

2024

# annual assessment 2024

WORKING TOWARDS A  
WORLD WITHOUT SLAVERY

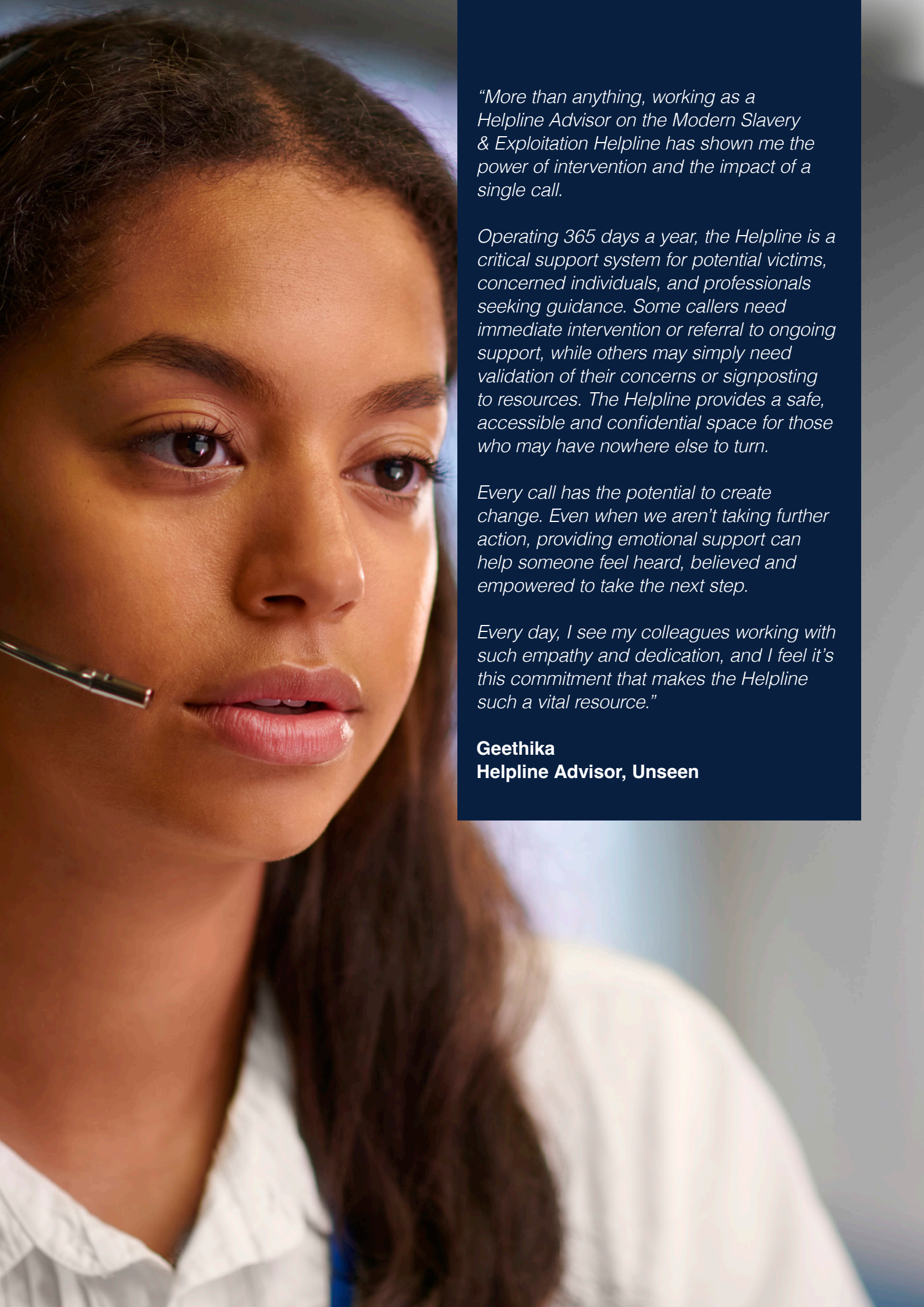


modern slavery  
& exploitation  
**helpline**



**unseen**





*"More than anything, working as a Helpline Advisor on the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline has shown me the power of intervention and the impact of a single call.*

*Operating 365 days a year, the Helpline is a critical support system for potential victims, concerned individuals, and professionals seeking guidance. Some callers need immediate intervention or referral to ongoing support, while others may simply need validation of their concerns or signposting to resources. The Helpline provides a safe, accessible and confidential space for those who may have nowhere else to turn.*

*Every call has the potential to create change. Even when we aren't taking further action, providing emotional support can help someone feel heard, believed and empowered to take the next step.*

*Every day, I see my colleagues working with such empathy and dedication, and I feel it's this commitment that makes the Helpline such a vital resource."*

**Geethika**  
**Helpline Advisor, Unseen**

# contents

<b>4</b>	Foreword
<b>5</b>	Summary numbers
<b>6</b>	High-level overview
<b>7</b>	Potential victim and exploiter demographics
<b>10</b>	Recruitment and control
<b>11</b>	Emerging trends
<b>13</b>	Sami's story
<b>14</b>	Conclusion
<b>15</b>	Annex



# foreword

The complexity of the calls and contacts we receive on the Helpline increases each year and 2024 was no exception. With increasing vulnerabilities and risks emanating from the challenging economic environment, the number of individuals requiring some form of guidance and support continues to climb. Often those seeking help have nowhere else to turn, and present to the Helpline with complex and multi-faceted needs.

The impact from a range of hostile legislative changes that occurred before 2024 is still being felt within the Helpline and beyond. For example, the number of people entering the government's National Referral Mechanism continues to increase despite the rapidly declining numbers who ultimately receive a positive reasonable grounds decision, thus reducing the number of those allowed to access government-funded support. Additionally, overseas workers who come into the UK on seasonal worker scheme visas or health and social care visas continue to be at significant risk of exploitation. This is, in part, due to the visa system not sufficiently supporting workers through each stage of the recruitment process. In many cases, the Helpline is the first port of call for those in difficult situations.

Those with lived experience remain at the heart of everything we do. Each person we support has a story to tell and helping them to reflect on their experience and find a pathway to independence and resilience is paramount. But we know that the magnitude of the wider costs of modern slavery and exploitation on public services and the UK economy is significant, at least £52 billion. Through our work with survivors, and our understanding of the issue as leaders in the sector, we seek to influence strategic partners, businesses and policymakers on the need for reform. We continue to work collaboratively with partner agencies from across the UK and wider providing a focus on prevention strategies, early identification of victims and holistic wraparound support that ultimately reduces public spend and provides better outcomes for those seeking to move on with their lives.

