladesh
15. Iran
16. Lithuania
17. Iraq
18. Ghana
19. Philippines
20. Somalia

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[1] The authors recognise contestation around the terms used to describe those who have experienced modern slavery. In this report, the language of 'potential victims' and 'confirmed victims' are used to describe those referred into the National Referral Mechanism and those receiving positive conclusive grounds decisions, in line with the relevant legal classifications. The term 'victim' is used in its legal sense to describe those currently experiencing exploitation, while 'survivor' is used to describe those who have exited or escaped from exploitation.

1.1.   About the study

This study combines evidence review and secondary data analysis to investigate the factors that influence transnational modern slavery dynamics between the UK and the top twenty non-UK source countries for modern slavery victims identified in the UK. In this report, comparative analysis of these Source Country Reports is combined with analysis of both existing publicly available data and previously unpublished data secured through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. From FOI data secured, this report provides new data and evidence on conclusive grounds decision making within the NRM and asylum decisions for conclusively identified victims, disaggregated by nationality. This allows for consideration of trends between the different top source country nationalities that was not previously possible.

The study provides a secondary review of key dynamics and trends across the top twenty non-UK source countries, conducted over a six-month period in 2020. Reports are therefore limited by the availability of data and evidence on key points of concern, and are not an exhaustive review of all available evidence. Full systematic review of evidence, as well as further primary research, is therefore necessary to generate additional insights not captured in this study and address key evidence gaps identified in the report.

All observations and evidence cited in this report that are not directly referenced in the text are drawn from the twenty Source Country Reports produced in this study. Each report provides an overview of relevant factors and dynamics in the country under consideration, including the State's modern slavery profile, antislavery governance frameworks, key performance indicators, and relevant features of the country context. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, each report also considers the impacts of Covid-19 and government response measures intended to curb the spread of the virus on modern slavery dynamics. Source Country Reports are available online at https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings

1.2.   UK NRM, immigration, and asylum decision making

Early evidence considered in this study indicates that the dynamics of modern slavery and transnational trafficking from the different source countries, and particularly key risks and vulnerabilities, may not be fully accounted for in UK decision making. Conclusive grounds decisions within the NRM, immigration, and asylum decision making for conclusive victims, demonstrates several idiosyncrasies when considered in light of the source country dynamics explored in the study. This calls for deeper interrogation of existing processes, as well as further research into the specific experiences of different national groups both within and outside the National Referral Mechanism. Attention should be paid to ensuring that the UK is fulfilling its obligations to protect survivors of modern slavery in the UK, that access to justice is extended to all survivors without bias or prejudice, and that survivors are not returned to precarious or dangerous conditions that place them at risk of further abuse and exploitation.

1.3. Key drivers of vulnerability to modern slavery

The top twenty non-UK source countries are geographically diverse, encompassing States in Eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa, West Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Countries are also diverse in terms of development profiles, levels of corruption, presence of conflict and armed groups, gender inequality, social support systems, migration profiles, and other political, social, and economic factors relevant to the dynamics of modern slavery. However, many key factors are shared across multiple contexts, including general drivers of modern slavery, vulnerability factors operating in particular groups of source countries, and nationally and locally specific factors operating in particular States. Modern slavery drivers are considered across four levels.

Table 1. Key risk and vulnerability factors identified in the top 20 non-UK source countries

Structural and environmental factors		
	▪ Poverty ▪ Lack of opportunity ▪ Limited access to education ▪ Gender inequality ▪ Informal economies ▪ Conflict and instability	▪ Urbanisation ▪ Limited options for regular migration ▪ Corruption and impunity ▪ Organised criminal networks ▪ Environmental factors
Social and community factors		
	▪ Religious and community practices ▪ Trafficking by community leaders and members ▪ Community stigmatisation	▪ Community norms facilitating trafficking ▪ Community support networks ▪ Social connections
Family factors		
	▪ Trafficking by family members ▪ Dysfunctional family units ▪ Parental divorce ▪ Family debt ▪ Familial marriage arrangements ▪ Absent caregivers	▪ Cultural norms related to family responsibility ▪ Traditional fostering practices ▪ Family socioeconomic condition ▪ Domestic violence ▪ Parental substance abuse
Individual factors		
	▪ Mental health issues ▪ Other health issues ▪ Substance abuse ▪ Disability	▪ Homelessness ▪ Limited language skills ▪ History of abuse

Membership of particularly vulnerable groups is also noted to shape the dynamics of modern slavery and transnational trafficking, with both general vulnerabilities across the top twenty non-UK source countries (including gender-based vulnerabilities for both females and males, and particular vulnerabilities for children and young persons) and specific vulnerabilities relevant to particular States (particular ethnic minority and foreign national groups, refugees, people seeking asylum, and internally displaced persons, returnees, and undocumented migrants). These dynamics also manifest in different ways for different source countries, requiring targeted and tailored programming in response.

1.4.   Antislavery governance

Antislavery governance frameworks in place in the top twenty non-UK source countries demonstrate various shortcomings in effectively preventing exploitation and trafficking, combatting offending when it occurs, and protecting and supporting survivors. Domestic antislavery advocacy in these contexts, as well as international advocacy by the UK as a key destination country for nationals from these States, should therefore consider strengthening local governance and support systems as a key antislavery objective. Consideration of the basic legislative frameworks needed to effectively combat trafficking is a fundamental first step in such efforts, as many of the top source countries are yet to align their domestic legislation with key international commitments and standards. However, governance efforts must also extend beyond legislation, considering supporting policy and regulatory frameworks, implementation, enforcement, funding, specialisation and training, and coordination.

Corruption and official complicity in modern slavery and transnational trafficking crimes are also significant obstacles that must be overcome in prevention and protection efforts. Issues of institutional capacity and resourcing also inhibit source country governance, requiring international cooperation and long-term, structural solutions.

1.5.   The impact of Covid-19

The significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on dynamics of modern slavery and transnational trafficking, vulnerability factors, and institutional responses is already being witnessed around the world. Individual and structural risks are exacerbated by the virus itself, as well as by government restrictions put in place to curb its spread. The immediate economic impacts of the pandemic are already influencing vulnerability, and the long-term economic consequences are anticipated to continue reshaping risk levels and affected populations. The pandemic has also fuelled adaptation in methods of perpetration, as well as key trafficking routes. Support, assistance, and opportunities for intervention have been hindered, as service providers struggle to continue operations in the midst of pandemic and government restrictions, and vulnerable individuals are kept away from the institutions that previously helped to safeguard them from exploitation and identify risks.

While the full picture of the pandemic's impact on modern slavery remains to be seen, it is already clear that the pandemic has radically impacted risk and vulnerability structures, with long term repercussions. With evidence indicating that migrant workers, refugees, and persons claiming asylum have been particularly severely impacted by the pandemic, the relevance of the pandemic in considering source country dynamics for modern slavery in the UK is clear. These effects are also likely to evolve in the future, as the pandemic continues to reshape the push and pull factors that facilitate transnational trafficking, and the source country conditions to which survivors from the UK would return if, and when, they are repatriated.
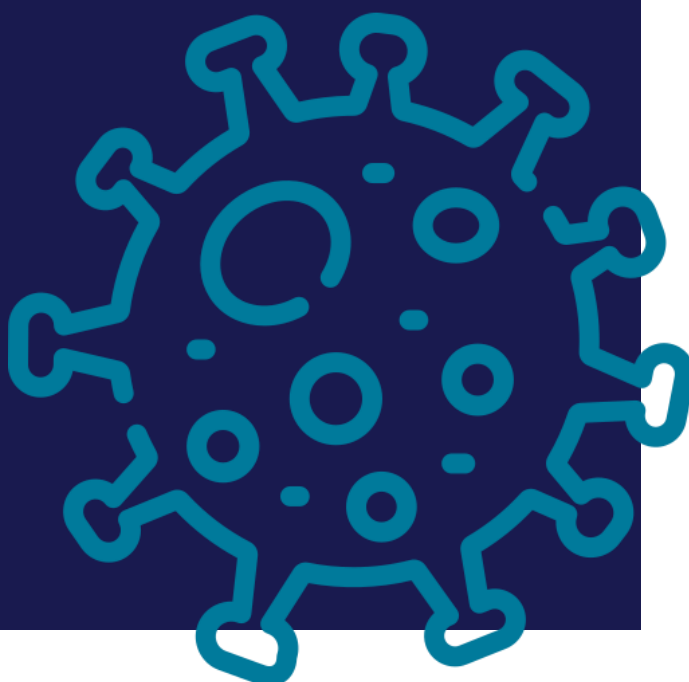
2. The top 20 source countries

Potential victims from a significant proportion of the world's countries have been referred into the UK's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for potential victims of modern slavery. However, despite the diversity of nationalities, a small group of countries have consistently represented the majority of cases. From 2013-2019, potential victims from the top five source countries have represented 55.6% of all referrals. The top ten source countries have represented 72.9% of all referrals, and the top twenty 85.4% of referrals. The top twenty non-UK source countries have made up 68.3% of referrals in this period. At the same time, the total number of potential victims referred to the NRM has increased each year since 2013, rising by over 600% in six years from 1,746 in 2013 to 10,627 in 2019.

UK nationals have made up a significant proportion of referrals since 2013, consistently being ranked as one of the top five source countries for referrals (dropping only once to the sixth position in 2014) and increasing as a proportion of all referrals year on year. Since 2017, UK nationals have maintained the position as the most commonly referred nationality, representing 15.9%-26.7% of all referrals from 2017-2019. The rise in the proportion of UK nationals referred into the NRM is connected to increased recognition of County Lines gang exploitation of minors as a potential modern slavery offence, with the majority of referrals being minors at the time of exploitation (the proportion of UK referrals that were minors rose from 57.3% in 2014 to 84.1% in 2019).[2] This helps to explain the rising proportion of UK minors in the NRM over time.

Beyond the UK, countries represented in the top twenty (non-UK) countries of nationality of potential victims referred into the NRM are geographically diverse, covering Europe, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, West Africa and the Horn of Africa. However, no American or Caribbean countries are represented in the top twenty non-UK source countries. Following the UK, the countries of nationality for the highest total numbers of potential victims referred from 2013-2019 are Albania (representing 15.9% of referrals), Viet Nam (10.9%), China (6.0%), Romania (5.0%), and Nigeria (4.9%)

Figure 1. Potential victims referred into the NRM by nationality (2013-2019)

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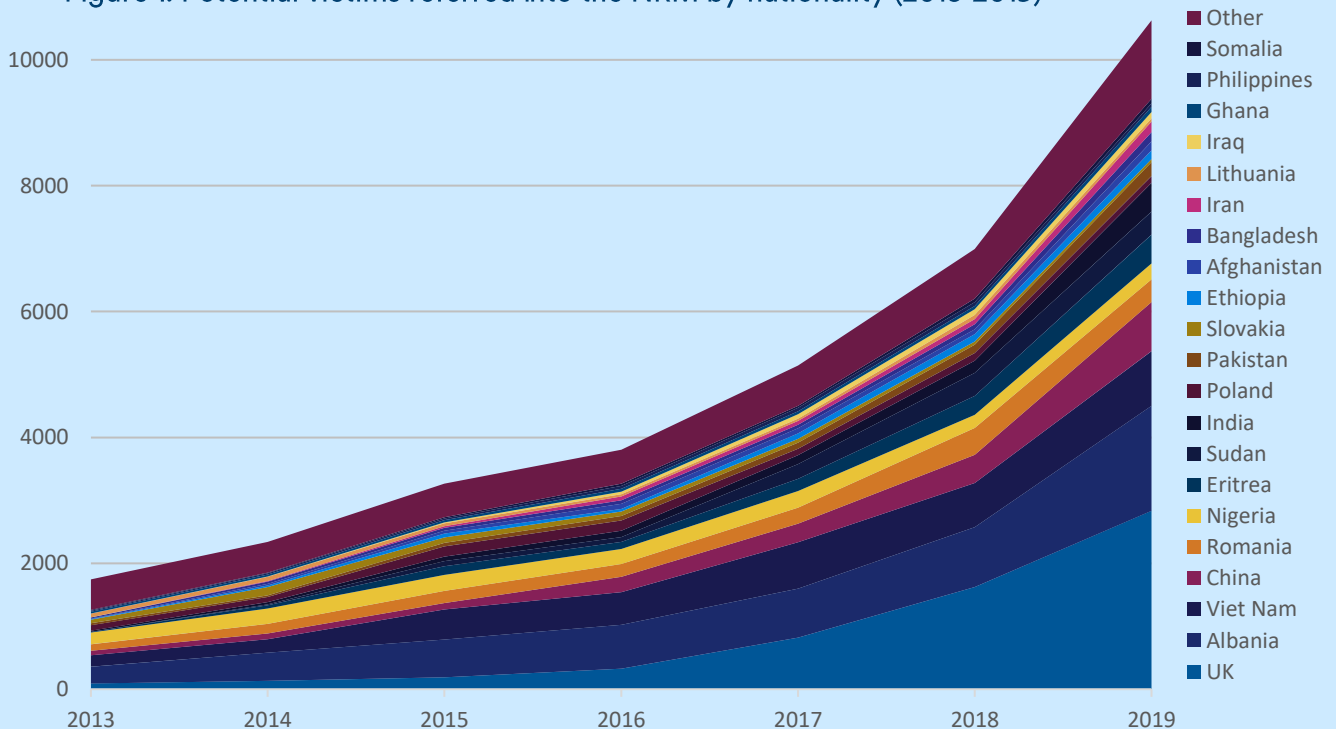
[2] For the NPCC definition of County Lines, see National Crime Agency, 'County Lines' (NCA) available here.

(see Figure 1). Albania and Viet Nam have consistently represented the highest numbers of referrals, ranked in the top three countries of origin consistently since 2013 (see Table 2). Other countries have demonstrated greater fluctuation, with countries like Nigeria, Poland and Slovakia gradually decreasing in the rankings of countries most represented in referrals, while others rose substantially.

Table 2. Total NRM referrals – country rankings[3]

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
UK	5	6	5	3	1	1	1
Afghanistan	28	19	14	10	13	16	13
Albania	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Bangladesh	17	13	16	15	17	14	12
China	8	7	8	5	4	4	4
Eritrea	26	11	7	8	8	7	6
Ethiopia	26	17	12	18	12	12	14
Ghana	15	15	19	16	20	21	17
India	16	14	11	9	9	9	5
Iran	*	39	23	14	15	14	11
Iraq	*	44	33	19	14	13	16
Lithuania	9	9	15	20	21	17	21
Nigeria	2	2	3	4	5	8	9
Pakistan	13	19	13	13	11	10	10
Philippines	17	22	21	16	18	18	20
Poland	6	8	6	7	10	11	15
Romania	4	4	4	6	6	5	7
Slovakia	11	5	9	12	15	20	22
Somalia	20	38	24	21	23	19	18
Sudan	*	29	10	11	7	6	8
Viet Nam	3	3	2	2	3	3	3

Notably, countries experiencing significant levels of conflict, instability, and crisis often demonstrated such increases in NRM referrals. This includes Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, and Sudan (among others). In 2019, eight of the top twenty non-UK source countries were recorded as having active State-based conflicts: Afghanistan (related to the Government and the Islamic State), India (related to the Government, the State of Kashmir, and Pakistan), Iran (related to the Government and Israel), Iraq (related to the Government), Nigeria (related to the Government and the Islamic State), Pakistan (related to the Government, India, and Balochistan), the Philippines (related to the Government, the Islamic State, and Mindanao), and Somalia (related to the Government and the Islamic State).[4] These conflicts heavily influence overall migration flows, in particular fuelling irregular migration and international movement of refugees and people seeking asylum. In Afghanistan, the conflict was noted to have fuelled unprecedented outward migration. These trends were also noted in relation to Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan in particular. Combined with other vulnerability factors related to conflict and instability, these dynamics exacerbate vulnerabilities to exploitation and create greater risks of modern slavery for those people on the move. Instability is noted as a driver of migration to Western Europe and the UK, not only during conflict, but after the collapse of political regimes, including in Albania and Romania.

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[3] *Referral data for Iran, Iraq, and Sudan was not included in reporting for 2013. Data in this year was only reported by nationality for the 30 most common countries of origin.
[4] Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 'Active State-Based Conflicts in 2019' (UCDP,

Several of the top source countries are noted as being the origin of significant refugee and asylum seeker populations, migrating towards Europe and the Gulf in particular (although other key destination countries are also noted. Countries identified as source countries for refugees and people seeking asylum travelling to Europe in this study include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh (particularly Hindu populations), Eritrea, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan. For those travelling from Europe, perilous Mediterranean routes are reported as particularly dangerous, entailing risks of trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Countries in the top twenty non-UK source countries for potential victims in the UK are also noted to be transit points for migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum from other States, including Albania, Iran (primarily from Afghanistan and Iraq), Somalia, and Sudan (primarily from Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia).

