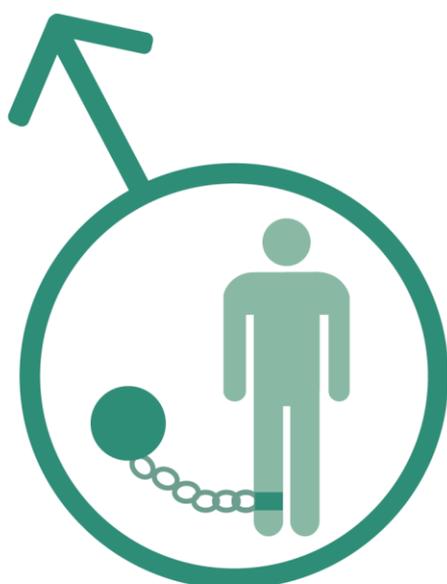


# [Trafficking in Persons and Gender]

2015



Victims of trafficking for  
**forced labour** are mostly males

Victims of trafficking for  
**sexual exploitation**  
are almost exclusively females



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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The data presented in this brief are based on statistics provided to UNODC by member states. These data are based on criminal offences reported to/detected by national authorities.

## Key points:

- Overall, 70 per cent of victims of trafficking in persons are females. Women appear to be mostly trafficked for sexual exploitation, while forced labour concerns mostly men.
- The share of adult female victims has decreased in recent years, offset by the increased percentage of victims who are girls, boys or adult males.
- The majority of traffickers are men, as they represent 72 percent of those convicted of trafficking, but the proportion of females (28 percent) is noteworthy.

## There exists a gender difference, depending on the form of exploitation, for trafficking in persons

Trafficking in persons is a complex crime. For a case to be defined as a trafficking in persons offence, three distinct 'constituent elements' must be present: the act, the means and the purpose. The "act" means the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons. The "means" refers to the method used to lure the victim and the "purpose" is always exploitation of the victim, though this can take various forms including the two most frequently detected types which are sexual exploitation and forced labour.

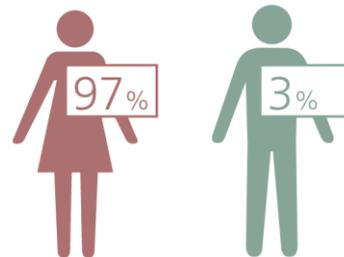
An examination of the gender breakdown within the two main types of exploitation demonstrates the gender differences that exist within this crime.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation concerns mainly women: between 2010 and 2012, the share of women among detected victims of this form of trafficking is 97 per cent. Trafficking of males for the purpose of sexual exploitation, while marginal (3 per cent of total victims for sexual exploitation) is not negligible.

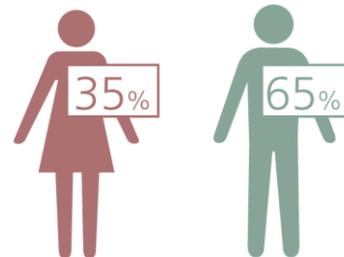
Even though most victims of detected trafficking were subjected to sexual exploitation (53 per cent), the share of forced labour is increasing and it accounts for about 40 per cent of the total number of victims detected.

For this type of exploitation, victims are often utilised as workforce in manufacturing, cleaning, construction, textile production, catering and domestic service. The large majority of such victims are men (almost two thirds), but women are also trafficked for forced labour in significant numbers.

**Figure 1: Percentage distribution of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, by sex, 2010-2012 (or more recent)**

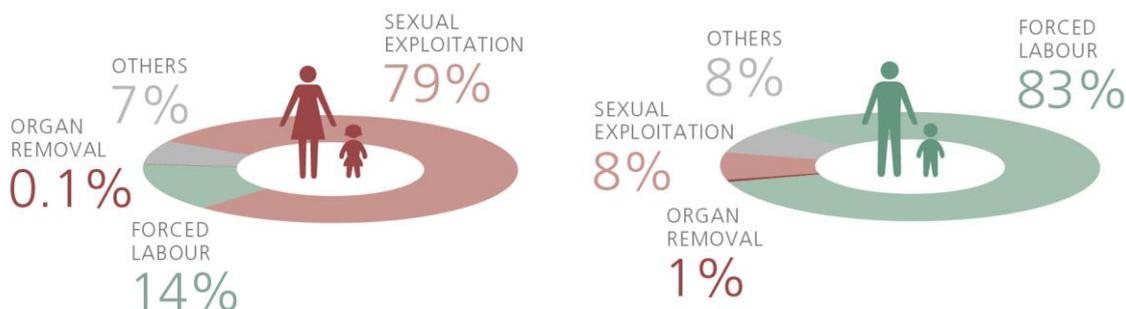


**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of detected victims of trafficking for forced labour, by sex, 2010-2012 (or more recent)**



Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

**Figure 3: Percentage distribution of detected female and male trafficking victims, by form of exploitation, 2010-2012 (or more recent)**



Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

There are pronounced regional differences with regard to these two forms of exploitation. For example, trafficking for sexual exploitation is the major detected form of trafficking in persons in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as it accounts for some 71 per cent of the victims detected in this region. For this region, 83 per cent of all detected victims are female and 17 per cent are male.