As we embark on our tenth operational year, we'll be looking further at how we can harness the role of technology and AI on the Helpline and wider operations. We want to ensure we remain responsive and agile to the changing needs of those we support to continue providing the best possible advice and guidance. This includes optimising Helpline data to provide unique insights into the issues and situations occurring within the UK daily, across the diverse range of exploitative situations we encounter.



**Andrew Wallis OBE**  
CEO,  
Unseen



**Justine Carter**  
Executive Director,  
Unseen



**Natasha Mitra**  
Head of Helpline Services,  
Unseen

# summary numbers

**7,730**

helpline  
calls

**3,734**

web forms  
and app  
submissions

**2,089**

modern  
slavery cases

**4,839**

modern slavery  
potential victims

**94**

nationalities

**10,582**

referrals and  
signposts

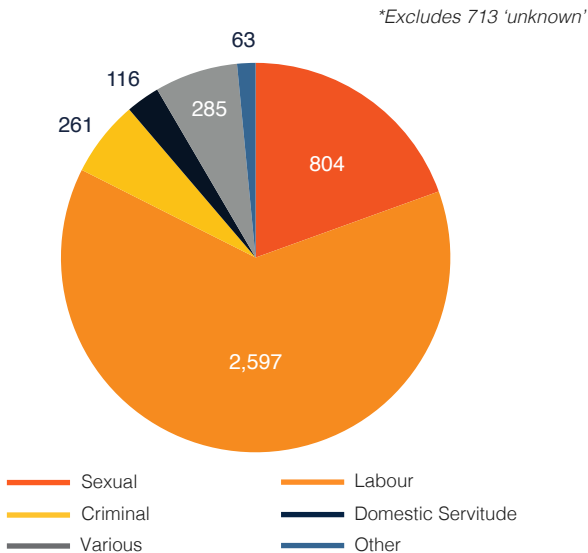
# high-level overview

Operating 365 days a year, the Helpline received a total of **11,464** calls, web forms and app submissions in 2024. Incoming web forms increased by **13%**, reaching an all-time high of **3,660**. Through these contacts, **2,089** unique cases of modern slavery were reported, indicating **4,839** potential victims. In **36%** of modern slavery cases a potential victim communicated directly with the Helpline about their situation, a figure that continues to increase annually. In **75%** of cases a potential victim or someone in direct contact with them communicated with the Helpline, up from **73%** the previous year.

## exploitation type

Where the exploitation type was known (**1,466**), the largest proportion of modern slavery cases were labour exploitation (**686**, **47%**), where **63%** (**2,597**) of all potential victims were indicated. A quarter (**25%**) of cases (**373**) were situations of sexual exploitation, with **804** potential victims (**19%**). **182** cases (**12%**) of criminal exploitation, involving **261** potential victims (**6%**) were indicated. **100** cases (**7%**) of domestic servitude involving **116** potential victims (**3%**) were reported. **23** cases (**2%**) involving **63** potential victims (**2%**) had indicators of 'other' forms of exploitation. These are often situations of financial exploitation or less commonly organ harvesting or forced surrogacy, which was indicated to the Helpline for the first time in 2023. There were also **102** cases (**7%**) where various exploitation types were indicated that involved **285** potential victims (**7%**). One of these cases involved forced surrogacy and another involved organ harvesting alongside another form of exploitation. **623** cases involving **713** potential victims were also recorded, which had strong indicators of modern slavery whilst the specific exploitation type was unknown.

## Potential victims by exploitation type\*



2024 saw an **18%** decrease in modern slavery potential

victims (**4,839**), despite high numbers of cases (**2,089**). This meant slight decreases in potential victim numbers across most exploitation types, with the biggest variance seen in criminal exploitation, in which there was a **32%** drop in potential victims (**261**) and **19%** reduction in cases (**182**) reported. Whilst there was a **3%** decrease in sexual exploitation potential victims (**804**), case numbers (**373**) rose by **17%**. The number of potential victims (**63**) in 'other' forms of slavery, which are emerging or less common forms, rose by **24%**; in 2024 all 'other' cases (**23**) related to financial exploitation.

## country

Where the country of exploitation was known (**1,515**), most cases reported to the Helpline involve exploitation in England (**1,030**, **68%**), or another part of the United Kingdom (UK unknown **199**; Scotland **41**; Wales **28**; Northern Ireland **7**). Beyond the UK, the highest number of reports relate to exploitation in Libya (**97**), Albania (**25**) and France (**24**). Most international cases are reported by potential victims now in the UK, however, a small number are calls from abroad

## Top 10 countries of exploitation\*

Country	Cases
England	1,030
United Kingdom**	199
Libya	97
Scotland	41
Wales	28
Albania	25
France	24
Turkey	14
China	13
Spain	12

*\*United Kingdom was recorded in cases where the UK country was not specified*

## referrals and signposts

In addition to the **2,089** cases of modern slavery, the Helpline also received reports about **794** cases of labour abuse, **4,257** non-modern slavery cases that were assessed as another crime type or adjacent issue, **190** general information cases and **816** non-substantive cases, such as wrong numbers. In response to these **8,146** cases, the Helpline gave **8,985** signposts to specialist support and submitted **1,597** referrals, totaling **10,582**, **17%** more than in 2023. **1,037** of these referrals and **3,384** signposts related to modern slavery cases.

The Helpline submits referrals to a range of organisations and agencies to aid investigation, for safeguarding purposes, or to advocate with first responders to enter potential victims into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for ongoing support. By far, the biggest proportion of referrals are submitted to law enforcement (**1,086**, **68%**), both

about modern slavery cases (**768, 74%**) and non-modern slavery cases (**267, 88%**). However, the majority of labour abuse cases are submitted to government agencies (**149, 58%**) such as HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) or the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS).

Referrals by case type

Referrals to	Modern Slavery	Labour Abuse	Non-MS	Total
Law enforcement	768	51	267	1,086
Government (incl. UKVI, HMRC & EAS)	198	149	23	370
GLAA	14	52	2	68
Local authority	32	3	12	47
NGO	25	0	1	26
Total	1,037	255	305	1,597

Top 10 referral agencies and organisations\*

Organisation	Referrals
Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)	213
UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI)	155
HMRC	136
National Crime Agency (NCA)	94
GLAA (Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority)	68
Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS)	67
West Midlands Police	65
West Yorkshire Police	45
Greater Manchester Police (GMP)	44
Thames Valley Police	44
Total	931

\*Includes modern slavery, labour abuse and non-MS referrals

potential victim and exploiter demographics

**4,839** potential victims of modern slavery were indicated to the Helpline in 2024, an **18%** drop from **5,876** in 2023, despite the number of cases (**2,089**) remaining relatively steady (**-4%**). The average number of potential victims indicated per case has reduced from **2.69** in 2023 to **2.32**.

potential victim age

Where age status was known (**2,986**), the proportion of modern slavery potential victims indicated to the Helpline as minors decreased slightly from **13%** in 2023 to **11%** in 2024 (**325**), with adult potential victims (**2,661**) comprising **89%**. Child victims were indicated in **9%** of all modern slavery cases (**187**). Almost a quarter of potential victims were reportedly minors in both sexual (**24%, 110**) and criminal exploitation (**21%, 41**), where age status was known. Reports of minors in sexual exploitation more than doubled (**108%**) since 2023 from **53** to **110**.