Regular migration flows into the UK from each of the top twenty non-UK source countries have continuously increased over time from 2000-2019. These increases in regular migration have typically been relatively steady, with neither sharp increases over the twenty year period considered or spikes in migration flows in particular five-year periods (see Figure 3). Notable exceptions to this trend are India, Pakistan, and Poland, which not only demonstrate the highest overall regular migration rates, but have also increased over time at a much greater rate than demonstrated by other top source countries.

Within the top twenty non-UK source countries, numbers of NRM referrals are not significantly correlated with overall migration rates to the UK. This suggests that the divergence in prevalence between different source countries cannot be explained simply by virtue of a higher overall migration rate. While some victims of modern slavery are trafficked through regular migration routes, others travel through irregular routes unaccounted for in official migration statistics. Comparison of regular migration rates and NRM referral rates cannot, therefore, capture the full picture of migration from the top twenty non-UK source countries. This is particularly true, as vulnerability to trafficking and irregular migration are connected—with many of the

Figure 2. Migrant stock in the UK by nationality over time (top 20 non-UK source countries)
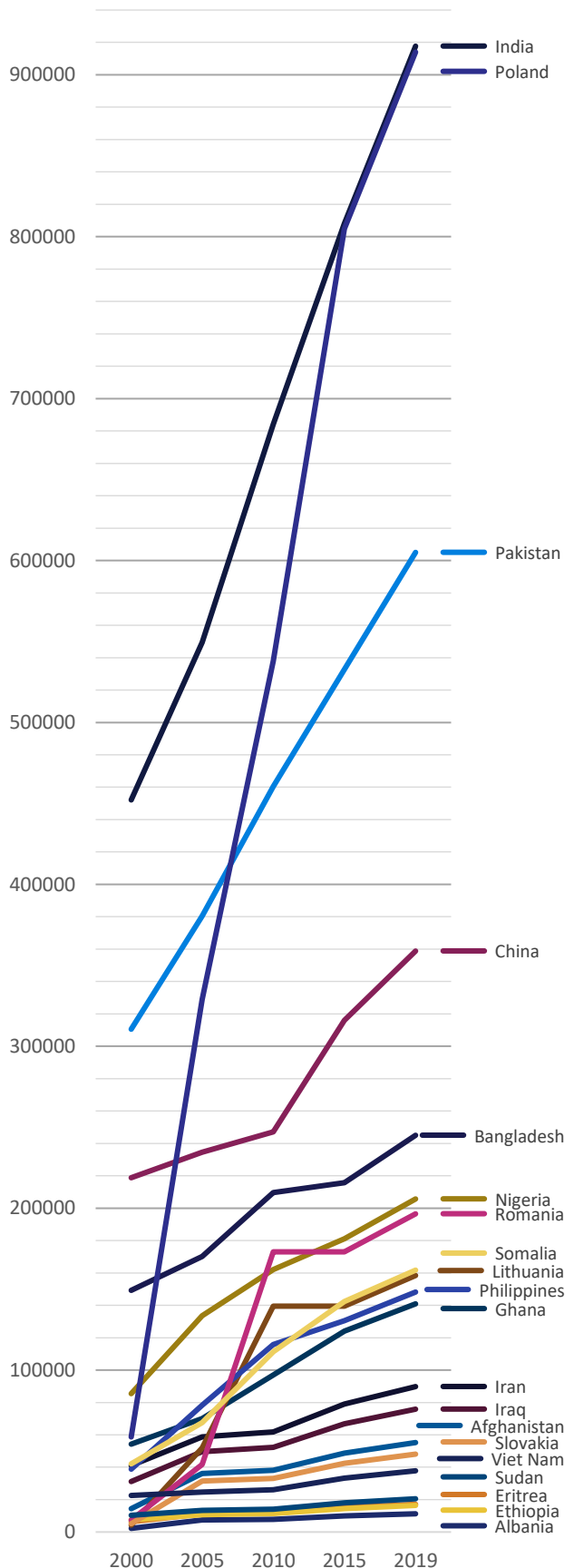
same drivers for modern slavery also acting as push factors for smuggling, and smuggling placing people at heightened risk of trafficking and exploitation.

Vulnerability and origin country factors driving migration help to further explain the risks of trafficking amongst migrants from the top twenty non-UK source countries. In addition to conflict and instability (discussed above), key factors identified in this study as associated with both migration and vulnerability to modern slavery from the top source countries include:

- **Natural disasters and climate change:** Afghanistan; Iran (climate change) Iraq (loss of arable land and water scarcity); and Somalia (drought, famine, flooding, and other natural disasters).
- **Poverty:** Afghanistan; Ethiopia; Nigeria; and Sudan. Poverty is also widely recognised as a key driver of trafficking and modern slavery globally.
- **Lack of economic opportunities in source countries, and perceived opportunity in destination:** Bangladesh; Eritrea; Iran; Lithuania; Pakistan; Philippines; Romania; Slovakia.
- **Lack of rights:** Eritrea (95% of Eritreans fleeing the country reported this to be a motivating factor); Iran (noting in particular violations of human rights).
- **Fear of conscription:** Eritrea (84% of Eritreans fleeing the country reported this to be a motivating factor).
- **Gender dynamics and social class:** Ethiopia.
- **Social and political repression:** Eritrea; Iran
- **Religious persecution:** Iran.

Trafficking itself, and the operations of traffickers, were also noted to be a driver of migration flows involving exploitation. All top source countries in this study were reported as having relatively high emigration rates, indicating the significant role of push and pull factors in modern slavery in the UK.

2.1. Demographics of potential victims from the top 20 source countries in the UK

Adults make up the majority of potential victims in the NRM, representing 60.5% of referrals from 2013-2019, while minors represented 38.9% of referrals.[5] However, this average is somewhat skewed by the high numbers of UK national minors referred to the NRM, connected to increased recognition of the intersection between 'County Lines' and modern slavery (reported as a significant factor in the increase in minor referrals from 2017-2019).[6] For all non-UK nationalities, adults represent 69.9% of potential victims, while minors make up 29.3% of referrals. This is consistent with the ratios of adults to minors in the top twenty non-UK source countries, with 70.3% of potential victims being adults at the time of their exploitation, and 29.7% minors. However, the profile of potential victims in the UK representing the top source nationalities varies substantially between the different countries. The top source countries cannot, therefore, be treated as a homogenous group. Rather, an understanding of the diverging dynamics between the different countries must be generated to improve international and domestic programming efforts aimed towards prevention, protection, and prosecution.

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[5] Age was not identified in the remaining cases.
[6] National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2017' (NCA 2018); National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2018' (NCA 2019); Home Office, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – UK, End of Year Summary, 2019' (Home Office 2020).

Age profiles of NRM referrals for top 20 source countries

Three basic profiles can be constructed from age data on NRM referrals:[7]

[1] **Adult dominant:** Albania, Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Lithuania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia.

[2] **Child dominant:** Afghanistan, Iraq, UK.

[3] **Balanced:** Eritrea, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Viet Nam.[8]

No non-UK source countries considered in this study match the age profile of UK national potential victims—which has the highest representation of minors by a margin of 9 percentage points. However, Afghanistan comes closest to this ratio, with 73.7% of potential victims being minors at the time of their exploitation. Iraq also demonstrates a child dominant profile, with 61.3% minor referrals. These trends are influenced by conflict, and the high numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from these source countries in the UK. Other countries experiencing high levels of conflict and instability also demonstrate a higher proportion of child referrals, including Eritrea (56.9%), Sudan (56.5%), and Somalia (53.1%)—all of which show a majority of referrals being minors.

Several countries demonstrate particularly high representation of adults in referrals, including the Philippines (96.8%), India (95.4%), China (93%), Poland (89.9%), Lithuania (86.9%), and Pakistan (85.5%). All non-UK European countries demonstrate a higher than average proportion of adult referrals, although Slovakia comes close to the mean at 35.8% minor referrals. Conversely, countries in the Middle East and Horn of Africa tend to demonstrate a higher proportion of minor referrals, with Ethiopia the only country from these regions that crosses the mean.

Figure 3. Age of potential victims referred to the NRM from 2013-2019 by nationality

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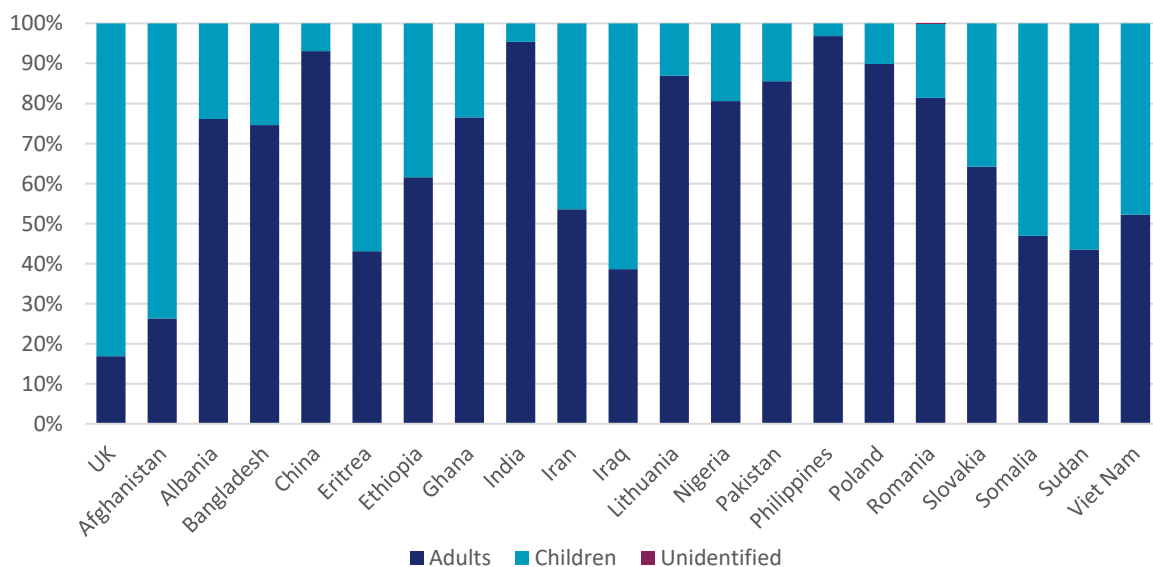
[7] Profiles are based on the age of referrals for each country. This is not indicative the proportion of overall referrals in an age bracket that come from that country. For instance, because of the high number of total referrals, Albanian nationals still represent a significant proportion of all minor referrals in the UK, despite having a adult-dominant profile.
[8] The proportions of adults and children are within 15 percentage points. (could be 20 for consistency, doesn't change the groupings)

Exploitation profiles of NRM referrals for top 20 source countries

The exploitation profile of potential victims from the different nationality groups also varies substantially. Seven key exploitation profiles for the top source countries are identified in NRM data:[9]

[1] **Labour exploitation dominant:** Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Romania, India, Viet Nam, Eritrea, Iraq.
[2] **Sexual exploitation dominant:** Albania.
[3] **Domestic servitude dominant:** Philippines.
[4] **Balanced (Domestic and Labour exploitation):** Bangladesh, Pakistan.[10]
[5] **Balanced (Domestic and Sexual exploitation):** Nigeria.[11]
[6] **Balanced (Labour and Sexual exploitation):** China, Iran, UK.[12]
[7] **Balanced:** Ghana, Somalia.[13]

Figure 4. Exploitation type experienced by potential victims referred to the NRM from 2015-2018 by nationality

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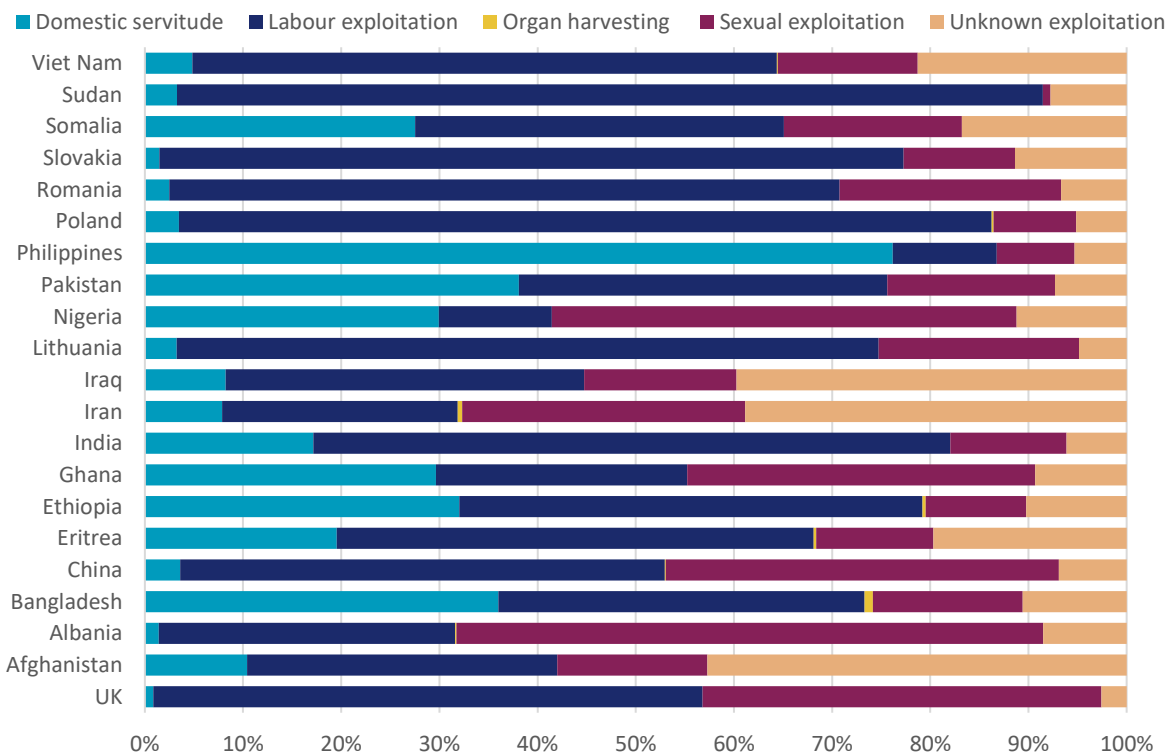
[9] All comparisons are based on proportions of referrals rather than the total number. Profiles omit cases of organ harvesting given the very low number of referrals for this exploitation type, as well as cases of unknown exploitation.
[10] Less than 60% in all categories, and less than 20 percentage points between domestic servitude and labour exploitation.
[11] Less than 60% in all categories, and less than 20 percentage points between domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.
[12] Less than 60% in all categories, and less than 20 percentage points between labour and sexual exploitation.
[13] Demonstrating less than 25 percentage points total deviation between each of the three dominant forms of exploitation, and less than 15 points between types consecutively.

Across all potential victims referred into the NRM, the most common form of exploitation experienced is **labour exploitation**, representing 50.7% of all referrals from 2014-2019 and 47.3% from 2015-2018.[14] The proportion of potential victims categorised as having experienced labour exploitation across the 20 nationalities reviewed ranged from 10.6%-88.2%, with Filipino and Nigerian nationals the least likely to be referred to the NRM for labour exploitation (representing 10.6% and 11.5% of all potential victims of those nationalities respectively). Sudanese and Polish nationals demonstrated the highest rates of labour exploitation, at 88.2% and 82.8% respectively. European countries typically demonstrated a labour-exploitation dominant profile, with referrals for five of the six European countries considered demonstrating a majority of potential victims of labour exploitation. Albania is the only exception to this trend.