In other regions, the shares of trafficking for forced labour are far higher. For example, in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, trafficking for forced labour is the major detected form of trafficking as it accounts for nearly two thirds of the detected victims. In particular, in South Asia, over 80 per cent of the reported victims are trafficked for forced labour while in the Americas, trafficking for forced labour and trafficking for sexual exploitation are detected in nearly identical proportions.

**But the difference is not only in the form of exploitation but also in the age of the victims**

Overall, the majority of victims of trafficking in persons are females, though their share has slowly decreased since 2004. In particular, the share of adult women has decreased from 74 per cent to 49 per cent. However, this is partially offset by the increased share of girls (from 10 per cent to 21 per cent since 2004).

The share of boys out of the total amount of victims has increased from three per cent to 12 per cent, and the share of men who are victims has increased from 13 per cent to 18 per cent. The increased number of boys and men is partly related to the increasing detection of trafficking for forced labour globally, in which the majority of victims are males.

**Figure 3: Share of females (adult women and girls) and males (adult men and boys) among the total number of detected victims, 2004 - 2011**



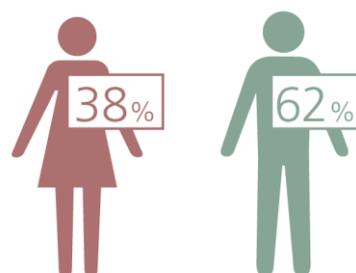
Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

The patterns of trafficking in persons continue to show pronounced regional differences. Children comprise the majority of victims detected in Africa and the Middle East, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the victims in this region. In Europe and Central Asia, trafficking in persons mainly concerns adult victims, as they comprise 83 per cent of the victims detected there. South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas report similar age profile breakdowns, with adults comprising about two thirds of the detected victims, with children making up the remaining one third.

For offenders, even though males still comprise the vast majority, the share of women offenders is high.

Available data for the period 2010 to 2012 indicate that traffickers are mostly men but women are also involved in the organisation and perpetration of this crime. Globally some 62 per cent of the suspected traffickers are male. This means that the share of suspected<sup>1</sup> female offenders (38 per cent) is distinctively high, especially when compared to the share of women offenders in other types of crime (on average, the share of women among persons suspected for any crime is around 18 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

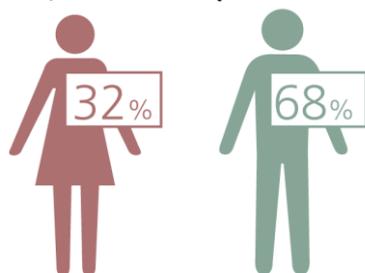
**Figure 5: Percentage distribution of persons suspected for trafficking in persons, by sex, 2010-2012 (or more recent)**



Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

The share of women remains relatively large at the further stages of the criminal justice process, as 32 per cent of persons prosecuted and 28 per cent of convicted traffickers are women.

**Figure 6: Percentage distribution of persons prosecuted for trafficking in persons, by sex, 2010-2012 (or more recent)**



Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

**Figure 7: Percentage distribution of persons convicted for trafficking in persons, by sex, 2010-2012 (or more recent)**



Source: UNODC elaboration on national data.

When looking at the gender and age of offenders and victims during the period 2007-2010, countries with high rates of female offending were generally countries where many underage female victims were detected. This could indicate that female traffickers are more frequently involved in the trafficking of girls.

There are clear regional and subregional differences regarding the involvement of women in trafficking in persons. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, more than three fourths of those convicted of trafficking in persons offences are women while the share of convicted females is also relatively high in Asia (although well below 50 per cent).

### High female involvement as traffickers:

One possible explanation for the high female involvement in this crime is that women may play different roles in the trafficking process, compared to men. One possible explanation is that women's roles may be more visible and therefore more easily detected by law enforcement. For example, women might be more frequently used as recruiters, particularly in cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation, since they may be more easily trusted by other females. Women may also be more likely to be assigned roles as guards, money collectors and/or receptionists in places where exploitation takes place. These 'low-ranking' activities are often more exposed to the risks of detection and prosecution. In addition, the roles of women in the human trafficking process often seem to be those that require frequent interaction with victims. This can increase the risk of detection for female offenders since many investigations of trafficking in persons cases rely heavily on the testimony of victims.

<sup>1</sup> Potential offenders' first contact with the criminal justice system – the time when suspicion arises and/or investigation is initiated but before prosecution.

<sup>2</sup> Data from United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems for 2012.