Potential victims by age status\*

\*Excludes 1,853 'unknown'



Potential victims by age and exploitation type

Exploitation Type	<12	13-15	16-17	18-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Unknown	Total
Labour	9	13	16	27	220	85	37	21	12	2,157	2,597
Sexual	11	32	13	12	95	34	22	4	1	580	804
Criminal	8	5	15	17	40	23	11	4	2	136	261
Domestic servitude	0	2	2	6	14	16	7	9	3	57	116
Various	4	2	1	3	25	19	13	3	4	211	285
Other	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	59	63
Unknown	9	7	11	10	30	20	4	2	3	617	713
Total	41	61	58	75	427	198	94	43		3,817	4,839

Across all modern slavery potential victims indicated, the most common age bracket was 20–29-year-olds (**427**). This was the most common age bracket indicated for potential victims of all exploitation types apart from domestic

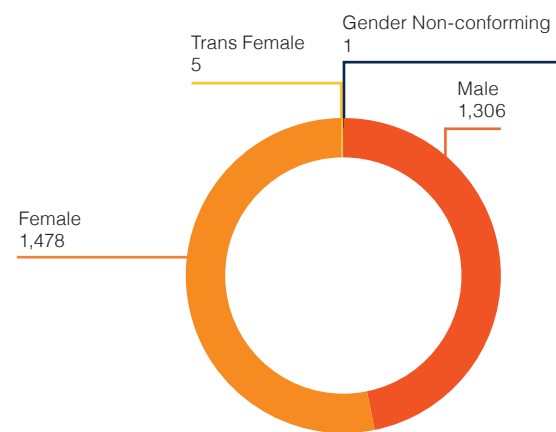
servitude, which was 30-39 (**16**).

Amongst minors, the most common age bracket overall was 13-15 (**61**), a change from the previous year when it was

16-17. However, when looking at specific exploitation types, 13-15 is only the most common age bracket for minors in sexual exploitation (32), with 16-17 being more common across labour exploitation (16), criminal exploitation (15), and equal numbers across both age brackets in domestic servitude (2, 2).

potential victim gender

Potential victims by gender\*



\*Excludes 2,049 'unknown'

Historically, higher numbers of male potential victims have been indicated to the Helpline, although the proportion of female potential victims has steadily grown over the years, reaching a breakdown of 50% male, 49% female, and 1% transgender (where gender was known) in both 2022 and 2023. The rise in female potential victims in recent years has been, in part, attributed to the scale of exploitation of migrant women in the care sector. In 2024, reports of female potential victims overtook males for the first time, almost reaching 53% (1,478) compared to just under 47% (1,306) males. Females were the most prevalent in both adult and minor potential victims, comprising 57% of minor potential victims (119) where gender was reported (207).

Five transgender females were recorded in 2024, a record high, as well as one potential victim indicated as gender non-conforming, the first since 2019. No transgender males were recorded, for the first time since 2021.

Whilst, as in previous years, the vast majority of those in

sexual exploitation were female (664, 95%) where gender was known (698), 2024 saw an all-time high in the number of males (29, 4%) an increase of 53% from 19 the previous year. Sexual exploitation was also where the gender non-conforming potential victim as well as all bar one transgender females (4) were indicated. The prevalence of males in criminal exploitation grew from 65% to 73% (147). This was also seen amongst minors in criminal exploitation, where the proportion of males increased from 71% in 2023 to 92% (23). Considerably more males than females were indicated in 'other' forms of exploitation, which in 2024 were all cases of financial exploitation. Several similar situations were reported involving men financially exploited by their spouse and in-laws following arranged marriages.

potential victim nationality

Top 20 potential victim nationalities

Nationality	Potential Victims	% Potential Victims
India	219	15%
China	140	10%
Vietnam	106	7%
Zimbabwe	91	6%
Romania	62	4%
Albania	59	4%
Bulgaria	54	4%
Nigeria	47	3%
Bangladesh	46	3%
Pakistan	37	3%
United Kingdom*	37	3%
Brazil	35	2%
United Arab Emirates	30	2%
Afghanistan	26	2%
Eritrea	25	2%
Philippines	24	2%
Poland	23	2%
Ukraine	22	2%
Iran	21	1%
Ghana	21	1%

\*United Kingdom was recorded where a UK national was indicated but the country was not specified'

Potential victims by gender and exploitation type

Exploitation Type	Female	Male	Trans Female	Gender Non-conforming	Unknown	Total
Labour	332	780	1	0	1,484	2,597
Sexual	664	29	4	1	106	804
Criminal	54	147	0	0	60	261
Domestic servitude	101	9	0	0	6	116
Various	88	70	0	0	127	285
Other	8	13	0	0	42	63
Unknown	231	258	0	0	224	713
Total	1,478	1,306	5	1	2,049	4,839



**94** different potential victim nationalities were indicated, down from **106** in 2023. Indian (**219**) remains the most prevalent nationality after topping the list for the first time in 2023 due to prominence in the care sector. Indian nationals comprised **15%** of potential victims, where nationality was known (**1,419**). Before this, Romanian nationals had been the most prevalent since the Helpline opened in 2016, however, in 2024, they dropped by **61%** to fifth place (**62**). Reports of Albanian nationals have almost halved (**-49%**) to **59**.

China has consistently featured in the top 10 potential victim nationalities but saw a significant **67%** increase to **140** in 2024, making it the second most prevalent. Chinese potential victims were reported across the board, in a range of exploitation types, although most prominently in situations of sexual exploitation, followed by labour exploitation. Chinese was the most reported potential victim nationality in sexual exploitation (**56**), overtaking Brazilian (**25**), which was the most recorded nationality in 2023. In 2024, almost a quarter (**24%**) of sexual exploitation potential victims were reportedly Chinese, where nationality was known.

Vietnamese (**106**) potential victims were the third most prevalent overall and featured in the top five most indicated in both sexual and labour exploitation, as well as being the most recorded nationality in criminal exploitation (**16**). Vietnamese was also the most prominent nationality recorded amongst minor potential victims (**10**, **21%**).