Sexual exploitation is the other dominant form of exploitation recorded for referrals into the NRM, representing 29.7% of referrals from 2014-2019 (and 31.6% from 2015-2018). Overall, the nationality groups considered tended to show a lower proportion of referrals for sexual exploitation than the average for all referrals, with only five countries showing a higher rate of sexual exploitation—Albania, Nigeria, the UK, China, and Ghana. The average in this case is lifted by the fact that several of these countries also have the highest overall numbers of potential victims referred into the NRM, notably Albania, China, and the UK.
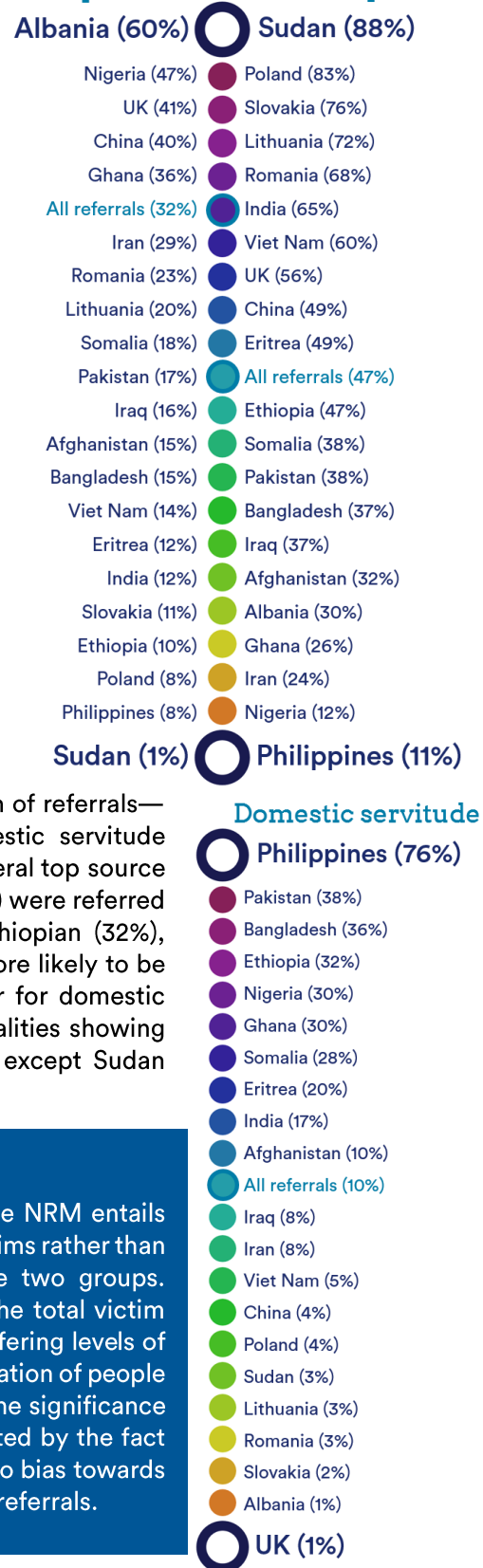
Overall, **domestic servitude** represents a relatively low proportion of referrals—9% from 2014-2019 and 9.7% from 2015-2018. However, domestic servitude represents a significantly more common exploitation type for several top source countries. Notably, the majority of Filipino potential victims (76.2%) were referred for domestic servitude. Pakistani (38.1%), Bangladeshi (36%), Ethiopian (32%), Nigerian (30%) and Ghanaian (30%) potential victims were also more likely to be referred for domestic servitude. Regional divergence is stronger for domestic servitude than other forms of exploitation, with European nationalities showing the lowest rates of referral. All African nationalities considered except Sudan demonstrated higher than average rates of domestic servitude.

Limitations of the data

It should be noted that consideration of potential victims referred into the NRM entails limitations in constructing victim profiles. First, data relates to potential victims rather than confirmed victims, with potential for significant deviation between the two groups. Second, data relates only to victims referred into the NRM and not to the total victim population. Programming, policy, and intervention priorities, as well as differing levels of awareness, create a risk that the profiles do not accurately reflect the population of people experiencing modern slavery in these different nationality groups. Third, the significance of comparison between all referrals and specific nationality groups is limited by the fact that the number of victims referred varies substantially, causing averages to bias towards the exploitation profiles of the countries with the highest numbers of total referrals.

Figure 5. Referrals by exploitation type: top 20 source country rankings

Sexual exploitation

Albania (60%)
- Nigeria (47%)
- UK (41%)
- China (40%)
- Ghana (36%)
- All referrals (32%)
- Iran (29%)
- Romania (23%)
- Lithuania (20%)
- Somalia (18%)
- Pakistan (17%)
- Iraq (16%)
- Afghanistan (15%)
- Bangladesh (15%)
- Viet Nam (14%)
- Eritrea (12%)
- India (12%)
- Slovakia (11%)
- Ethiopia (10%)
- Poland (8%)
- Philippines (8%)

Sudan (1%)

Labour exploitation

Sudan (88%)
- Poland (83%)
- Slovakia (76%)
- Lithuania (72%)
- Romania (68%)
- India (65%)
- Viet Nam (60%)
- UK (56%)
- China (49%)
- Eritrea (49%)
- All referrals (47%)
- Ethiopia (47%)
- Somalia (38%)
- Pakistan (38%)
- Bangladesh (37%)
- Iraq (37%)
- Afghanistan (32%)
- Albania (30%)
- Ghana (26%)
- Iran (24%)
- Nigeria (12%)

Philippines (11%)

Domestic servitude

Philippines (76%)
- Pakistan (38%)
- Bangladesh (36%)
- Ethiopia (32%)
- Nigeria (30%)
- Ghana (30%)
- Somalia (28%)
- Eritrea (20%)
- India (17%)
- Afghanistan (10%)
- All referrals (10%)
- Iraq (8%)
- Iran (8%)
- Viet Nam (5%)
- China (4%)
- Poland (4%)
- Sudan (3%)
- Lithuania (3%)
- Romania (3%)
- Slovakia (2%)
- Albania (1%)

UK (1%)

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[14] Exploitation type is only disaggregated by nationality in data from 2015-2018, although data is disaggregated by type for all years from 2014 onwards. Overall data for 2015-2018 is therefore provided for accurate comparison with country data.

2.2. Dynamics of transnational trafficking

Routes travelled by victims of modern slavery in the UK are varied, both in terms of the geographies of travel, and modes of transportation adopted. Overall, routes from all the countries considered in this study are noted as having multiple points of transit, often through other European countries before individuals reach the UK. Trafficking victims are noted to be at significant risk of exploitation and abuse on these journeys, in some cases for prolonged periods of time. This demonstrates a need for effective programming and interventions in key sites of transit, as well as source and destination countries, in order to protect victims and prevent exploitation. Overall, 56.7% of potential victims in the UK from 2017-2019 were recorded as being exploited in the UK only, 27.9% were exploited overseas and not within the UK, while 6.7% were exploited both overseas and within the UK.[15]

A major route from the East, West, and Horn of Africa is the Northern Route, also known as the 'Central Mediterranean Route', reaching Europe through Egypt, Libya, and other North African countries. This is noted as a key route for modern slavery victims and survivors from all African countries considered in this study (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan). Trafficking from West Africa (Nigeria and Ghana) in particular also occurs via Morocco and then Spain. The 'Eastern Mediterranean Route' travelling through Turkey to Greece is also common in the journeys of trafficking victims, including from the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan), the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq), South Asia (Pakistan and India), and Southeast Asia (Bangladesh).

Victims are often noted to arrive in other European countries, before travelling on to the United Kingdom. This includes transit through Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. Russia is also noted to be a key transit country for victims travelling from Asia (Bangladesh, China, India, and Viet Nam).

Many of the top source countries for trafficking into the UK are also countries of transit for victims from other top source countries. Iran is noted to be a key transit country as a result of its strategic location, channelling victims from Asia and Afghanistan. India and Pakistan are also transit points for those travelling from Bangladesh, while Poland and Slovakia serve as a key transit points for those travelling from Viet Nam, and Sudan and Ethiopia channel victims from Eritrea. Programming focused on prevention and support for survivors in these countries should therefore target both country nationals, and those moving through the country. Migrant and refugee camps are sites warranting particular focus, as noted transit points for trafficking (as well as being sources of trafficking themselves).

Traffickers and smugglers from across the top twenty non-UK source countries are reported to use both regular and irregular migration channels, with some trafficking victims being smuggled and others travelling through established channels with visas and real passports and then disappearing at their destination. In other cases, false documentation is reported to be used to facilitate travel, particularly by air.

Recruitment fees and other costs associated with travel are entry points to exploitation in many cases, as victims are indebted to their traffickers for costs associated with their travel. These debts are used by traffickers as a means of coercion, facilitating exploitation on the journey as well as at the final destination. High recruitment, 'transit', and smuggling fees that leave individuals in debt when they reach the UK are common tools manipulated by perpetrators to exploit people. Such fees are noted for victims travelling from Albania, Bangladesh, China, India, Iraq, Romania, Somalia, and Viet Nam. In some cases of victims from Albania, victims are not informed of costs upfront, but informed on

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[15] Location of exploitation was not known in 8.8% of cases, and no exploitation occurred in <0.1% of cases (where exploitation was intended but did not occur). Data on location of exploitation is not disaggregated by nationality, preventing close analysis of trends between the different source countries in this report. Further research is therefore needed to interrogate these dynamics.

arrival that they owe a debt for the cost of the journey. Fees are also noted to be increased throughout the journey, as well as in the UK.

Deception is a common tool used by perpetrators, both in relation to recruitment fees and costs, but also with regard to the nature of the journey, risks, legal requirements, alternative options for travel, and the situations en route and in destination countries. False promises of work and deception about the conditions of work in the destination country facilitate apparent consent to travelling, and are specifically noted in relation to Albania, China, India, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia.

Trafficking victims are not only subjected to exploitation and abuse at their final destination, but often face exploitation, abuse, violence, and degrading conditions on their journey. Journeys can become increasingly precarious, including abuse, exploitation, extortion, kidnapping, lack of food and water, social exclusion, rape, sexual exploitation, torture, violence and threats, as well as fatalities. Such experiences were noted in evidence related to virtually all countries under consideration, although the specific dynamics of these risks might vary between countries and regions. Kidnapping and detaining to extort for money and ransom were noted specifically in relation to trafficking from the Horn of Africa and through the North of Africa.

Organised criminal actors, often operating in transnational networks (whether loosely or hierarchically structured) play a central role in transnational smuggling and trafficking, and are specifically noted in evidence related to China, Ethiopia, India, Romania, and Somalia. These groups often operate in connection to corrupt officials, who may facilitate abuses, accept bribes, and/or profit from the exploitation of migrants and refugees. Corruption and bribery may occur in various points along the journey for modern slavery survivors from a wide range of countries, but are specifically noted in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

2.3. Factors influencing experiences of exploitation

Several factors are identified in this study as influencing the exploitation experiences of survivors from the different source countries considered. However, overall, there is a notable lack of specific data and research on the diverging experiences of survivors of different nationalities. This has implications for the design of programming to prevent and address modern slavery in relation to these different nationality groups, which are often ill-equipped to tailor interventions to these groups as a result of a lack of evidence. This includes the lack of disaggregation of some NRM data by nationality. While referrals have been disaggregated by age and nationality from 2013-2019, gender dynamics were only disaggregated by nationality in 2013 and 2014. Likewise, the Home Office did not report exploitation type data disaggregated by nationality in 2019. This is further compounded by limited evidence of the nuances of the experiences of both exploitation and support for different nationality groups.

Immigration status

Irregular immigration status was reported as a key factor influencing experiences of exploitation across the countries considered in this study. Research considered in this study notes that individuals with irregular status are more vulnerable to being exploited in the UK. This, historically the experiences of non-UK, non-EU nationals have differed from those of non-UK EU nationals. However, it should be noted that these dynamics are likely to shift as a result of the UK's exit from the European Union. These impacts were noted both in relation to individuals' access to decent work, and conditions of employment, but also in their ability to access education to develop skills and qualifications that would help protect them from exploitation. Confusion and fear in relation to immigration status was noted to be a hindering factor to self-reporting poor working conditions and exploitation, noted specifically in relation to Chinese nationals. These fears related both to risks of punishment for immigration offences and deportation, but also fear of losing the jobs in which the individuals were being exploited. Confiscation of identity documents is also commonly used as a mechanism of control over non-UK nationals, noted specifically in relation to India. Tied visa regimes are likewise identified as creating potential

vulnerabilities, and preventing victims from reporting for fear of immigration sanctions and deportation.

Exclusion & discrimination

Social marginalisation and racism were also reported as significant factors in the experiences of non-UK national victims of modern slavery in the UK, including discrimination and exclusion in the workplace. For Afghani nationals, exclusion and racial harassment were noted in the labour market. Likewise, Ghanaian nationals were reported to experience racism in the labour market, including downward mobility and de-skilling in the UK. Such experiences of discrimination were also reported in relation to Indian and Pakistani nationals. Eritrean nationals were also reported to experience social marginalisation in restrictions on contact with social support networks and community, facilitating the continuation of exploitation. Lack of support from extended family that they would have had at home is also cited as a point of vulnerability for Sudanese nationals in the UK. **Language barriers** for non-English speaking individuals are also highlighted as exacerbating vulnerability, noted specifically in relation to Lithuanian, Sudanese, and Vietnamese survivors.

Intersecting abuses

Some reports highlighted the **intersection of multiple abuses** for particular nationality groups. For instance, Bangladeshi nationals exploited in domestic servitude were noted to also experience sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and benefit fraud. Nigerian nationals in domestic servitude are likewise reported as experiencing sexual exploitation and abuse. While NRM data began reporting multiple intersecting exploitation types in the experiences of potential victims in 2019, this data is not yet disaggregated by nationality, preventing identification of trends between different nationality groups.

Sectors of exploitation

Indications in the current evidence base also suggest trends in the **sectors in which different nationality groups experience labour exploitation.** While this evidence is nascent, some indications of particular communities being over-represented in exploitation in specific sectors include: Albanian nationals in construction and criminal exploitation; Bangladeshi nationals in domestic service; Lithuanian nationals in criminal exploitation; Polish nationals in construction and agriculture; Romanian nationals in agriculture, food service, catering, hostelry, car washes, warehouse and distribution, food processing, manufacturing, recycling and waste disposal, cleaning, construction, food packaging, and criminal exploitation; and Vietnamese nationals in factories, construction, domestic servitude, nail bars, and criminal exploitation. Somali nationals were also highlighted as facing particular risks of forced marriage.

2.4. Impacts of modern slavery on survivors

Reflecting overarching trends in the evidence base related to survivors from different source countries in the UK, there is relatively limited evidence on potential divergence in the impacts of modern slavery on these different groups. In large part, this may be a result of the fact that the impacts of modern slavery are more determined by the nature of the experiences than they are by an individual's nationality. However, both the situation in a survivor's source country and their particular background can influence their experiences (and the stresses that they face) in the UK upon exiting exploitation.

Historically, for non-UK non-EU nationals, uncertainty of immigration status and ongoing asylum claims are noted to be a great source of strain for survivors. This was reported to reach such high levels for Afghani nationals that it contributed to persons dying by suicide in some cases. Chinese nationals were likewise reported to experience confusion over immigration status as an ongoing source of anxiety and pressure. This was also reported to relate to the impact of financial instability on survivors' recovery, which generated greater concern for survivors in some cases than personal trauma (noted specifically in relation to Filipino nationals). Lack of access to public funds, or limited access to subsistence and other support, can substantially shape experiences of recovery for non-UK national. This can also create risks of destitution, homelessness, and further exploitation and re-trafficking.

The conditions to which survivors are to be returned in the event that they are not granted leave to remain was also reported to be a matter of significant concern. For survivors returning to greater levels of instability and risk of violence, the mental strain of uncertainty and precarity of migration status can be significant. This creates risks that victims from these source countries will disappear within the UK, leaving them without support and vulnerable to re-trafficking and destitution. Where the drivers and risk factors that facilitated the survivors' exploitation in the first instance are not addressed in the source country, survivors who are repatriated to their home country face greater risk of re-trafficking. These risks may be associated with their initial trafficking experience (for instance, if the individual still owes their trafficker money), or to new instances of modern slavery based on the continued existence of key drivers and vulnerabilities. For survivors who experienced dangerous and abusive journeys from their home country to the UK, the trauma and impacts associated with trafficking are reported to be exacerbated. Thus, for survivors from countries with higher risks of such precarious journeys, the nature of experiences may differ from those travelling more secure routes, calling for tailored responses.

Survivors from source countries with high levels of official corruption, including in some cases official complicity in modern slavery, may experience interactions with relevant officials in the UK differently than individuals from more stable countries where rule of law is more secure. Ensuring institutional trust in UK processes for addressing modern slavery, including the NRM, may therefore require higher levels of care in such cases.

The impacts of social isolation—used as a tool by exploiters to facilitate exploitation and prevent escape—can also be particularly acute for country nationals without a safe community in the UK, and with limited contact with community (or lack of family and community) in the source country. Lack of community networks in the UK can exacerbate the impacts of modern slavery, and impede recovery and reintegration. Evidence further suggests that community support and coping mechanisms, as well as efforts to strengthen or rekindle family ties, may help to mitigate adverse impacts of trafficking. Engaging with source country embassies and consulates in the UK can also be an important source of support (noted specifically in relation to Romanian nationals). This must be approached with some care, as communities of shared nationality can provide strong roots for survivors in the UK, but may also include perpetrators themselves, and others with connections to perpetrators.

