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Nottingham
Rights Lab

Voices:

Survivor narratives for UK policy and practice

Project report

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January 2024



Authorship and acknowledgements

This report was funded by the University of Nottingham Arts and Humanities Research Council Impact Accelerator Account. Project ID 5759329.

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Content notice

This report deals with the topic of modern slavery and includes references to abuses experienced by people within this context. The report includes accounts from survivors of modern slavery and references to other forms of exploitation and abuse, including physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and child abuse. It also contains discussions of racism, homophobia, sexism, and mental health issues including feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, and self-harming.

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1. Executive summary

This report describes the lived experience of those who have been exploited in forms of modern slavery in the UK. It analyses narratives from Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery—the world’s largest collection of modern slavery survivor narratives—to map UK survivor demographics, drivers of modern slavery, and survivors’ experiences with UK antislavery policy and practice. It maps the barriers survivors face to receiving assistance at the stages of identification, intervention, and recovery to identify key areas for antislavery policy and practice development.

1.1. Background

In 2015 the United Kingdom (UK) passed the Modern Slavery Act, positioning itself as a world leader in efforts to combat forms of exploitation included under the umbrella term of modern slavery. It has been estimated that on any given day in 2021, there were 122,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in the UK. Yet the most recent data for those referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK’s framework for identifying and supporting potential and actual victims of modern slavery, identified only 16,938 potential victims in 2022. The difference between estimated numbers and actual referrals suggests significant gaps in current antislavery policy and practice.

1.2. About the study

This study analyses first-hand accounts of those who have experienced modern slavery in the UK, as found in the Voices archive. It adopts a mixed-methods approach to better understand the experiences of modern slavery survivors in the UK as they interact with key policy stakeholders and the limitations of current policy and practice. It primarily utilised quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 95 UK narratives contained within the archive, supported by a rapid law and policy review.

1.3. Key findings

1. Policy actors do not always fulfil their legal obligations and statutory duties.

- Survivors detail examples of multi-sector failures across public policy actors who have professional responsibilities to identify, intervene, and support survivors of modern slavery in line with international and national legislation and statutory guidance.

2. Current support and aftercare provision is insufficient.

- Survivors’ access to aftercare and the level of support they receive—including physical and mental health, accommodation, practical, emotional, and financial support—often fails to meet levels set out in antislavery policy. Survivors also emphasise the lack of long-term aftercare as a particular limitation of current public policy provisions.

3. Rather than identifying, intervening, and supporting survivors of modern slavery, key policy actors can contribute to their re-traumatisation and criminalisation.

- Survivors’ interactions with key policy actors are often dismissive, condescending, discriminatory, and re-traumatising. Misconduct, harmful stereotypes, and discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and nationality (and/or migration status) shape survivors’ experiences. Such treatment often results in the criminalisation of survivors who are subsequently denied their rights to assistance under existing law and policy.

1.3.1. Drivers of modern slavery in the UK

This study identified five key drivers of modern slavery among UK survivors in the Voices archive:

- Gender norms
- Socio-economic inequality
- Discrimination on the basis of sexuality
- Religious persecution
- Existing and previous experiences of abuse

1.3.2. Barriers to identification, intervention, and support

Survivors in the Voices archive attributed limitations in current antislavery policy and practice to six barriers to identification, intervention, and support:

- Limited knowledge and awareness
- Misconduct
- Discrimination and harmful stereotypes
- Criminalisation of victims
- Fear
- Lack of adequate support and aftercare

1.4. Key recommendations

The report concludes with proposed recommendations for policy and practice to address existing barriers to assistance experienced by survivors of modern slavery in the UK. A framework of overarching recommendations applicable across public sector actors is organised around six themes, with further specialised recommendations for different actors included within:

1. Increase knowledge and awareness of modern slavery
2. Improve implementation of existing law and policy
3. Advance gender and racial equality
4. Improve support for survivors
5. Increase accountability among policy actors
6. Address interconnections between modern slavery and other forms of abuse





2. Introduction

2.1. About the study

The UK government has taken significant steps to combat modern slavery in the last ten years, including by passing the Modern Slavery Act in 2015. However, there is a continued need for reflection on, and development of, policy and practice approaches to combatting the issue.