Filipino nationals were only recorded **24** times; however, they were disproportionately indicated in domestic servitude (**12**) where it was not only the most prominent nationality, but where half of all potential victims from the Philippines were reported.

Zimbabwean nationals (**91**) rose by **18%**, moving from eighth to fourth most prevalent, owing to prevalence in the care sector. Bulgaria (**54**) has appeared in the top 10 for the first time since 2020, following a **575%** increase from eight the previous year. Most Bulgarian potential victims indicated in 2024 were exploited for labour in the construction industry.

## potential exploiter age

A total of **3,507** potential exploiters were indicated in 2024, with an average of **1.7** potential exploiters per case. For every potential exploiter recorded, **1.4** potential victims were indicated.

As expected, where age status was known (**1,609**), almost all potential exploiters were reportedly adults (**1,603**). However, six potential exploiters were reportedly minors, twice the number indicated in 2023 (**three**). The specific age bracket was recorded in relation to two minor potential exploiters, both aged 16-17. Half of the cases involving potential exploiters indicated as minors involved criminal exploitation, and half involved labour exploitation. Overall, where the specific age bracket was known (**153**), the most reported was 30-39 (**49**, **32%**).

## Potential exploiters by age status\*

*\*Excludes 1,853 'unknown'*

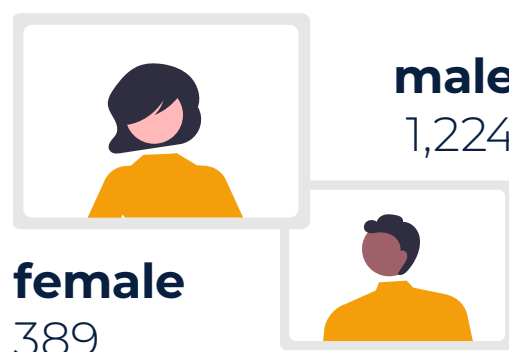


## potential exploiter gender

Where gender was known (**1,613**), **76%** of potential exploiters were reportedly male (**1,224**). Whilst this is a significant majority, it is a reduction of **2%** since the previous year. The remaining **24%** were reportedly female (**389**), the highest proportion ever recorded by the Helpline. Whereas most male potential exploiters featured in situations of labour (**457**, **39%**) and sexual exploitation (**412**, **35%**), female potential exploiters were more evenly distributed amongst labour exploitation (**137**, **37%**), sexual exploitation (**90**, **24%**) and domestic servitude (**74**, **20%**). There was a slightly higher number of female potential exploiters recorded (**15**) than males (**13**) in situations of financial exploitation.

## Potential exploiters by gender\*

*\*Excludes 1,894 'unknown'*



## potential exploiter nationality

Libyan (**75**) was the most indicated potential exploiter nationality, comprising **16%** of exploiters, where nationality was known (**464**). Libyan exploiters are mainly indicated in cases where victims have fled from conflict zones into Libya and been exploited by militia for labour. Commonly these cases are reported by potential victims who have sought asylum in the UK. There are few changes in the top 10, with the same nationalities indicated consistently for several years.

## Top 10 potential exploiter nationalities

Nationality	Potential Exploiters	% Potential Exploiters
Libya	75	16%
Albania	50	11%
United Kingdom*	40	9%
China	34	7%
Romania	31	7%
India	17	4%
Nigeria	16	3%
Pakistan	16	3%
Iraq	13	3%
Vietnam	12	3%

\*United Kingdom was recorded where a UK national was indicated but the country was not specified

## recruitment and control

### recruitment tactics

Where recruitment tactics were reported, the most common continues to be through job offers and advertisements (**771, 49%**), which is the most reported tactic amongst both labour exploitation (**573**) and domestic servitude (**36**) potential victims. False promises or statements (**378, 24%**) are the second most common forms of recruitment overall, whilst being the most common tactic amongst potential victims of sexual exploitation (**103**). Abduction (**255, 16%**) was the third most common, featuring most prominently in labour (**164**) and criminal exploitation (**19**). Interestingly, smuggling and ransom (**179, 11%**) has almost doubled, moving up from sixth to fourth most reported. This is predominantly seen in those in labour exploitation.

Recruitment tactics differ concerning child victims. Where recruitment tactics were recorded (**346**), the most common was through a familial relationship (**19, 27%**). This was

closely followed by abduction (**18, 25%**); false promises or statements (**16, 23%**); grooming (**15, 21%**); and coercion.

### control methods

Once recruited into exploitation, the most common control method was confinement or restricted movement (**2,334, 58%**), reported in relation to almost half of potential victims where control methods were known (**4,052**). This was the most common control method reported in criminal exploitation (**175**). Concerning child victims, where control methods were known (**248**) confinement and restricted movement (**149, 60%**) was also the most reported control method.

In 2024, financial control (**2,146, 53%**) overtook tied accommodation (**1,704, 42%**) which dropped from **50%**

### Potential victims (PVs) by control method\*

Control Method	PVs**	% PVs**
Confinement/restricted movement	2,334	58%
Financial control	2,146	53%
Tied accommodation	1,704	42%
Monitoring	1,277	32%
Emotional abuse - verbal/manipulation	1,164	29%
Physical abuse	1,127	28%
Sexual abuse	1,030	25%
Isolation	812	20%
Threat to harm subject, family or other	675	17%
Threat - other	525	13%
Threat to report to police/immigration	443	11%
Withheld/destroyed important documents	438	11%
Induced substance abuse	152	4%
Threat to abandon subject/ make homeless	103	3%
Threat to expose or shame subject	84	2%
Cultural/familial/religious pressure or coercion	70	2%

\*Excludes 787 'unknown'

\*\* Total exceeds overall number of potential victims as multiple control methods may be indicated per potential victim

### Potential victims by recruitment tactic and exploitation type\*

Recruitment Tactic	Labour	Sexual	Criminal	Domestic Servitude	Various	Other	Unknown	Total**
Job offer/advertisement	573	59	12	36	46	0	5	771
False promises/statements	171	103	14	23	50	5	12	378
Abduction	164	25	19	2	43	0	2	255
Smuggling/ransom	155	7	7	1	6	0	3	179
Offer of accommodation	116	25	5	5	7	1	0	159
Coercion - threats, blackmail etc	26	28	39	1	5	0	4	103
Familial	32	24	6	11	20	5	5	103
Grooming	1	64	20	0	5	0	2	92
Intimate partner/marriage proposition	3	31	4	17	9	3	7	74
Friend	24	7	12	2	5	0	1	51
Posing as benefactor	7	1	3	3	5	0	0	19
Other	19	11	12	2	5	0	1	50

\*Excludes 3,266 'unknown' (recruitment tactics)

\*\*Sum of table may exceed overall number of potential victims, as multiple recruitment tactics may be indicated per potential victim

the year before, likely coinciding with the reduction in care sector cases where potential victims commonly live on-site or in accommodation arranged by their employers. Financial control was the most prevalent control method in labour (1,495) and financial exploitation (63). Financial control was also prevalent amongst minor potential victims, (61, 25%). Sexual abuse as a control method was reported disproportionately with minors (126, 51%) compared with all potential victims (1,030, 25%). Amongst child victims this was the second most recorded control method. Emotional abuse (51, 21%) and physical abuse (44, 18%) also featured in the top five most reported control methods amongst minors.