Survivors from different nationality groups (as well as cultural, social, ethnic and religious) may also experience diverging levels of stigma associated with their experiences of modern slavery. For instance, Ethiopian and Somali women are noted to experience higher levels of stigma associated with their modern slavery experiences, as well as facing higher risks of sexual exploitation and abuse. Strong cultural stigma related to mental illness can also interfere with early mental healthcare intervention—both in seeking support and in accepting support offered (Ethiopia). Feelings of shame and isolation (associated with stigma) were also noted to prevent survivors from seeking help, and result in additional psychological harms (Ethiopia). These differing cultural backgrounds can also influence survivors' self-identification as victims, and willingness to seek out or accept support. This can also impact the effectiveness of 'rescue' responses with particular survivor groups.

For survivors from diverse backgrounds, the impacts of modern slavery and experiences of recovery can be significantly influenced by racism and discrimination. Efforts to recognise and address the specific forms of discrimination experienced by specific communities from the top source countries may therefore support effective modern slavery responses in these cases. Evidence reported in relation to Iraqi refugees, for instance, notes that settling in areas that are accepting of diversity and difference is important for integration. Language support and community are also noted as important factors in recovery for non-UK national survivors from non-English speaking countries.

Different belief systems can shape the experiences of survivors from particular groups, including support experiences, as well as the impacts of modern slavery offending. For instance, use of *juju* curses in cases of Nigerian national survivors are reported as exerting psychological pressures that are unique to their roots in a belief system. Potential for mental health issues to be attributed to magic, witchcraft, or spiritual forces were also noted in relation to Ethiopian nationals, influencing experiences of support and recovery.

3. UK decision making

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK decision making apparatus that receives referrals for suspected victims of modern slavery, before a decision is made as to whether the person is officially deemed to be a victim, thus entitling them to specific state support. Numbers of referrals have increased significantly over the past five years, reflecting an increased awareness of the mechanism and of modern slavery itself. While increases may also correlate with overall prevalence of modern slavery in the UK, data on prevalence over time to test this hypothesis is not available. The Home Office publishes quarterly and yearly data on the breakdown of referrals (previously published by the National Crime Agency). The table below is drawn from the 2019 statistics published by the Home Office. It is important to note that conclusive grounds decisions will subsequently include figures not yet processed for the year and will be updated as decisions are made.

Table 3. Status of decisions in the NRM[16]

Decision Status	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Negative Conclusive Grounds	1055	952	800	511	90
Negative Reasonable Grounds	454	655	921	1291	1064
Positive Conclusive Grounds	1451	1766	2293	2028	693
Positive Reasonable Grounds	44	103	661	2659	8429
Reasonable Grounds Pending	0	0	1	1	26
Deceased	1	1	0	1	2
Suspended	133	154	180	166	96
Withdrawn	124	173	285	329	227
Total	3262	3804	5141	6986	10627

The average split between positive and negative final decisions from 2015-2019 was 73% positive and 27% negative. The proportion of positive conclusive grounds decisions has steadily increased each year, with 58% of conclusive grounds decisions positively decided for referrals made in 2015, rising to 89% in 2019. However, it should be noted that because of decision-making timeframes in the NRM, the proportion of referrals from each year that have been conclusively decided decreases over time.

Table 4. Percentage of conclusive grounds decisions decided negatively and positively[17]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Negative Conclusive Grounds	42%	35%	26%	20%	11%
Positive Conclusive Grounds	58%	65%	74%	80%	89%
% of all referrals conclusively decided	99%	97%	87%	62%	20%

3.1. Conclusive Grounds decisions by nationality

Statistics released from the NRM do not currently include a breakdown of decision making by nationality. Following a Freedom of Information request, a breakdown of conclusive grounds decisions for the years 2015-2019 for nationals of the twenty countries included in this study was obtained. This data has not previously been published.

Figure 6 demonstrates a clear difference in positive conclusive grounds decisions based on the nationality of the individual. This has been 'anecdotally' acknowledged for several years amongst non-governmental service providers: that clients from certain source countries, for example Ghana and Albania, are less likely to receive a positive conclusive grounds decision even if the support worker

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[16] NRM End of year summary 2019 [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-referral-mechanism-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2019].

[17] 2019. Proportion of referrals conclusively decided includes cases where a conclusive grounds decision has been made, as well as cases with negative reasonable grounds decisions, suspended and withdrawn cases, and cases where the potential victim was deceased.

believes there to be a strong case. This would seem to be reflected in the average positive decisions as seen above.

Figure 6. Positive and negative conclusive grounds decisions by nationality (2015-2019)
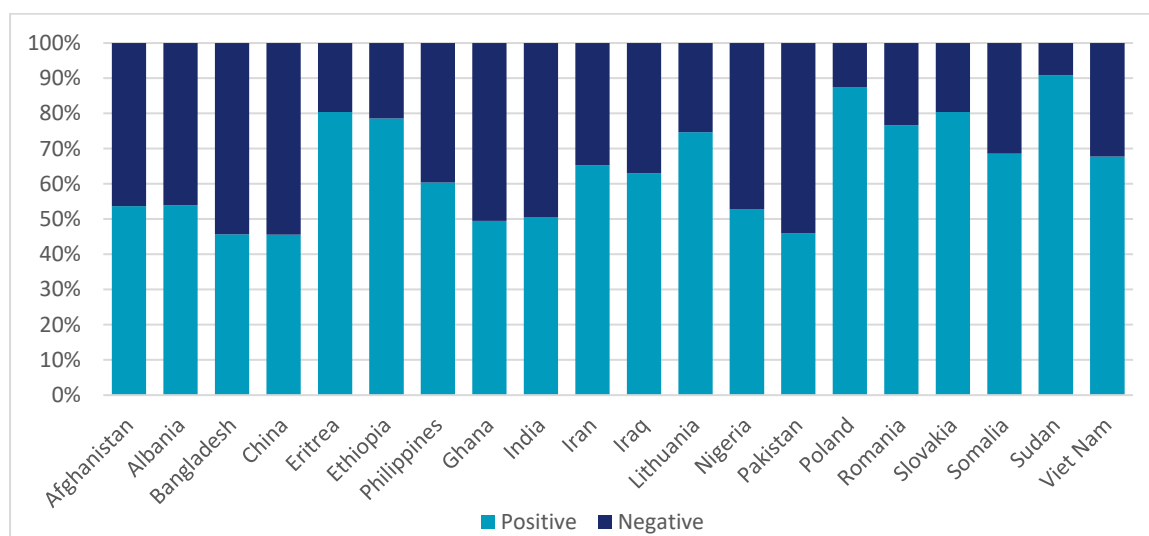
Following a preliminary consultation with NGOs, case studies that reflected potentially problematic decision making from countries with a lower average positive conclusive grounds decision rates were reported. In one instance, an Albanian woman received a negative conclusive grounds decision due to being deemed 'not a credible witness'. This assertion was based on arguments that subsequent legal advice deemed to be implausible. The women was subsequently granted refugee status on the basis of her trafficking experience. The statistics above demonstrate the need for further research, including a comprehensive case review to assess whether the threshold for a positive conclusive grounds decision is being fairly applied across all nationality groups. Further research and disaggregated data is also needed to fully understand the trends indicated in this data, and explore other potentially explanatory factors influencing decision rates.

3.2. Conclusive Grounds decisions by region

Table 5 shows the average positive conclusive grounds decision rates across the twenty countries considered in this study, grouped into regions. It should be noted that the only non-EU European country is Albania.

Table 5. Positive conclusive grounds decision rates of top twenty source countries by region

Region	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asia	39%	29%	53%	64%	66%
Non-EU European	37%	26%	42%	60%	81%
EU European	83%	78%	82%	75%	77%
Africa	54%	63%	63%	78%	78%

Figure 7 shows the percentage of positive conclusive grounds decisions across each region over the period from 2015-2019. It is apparent in Figure 7 that EU nationals are significantly more likely to receive a positive decision than individuals from other regions. This regional differential has been noted by NGOs, and has been addressed by the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.[18] There is no firm evidence as to what accounts for the differential, as comprehensive data on decision-making disaggregated by nationality has not previously been made public. While the following analysis on the different source countries provides some insights into these trends, further research is required to

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[18] See After Exploitation, 'Analysis: Trafficking decisions on non-EU nationals "nearly five times more likely" to be rejected than British claims' (*After Exploitation,* 14 April 2020), available here.

understand the dynamics of NRM decision making for potential victims from the different source countries.

Figure 7. Conclusive grounds decisions of top twenty source countries by region (2015-2019)
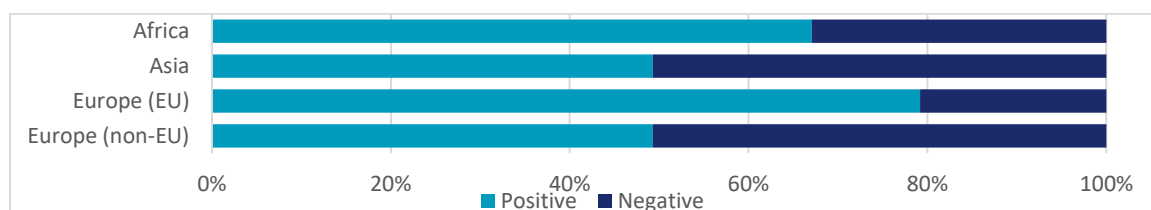
However, it should be noted that the divergence between EU and African decisions collapses when considering aggregate decision numbers, rather than average rates. In other words, weighting each country equally influences the level of regional divergence, when counting total referral numbers from the region collectively shows more limited deviation. Considering aggregate numbers, 71.3% of all conclusive decisions for potential victims from top source countries from the European Union from 2015-2019 resulted in a positive conclusive grounds decision. This was closely followed by decisions on referrals from top source countries in Africa, with 71% of cases positively concluded. The divergence of Asian and non-EU European States remains, however, with 59.5% and 54.0% of conclusive grounds decisions being positive.

3.3. Immigration decisions

A positive conclusive grounds decision does not automatically entitle the individual to leave to remain in the UK. Conclusively identified victims of modern slavery may, however, apply for discretionary leave to remain in the UK. Discretionary leave is not automatic, being granted where a conclusive victim satisfies one of three criteria: (1) leave is necessary owing to personal circumstances; (2) leave is necessary to pursue compensation; or (3) the victim is helping police with their enquiries.[19] Available data on discretionary leave is limited, and is not disaggregated by nationality. The only currently available data indicates that 12% of conclusive victims in 2015 were granted discretionary leave—58% of whom were non-EEA nationals, and 42% EEA nationals.[20] Understanding discretionary leave trends therefore requires further research.[21]

In recent years an increasing number of individuals have claimed asylum on the basis of being a victim of modern slavery. While this has provided a successful route for some, the process is complex as applicants are trying to navigate a system not designed to reflect their circumstances.[22]

Table 6 contains a breakdown of the result of asylum applications submitted in 2018 and 2019 for individuals who have previously been given a positive conclusive grounds decision, of the nationalities referenced in this report. This information is the result of a Freedom of Information request made to the Home Office as this data is not released publicly, and therefore presents early insights into the dynamics of asylum decision making for conclusively identified victims of modern slavery from the different source countries under consideration.

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[19] Home Office, 'Discretionary Leave Considerations for Victims of Modern Slavery' (version 4.0, 2020), 5.
[20] Sarah Newton, 'Victims of Modern Slavery Inquiry' (Home Office 2017) available here.
[21] Data returned in response to a Freedom of Information request related to leave to remain for conclusive victims from Albania, China, Sudan, and Viet Nam was rounded to the nearest 5. With the highest number for any country being 10, data was not sufficiently reliable for analysis.
[22] Williams-Woods, A. and Mellon, Y. (2018) "Irregular Victims: Investigating the immigration status decisions of post-NRM victims of human trafficking, the availability of eligible benefits and the related impact on victims of trafficking", *Journal of Modern Slavery,* 4(2): 66–92.

Table 6. Asylum outcomes for conclusive victims from top twenty source countries[23]

|	2018						2019					
	Grant asylum		Grant other		Refused		Grant asylum		Grant other		Refused	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Afghan	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
Albania	11	10.7%	4	3.9%	88	85.4%	110	28.5%	15	3.9%	261	67.6%
Bangladeshi	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
China	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	10	90.9%	2	5.0%	2	5.0%	36	90.0%
Eritrean	36	92.3%	0	0.0%	3	7.7%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Ethiopian	11	37.9%	5	17.2%	13	44.8%	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Filipino	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%
Ghanaian	11	37.9%	5	17.2%	13	44.8%	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Indian	3	60.0%	0	0.0%	2	40.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
Iranian	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	40.0%	3	60.0%	0	0.0%
Iraqi	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Lithuanian	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Nigerian	12	70.6%	3	17.6%	2	11.8%	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	50.0%
Pakistani	3	60.0%	1	20.0%	1	20.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
Polish	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Romania	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Slovak	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Somali	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
Sudan	39	90.7%	0	0.0%	4	9.3%	118	95.2%	0	0.0%	6	4.8%
Viet Nam	20	19.4%	21	20.4%	62	60.2%	82	33.6%	52	21.3%	110	45.1%

The average proportion of all asylum applications with final outcomes in the UK that resulted in grants of asylum in 2018 and 2019 was 45.9%, with 6.0% of applications granted other forms of leave (see Figure 8). Excluding withdrawals (as withdrawals are not included in the data presented on conclusive victims from the top source countries), this rate increases to 55.0% (53.4% in 2018 and 58.1% in 2019), with 7.2% of applications resulting in other leave. These rates are mirrored in asylum decision making for nationals from the top twenty non-UK source countries as a sub-set of the asylum-seeking population. In 2018 and 2019 collectively, 55.8% of final decisions for all asylum applicants from the top twenty non-UK source countries resulted in grants of asylum, and 4.9% in other leave (53.9% and 5.7% respectively in 2018, and 59.7% and 3.1% in 2019).

Risks of re-trafficking are relevant factors for consideration in asylum applications. However, the data on asylum decision making for conclusive victims from the top twenty non-UK source countries shows a lower success rate than decisions on all asylum applications, or all applications for these countries. In other words, conclusive victims of modern slavery from the top source countries in the UK are less likely to be granted asylum than other people seeking asylum in the UK. They are also less likely to be granted asylum than others claiming asylum from the same origin countries. Rates of grant of other forms of leave, however, are slightly higher for conclusive victims than the asylum population.

Overall, 39.7% of asylum applications by conclusive victims concluded in 2018 and 2019 resulted in a grant of asylum (39.3% in 2018 and 40.0% in 2019), and 9.5% resulted in other forms of leave (10.8% in 2018 and 8.9% in 2019). This compared to all asylum applications from the same countries, which demonstrated a total asylum grant rate of 55.8% and other grant rate of 4.9%. Further interrogation is required to understand asylum decision making processes. However, the reduced likelihood of securing asylum or other leave for conclusive victims of modern slavery is cause for some concern about whether the processes adequately protect survivors of modern slavery. This suggests that vulnerabilities associated with modern slavery experiences, and risks of re-trafficking may not be adequately considered or given sufficient weight in asylum decisions.

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[23] Grants of 'other leave' include humanitarian protection and discretionary leave. Countries currently designated as safe countries of origin and therefore ineligible for asylum include EU countries (Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia). Countries designated as safe for both men and women include Albania and India, and Ghana and Nigeria specifically for men. Designation of Bangladesh as safe was successfully challenged through judicial review in 2005. Where an asylum claimant comes from a designated safe country, the UKVI caseworker is obliged to certify the case as 'clearly unfounded' unless satisfied that the individual case is not clearly unfounded. See UKVI, 'Asylum Policy Instruction EU/EEA Asylum Claims' (version 3.0, 2015) available here; AIDA and ECRE, 'Safe Country of Origin: UK' (2021) available here.