The most recent Global Slavery Index estimates that there were 122,000 people living in modern slavery on any given day in 2021 in the UK.¹

However, according to National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and Duty to Notify statistics, there were just 16,938 people referred to the Home Office as potential victims of modern slavery in 2022.²

There remain gaps in public policy responses that impact the efficacy of service provision for prevention, intervention, and recovery for people at risk of, or who have experienced, modern slavery. Moreover, the introduction of recent legislation positioning modern slavery as an immigration issue has consequences for public policy and practice, for survivors of modern slavery in the UK, and for those at risk of trafficking to the UK from different countries.

There has increasingly been a call for greater inclusion of the perspective and expertise of those with lived experience of modern slavery in efforts to combat the phenomenon. While lived experience and survivor engagement has grown in the fields of research and advocacy, there has been less engagement with survivors in the development of antislavery policy.³ Ten years after the publication of the UK's Modern Slavery Strategy (2014) and nine years after the passage of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the potential of survivors' narratives for the development of policy and practice remains under-realised, and survivors and their stories continue to be sensationalised by those who rescue and support them.

This project explored the potential for generating survivor-informed public policy recommendations through analysis of the world's largest collection of modern slavery survivor narratives—Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery.

It has been argued that survivor narratives are perhaps the most important tool for the modern antislavery movement because of the “depth and breadth of information they provide, the turning points they identify, the awareness they raise, the empathy they evoke and the action they demand.”⁴ Individual experiences can help ascertain the common drivers of modern slavery and identify intervention points for prevention, abolition, and rehabilitation on national and international scales. Coretta Phillips has advocated for the potential of survivor narratives for social policy because they enable “an exploration of individual and collective realities of harmful exploitation,” and allow a “critical examination of the degree and nature of control exerted.”⁵ Narratives can be useful for understanding how those who have experienced forms of modern slavery in the UK have engaged with key areas of policy, including: education; healthcare; policing, employment; housing; and community services. They enable an examination of how access to services and interactions with key policy actors differ across and between identity factors such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, and migration status. As a result, narratives can point to gaps in policy and practice, as well as barriers to intervention in efforts to address modern slavery in the UK.

In this project, we were also concerned with the extent to which insights into public policy more broadly, the system of laws and regulatory measures underpinning government actions, can be derived from analysis of survivor narratives. In doing so, the research identifies opportunities for the government and other key stakeholders to improve prevention, identification, intervention, and support for people who have experienced modern slavery.



2.2. Methodology

The project adopted a mixed-methods approach to achieve its aims, combining quantitative and qualitative methods using primary data from the Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery archive.

Narratives from survivors who have experienced forms of modern slavery in the UK were collected from the Voices archive and imported into NVivo qualitative analysis software for coding and analysis. This amounted to 95 narratives, which were coded using a mixed deductive-inductive approach. A codebook was developed by project researchers from which we deductively developed survivor identity case classifications that allowed for analysis of gender, age, and country trafficked from (if applicable). We also developed codes for form of exploitation, form of abuse, relationship to perpetrator, perpetrator identities, justice actors, barriers to receiving assistance, methods of control, systemic drivers of exploitation, and recommendations. To ensure consistency in terminology and understanding throughout coding and analysis, team members had regular discussions about definitions and the inclusion and/or exclusion of new codes. Nodes were added using the 'tree organisation' with all nodes and sub nodes being recorded in the code book, alongside notes to guide coding and to further support consistency. New codes were added inductively as new themes emerged from the narratives, and these codes were added to the codebook. The codebook was created as a shareable MS word document, to which all coders had access and could edit (Annex 1).