## emerging trends

### labour exploitation

For the first time since the Helpline was founded, the care sector overtook the service industry as the sector with the highest instances of labour exploitation reported in 2023. Services include car washes and nail bars, both known to be high-risk, and was consistently the most prevalent sector before 2023. Despite a sizeable reduction in both cases (-24%) and potential victims (-36%), the care sector is still where the highest number of cases (107) were seen in 2024 and still comprises almost a quarter (24%) of all labour exploitation potential victims (586) indicated where the sector was known (611). Numbers did start to decline from March when legislation was introduced preventing migrant workers on health and care worker visas from bringing dependants with them to the UK.

Following a 7% increase in cases, and a slight drop in potential victims (-6%), construction has also overtaken services with the second highest number of cases (105) and potential victims (492). This is now only slightly behind the care sector.

2024 saw a 26% drop in cases (102) and 41% drop in potential victims (309) indicated in services. The number of cases recorded in the care sector, construction and services are similar, but the number of potential victims differs quite considerably. However, services are where the highest number of cases involving minors were indicated (13) involving 18 potential victims.

Hospitality is another sector where the Helpline saw an increase in cases (88) in 2024; a 21% rise following a 26% decrease the previous year. In contrast, the number of potential victims (307) dropped by 5% after a 22% increase the previous year. In 2024 many cases in hospitality have mirrored what has been observed in the care sector, with migrant workers charged exorbitant fees by employers for certificates of sponsorship, excessive working hours, and threats of deportation. Hospitality is also a prominent industry when it comes to minors, as the industry with the second

highest number of cases (10) and potential victims (16). Another sector where the Helpline have seen an increase in cases is entertainment; a 133% jump in cases (7) and 5% rise in potential victims (20). These cases span across businesses such as carnivals and circuses; cinemas or theatres; and casinos.

### Labour exploitation cases and potential victims by industry\*

Industry	Cases	Potential Victims
Care sector	107	586
Construction	105	492
Services	102	309
Hospitality	88	307
Various	50	191
Agriculture/farm	37	189
Retail	34	99
Logistics	12	54
Manufacturing	6	47
Domestic work	23	46
Janitorial/out-call cleaning services	14	31
Tech	2	31
Entertainment	7	20
Landscaping	5	7
Transportation	2	7
Maritime industry/boat/shipping	2	2
Other	15	36

\*Excludes 75 'unknown' cases and 143 'unknown' potential victims'

### criminal exploitation

Within criminal exploitation, the breakdown is heavily weighted towards cases involving drugs, such as county lines or cuckooing situations. These make up 71% of cases and 59% of potential victims. This is seen to an even greater extent amongst minors, with 77% (23) of cases related to drugs, involving 71% (29) of child victims. Reports of forced begging have noticeably declined from 31 cases involving 65 potential victims down to 13 cases involving 26 potential victims. While forced scamming cases remain low (six), they have steadily increased by two each year since first indicated in 2022. These situations involve individuals forced into instigating scams to fraudulently acquire money for an exploiter.

### Criminal exploitation cases and potential victims by sub-type

Industry	Cases	Potential Victims
Drugs	130	153
Begging	13	26
Shoplifting	4	5
Other	35	77



# labour abuse

As well as modern slavery, a high number of labour abuse cases are also reported to the Helpline. Cases of labour abuse reported to the Helpline rose by **54%** to a peak of **794**, involving **2,701** potential victims, **50%** higher than the previous year.

These cases demonstrate worker rights abuses but without the level of control that is characteristic of modern slavery. The most common indicators experienced by potential victims of labour abuse were non-compliance with the National Minimum Wage (**1,624, 60%**); long or excessive working hours (**1,111, 41%**); harassment, intimidation or bullying (**997, 37%**).

Similarly to labour exploitation, the greatest prevalence of labour abuse was reported in the care sector, which comprised **40%** of all labour abuse cases (**284**) and nearly half of potential victims (**48%, 1,217**). This has impacted the breakdown of nationalities indicated in labour abuse, with Indian potential victims (**205**) now comprising **32%**, where nationality was known (**649**). This is a **163%** increase from the **78** Indians indicated in labour abuse in 2023. The second most concerning sector for labour abuse was hospitality, with cases (**110**) and potential victims (**347**) increasing by **59%** and **80%** respectively. The largest variance was the **100%** increase in retail cases (**52**). Notable increases also related to cases of construction (**42%**) and janitorial/cleaning services (**73%**).

## Labour abuse cases and potential victims by industry\*

Industry	Cases	Potential Victims
Agriculture/farm	15	37
Care sector	284	1,217
Construction	57	176
Domestic work	15	25
Entertainment	12	23
Hospitality	110	347
Janitorial/out-call cleaning services	19	60
Landscaping	3	3
Logistics	25	100
Manufacturing	13	70
Maritime industry/boat/shipping	2	8
Other	24	55
Retail	52	117
Services	60	179
Tech	8	26
Transportation	3	46
Various	14	62

*\*Excludes 78 'unknown' cases and 150 'unknown' potential victims*

## Sami's\* story

Sami was sponsored to come to the UK on a skilled worker visa and work in a restaurant. On arrival, the reality of the job was quite different to what had been agreed in his employment contract.

Sami was monitored heavily via CCTV and was verbally abused frequently by his employer. Sami was paid a fraction of the salary he was supposed to receive, earning less than £150 per week. Out of this meagre wage, he had to return half to his employer as rent for his accommodation. The 'accommodation' consisted of a sofa in the restaurant. Sami's employer also made further deductions to his pay, stating these were for tax purposes.

Sami was left with very little money to survive on and wanted to leave the situation to find different employment. His employer demanded that Sami pay thousands of pounds in exit fees to leave his contract and threatened to have him killed if he returned to his home country.

Sami fled the situation but did not have any money for accommodation and was fearful that he would be deported and that his life would be at risk when arriving back in his home country. Sami reached out to a solicitor who put him in touch with the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline.