Figure 8. Comparison of asylum outcomes in the UK (2018-2019)[24]
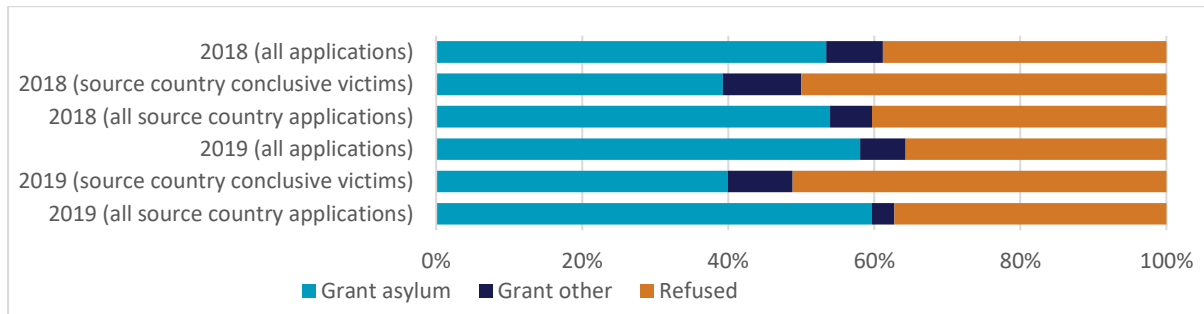
Asylum data for the top source countries considered in aggregate does not paint the full picture of divergences in decision making between the different countries considered in this study. To further analyse these trends, Figure 9 shows the split of final asylum decisions for conclusive victims (CG) and all asylum applicants in the UK (all) by nationality. Traditionally, European Union countries have not been included in asylum grants as individuals from these countries are considered 'safe'. Therefore asylum claims would not be successful (as seen in Table 6, showing no asylum claims made for individuals from these countries). A small number of asylum applications from country nationals from these States (not conclusive victims) were submitted in 2018 and 2019, all of which were refused.

Asylum grants for confirmed victims from particular source countries are notably low. Albania and China, for instance, show asylum grants at a significantly lower rate than average for all asylum applications or conclusive victims generally. On the other hand, most applications from conclusively identified victims from Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea are granted. Putting this in the context of decision-making processes for asylum more broadly, decision makers may be paying closer attention to the generic 'safety' measurement of the country of origin and other individual circumstances rather than the specific risk factors for the individual concerned of being returned to their home country. In view of the significant variation within conclusive grounds decision-making and asylum application outcomes, further research that tests the threshold for positive decisions applied to individuals of different nationalities would seem prescient.

Figure 9. Asylum decisions for conclusive victims compared to all asylum applications from top source countries (2018-2019)

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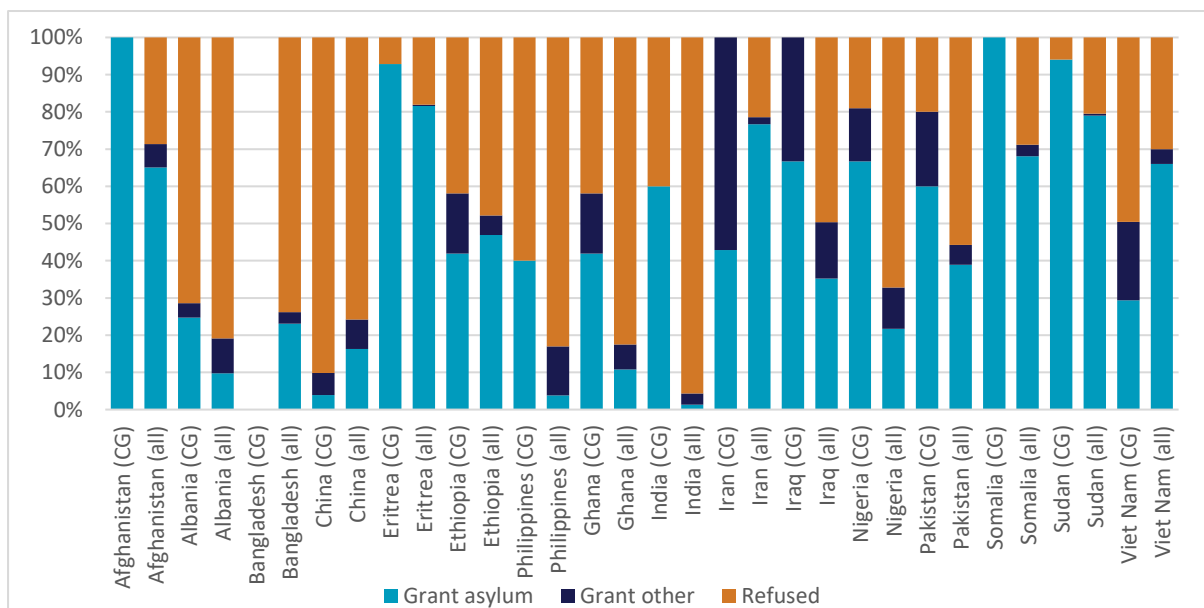
[24] Total UK asylum applications for 2018 and 2019 split by grant of asylum, grant of other leave, and refusals. Withdrawn cases excluded to enable comparison with data on conclusive victims. Available here.

4. Source country contexts

Common themes emerge in the consideration of the socio-political and economic factors in the top twenty non-UK source countries across multiple national contexts. These include pervasive corruption and high levels of poverty or inequality. Other relevant factors include lack of civil liberties such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press, widespread discrimination against women and girls, discrimination against ethnic groups, political instability, and conflict.

Alleged **corruption** is a key underlying theme across countries, reflected in the Corruption Perception Index 2020. Half of the top source countries are ranked in the bottom 25% of countries—where corruption is perceived as most widespread. Such corruption is reported to make States 'fragile' and incapable of delivering crucial public goods such as safety, security and other basic services. In such fragile states, criminal groups can undertake illegal activities, such as human trafficking, and infiltrate the legitimate economy through corruption of its agents.

Several years of **conflict and instability** is a common feature in other group of countries, including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan (40% of the total). This has generally resulted in entrenched political instability, internal displacement, forced migration and generalised problems of governance that hinder the presence of the State in some regions. In cases such as Ethiopia, Iraq and Nigeria, internal conflicts and tensions have deepened tensions between different ethnic groups. These tensions often lead to higher levels of discrimination for reasons of ethnicity and to a greater risk of exposure to trafficking and exploitation of these groups. The presence of conflict also impacts on the proliferation of **child recruitment** or abduction practices, whether by governmental or non-governmental forces, such as in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Eritrea.

States are evenly distributed between development groupings, although there is a slightly higher proportion of countries in the **low and medium human development** groups than in high and very high groupings (see Table 7). All States classified in the 'very high' group were European Union countries, while the majority of African States considered in were ranked in the low development group.

In terms of **migration profiles**, three groups of countries are noted in this study:

1. **Primarily countries of origin:** Afghanistan, Ghana, Philippines, Slovakia, Somalia, Lithuania, Eritrea and Viet Nam.
2. **Primarily countries of origin and transit:** Iraq, Albania, and Romania.
3. **Countries of origin, transit and destination:** China, India, Pakistan, Poland, Sudan, and Romania.

Most countries are countries of origin, and to a lesser extent transit and destination, often motivated by conflict within the region, political insecurity, terrorist attacks and environmental factors.

A lack of **civil liberties** such as freedom of expression and of the press is also a characteristic of many of the countries of origin, including China, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Viet Nam. In some cases it was also reported harassment and prosecution of human rights defenders, such as in China.

Table 7. Human Development Index[25]

	Rank	Score	Grouping
Lithuania	34	0.882	Very high
Poland	35	0.88	Very high
Slovakia	39	0.86	Very high
Romania	49	0.828	Very high
Albania	69	0.795	High
Iran	70	0.783	High
China	85	0.761	High
Philippines	107	0.718	High
Viet Nam	117	0.704	High
Iraq	123	0.674	Medium
India	131	0.645	Medium
Bangladesh	133	0.632	Medium
Ghana	138	0.611	Medium
Pakistan	154	0.557	Medium
Nigeria	161	0.539	Low
Afghanistan	169	0.511	Low
Sudan	170	0.51	Low
Ethiopia	173	0.485	Low
Eritrea	180	0.459	Low

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25 United Nations Development Programme, 'Human Development Index' (2020) available here. 189 countries are considered in the index rankings. Note: Somalia is not included in current HDI data.

Widespread discrimination against women and girls is frequently mentioned as an entrenched element in the socio-political landscape of countries, as well as discrimination of minority groups based on ethnicity, religious affiliation or social status. High levels of violence against women and girls are usually associated with tantamount levels of impunity and low levels of reporting. Interestingly, half of the 20 countries are in the top 25% of countries with the highest degree of gender inequality according to the UN Gender Inequality Index, ranging from a position of 28 (Poland) to 157 (Afghanistan). In all countries, the people most at risk of trafficking and exploitation were those in which different vulnerability factors intersected, the most common being age, gender, or membership of an ethnic, religious or other minority group. For instance, while being a woman in Albania was considered a risk factor for trafficking, this risk was increased if the person was of Roma origin or of a low socio-economic status.

Social support systems have contributed to reducing poverty, as in Bangladesh through social welfare programmes, and in Lithuania through high out-of-pocket payments targeted to vulnerable population. In general, social support systems are made up of a contributory part, which covers work-related illnesses, disability, maternity leave, old-age pensions or allowances, and unemployment insurance, and a non-contributory part, although the latter often lacks funding and does not reach the most deprived parts of the population. Some countries complement these formal support systems with community-based safety nets, such as the Iraqi *waqf* (endowments) and clan funds in Somalia. Key shortcomings of social support systems identified across countries fall into the following groups:

Figure 10. Gender inequality rankings

Poland (28)
Lithuania (34)
China (39)
Albania (42)
Slovakia (45)
Romania (61)
Viet Nam (65)
Philippines (104)
Iran (113)
India (123)
Ethiopia (125)
Bangladesh (133)
Ghana (135)
Pakistan (135)
Iraq (146)
Afghanistan (157)

1. A generalised lack of funding;
2. Insufficiently comprehensive support, or inaccessible to a high proportion of the population;
3. Lack of coordination between different schemes and competent bodies;
4. Corruption; and
5. Urban-rural gap.

Inadequate funding is mentioned as a major contributing factor to the ineffectiveness of social support systems in most countries. In some cases, the average expenditure on healthcare is lower than that of other countries in the region, such as in Lithuania, Philippines, and Viet Nam. In at least half of the twenty countries, the **lack of comprehensiveness of the social support systems** was reported as a major challenge, and a key contributor to vulnerability. Privatisation of the healthcare system (Sudan and Somalia); insufficiency of the non-contributory pension scheme (Ghana and Albania); problems in governance (Eritrea and Somalia); and restrictive access conditions (Slovakia and Poland), were alleged reasons for this lack of comprehensiveness. On the other hand, this inaccessibility favoured the use of alternative coping mechanisms such as community-based support, as highlighted in Iraq, or remittances from expatriates who live and work abroad, such as in Sudan.

Lack of coordination between different schemes and competent bodies was explicitly noted in relation to Iran and Iraq. In Somalia, this is due to the fragmented nature of support, where different national and international actors are involved and where the State has no presence in many parts of the country. While related to other shortcomings such as lack of funding, **corruption** is explicitly mentioned as a major problem in India, despite existing adequate coverage based on needs, including in the public distribution system. A gap in protection was identified as particularly relevant in relation to **rural workers**, who often were not covered by health insurance or were covered to a lesser extent than those in urban settings. This was highlighted in relation to China and Romania, and in the latter case pointing out that the urban-rural gap disproportionately affected Roma communities.
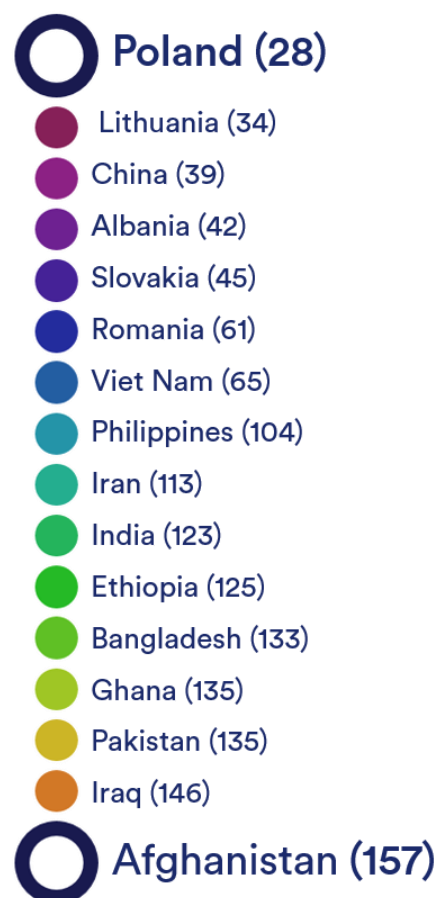
5. Drivers of modern slavery

The top twenty non-UK source countries for modern slavery referrals in the UK are diverse in many respects: geographically, politically, culturally, and economically. However, despite local and national nuances, many of the key factors driving modern slavery are shared across the countries under consideration.

Naturally, all the countries under consideration are significant source countries for modern slavery internationally. Several countries are also countries of transit—notably Albania, China, Ethiopia, Ghana (particularly from other West African States to Europe), India (particularly from Nepal and Bangladesh), Iran, Nigeria (particularly from neighbouring West African countries to Europe and the Middle East), Poland, Slovakia, Somalia, and Sudan. Several of the States are also destination countries, as well as evidencing significant levels of internal trafficking.

Figure 11 shows the estimated prevalence of modern slavery in each of the top source countries per 1000 persons in the population, demonstrating the extent of internal exploitation (see further Table 8). This shows the variety of source country profiles across the 20 countries, with some showing extremely high prevalence of modern slavery, and others relatively low. As Walk Free estimates are include consideration of both vulnerability and government response measures, the varying profiles across the different top non-UK source countries demonstrate the diversity of drivers of modern slavery and transnational trafficking from these countries to the UK.

Figure 11. Walk Free modern slavery prevalence estimates (per 1000 persons in the population)

	Prevalence /1000			
	2013	2014	2016	2018
Afghanistan	2.89	4.35	11.3	22.2
Albania	3.6	3.6	2.9	6.87
Bangladesh	2.22	4.35	9.51	3.7
China	2.18	2.39	2.47	2.8
Eritrea	7.25	4.3	3.7	93
Ethiopia	7.1	4.1	4.14	6.1
Ghana	7.14	7.46	3.77	4.8
India	11.3	11.4	14.03	6.1
Iran	0.85	4.3	6.2	16.2
Iraq	0.87	10.3	11.3	4.8
Lithuania	0.97	3.6	4.04	5.8
Nigeria	4.15	4.8	4.8	7.7
Pakistan	11.9	11.3	11.3	16.8
Philippines	1.55	2.6	3.9	7.7
Poland	3.6	1.9	4.8	3.4
Romania	1.13	1.13	4.04	4.32
Slovakia	3.6	3.6	2.28	2.9
Somalia	7.18	4.35	11.3	15.5
Sudan	7.11	11.3	11.3	12
Viet Nam	2.8	3.5	1.5	4.5
Lowest Highest				

Across the top twenty non-UK source countries considered in this study, key risk and vulnerability factors driving and facilitating modern slavery and transnational trafficking reflect the variables identified in global literature. Many of the key risk factors and drivers of modern slavery in these countries have been recorded in a range of different States around the world, factors that are also shared in many States not featured in the top twenty countries of origin of modern slavery survivors in the UK. Nonetheless, recognising the role of these factors in driving modern slavery can support prevention and protection efforts in the UK and in these source countries. Further, identifying the factors most reported in relation to particular source countries helps to identify specific programming priorities for different States.

Key factors considered in this study are organised into four levels (although many factors operate at multiple levels): (1) structural and environmental factors; (2) social and community factors; (3) family factors; and (4) individual factors.

5.1. Structural and environmental factors

Many of the key factors driving modern slavery and transnational trafficking emphasised in the evidence considered in this study are structural and environmental factors relevant to the specific country context.