Once coded, we carried out a simple quantitative analysis of codes to examine the prevalence of different forms of modern slavery in the UK narratives, as well as to analyse survivor demographics and which areas of policy/stakeholder intervention came up most often.

In-depth thematic analysis of the narratives coded at different nodes then allowed project researchers to identify patterns in the systemic drivers of modern slavery, as well as barriers to assistance, which form the structure of this report. From this analysis we developed multi-sectoral policy and practice recommendations to address modern slavery in the UK.

2.3. Defining modern slavery

This report uses modern slavery as an umbrella term for a range of otherwise defined forms of exploitation, as laid out in the UK government's typologies of modern slavery: domestic servitude, labour, criminal, and sexual exploitation.⁶ We have also included forced marriage as a form of modern slavery as it was first designated in the ILO and Walk Free's 2017 global estimates. Human trafficking is included for analysis of the mode by which people become exploited.

The definitions of the forms of exploitation included under the modern slavery umbrella and used for this study are as follows.

- **Forced marriage:** a marriage in which one and/or both parties have not expressed free and informed consent to the union. As set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1964).
- **Forced labour:** all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself [or herself] voluntarily. Article 2(1) of the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29).
- **Human trafficking:** the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. Article 3(a) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish

Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (the Palermo Protocol).

- **Sexual exploitation:** any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- **Slavery:** the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised. Article 1(1) 1926 Slavery Convention.
- **Domestic servitude:** a form of labour where workers work inside private homes, performing labour which is involuntary and exacted under menace of penalty and where, usually, workers are exposed to at least one form of abuse such as: physical and social isolation; restriction of movement; psychological, physical and sexual violence; intimidation and threat; retention of identity documents; withholding of wages; abusive working and living conditions and excessive overtime. United Nations, 2018.
- **Criminal exploitation:** the deliberate manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person, taking advantage of another person or situation for criminal purposes for personal gain. Criminal exploitation comes in many forms, including slavery and being controlled by a person or a group. Safer Communities Wales.

This report also details additional forms of abuse not included under the modern slavery umbrella. This includes specific abuses prohibited under the United Kingdom's domestic abuse and sexual offences legislation, as well as various forms of violence, harassment, physical, emotional, psychological, economic, verbal, spiritual, religious, and/or child abuse.

Note: The scope of the study is limited to those who have experienced modern slavery in the United Kingdom as found in the Voices archive. The sample data is not representative of modern slavery in the UK, rather it is reflective of the focus of those who have collected survivor narratives, including antislavery NGOs, policymakers, and researchers.

2.4. Note on language

“One thing I know for certain is that I don't want to be called a victim. For all I have been through, I am a survivor.” - Layla

The terms used to describe people who have experienced modern slavery vary between different organisations and individuals. While the law tends to identify those who have been subjected to a crime as ‘victims’, this language has been criticised by those who have experienced modern slavery as disempowering, stereotyping, and removing agency from people's decision-making during and after enslavement.

The term ‘survivor’ is preferred by many, though there remain others who do not identify with the idea that they have yet ‘survived’ their experience. The narratives held in the Voices archive have, however, previously been labelled as ‘survivor narratives’ and the people who gave them as ‘survivors’ by the NGOs, activists, researchers, and policymakers who collected them.

As such, we employ the term ‘survivor(s)’ throughout this report. ‘Victim’ is used only when this is the term used by the person who has experienced modern slavery in their narrative or when referring to the criminal justice system.

2.5. The Voices archive

Since 2014, researchers at the Rights Lab, University of Nottingham have been building what is now the world's largest archive of modern slavery survivor narratives.⁷ The archive was launched in 2019 and at the time of writing this report it contains over 1,300 first-hand accounts of people's experiences of different forms of exploitation contained under the modern slavery umbrella.

The archive was built with the aim of creating a new evidence-base that could contribute to a fuller understanding of people's experiences of modern slavery, including *de facto* slavery, institutions and practices similar to slavery (including debt bondage), servitude, human trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage.