Following several calls with the Helpline, Sami presented at a police station and successfully advocated for himself to receive support as a destitute survivor of modern slavery. He was entered into the National Referral Mechanism and provided with safe accommodation.

*\*Some details changed to protect identity. Image posed by model.*



# conclusion

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Almost 10 years on from the world-leading Modern Slavery Act 2015, the need for the independent and person-centred Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline is more evident than ever. Already feeling the impact of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, Illegal Migration Act 2023 and deliberate rhetoric conflating smuggling and immigration with trafficking, the Safety of Rwanda Act 2024 worsened an already hostile political environment for those with irregular status. This made it harder for many potential victims of modern slavery to report their exploitation to statutory agencies for fear of detention or deportation, pushing this crime deeper underground. This may have contributed to the slight decline in modern slavery potential victims indicated in 2023 and 2024. Despite these challenges, the Helpline continues to provide a confidential space for all individuals to seek advice, guidance and support in relation to exploitation, and works to bridge the gap between survivors and statutory agencies. To ensure survivors can access the support they need despite this barrier, the Helpline has developed new referral pathways with more non-statutory partners including West Midlands Anti-Slavery Partnership, A21 and Migrant Help.

## Women and girls at growing risk of modern slavery

Whilst certain forms of modern slavery, such as sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, have been more common amongst females, males have historically been the prominent gender reported to the Helpline overall. In 2024, more female potential victims were indicated than males for the first time, highlighting the changing face of exploitation and the growing risk to women and girls. Even amongst minors, where equal numbers of boys and girls have been indicated for the past two years, females have been reported in higher numbers in 2024. Modern slavery can impact anyone, but Helpline data now shows that women and girls are disproportionately affected. This trend comes in tandem with worrying findings from IOM research that, on average, women and girls wait longer than males for NRM decisions and these are more likely to be negative, limiting their access to support and putting them at risk of being re-exploited. Exploitation in the care sector has continued to be a consistent theme, despite a drop in cases following legislative changes preventing migrant workers on health and care visas from bringing dependents to the UK. Further rules introduced in April 2025 mean that care providers in England must evidence trying to recruit locally before internationally, the impact of which may be seen over the coming year. Changes like these reduce the number of people exploited in the sector by reducing immigration, rather than addressing the failings in the visa system, inadequate sanctions on exploiters, and insufficient protections for those at risk and trapped in dire situations.

This concerning trend of migrants recruited into exploitative situations in the UK through skilled worker visas has therefore been allowed to spread, with similar situations now becoming apparent in hospitality and other sectors. The impact and scale of the issue can also be seen beyond modern slavery, with increasingly high numbers of labour abuse cases in the care and hospitality industries. Growing numbers of labour abuse cases overall present a challenge for the Helpline and demonstrate the legislative gap that will hopefully be addressed by the Employment Rights Bill and the creation of The Fair Work Agency. At present, with limited powers and resources, the Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority is forced to prioritise the highest-risk cases, leaving many situations of labour abuse unresolved, with the potential to escalate. Early intervention could prevent many cases of modern slavery. Amongst other new referral pathways, the Helpline began referring to the Bristol Modern Slavery Operational Partnership, which responds to labour abuse and lower-risk modern slavery cases with a multi-agency approach. We hope to build relationships with further operational partnerships in the future.

## Forging a united front against modern slavery

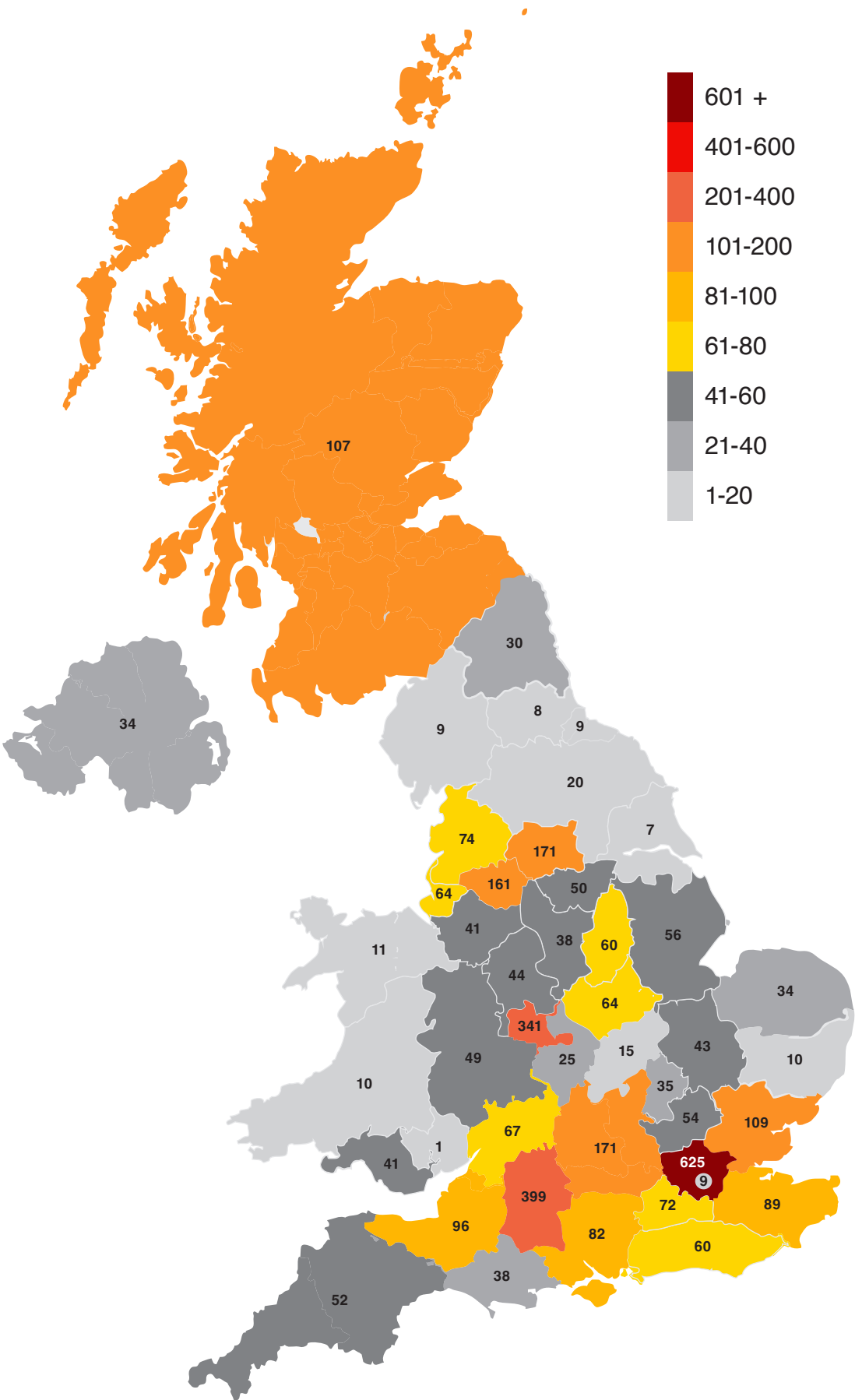
Unseen's collaborative approach means that we are continuously seeking new partnerships and innovative ways of working together through policy and research projects, consultancy for businesses, new referral pathways, or acting on insights from survivor consultants to tackle modern slavery in all its forms. With the support of a £1 million grant from The National Lottery Community Fund, the Helpline is targeting hard-to-reach communities where modern slavery often goes unreported, expanding its reach over the next five years.