Poverty

Poverty was the most commonly recognised driver of modern slavery and transnational trafficking across the top twenty non-UK source countries, recognised as a key factor in all cases. In several cases—namely Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sudan—income inequality was reported as exacerbating the strain of poverty on disadvantaged populations and increasing the effect of economic deprivation as a driver of trafficking. This factor is closely related to the **lack of employment opportunities** and alternatives also reported to be a key driver across the source countries considered, explicitly identified in twelve of the twenty cases. The perceived or actual opportunities for employment in intended destination countries was a related 'pull' factor in these cases, combined with the belief that overseas jobs would be more lucrative. **Informal economies** are also noted to produce vulnerabilities where employment does exist, with workers driven to accept exploitative working conditions as a result of lack of alternatives.[26]

Conflict & instability

Conflict and instability were also identified as significant forced driving exploitation and trafficking in a sub-set of the twenty source countries, particularly noted in relation to Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, and Sudan. Political instability was also noted in relation to India. Several impacts of conflict were reported as relevant to modern slavery dynamics, including the direct employment of modern slavery by armed groups (particularly noted in Iraq, Nigeria, and Somalia), as well as several factors fuelling vulnerability to modern slavery. Forced displacement as a vulnerability factor was specifically noted in relation to Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan, and disruption of income and social networks was noted in Afghanistan. Individuals widowed, orphaned, and disabled as a result of conflict, as well as former militia and armed group members, were also reported to be particularly vulnerable in Afghanistan. Security contexts were also highlighted as hindering efforts to understand the dynamics of modern slavery in source countries, and to build a robust evidence base on modern slavery trends.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation was identified as a force operating in many source countries to drive vulnerability, particularly of individuals from rural areas. Uneven economic growth between rural and urban areas in the source countries was highlighted as resulting in internal migration patterns that in turn made people vulnerable to transnational trafficking. This, in part, was attributed to the separation from family and community support networks that help protect individuals from exploitation, and provide avenues for leaving exploitative situations and seeking support. This risk factor was noted specifically in evidence considered in relation to Albania, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Romania, and Viet Nam. This factor was not limited to economic factors, including recognition that access to education in rural areas could be more limited than in urban centres.

Access to education

Lack of **access to education** more broadly was likewise understood as a key vulnerability factor in many of the top twenty non-UK source countries, noted specifically in relation to Albania, India, Iran, Lithuania, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Somalia, and Viet Nam. Illiteracy was emphasised in several contexts as creating particular vulnerabilities, as was lack of skills in destination country languages, and lack of awareness of legal rights. Lack of access to education for particular marginalised groups was highlighted as creating intersectional vulnerability in a number of cases, including for females in Albania, Roma children in Lithuania, and displaced persons in Somalia.

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[26] Particularly noted in Albania, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Poland, and Romania.

Gender inequality

Gender inequality and discrimination more broadly was also noted as a key intersectional driver of modern slavery across many of the top twenty non-UK source countries. This was specifically highlighted as a factor shaping vulnerability in Albania, Bangladesh, China, Eritrea, India, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, the Philippines, Romania, Slovakia, Somalia, and Viet Nam. Patriarchal gender norms and unequal power relations were noted to influence the particular forms of exploitation experienced by individuals of different genders, as well as driving transnational trafficking and precarious migration for individuals seeking to escape contexts of severe gender-based violence. Violence was recorded as particularly severe in Eritrea, rising to the level of sexual slavery and torture. Social stigma associated with gendered norms were also highlighted as preventing women and girls from reporting their exploitation, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation. Legal and social norms preventing divorce were also highlighted as preventing women and girls from escaping forced marriages.

Safe migration options

Institutional and legal structures were also identified as playing a significant role in driving modern slavery and transnational trafficking from the top twenty non-UK source countries. **Limited options for safe and regular migration** were emphasised as facilitating trafficking in Albania, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Lithuania, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, and Viet Nam. In several cases, this was exacerbated by a lack of understanding or awareness of regular channels, and institutional barriers and inefficiencies in these systems that made them unviable options for particularly vulnerable individuals. In Somalia, particular emphasis was placed on the lack of safe routes for displaced persons, while in Eritrea the legal system for migration was noted to all but preclude regular emigration for vulnerable persons.

Corruption

Effectiveness of institutions in preventing and combatting modern slavery, as well as protecting survivors (whether internal to the country or repatriated from other States), is also heavily influenced by levels of **corruption.** Acquiescence, complicity, and direct involvement of local and national officials in modern slavery and trafficking crimes were specifically reported in twelve of the top source countries. Officials accepting bribes from traffickers was a commonly noted phenomenon in the top source countries, as were more direct forms of engagement. In Eritrea, officials were noted to be complicit in both trafficking and abduction, combined with widespread state imposition of indefinite forced conscription and national service that have been labelled a form of modern slavery. In Pakistan, local government officials were noted to be responsible for trafficking, while local officials and border agents in Iraq were also noted to demonstrate complicity and direct involvement. Corruption was described as 'rampant' in Somalia, while Iranian officials were specifically noted to acquiesce to, and perpetrate, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls. Corruption was also specifically recorded in relation to India, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Slovakia, Sudan, and Viet Nam.

Impunity

Distinct from corruption, a lack of concerted and effective government responses to modern slavery and transnational trafficking were highlighted as creating widespread **impunity** for the crimes, failing to adequately deter or combat offending. In Poland, impunity was seen as so extensive that trafficking was seen as a low-risk activity for perpetrators. In Somalia and Sudan, the fragility of institutions was framed as inhibiting official responses. Insufficient government efforts were also noted in Iraq, Lithuania, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. In Walk Free's Government Response assessment (see Table 8), the countries noted as demonstrating particularly weak government responses include Pakistan (ranked 160 of 162 countries in its responses), Eritrea (ranked 157), Iran (155), Sudan (151), and Somalia (149).This places each of these States in the top twenty least effective government responses according to Walk Free's metrics.

Organised crime

Entrenched and widespread **organised criminal networks** were noted in several States, exacerbating vulnerability as a result of the structuring of perpetration across a network, increasing likelihood of involvement with corrupt officials, and increasing impunity. The role of organised crime in facilitating modern slavery and transnational trafficking was specifically noted in evidence related to Albania, China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lithuania, Nigeria, Poland, Slovakia, and Sudan. In the case of Nigeria, trafficking syndicates were recognised by Europol as one of the greatest threats to law enforcement in Europe.

Environmental factors

Finally, **environmental factors** were also noted to be significant drivers of modern slavery and transnational trafficking in several of the top source countries. Risks identified included drought in Ethiopia, floods in India, environmental degradation in Iran, weather-related disasters in the Philippines, and environmental crises in Somalia.

5.2. Social and community factors

Community networks were identified to act as both sources of resilience and support for vulnerable individuals and survivors of modern slavery, as well as potential facilitators of exploitation and trafficking.

Community trafficking

In several of the top source countries, trusted community members were recorded as **facilitating trafficking** by taking advantage of the relationship of trust fostered within the community. In Ethiopia, *manamasas* were noted to play a key role in facilitating internal and transnational trafficking by exaggerating the advantages of working abroad. In Slovakia, prominent community members were also regarded as playing a key role in facilitating trafficking, particularly in Roma communities. Traffickers were also noted to work with widespread local networks in the Philippines, facilitating connections into multiple communities and extending the reach of traffickers through local connections. Community norms and social pressures were also regarded as facilitating trafficking. For instance, in Viet Nam communities were noted to follow existing precarious migration patterns as a result of these having been normalised and social pressure from community to follow these pathways, without understanding or awareness of the risks involved.

Religion & tradition

Religious and traditional practices were reported to facilitate or enable modern slavery and trafficking in several of the top source countries. These practices included *trokosi* in Ghana, the *Devadasi* system in India, *sigheh* temporary marriages in Iran, *fasliya* and temporary marriages in Iraq, *juju* oaths and rituals in Nigeria, and Muslim Law permitting early marriage in the Philippines. **Community stigmatisation** of sex work in Ghana was also noted as inhibiting reporting, identification, and support for survivors of modern slavery and transnational trafficking.

Community connections

Community connection and cohesion were also noted as **prevention and protection factors** in several of the top source countries. Conversely, the lack of community support networks was noted to make individuals more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. This was noted as a factor exacerbating vulnerabilities of internal migrants, including to transnational trafficking, in Afghanistan, Albania, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Somalia. Traffickers of Polish nationals were also noted to limit contact with the outside world to prevent maintenance and establishment of community bonds that might facilitate escape. In Afghanistan and Nigeria, community support systems were noted to have been disrupted by conflict, creating vulnerabilities at the intersection of these two factors. In Somalia, displacement from social clan structures that provide protection and support was noted as particularly relevant.

5.3. Family factors

Family units are often particularly important in the experiences and vulnerabilities of modern slavery and trafficking. Strong family units can help foster resilience to exploitation and trafficking. On the other hand, dysfunctional and disrupted family units can create vulnerabilities and acts as facilitators or perpetrators of modern slavery.

Family trafficking

Direct involvement of family members as traffickers was specifically noted in Afghanistan, Albania, India, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. In several cases, this intersected with issues of poverty and socioeconomic status, as families were driven to exploit, 'rent', or sell children as a result of material deprivation. Such measures were also taken to resolve disputes between families (Iraq), to discharge debts (Afghanistan and Iraq), and as a result of parental substance abuse and drug addiction (Afghanistan in opium-farming families). 'Renting' of children to criminal groups for forced begging was specifically noted in Iran and Nigeria, while parents in India were also noted to rent and sell children, particularly in families from lower castes. The Philippines was noted to be one of the largest known sources of online sexual exploitation of children, typically perpetrated by parents or close relatives. **Families arranging forced marriages** was also noted to be a common, specifically identified in evidence related to Albania, the Philippines, Romania, and Slovakia (particularly in Roma communities), although the practice is much more widespread across the twenty countries.

Family vulnerabilities

Less direct involvement of family members that nonetheless facilitated or enabled modern slavery was also recorded in several of the top source countries. **Family factors creating vulnerability** to exploitation and trafficking included unsupervised and abandoned children and absent caregivers in China and the Philippines. Parents travelling to other areas, particularly urban centres, to access employment was noted as a key factor in this dynamic, connected to the structural force of urbanisation considered above. Dysfunctional family units (India), cultural norms related to responsibility (Ethiopia), parental divorce (Albania), large family units (Afghanistan), and domestic violence (Albania) were also noted as related to vulnerability. In Ghana and Nigeria, traditional fostering practices whereby children were sent to live with relatives in exchange for them paying for the child's education were also noted to create vulnerability, as children in these circumstances faced risks of domestic and sexual exploitation.

5.4. Individual factors

At the individual level, several factors are recorded as exacerbating risk in the top source countries, including identity factors and membership of particularly vulnerable groups discussed further below. Additional factors operating at the individual level to increase vulnerability included:

- **Mental health issues,** particularly noted in evidence related to Albania, Lithuania, the Philippines, and Poland.
- Other **health issues,** including exposure to diseases, noted in evidence related to girls in sexual exploitation in Albania, and street children in Iran.
- **Substance abuse,** including drugs and alcohol, noted in evidence related to Iran and Poland.
- **Disability,** noted in evidence on Lithuania (particularly related to children), Slovakia (particularly in connection to forced begging), and Romania (where promises of surgical intervention and other medical support abroad were used to manipulate disabled individuals into transnational trafficking).
- **Homelessness,** noted in the Philippines and Romania.
- **Limited language skills** were noted to increase vulnerability in Poland.
- A **history of abuse** was also noted as increasing risk in Poland.

5.5. Particularly vulnerable groups

Vulnerability and the dynamics of exploitation and trafficking were noted to diverge in relation to particular societal groups in each of the top twenty non-UK source countries, although specific groups considered particularly vulnerable differed between countries.

In evidence considered in relation to Romania, it was emphasised that individual vulnerability factors and drivers themselves do not differ substantially between different populations. Rather, vulnerability factors are exacerbated by discrimination, and denial of access to relevant services and entitlements that would alleviate risks. Thus, group and identity-based vulnerabilities sit at the intersection of individual and structural risk, and may also influence family and community dynamics. It should also be noted that many particularly vulnerable individuals are at the intersection of multiple of these groups, demanding an intersectional approach to understanding risks and responding to threats.

Children

In each of the top source countries, **children** are considered particularly at risk of exploitation. Forms of exploitation highlighted, the sectors into which children were likely to be exploited, and entry points into transnational trafficking diverged between countries. Particular groups of children considered particularly vulnerable in the top source countries included: street children (Albania, Iran, the Philippines); refugee and unaccompanied children (Eritrea, Iran, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia); orphans (Afghanistan, Iran); children in state custody and institutional care (Lithuania, Nigeria, Slovakia); Roma children (Poland, Romania); and children from scheduled castes and tribes (India).

Women & girls

Women and girls were also considered particularly vulnerable in each of the top source countries considered in this study. Gender-based discrimination (discussed in section 0 above) was noted to both exacerbate vulnerability, as well as shaping the forms of exploitation experienced by females subjected to modern slavery. Sexual exploitation and domestic work were noted to be particularly common forms of exploitation of females, specifically identified in Albania, Bangladesh, China, Eritrea, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Lithuania, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sudan, and Viet Nam. Forced marriage (including child marriage) was also recorded as particularly prevalent amongst female victims and survivors, specifically noted in relation to China, India, Iran, Iraq, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Somalia. In Somalia and Iraq, forced marriages and sexual slavery of females were reported to be utilised as incentives and rewards for soldiers. Widows were also noted to be particularly vulnerable in Afghanistan and Iraq, while rural girls were recorded as particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation in China, and trans women reported as particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation in Pakistan.

Men & boys

While females are noted to be particularly vulnerable as a result of gender imbalances, inequality, and discrimination across the top twenty non-UK source countries, gender norms are also noted to give rise to particular vulnerabilities for **men and boys.** Overall, men and boys are regarded as particularly vulnerable to forced labour and forced criminality, including in relation to Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, Lithuania, Nigeria, the Philippines, Slovakia, Somalia, and Viet Nam. In Afghanistan, restrictions on female mobility in particular are noted to make males more vulnerable. In Bangladesh, young men recruited for overseas work are flagged as particularly vulnerable.

Ethnic minority groups

Ethnic minority groups are regarded as particularly vulnerable in Albania, Iran, Iraq, Lithuania, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Somalia, and Viet Nam. Particular at-risk communities varied between countries, and included:

- **Roma communities** in relation to Albania, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Community norms, as well as widespread discrimination and institutional exclusion, were reported as exacerbating vulnerabilities in these cases.
- **Christians** (Iraq and Pakistan).
- Individuals from **scheduled castes and tribes** (India and Pakistan).
- **Yazidis** (Iraq).
- **Sikhs** (Pakistan).
- **Egyptian communities** (Albania).
- **Uyghur Muslims, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and other Muslims** (China).
- **Rohingya refugees** (Bangladesh).
- **Minority clans** in Somalia, including Somali ethnic Bantus.

Foreign national groups

Particular **foreign national groups** are also considered to be particularly vulnerable in several of the top source countries, including Afghan nationals in Iran, Ukrainian and Belarusian nationals in Poland, and North Korean nationals in China, Ethiopia, and Poland.

Migrant groups

Refugees, people seeking asylum, and internally displaced persons were also considered particularly vulnerable to modern slavery and transnational trafficking in many of the top source countries. Specific risks were explicitly noted in evidence related to Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Lithuania, Nigeria, Poland, Slovakia, Somalia, and Sudan. **Returned** migrants were also highlighted as particularly vulnerable in Afghanistan. Evidence on the vulnerabilities of conclusive modern slavery victims repatriated to their countries of nationality is scarce. Further interrogation is therefore needed to understand the specific experiences and vulnerabilities of these groups. Relatedly, **undocumented migrants,** as well as migrants more generally, were noted to be particularly vulnerable in many of the top source countries.

6. Key performance indicators

The nature of modern slavery, and modern slavery offending, makes measuring the phenomenon an inherently difficult task. However, efforts to measure modern slavery provide some insights into the relative performance of different States against key performance metrics.

6.1. The Walk Free Global Slavery Index

Walk Free's Global Slavery Index (GSI) aims to provide the 'best available data and information about the scale and regional distribution of modern slavery'.[27] This includes **national prevalence estimates** of the number of people experiencing modern slavery in each country, which draw on a **vulnerability model** that uses 'statistical testing and processes to identify the factors that explain or predict the prevalence of modern slavery', and **government response** measures across five milestones.

Changes in methodology mean that data across reporting years is not directly comparable. However, consideration of these measures provides useful insights on modern slavery and antislavery governance in the top source countries relative to one another. Table 8 shows the relative ranking of each of the top source countries in the three Walk Free measures. Countries closer to first place ranking demonstrate: higher prevalence; greater vulnerability; and better government responses.