Currently, people who have experienced forms of exploitation included under the umbrella term of modern slavery are often marginalised and/or tokenised by being asked to re-tell the stories of what happened to them, often with little support and at the risk of re-traumatisation. The Voices archive was built with the ethos that those best placed to advise on the causes, dynamics, and consequences of modern slavery are those who have experienced it. The archive is useful to a range of practitioners working in the antislavery field for the breadth and depth of knowledge it contains.⁸

Narratives are tagged for location, including the country in which the person has been exploited and the country they are from, allowing for cross-cutting analysis of geographic trends for different types of exploitation. The narratives are also tagged for key themes that emerge, including engagement with justice and policy actors, service providers, other forms of exploitation experienced not under the modern slavery umbrella, dates of exploitation, means of trafficking, and other contextual trends such as education, religion, and conflict. Narratives are also coded against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for analysis of the intersections of global challenges. The archive continues to be added to and edited, now containing over 1,300 first-hand accounts of people with lived experience that are publicly available as an evidence-base for antislavery work. The archive enables scholars, activists, NGOs, policymakers, and educators to analyse patterns of exploitation, uncover trafficking routes, identify drivers and vulnerability factors, and understand challenges people face in liberation.

The online collection is searchable by country, name, type of exploitation (theme), and the date that the narrative was collected. As well as nuanced analysis of people's individual experiences of exploitation, this feature enables analysis of survivor narratives as a genre in the global antislavery movement.¹⁴ The earliest published narrative present in the Voices archive is from 2002, with the most recent being collected in 2020. The number of narratives recorded each year ranges from zero in years 2003, 2004, and 2009, to 134 in 2018, with a significant increase in the collection of narratives by the anti-slavery movement able to be identified from 2013 to 2018.



2.6. The UK legal and policy framework

2.6.1. Modern slavery

The UK government recognises modern slavery as a serious social and political issue and has enacted criminal legislation to protect those at risk of, or who have experienced, different forms of modern slavery.

The UK Modern Slavery Act (2015) consolidated existing offences on human trafficking and slavery and encompasses trafficking for all forms of exploitation. Offences included under the Act are divided into four sections:

Section 1 – Slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour, as construed in accordance with Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights;

Section 2 – Human trafficking. A person commits an offence of human trafficking if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another person with a view to their exploitation.

Section 3 – The meaning of exploitation. For the purposes of section 2, a person is exploited only if one or more of the following subsections apply in relation to the person:

- Slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour
- Sexual exploitation
- Removal of organs etc
- Securing services etc by force, threats or deception
- Securing services etc from children and vulnerable persons

Section 4 – Committing offence with intent to commit offence under Section 2

Section 5 – Sets out the penalties for an offence under sections 1,2 and 4 as follows:

- Sections 1 and 2 *on conviction on indictment*: imprisonment for life
- Sections 1 and 2 *on summary conviction*: imprisonment not exceeding 12 months, or a fine, or both
- Section 4 *on conviction on indictment*: imprisonment not exceeding 10 years
- Section 4 *on summary conviction*: imprisonment not exceeding 12 months, or a fine, or both
- Section 4 when section (5)(3) applies (on indictment): imprisonment for life.

As well as criminal convictions, the Act also established Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders (STROs) to prevent modern slavery abuses from occurring and Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders (STPOs) to prevent further abuse by those who have committed modern slavery violations.⁹

The Act also implemented provisions for the protection of victims, including civil legal aid regarding leave to enter and leave to remain, amendments to the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 regarding special measures for witnesses in criminal proceedings, and the arranging of Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTAs). The MSA has since been amended and ICTAs are now known as Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs).

In 2021, there were 93 prosecutions and 33 convictions for modern slavery offences as a principal offence under the Modern Slavery Act. On an all-offence basis, including where modern slavery charges were brought alongside more serious charges, there were 342 prosecutions and 114 convictions.¹⁰ This is in comparison to a recorded 9,661 modern slavery crimes recorded by the National Crime Agency in 2021-22.¹¹

The **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** was introduced in 2009 to meet the UK's obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Following the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the NRM was extended to all victims of modern slavery in England and Wales. The NRM is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. Referrals to the NRM can only be made by

designated first responder organisations.¹² Where an adult does not consent to referral, specific public authorities are required to notify the Home Office about any potential victims of modern slavery they encounter in England and Wales.