# Annex

## Modern slavery potential victims by UK police force region\*

\*The sum of modern slavery potential victims by police force region may differ from the overall total of potential victims as some victims may have been exploited across multiple police force regions.



Police Force Region	PVs
ENGLAND	
Avon and Somerset Police	96
Bedfordshire Police	35
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	43
Cheshire Constabulary	41
City of London Police	9
Cleveland Police	9
Cumbria Police	9
Derbyshire Constabulary	38
Devon and Cornwall Police	52
Dorset Police	38
Durham Constabulary	8
Essex Police	109
Gloucestershire Constabulary	67
Greater Manchester Police	161
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary	82
Hertfordshire Constabulary	54
Humberside Police	7
Kent Police	89
Lancashire Constabulary	74
Leicestershire Police	64
Lincolnshire Police	56
Merseyside Police	64
Metropolitan Police Service	625
Norfolk Constabulary	34
North Yorkshire Police	20
Northamptonshire Police	15
Northumbria Police	30
Nottinghamshire Police	60
South Yorkshire Police	50
Staffordshire Police	44
Suffolk Constabulary	10
Surrey Police	72
Sussex Police	60
Thames Valley Police	171
Warwickshire Police	25
West Mercia Police	49
West Midlands Police	341
West Yorkshire Police	171
Wiltshire Police	399
SCOTLAND	
Police Scotland	107
WALES	
Dyfed Powys Police	10
Gwent Police	1
North Wales Police	11
South Wales Police	41
NORTHERN IRELAND (total)	
Police Service of Northern Ireland	34

## Modern slavery cases (MS) and potential victims (PVs) by exploitation type and UK police force region\*

Police Force Region	2024		Cases by exploitation type						
ENGLAND (total) **	MS Cases	MS PVs	Labour	Sexual	Criminal	Domestic	Other	Various	Unknown
	972	2,826	447	209	89	65	19	56	87
Avon and Somerset Police	42	96	17	9	4	2	2	6	2
Bedfordshire Police	13	35	7	4	2	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	21	43	11	3	0	3	2	0	2
Cheshire Constabulary	17	41	8	3	2	2	0	1	1
City of London Police	3	9	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Cleveland Police	4	9	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
Cumbria Police	3	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire Constabulary	11	38	7	4	0	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall Police	18	52	6	6	3	0	1	1	1
Dorset Police	11	38	8	3	0	0	0	0	0
Durham Constabulary	4	8	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
Essex Police	28	109	15	7	1	0	0	3	2
Gloucestershire Constabulary	15	67	9	1	1	2	0	1	1
Greater Manchester Police	56	161	23	13	7	2	1	5	5
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary	30	82	13	9	2	1	0	2	3
Hertfordshire Constabulary	21	54	12	4	1	1	0	2	1
Humberside Police	5	7	3	0	1	0	0	1	0
Kent Police	31	89	16	5	3	3	0	1	3
Lancashire Constabulary	19	74	12	3	1	1	0	0	2
Leicestershire Police	23	64	15	6	0	0	0	0	2
Lincolnshire Police	10	56	4	3	1	0	0	1	1
Merseyside Police	20	64	9	4	3	0	1	2	1
Metropolitan Police Service	258	625	78	76	23	35	5	19	22
Norfolk Constabulary	13	34	8	3	1	0	0	1	0
North Yorkshire Police	10	20	5	2	2	0	0	1	0
Northamptonshire Police	7	15	4	0	1	0	1	0	1
Northumbria Police	12	30	4	5	3	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire Police	21	60	12	3	3	1	0	1	1
South Yorkshire Police	20	50	9	2	4	1	2	1	1
Staffordshire Police	11	44	6	3	0	1	0	0	1
Suffolk Constabulary	6	10	4	1	0	0	1	0	0
Surrey Police	31	72	20	3	2	2	0	2	2
Sussex Police	32	60	13	7	3	2	0	2	5
Thames Valley Police	39	171	19	12	4	1	0	1	2
Warwickshire Police	9	25	6	1	2	0	0	0	0
West Mercia Police	21	49	12	2	0	2	0	1	4
West Midlands Police	63	341	23	14	7	2	1	5	11
West Yorkshire Police	58	171	24	8	8	2	2	5	9
Wiltshire Police	12	39	6	1	1	1	0	0	3
SCOTLAND (total)	40	107	16	14	2	1	0	5	2
Scotland Police	40	107	16	14	2	1	0	5	2
WALES (total)	27	63	11	5	5	0	1	2	2
Dyfed Powys Police	4	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gwent Police	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
North Wales Police	5	11	3	1	0	0	0	1	0
South Wales Police	18	41	7	4	5	0	0	1	1
NORTHERN IRELAND (total)	6	34	2	2	0	0	0	1	1
Police Service of Northern Ireland	6	34	2	2	0	0	0	1	1

\*Sum of table may differ from the total number of modern slavery cases/potential victims as some cases spanned multiple police force regions.

\*\*49 cases, involving 65 potential victims, were reported to occur within England, but the police force region was unknown.