Table 8. Walk Free rankings for top twenty source countries

	Prevalence				Vulnerability				Government response		
	2013	2014	2016	2018	2013	2014	2016	2018	2014	2016	2018
Total # of States	162	167	167	167	162	167	167	167	167	161	162
Afghanistan	58	62	6	5	4	10	4	3	119	-	-
Albania	51	83	37	43	112	100	97	90	63	28	23
Bangladesh	71	59	21	85	52	61	53	75	60	43	69
China	84	109	40	111	48	53	46	72	91	107	130
Eritrea	15	68	17	2	3	2	23	20	164	159	157
Ethiopia	12	71	90	51	37	43	18	27	101	91	97
Ghana	18	21	113	66	80	74	66	64	83	125	128
India	4	5	4	50	71	63	19	56	59	73	66
Iran	103	60	57	10	11	17	22	30	166	160	155
Iraq	104	13	13	65	17	16	9	9	158	-	-
Lithuania	128	82	109	59	132	129	139	132	44	37	25
Nigeria	48	52	23	32	27	36	11	11	42	51	66
Pakistan	3	6	6	8	29	21	10	12	125	78	160
Philippines	98	103	112	29	109	97	32	42	29	29	36
Poland	61	130	73	100	138	143	140	135	22	30	40
Romania	125	139	32	81	122	123	130	121	37	72	72
Slovakia	61	77	133	155	139	142	145	130	18	50	42
Somalia	27	67	8	11	1	1	3	6	155	-	149
Sudan	22	8	6	14	6	3	5	7	150	145	151
Viet Nam	64	89	47	77	76	75	127	108	73	60	57

Conflict and instability are considered in Walk Free's model to be significantly associated with modern slavery. Thus, amongst the top twenty non-UK source countries, those countries experiencing conflict and instability tend to demonstrate higher prevalence and vulnerability in Walk Free's reporting. These contexts also tend to demonstrate a more limited government response.

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[27] Walk Free Foundation, 'Global Findings' (2018), available here.

6.2. US State Department TIP Reports

The Trafficking in Persons report ranks countries into one of four tier ratings, as mandated by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 (TVPA). A country's ranking is based on an assessment of the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons, rather than on the extent of trafficking within the country, and considers government action against the TVPA's minimum standards.[28]

A Tier 1 ranking indicates that the government fully meets the TVPA's minimum standards and is continuing to make progress on anti-trafficking efforts on the previous year. A Tier 2 ranking indicates that the government is making significant efforts towards compliance with the minimum standards, while Tier 3 indicates that the country is not making such efforts. Countries listed in the Tier 2 Watchlist (2W) are assessed to be making significant efforts towards compliance, but with high or significantly increasing numbers of victims, failure to provide necessary evidence for TIP reporting, or where efforts relate to the coming year (rather than the reporting period).

Table 9. TIP rankings for top twenty source countries (2001-2020)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Afghanistan	-	3	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2W	2	2	2W	2	2	2W	3
Albania	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bangladesh	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2
China	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	3	2W	2W	2W	3	3	3	3
Eritrea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ethiopia	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ghana	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2	2	2
India	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Iran	-	3	-	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Iraq	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2W	2W	2W	2W	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2
Lithuania	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Nigeria	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2	2W
Pakistan	3	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2W	2W	2	2	2W
Philippines	2	2	2	2W	2W	2	2	2	2W	2W	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Poland	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Romania	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W
Slovakia	-	-	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Somalia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sudan	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2W	2W	3	3	2W	2W	2W
Viet Nam	2	2	2	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2W	2W

TIP rankings for the top twenty non-UK source countries for modern slavery in the UK vary substantially. Some countries considered in this study demonstrate consistently positive TIP performance, particularly Poland and Lithuania. On the other hand, several top source countries demonstrate consistently poor TIP performance. Like in the case of Walk Free measures, poor performance is often associated with conflict and instability, although this does not always produce a Tier 3 rating. Eritrea, Iran, and Sudan show notably low ratings, although Sudan has recently seen moderate improvement.

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[28] Minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking are found in section 108, Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 (United States), available here. Note that Somalia has been considered a special case for each year of TIP reporting, meaning that it has not been rated.

7. Legislation and policy

	Yes	No
Prohibits human trafficking	Afghanistan(*); Albania; Bangladesh; China(**); Eritrea(**); Ethiopia; Ghana; India; Iran(**); Iraq; Lithuania; Nigeria; Pakistan; Philippines; Poland, Romania; Slovakia; Sudan; Viet Nam[29]	Somalia
Criminalises slavery	Bangladesh; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Ghana; Iran; Lithuania; Nigeria; Philippines; Romania; Somalia	Afghanistan; Albania; China; India; Iraq; Poland; Slovakia; Sudan
Criminalises forced labour	Bangladesh; China; Eritrea; Ghana; India; Iran; Lithuania; Nigeria; Pakistan; Romania; Sudan; Somalia	Afghanistan; Albania; Ethiopia; Iraq; Slovakia;
Criminalises servitude	Ghana; Nigeria	Afghanistan; Albania; Bangladesh; Eritrea; Ethiopia; India; Iran; Iraq; Lithuania; Pakistan; Poland; Philippines; Romania; Slovakia; Somalia
Criminalises institutions and practices similar to slavery	Ghana; India; Nigeria; Philippines; Sudan	Afghanistan; Albania; Bangladesh; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Iran; Iraq; Lithuania; Pakistan; Poland; Romania; Slovakia; Somalia
State compensation/ fund for victims of trafficking or forced labour	Albania; Bangladesh; China; India; Iran; Lithuania; Philippines; Poland; Slovakia	Afghanistan; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Ghana; Iraq; Pakistan; Romania; Sudan; Somalia
Reflection and recovery period	Albania; Lithuania; Nigeria; Poland; Romania; Slovakia	Afghanistan; Bangladesh; China; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Ghana; India; Iran; Iraq; Pakistan; Philippines; Sudan; Somalia
Resident permit to trafficking victims	Albania; Iraq; Lithuania; Iraq; Nigeria; Poland; Romania; Slovakia	Afghanistan; Bangladesh; China; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Ghana; India; Iran; Pakistan; Philippines; Sudan; Somalia

(*) Definition could not be retrieved.

(**) Not in accordance with the Palermo Protocol's definition.

7.1. Antislavery criminal frameworks

In line with international trends, 50% of the top twenty non-UK source countries have criminalised slavery (against a global 51% of UN Member States), 60% have criminalised forced labour (against a global 42%), and 95% have criminalised human trafficking (against a global 96%).[30] The majority of the twenty countries (90%) have failed to criminalise servitude, and 65% have not criminalised any of the four institutions and practices similar to slavery. This places them in the group of 93% of States that have failed to criminalise servitude as a distinct offence, and 88% that have not criminalised each

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[29] Article 150 of the Criminal Code 2015: '1. Any person who uses violence, threatens to use violence, deceives, or employs other tricks to commit any of the following acts shall face a penalty of 05 - 10 years' imprisonment:
a) Transferring or receiving human people for transfer for money, property, or other financial interests; b) Transferring or receiving human people for sexual slavery, coercive labour, taking body parts, or for other inhuman purposes; c) Recruiting, transporting, harbouring other people for the commission of any of the acts specified in Point a or Point b of this Clause'.
[30] Katarina Schwarz and Jean Allain, 'Antislavery in Domestic Legislation: An Empirical Analysis of National Prohibition Globally' (The Rights Lab and Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, February 2020) 11, available here.

of the four institutions and practices similar to slavery, although these practices may form elements of the offence of trafficking.

Most countries have established a human trafficking offence in line with the definition envisaged in Article 3(a) of the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol). This requires a three-pronged offence constituted by act, means, and purpose of exploitation. There are some exceptions, in which the human trafficking definitions do not reflect the international standards, including China, Eritrea, and Iran, and one country (Somalia) which does not have a specific national offence in place.[31] Neither the Afghan Law to Combat Crimes of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants 2017, nor the Afghan Criminal Code which envisage human trafficking offences could be retrieved, with information on Afghanistan's provisions sourced from the US Trafficking in Persons Reports.

Although mirroring the Palermo Protocol's essential minimum standards, domestic human trafficking definitions have relevant variations concerning the 'means' and 'purposes of exploitation' which have an impact on the type of situations covered. Most countries in this study required specific means to be used, either coercive, deceptive or abusive,[32] while in others the 'means element' was not a constituent element of human trafficking.[33] Other relevant differences related to the 'purpose element' drew a distinction between those States that established an open-ended clause of 'other forms of exploitation', thus broadening the scope of the anti-trafficking provisions,[34] and States which restricted the purposes of exploitation to a closed list of abuses, including slavery, servitude, and forced labour.[35] Some legislation further narrowed the scope of exploitative purposes, restricting their offences to certain types of trafficking.[36] For instance, Pakistan criminalised trafficking for compelled labour and commercial sexual exploitation, whereas the Palermo Protocol further includes exploitation forslavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, and organ removal.

Most countries have aligned child trafficking offences with the Palermo Protocol, omitting the requirement for the 'means' element to be present.[37] However, 30% of countries studied required the use of certain means (coercive, deceptive or abusive) as constituent elements of the child trafficking offence, thereby deviating from the standard set in the Palermo Protocol.[38] Countries that included a specific non-punishment clause for victims who have carried out illegal activities due to their exploitation remain the exception rather than the rule,[39] and the role of victims' consent in the crime of trafficking remain unclear within most domestic legislation considered in this study. Only 30% of the countries considered make explicit that the consent expressed by an individual who is a victim of trafficking does not represent an acceptable defence.[40] Human trafficking offences are established in either separate legislation,[41] in Criminal Codes,[42] or in both.[43] Penalties are generally severe,

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[31] However, it is worth noting that Somalia's autonomous region of Puntland criminalises human trafficking mirroring the Palermo Protocol's definition.
[32] Albania; Ethiopia; India; Iran; Iraq; Lithuania; Nigeria; Pakistan; Philippines; Poland; Romania; Slovakia; Sudan; Vietnam.
[33] China; Eritrea.
[34] Albania; Lithuania; Nigeria; Philippines; Sudan; Vietnam.
[35] Ethiopia; Ghana; India; Iraq; Poland; Romania; Slovakia.
[36] China; Eritrea; Iran; Pakistan.
[37] Albania (Article 128/b of the Criminal Code); Bangladesh (Article 3(2) of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012); Ethiopia (Article 3(3) of the Proclamation for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants); Ghana (Article 1(4) of the Human Trafficking Act 2015); Lithuania (Article 157 of the Criminal Code); Nigeria (Section 13(6) of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015); Pakistan (Section 7 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2018); Philippines (Section 3 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2003); Poland (Article 115(2) of the Polish Criminal Code); Romania (Article 211 of the Romania Criminal Code); Slovakia (Article 179(2) of the Criminal Code).
[38] Eritrea; India; Iran; Iraq; Sudan; Vietnam.
[39] Albania; Philippines; Romania have such defences in their laws.
[40] Iraq, Nigeria, Philippines; Romania and Slovakia explicitly exclude victims' consent, and Poland excludes consent to abuses.
[41] Bangladesh; Ghana; Iran; Nigeria; Pakistan; Philippines.
[42] Albania; India; Lithuania; Poland; Slovakia; Vietnam.
[43] Afghanistan; Ethiopia; Sudan.

particularly when aggravating circumstances occur, ranging from 2 years of imprisonment and a fine to life imprisonment (Bangladesh, Iraq and the Philippines), and even death sentence (Afghanistan).

The fact that most States have adopted specific legislation addressing human trafficking, including its criminalisation and measures concerning prosecution, inter-departmental or international cooperation, and victim protection and redress, makes anti-trafficking a considerably harmonised regime. Only two countries (China and Somalia) have not adopted specific anti-trafficking laws. By contrast, slavery and slavery-related practices are tackled in a piecemeal fashion, and often in relation to the 'purpose' element of human trafficking. As stand-alone offences, while slavery is criminalised in 50% of the cases, forced labour constitutes a crime in the majority of countries under review (60%). Any of the four institutions and practices similar to slavery are criminalised in 5 countries (25%), and servitude constitutes an offence in two States (Ghana and Nigeria), representing 10% of the total. In many domestic legislation, overlapping offences were identified, which points to a lack of comprehensive and coherent antislavery regimes. The lack of specific criminalisation of modern slavery-related crimes has implications from several points of view: it hinders effective investigation and prosecution of such abuses, results in inadequate identification of victims, and interferes with effective prevention and control measures. Instead of being labelled as victims of severe abuses such as slavery, individuals subjected to modern slavery are labelled otherwise, and consequently may not have access to adequate protection or redress.

Other shortcomings affecting criminal regimes addressing modern slavery in the top twenty non-UK source countries include overly lenient penalties for forced labour offences, and a lack of consistency between the penalties associated with trafficking and related exploitation offences such as slavery or forced labour. For instance, while the act of recruiting, harbouring, transporting, providing or obtaining another person for compelled labour through the use of force, fraud or coercion constitutes an offence of human trafficking punishable with up to 7 years' imprisonment in Pakistan, forced or compulsory labour itself results in a maximum of one year of imprisonment and a fine.[44]

Specific protection of vulnerable groups in relation to particularly exploitative practices were identified in several States considered in this study, including:

- Forced labour of children (Albania, Nigeria, Sudan);
- Forced begging of children (China, Iran, Philippines, Romania);
- Forced prostitution (China, Iran, Poland and Romania);
- Forced prostitution of minors (Lithuania, Philippines); and
- Employment of foreigners without valid documents under particularly exploitative working conditions (Poland and Slovakia).

Specific methods of trafficking are separately criminalised in some jurisdictions, including:

- The recruitment of Ethiopian women by unlicensed agents to undertake domestic work abroad (Ethiopia);
- Prohibition of juju practices (Nigeria);
- Prohibition of making of false employment promises or advertisements in order to subject victims to human trafficking, forced labour or exploitation in overseas employment (Viet Nam);
- Online recruitment (Sudan); and
- The prohibition 'to establish or carry on a business which has for its purpose the matching of Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals either on a mail-order basis or through personal introduction' (Philippines).

On the other hand, males and sometimes children are excluded or subjected to less protection in human trafficking or slavery related offences in some instances, such as in China.

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[44] Section 374 of the Criminal Code. Similar differentials can be seen in Bangladesh, Eritrea, India, and Iran.

7.2. Challenges in implementation of antislavery regimes

Despite the normative frameworks in place, other evidence brought into question the effectiveness of antislavery regimes in most domestic jurisdictions. The most overarching and common pitfalls can be grouped under the following headings:

1. Lack of understanding of the crime of human trafficking and other exploitation crimes relevant to modern slavery;
2. Excessive focus on criminalisation to the detriment of protective approaches;
3. Complicity of State officials in human trafficking and slavery-related practices; and
4. Lack of inter-departmental and international cooperation.

These pitfalls directly impact the main shortcomings of the antislavery regimes: a strikingly low rate of prosecutions and convictions, thus resulting in a widespread impunity, misidentification of victims, particularly among particularly vulnerable groups such as street children and asylum-seeking population, and prosecution of victims of trafficking for committing offences directly related to their situation of exploitation, for instance in commercial sexual exploitation.

Lack of understanding of the crime of trafficking

Lack of understanding of the crime of human trafficking, sometimes motivated by the lack of adequate training or identification guidelines, leads to misidentification, criminalisation, and punishment of victims. For instance, Iraqi and Sudanese authorities were reported not to adequately screen for victims in brothel raids and continued criminalising and punishing survivors for crimes related to prostitution or immigration violations. The lack of understanding of trafficking also led to inadequate application of offences such as pandering or pimping, and often to the application of lenient penalties to traffickers, such as in Romania and Slovakia.

Immigration enforcement and identification

Amidst reports indicating an increase in the exploitation of foreign workers, authorities often identified low numbers of foreign trafficking victims. Inadequate use of identification procedures and an excessive focus on detecting people in irregular migration situations was reported to lead to Labour inspectors, border guards and other frontline officers not adequately screening for victims among vulnerable populations, such as people seeking asylum, unaccompanied minors, and migrants.

Complicity of the State

In almost all countries considered in this study, there were allegations of the State being involved or complicit in human trafficking or exploitation cases, and of widespread corruption. Despite these allegations, only two countries (Albania and Slovakia) reported investigations of State agents, and no case was reported involving high-ranking officials.

Lack of cooperation

Lack of cooperation between the labour inspectorates and law enforcement authorities, and more generally a lack of interdepartmental cooperation were commonly reported as hindering factors of prosecutions of human trafficking offences. Notwithstanding this, international cooperation initiatives, such as joint investigations teams, have proliferated during the last decade.

7.3. Victim support mechanisms

In most countries considered in this study trafficking victims have access to specialised support and social services, including shelter, health care and economic help. However, victim support and safeguarding mechanisms presented shortcomings in all jurisdictions. Some of these pitfalls were common to all countries (lack of funding, uneven quality of legal and social assistance, lack of shelters for male victims of trafficking, misidentification of victims), while others were specific to particular countries (such as the vulnerabilities arising from a sponsorship system in place to regulate migration). Good practices were also noted, such as the granting of reflection and recovery periods and residence permits to victims of trafficking or of severe forms of exploitation, and the availability of State or Special funds for victims of trafficking, bonded labourers, or victims of forced labour.