In 2021 the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority was introduced. This body makes NRM decisions for potential victims who do not have leave to remain in the UK.¹³

Adults in England and Wales recognised as potential victims of modern slavery through the NRM have access to specialist tailored support for a period of at least 30 days while their case is considered. This includes access to: legal advice; accommodation; protection; and independent emotional and practical help.¹⁴

A referral into the NRM does not replace or supersede established child protection processes, such as a Section 47 investigation, which should continue in tandem with NRM processes. All children, irrespective of their immigration status, are entitled to safeguarding and protection under the law.

Referrals to the NRM should be for all potential victims of trafficking and modern slavery, who can be of any nationality, and may include British national children.¹⁵

Within five working days of being referred to the NRM, a first-stage reasonable grounds decision should be made. A positive decision triggers a 45-day recovery and reflection period while the competent authority seeks further information to support a conclusive grounds decision.

During the 45 days, the victim cannot be removed from the UK. Police can request an extension to this if required. Victims might apply for asylum or may receive temporary admission. Support provision in the NRM in the UK, unlike in some other countries, is not dependent on the victim participating in a criminal investigation. There is no formal appeal process in the NRM.¹⁶

Individuals who receive a positive conclusive grounds decision may be eligible for discretionary leave to remain. Importantly, discretionary leave to remain is not refugee status. Negative reasonable and conclusive grounds decisions can be challenged by asking for a reconsideration or a judicial review of the decision. Some people recognised as a victim of trafficking following a conclusive grounds decision can be granted discretionary leave to remain for up to thirty months by the Home Office.

The Nationality and Borders Act (2022) made provisions about nationality, asylum, immigration, and victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. Part 5 of the Act includes provisions for modern slavery and human trafficking victims, irrespective of nationality or immigration status, thereby positioning modern slavery as an immigration issue. During the Bill's passage through Parliament, concerns were raised about the impact the legislative provisions would have on the identification, support, and protection of victims of modern slavery and trafficking.¹⁷

The Illegal Migration Act (2023) has serious implications for those who have experienced modern slavery in the UK and have been trafficked from other countries. The Act was enacted to prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes, by requiring the removal from the United Kingdom of certain persons who enter or arrive in the UK in breach of immigration control.¹⁸ The Act includes provisions that have direct repercussions for survivors of modern slavery and amends existing modern slavery legislation.

The Illegal Migration Act's provisions for accelerated removal of persons entering the UK 'illegally' increases risk of removal before the victim identification process has been completed, impacting on safety and recovery from exploitation. Such accelerated removal results in a revocation of existing protections previously guaranteed under the Modern Slavery Act (2015), including: a potential victims' rights not to be removed during the period of time between a positive reasonable grounds and to a final conclusive grounds decision; their right to specialist support services; the Secretary of State's duty to grant temporary permission to stay; and a conclusive grounds decision being made.¹⁹ The Act can also be seen to increase people's risk of exploitation as they are forced to take ever more dangerous and irregular routes to enter the UK. Moreover, it increases risk of exploitation once the person has entered the UK for fear of detention and removal and increases the risk of re-exploitation and a lack of safety after deportation.²⁰

2.6.2. Forced marriage

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is a joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office unit established in 2005 to lead on the government's forced marriage policy, outreach, and casework. In 2022, the FMU gave advice and support in 302 cases related to a possible forced marriage and/or possible female genital mutilation (FGM).²¹

The FMU runs training for service providers on how to support victims of forced marriage, reporting that the numbers of people in receipt of this training and awareness raising activity has risen in recent years. In 2022, the FMU delivered training to 1,537 UK professionals, representing an increase of 52% compared with 2021. In addition, in 2022, 5,209 people from a wide range of professions took the FMU's "Awareness of Forced Marriage" free online course.²²

The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act, enacted in 2007, made provision for protecting individuals against being forced to enter into marriage without their free and full consent and for protecting individuals who have been forced into marriage without such consent.