*\*Sum of table may differ from the total number of modern slavery potential victims as some victims may have been exploited across multiple police force regions.  
\*\*65 potential victims were reported to have been exploited in England in cases where the police force region was unknown.*

Modern slavery (MS) potential victim demographics by UK police force region\*

Police Force Region 2024	Total PVs	Adult					Minor					Unknown		
				Transgender	Gender				Transgender	Gender				
		Male	Female	Female	Non-conforming	Unknown	Male	Female	Female	Non-conforming	Unknown	Male	Female	Unknown
ENGLAND (total)**	2,826	612	612	2	0	564	50	80	1	1	43	94	247	521
Avon and Somerset Police	96	29	26	0	0	7	1	3	0	0	0	2	6	22
Bedfordshire Police	35	12	6	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	10
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	43	5	11	1	0	10	2	0	0	0	1	2	9	2
Cheshire Constabulary	41	10	10	0	0	8	2	2	0	0	2	0	3	4
City of London Police	9	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Cleveland Police	9	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Cumbria Police	9	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Derbyshire Constabulary	38	5	8	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3
Devon and Cornwall Police	52	8	9	0	0	16	1	3	0	0	0	2	9	4
Dorset Police	38	11	6	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	7
Durham Constabulary	8	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Essex Police	109	12	6	0	0	41	0	4	0	0	1	3	13	29
Gloucestershire Constabulary	67	5	9	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	39
Greater Manchester Police	161	31	62	0	0	26	3	8	1	1	8	7	5	9
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary	82	28	17	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	19	12
Hertfordshire Constabulary	54	9	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	8	25
Humberside Police	7	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Kent Police	89	23	13	0	0	20	2	0	0	0	1	0	17	13
Lancashire Constabulary	74	15	17	0	0	29	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	8
Leicestershire Police	64	10	4	0	0	12	2	3	0	0	0	1	12	20
Lincolnshire Police	56	4	26	0	0	0	1	13	0	0	0	7	1	4
Merseyside Police	64	7	10	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	6	5	7	21
Metropolitan Police Service	625	108	171	2	0	125	14	20	0	0	20	20	66	79
Norfolk Constabulary	34	14	4	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
North Yorkshire Police	20	5	5	0	0	7	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Northamptonshire Police	15	6	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Northumbria Police	30	5	12	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	6
Nottinghamshire Police	60	18	15	0	0	17	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
South Yorkshire Police	50	25	11	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	5	3
Staffordshire Police	44	5	7	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	2	4	3	18
Suffolk Constabulary	10	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
Surrey Police	72	16	22	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	1	2	6	19
Sussex Police	60	9	18	0	0	12	3	0	0	0	2	2	3	11
Thames Valley Police	171	20	23	0	0	34	4	6	0	0	0	8	14	62
Warwickshire Police	25	7	4	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	2
West Mercia Police	49	10	14	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	17
West Midlands Police	341	87	50	0	0	109	7	5	0	0	1	5	20	57
West Yorkshire Police	171	46	30	0	0	31	1	4	0	0	6	6	14	33
Wiltshire Police	39	4	9	0	0	22	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
SCOTLAND	107	8	31	0	1	13	2	13	0	0	0	3	15	21
Scotland Police	107	8	31	0	1	13	2	13	0	0	0	3	15	21
WALES	63	18	2	0	0	4	4	2	0	0	0	5	5	23
Dyfed-Powys Police	10	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Gwent Police	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
North Wales Police	11	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Wales Police	41	10	1	0	0	4	3	2	0	0	0	4	5	7
														12
NORTHERN IRELAND	34	3	4	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	16	0	4	2
Police Service of Northern Ireland	34	3	4	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	16	0	4	2



## Referrals on cases\* by UK police force region\*\*


\*Includes case types: modern slavery, labour abuse, non-modern slavery

\*\*The sum of table may differ from the total number of referrals as some cases spanned multiple police force regions

Police Force Region 2024	Law Enforcement	Local Authority	Government	NGO	GLAA
<b>ENGLAND (total)</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>62</b>
Avon and Somerset Police	33	1	7	6	3
Bedfordshire Police	13	0	4	0	1
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	17	0	4	0	4
Cheshire Constabulary	12	0	7	0	2
City of London Police	1	0	1	0	0
Cleveland Police	8	0	1	0	0
Cumbria Police	4	0	1	0	1
Derbyshire Constabulary	18	0	3	0	3
Devon and Cornwall Police	24	1	0	0	1
Dorset Police	9	0	1	0	1
Durham Constabulary	2	0	1	0	0
Essex Police	36	4	6	0	3
Gloucestershire Constabulary	13	2	1	1	0
Greater Manchester Police	50	3	18	2	2
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary	29	0	2	0	1
Hertfordshire Constabulary	24	2	5	0	1
Humberside Police	7	0	2	0	0
Kent Police	36	3	19	0	6
Lancashire Constabulary	15	0	10	0	1
Leicestershire Police	17	0	2	0	0
Lincolnshire Police	8	2	5	0	1
Merseyside Police	19	0	6	1	0
Metropolitan Police Service	213	6	42	9	6
Norfolk Constabulary	11	0	2	0	0
North Yorkshire Police	12	0	3	0	1
Northamptonshire Police	8	0	7	1	0
Northumbria Police	10	0	6	0	1
Nottinghamshire Police	14	0	8	0	3
South Yorkshire Police	14	0	2	1	2
Staffordshire Police	12	0	2	0	1
Suffolk Constabulary	8	0	3	0	1
Surrey Police	37	0	2	0	0
Sussex Police	24	2	3	0	0
Thames Valley Police	49	0	10	0	4
Warwickshire Police	13	0	2	0	0
West Mercia Police	21	0	3	0	1
West Midlands Police	70	5	21	1	7
West Yorkshire Police	43	2	6	0	2
Wiltshire Police	8	1	6	0	5
<b>SCOTLAND (total)</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
Scotland Police	41	5	7	0	2
<b>WALES (total)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
Dyfed Powys Police	8	0	0	0	0
Gwent Police	4	1	2	0	1
North Wales Police	16	0	0	0	0
South Wales Police	13	1	3	0	1
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND (total)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Police Service of Northern Ireland	6	0	2	0	0

# The Helpline's strategic importance

Modern slavery is a hidden crime that demands a coordinated, intelligence-led response. In the words of leading figures in law enforcement and anti-slavery strategy, the Helpline is much more than a phone line – it is an essential channel in the UK's collective effort to dismantle exploitation and deliver justice.



*"The Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline is an invaluable tool in the fight against modern slavery. It provides a crucial channel for intelligence, offering unique data that helps policing identify patterns, disrupt criminal networks, and safeguard victims. By working together, we can turn insights into action, ensuring those trapped in exploitation get the support they need while bringing perpetrators to justice."*

**Sarah Crew**  
**Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police**



*"Tackling modern slavery requires a truly collaborative approach, with law enforcement, government agencies, NGOs, and businesses working together. The Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline acts as a vital bridge between the public, frontline responders, and support services. Its ability to gather, analyse, and share intelligence across sectors ensures that victims are identified more quickly and support is better coordinated. This multi-agency collaboration is essential, we need to make tackling modern slavery everyone's business if we are to dismantle exploitation and create a world free from slavery."*

**Eleanor Lyons**  
**Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**

2024

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Helpline at [modernslaveryhelpline.org](https://modernslaveryhelpline.org)