Lack of funding and quality of legal and social assistance

Lack of funding or limited resources available for assisting victims of trafficking or exploitation are common issues to all jurisdictions. While specialised services for victims of human trafficking are available in most countries, other States offer non-specialised assistance, with impacts on reintegration.[45] Lack of dedicated shelters for male victims of trafficking was also reported as a significant issue in several States.[46] The absence of free or adequate legal assistance is often highlighted as a major problem for achieving victims' redress. Other factors include inadequate cooperation mechanisms among governmental and non-governmental organisations providing assistance, and an overemphasis in obtaining victims' testimonies and cooperation in criminal proceedings in detriment to their referral to assistance facilities.

Problems in identification

While standard guidelines have been developed in most countries under review, they have remained largely underutilised, and there are still States that have not yet established formal procedures.[47] As promising practices, the implementation of a victim protocol was demanded by the courts in India (*Prajwala v Union of India*). Lack of training of labour inspectors was also identified as a major challenge to identifying victims of trafficking and forced labour. In some cases, the misidentification of victims was reported to be due to the lack of adequate safeguards for victims and witnesses to encourage their assistance and participation in investigations and prosecutions of traffickers.

Vulnerabilities arising from migratory legal frameworks

Vulnerabilities to modern slavery, including transnational trafficking, can arise as a result of the legal frameworks governing recruitment and migration in the source countries under consideration. In countries such as Iran, the absence of legal alternatives to removal for foreign trafficking victims increase their vulnerability to being re-trafficked. The legislation in Bangladesh permits the government to set legal recruitment fees at amounts that could render migrant workers indebted and vulnerable to trafficking. On the other hand, some of the top source countries have introduced legislation to reduce migrants' vulnerability to exploitation, such as limiting mandatory fees to foreigners (Ethiopia).

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[45] Bangladesh, Eritrea; Iran.
[46] Ghana; Philippines; Poland.
[47] Eritrea; Iraq.

8. The impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted individual and structural risks and vulnerabilities to modern slavery, as well as fuelling adaptation in perpetration methods and altering the dynamics and experiences of exploitation. Support, assistance, and opportunities for intervention have also been hindered, as service providers struggle to continue operations in the midst of pandemic and government restrictions, and vulnerable individuals are kept away from the institutions that previously helped to safeguard them from exploitation and identify risks. While the full picture of the pandemic's impact on modern slavery remains to be seen, it is already clear that the pandemic has radically impacted risk and vulnerability structures, with long term repercussions. With evidence indicating that migrant workers, refugees, and people seeking asylum have been particularly severely impacted by the pandemic, the relevance of the pandemic in considering source country dynamics for modern slavery in the UK is clear. These effects are also likely to evolve in the future, as the pandemic continues to reshape the push and pull factors that facilitate transnational trafficking and make people vulnerable to modern slavery, and the source country conditions to which survivors from the UK would return if, and when, they are repatriated.

Source country government responses to Covid-19

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, countries have adopted measures ranging from total or partial lockdowns, restrictions on mobility, bans on public gatherings, school closures, and curfews. According to the Oxford University Stringency Index, which is a composite measure based on nine response indicators including workplace closures and travel bans, rescaled to a value from 0 to 100 (100 being the strictest). The stringency of government response measures have varied in each State over time, however, there is also substantial divergence in the timelines and overall stringency of measures adopted by different States. Table 10 shows the stringency of Covid-19 response measures adopted by the governments in the top twenty non-UK source countries, considering measures in place from the 11 March 2020 (when the World Health Organisation declared the pandemic) up to the most recent data (ranging from 22 February to 6 March). It should be noted, however, that many countries had already put some restrictions in place prior to the WHO declaration in March.

The response of the top twenty non-UK source countries has varied substantially. Somalia was initially slower to respond to the pandemic, enacting its first restrictions after the WHO declaration and reaching a maximum stringency score of 60.19 (almost 20 points lower than the next lowest maximum in the group). Other countries with less stringent government responses in the early days of the pandemic included other African States—Ethiopia, Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, and Eritrea—a trend influenced by the spread of the pandemic at that point in time. Unsurprisingly, China demonstrated the most stringent measures at the time of declaration. However, within ten days, the Philippines, Iraq, Albania, Bangladesh, and Lithuania had implemented more stringent measures than China. On the most recent date for which data was available for all twenty top source countries (22 February), Eritrea, Bangladesh, Iran, the Philippines, and Romania had the most stringent measures in place (in that order).

Table 10. Stringency of Covid-19 response measures (from 11 March 2021)[48]

	Minimum	Maximum
Afghanistan	9.26	84.26
Albania	50.93	89.81
Bangladesh	13.89	93.52
China	46.76	81.94
Eritrea	11.11	93.52
Ethiopia	2.78	80.56
Ghana	8.33	86.11
India	26.85	100.00
Iran	41.67	80.09
Iraq	44.44	96.30
Lithuania	11.11	87.04
Nigeria	11.11	85.65
Pakistan	28.70	96.30
Philippines	34.26	100.00
Poland	23.15	83.33
Slovakia	25.93	87.04
Romania	38.89	87.04
Somalia	0.00	60.19
Sudan	5.56	91.67
Viet Nam	43.06	96.30

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[48] Our World in Data, 'Covid-19: Stringency Index' (2021), available here.

In addition to measures aimed at prevention and reduction of Covid-19 infections, States introduced measures to strengthen the health system and mitigate the economic impact on the population, particularly on vulnerable groups. The most frequent measures adopted included stimulus packages addressed at Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), deferment of the payment of social security contributions, liquidity injections for the banking system, restructuring of loans, emergency budgets, and compulsory job maintenance.

States such as India, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Viet Nam have provided for emergency cash transfer programmes. Notwithstanding this, these systems have been reported not to be transparent in some countries such as Nigeria, or have encountered logistical problems in their implementation. For instance, the government of Pakistan has set up the Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program aimed to help 12 million vulnerable families affected by the pandemic. However, the Ehsaas program only assists individuals who register via text message, which may not be particularly friendly to rural families who do not own smartphones or persons that cannot read or send text messages. Other specific measures include temporary shelters for street children in Ethiopia, or for migrants in India, and the launching of fundraising campaigns in Eritrea, turning to its own citizens, churches, entrepreneurs, and businesses for support.

The economic impacts of Covid-19

The Covid-19 crisis has affected all economies, and is likely to have a greater impact on the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Lockdowns, restrictions on activity, and the closure of businesses disproportionately affected people working in the informal sector, who in many cases survived with daily wages. Since access to cash transfers or other benefits depends in many cases on having formal contracts, these people have been unable to access such support, despite constituting a high percentage of the total working population in many States. Further, given the importance of sectors such as garment and cocoa in some economies, the reduction in global demand has placed people working in those industries in an extraordinarily precarious situations.

Covid-19 has disrupted the flow of remittances from migrant workers now unable to work in their destination countries. In many countries, remittances constitute an important part of the country's GDP and a major source of revenue for a large part of the population, such as in Somalia, Nigeria, and the Philippines. The reduction of such sources of income results in precarious individuals resorting to negative coping mechanisms, such as child trafficking or sexual exploitation. The risks of debt bondage have also increased under this climate.

Conflict, instability, corruption, and the pandemic

In certain circumstances, the implementation of Covid-19 measures has encountered problems of governance or ongoing conflict that prevent the State from acting homogeneously across the territory, such as in Afghanistan and Somalia. In Sudan, the pandemic has hampered efforts to progress the country's transition, and to ensure human rights and anti-trafficking protections are embedded in the new State infrastructure. Covid-19 has also exacerbated and provoked human rights violations, as in the Philippines, due to abusive techniques used by the Police, or has been used as a political weapon, as in Poland.

Disproportionate impacts of Covid-19

The impacts of Covid-19 and government measures adopted in response to the pandemic are not equally felt across societies. Particular communities and groups are already experiencing disproportionate adverse consequences, which are projected to evolve and expand as time goes on. Specific population groups mentioned as particularly vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 include women, children, migrant workers, refugees, and people seeking asylum.

Women and girls

Not only do women face increased risks of gender-based violence in the context of lockdowns and mobility restrictions, but also higher rates of unemployment, unequal access to health and education, unequal distribution of care and domestic work, and lesser representation in the political area. Thus policy response mechanisms do not incorporate gender-responsive plans. When intersecting with other vulnerability factors, such as migratory status or ethnicity, their situation gets worsened. For instance, violence against Rohingya women and girls has been widespread in refugee camps.

Children

Covid-19 and lockdown measures have also had a considerable impact on children, as mobility restrictions have facilitated and fostered child abuse and child marriage. Reliance on online platforms for education purposes has increased children's risk of exposure to inappropriate content and online predators. On the other side, a considerable spike in searches for 'child porn' was registered during lockdown in India. It is important to note that a significant proportion of the pornographic content reportedly involves victims of child trafficking. Thus traffickers are likely to refine online forms of recruitment of child and adolescents.

Refugees and people seeking asylum

People seeking asylum and refugees also face heightened risks due to Covid-related measures: on the one side, entrance restrictions and denial of asylum requests increase their vulnerability and facilitate recourse to alternative, more dangerous routes. On the other side, the impact of the coronavirus is noticeable in refugee camps with limited access to health facilities, such as in Iraq or Bangladesh. Lockdown measures have reduced humanitarian workers in refugee camps, which have prevented humanitarian workers from coordinating protection responses for victims of sexual exploitation, trafficking, and gender-based violence.

The specific impacts of the pandemic on the dynamics of trafficking to, and modern slavery within, the UK remain to be seen. Likewise, effects on source country contexts that influence modern slavery and transnational trafficking continue to emerge. However, this early evidence indicates increased precarity and vulnerability that have been noted to drive cases of modern slavery involving top source country nationals in the UK.
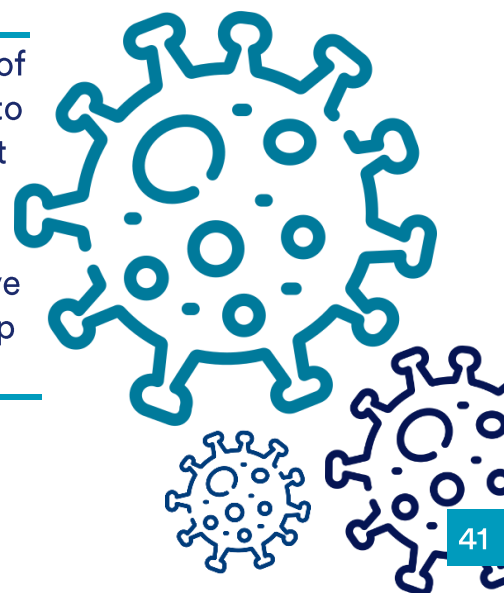
9. Conclusion

In the UK, foreign country nationals represent the majority of potential victims identified and referred into the NRM. UK nationals have represented an increasing share of referrals over time (from 2013-2019), requiring interrogation of the dynamics of modern slavery for this population. However, the situation for UK national victims in the UK is substantively different to that of non-UK nationals. Dynamics of transnational trafficking and international migration are not factors in these cases, immigration status is not in issue, and victims and survivors are entitled to a range of benefits not accessible to those that are not citizens or residents of the country. Individual experiences of modern slavery may be more or less comparable to one another depending on the specific facts of the case. However, various factors related to nationality and status are relevant to the experiences of exploitation, efforts to combat modern slavery, and support provision. By considering the specific dynamics of modern slavery for non-UK nationals in the UK, relevant insights can be drawn out for efforts to prevent, combat, and redress modern slavery.

The dynamics of modern slavery are complex, with intersecting risks driving vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking for individuals and groups. Some factors are identified as common across all nationality groups—including the role of gender, poverty, and age in shaping vulnerability. Families and communities are likewise relevant across cases, in both facilitating exploitation and fostering resilience to such. Other factors are shared between multiple nationality groups, creating sub-sets of source countries where particular conditions fuel trafficking and exploitation. Conflict and instability, widespread corruption, significant informal economies, and environmental degradation share such cross-country relevance. However, in both of these categories locally specific dynamics between different geographies and units also shape the specific influence of the various factors. Locally specific factors are also identified for various top source countries considered in this study. Particular cultural, social, and religious norms can influence modern slavery experiences and vulnerabilities. Specific institutional realities and governance frameworks also play a role, varying between countries in how they are set up, how they are implemented and enforced, and how they intersect with modern slavery and transnational trafficking.

Data and evidence exploring the specific demographics, experiences, and needs of victims and survivors from different nationality groups is limited. Further research is therefore needed to understand trends identified in the data analysed in this report, and the points of difference and similarity between different groups. Victim-centred support and care necessarily must focus on individual experiences and needs on a case-by-case basis. However, various aspects of victims' and survivors' background and identities influence their experiences and interactions with anti-slavery infrastructure. Nuanced consideration of these factors can improve efforts to address modern slavery and provide effective support to victims and survivors in both the UK and in source countries.

Given the high proportion of non-UK nationals represented in the National Referral Mechanism, efforts to address modern slavery in the UK must grapple with these transnational and nationality-based dynamics. Support must be tailored to the complex needs of particular victims, accounting for intersecting experiences, vulnerabilities, and identity factors. Likewise, if confirmed victims are to be returned to their country of origin, then the conditions to which they will be returned should be considered, and frameworks to support their ongoing recovery and reintegration advanced.

9.1. Recommendations for UK-focused actors

Recommendation 1: Policies and support services aimed towards supporting recovery, reintegration, and safe repatriation should engage with the specific factors and vulnerabilities identified in this report, considering factors associated with victims' countries of origin as well as their individual circumstances. This is consistent with the UK Government's commitment to an individualised and needs-based approach to supporting modern slavery victims.

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Recommendation 2: Home Office decision makers assessing claims for asylum and the Country Policy and Information Team in the Home Office should ensure vulnerabilities and drivers of modern slavery in countries of origin and transit are adequately considered in individual decisions given the relevance of these factors in assessing risks of re-trafficking, new forms of exploitation, effective protection thereof and evidence of past persecution.

Recommendation 3: Home Office decision makers assessing discretionary leave applications and repatriation of conclusive victims should ensure that the source country dynamics that drive transnational trafficking and modern slavery, as well as the support and safeguarding infrastructure in origin countries, are adequately accounted for in discretionary leave and repatriation decisions.

Recommendation 4: The Home Office should continue to strengthen coordination with support infrastructure in place in source countries to which conclusive victims are being returned, seek to facilitate data sharing on returned victims, and monitor the long-term outcomes of returned victims to ensure protection for these individuals.

9.2. Recommendations for internationally focused actors

Recommendation 1: The UK Government already funds international development programming targeted towards addressing key drivers of modern slavery identified in the report, such as conflict. Further efforts to mainstream modern slavery considerations into wider development programmes are needed to support protection and prevention. This programming should not only respond to the overarching drivers shared across the top twenty countries considered, but also engage with the specific and local dynamics identified in the report on an individualised country basis.

Recommendation 2: the UK has an important ongoing role in encouraging a greater focus on modern slavery within source countries, building local capacity to respond effectively to challenges in protection and prevention, and supporting interventions. The UK Government should continue to advance international advocacy and programming in these areas.

Recommendation 3: UK international policy actors should increase programming for transit countries, including in the top twenty non-UK source countries that are also key sites of transit. Transit country programming should be targeted towards people on the move, focusing on actors, sites, and communities they are likely to come into contact with, as well as tailoring messaging to the complex realities of vulnerable migration.

9.3. Recommendations for data and research

Recommendation 1: The Home Office should release more granular NRM data encompassing a wider range of intersecting variables to enable more nuanced analysis of the specific trends and experiences of victims according to different factors. This should include working with the National Crime Agency to release disaggregated data for previous reporting years, to enable analysis of trends over time.

Recommendation 2: Robust and comprehensive data on post-return experiences of confirmed victims returned to their home country from the UK is needed to understand the implication of return in particular circumstances and contexts.

Recommendation 3: Further research and data is required to understand:

- Other characteristics of cases that may help to explain differences in conclusive grounds and asylum decisions—the sharp difference between source countries, as well as overall decision rates, make this investigation crucial to ensuring fair and unbiased decision making.
- The nuances of individual experiences and drivers from the top twenty non-UK countries, and particular support needs associated with different identity factors including nationality and source country dynamics.
- What works to ensure effective prevention and protection in the UK and in top source and transit countries.

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