The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act established **Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs)** for the purposes of protecting a person from being forced into marriage or from any attempt to force them into marriage; or protecting a person who has been forced into marriage. FMPOs may contain prohibitions, restrictions, or requirements for the purposes of the order. They are made by the family courts and can be made in emergency situations so that immediate and enforceable protection can be put in place.

Family Court statistics suggest that the number of applications and orders made for FMPOs is small. While numbers fluctuate each quarter, there has been a long-term upward trend from their introduction in November 2008 until the end of 2019.²³

Forced Marriage was made a criminal offence under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014). A person found guilty of an offence of forced marriage is liable on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for up to seven years.

2.6.3. Related statutory guidance

The UK government has published statutory guidance for modern slavery and other associated crimes to assist agencies in complying with the law.

For modern slavery, guidance is aimed at competent authority staff in any part of the UK who make decisions on whether an individual is a potential victim/victim of modern slavery for the purposes of the NRM. It includes guidance for those within public authorities who may encounter potential victims of modern slavery and/or those who are involved in supporting those who have experienced modern slavery.

The UK government has developed statutory guidance for the following harms and crimes related to modern slavery:

- Modern slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales (under Section 49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage and multi-agency practice guidelines on handling cases of forced marriage
- Domestic abuse statutory guidance
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines
- Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners



3. Experiences of modern slavery in the UK in the Voices archive

Though not a representative sample, the narratives in the Voices archive can offer insights into individual and common experiences of modern slavery in the UK, including who is being exploited and how. This provides important lessons from which public policy gaps can be identified and interventions can be developed.

3.1. Forms of modern slavery

Table 1 shows the forms of modern slavery identified from narratives of people with lived experience of modern slavery in the UK in the Voices archive. Any time a new form of exploitation emerged from the narratives, a new code was created. Codes were organised in a tree formation, with all narratives coded to a core form of modern slavery and then coded to sub-nodes (see codebook in Annex 1). For example, 83 narratives (87%) detailed experiencing forced labour, 42 (45%) experienced sexual exploitation, 26 (28%) experienced domestic servitude, and 8 (8.5%) experienced criminal exploitation. There are only 6 (6.4%) narratives in the archive in which people referenced being forced into marriage in the UK, highlighting a dearth of collected narratives rather than being representative of the prevalence of forced marriage in the country.

Fifty narratives (53%) include examples of people being trafficked to the UK as part of their exploitation in modern slavery. Of these, 29 narratives (58%) reported trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, 10 (20%) for domestic servitude, 1 (2%) for forced marriage, and 6 (12%) for forced criminal activity.

Table 1. Forms of modern slavery reported by survivors experiencing exploitation in the UK in the Voices archive

Form of modern slavery	Number of narratives
1. Forced labour	82
▪ Sexual exploitation	42
▪ Domestic servitude	26
▪ Forced criminal activity	8
2. Forced marriage	6
3. Human Trafficking	48
▪ a. for sexual exploitation	29
▪ b. for domestic servitude	10
▪ c. for forced marriage	1
▪ d. for criminal exploitation	6

Survivors often detailed experiencing more than one form of modern slavery in their narrative, either at the same time or at different stages of their story. For example, Cristina was forced into marriage by her mother at the age of thirteen and then trafficked by her husband from England to Spain and forced to steal under the threat of violence.²⁴ Sheila was trafficked from Nigeria to the UK on the promise of receiving an education. Instead, her trafficker “kept me in the house to do all the housework. She also started bringing men to the house to sleep with me for money.”²⁵ As a result, many of the narratives were coded for the presence of more than one form of exploitation, and this is reflected in Table 1.

That survivors often reported more than one form of exploitation suggested that different forms of modern slavery cannot necessarily be addressed in isolation but require the implementation of integrated approaches and policies that account for interconnections between forms of modern slavery and exploitation across driving factors.

3.2. Archive demographics

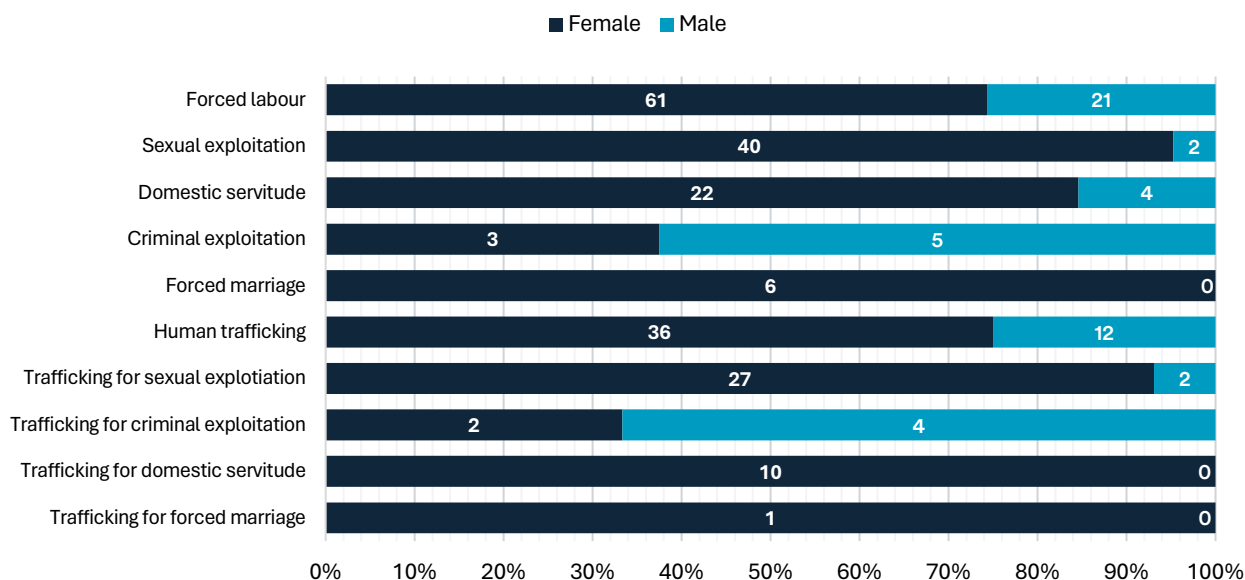
3.2.1. Survivors

Of the 95 UK narratives in the Voices archive, 71 (75%) are from women and girls and 24 (25%) are from men and boys. There are currently no UK narratives from transgender or nonbinary individuals and, as such, research findings and recommendations presented cannot be said to represent these individuals' experiences of modern slavery or the kind of tailored action and support they may require.

Gender

Gender was identified as a factor shaping forms of exploitation experienced. While it should be kept in mind that, as noted, women and girls account for a higher overall percentage of UK narratives in the archive, Figure 1 also shows that women and girls account for the highest percentage of every form of exploitation apart from criminal exploitation. Of those who experienced domestic servitude, 22 (85%) were women and girls, and 4 (15%) were men and boys. For sexual exploitation, 40 narratives (95%) were from women and girls and just 2 (5%) were from men and boys. Of narratives from people who experienced forced criminal activity, 3 (38%) were women and girls and 5 (63%) were men and boys, and for forced marriage, all narratives were from women and girls. In the entire Voices archive covering over 100 countries, there is just one forced marriage narrative from a boy, pointing not only to the highly gendered nature of forced marriage but also to the lacuna in first-hand accounts of forced marriage of men and boys, which continues to be an under-researched area. For those who were trafficked into their form of exploitation, 36 (75%) were women and girls and 12 (25%) were men and boys.

Figure 1. Forms of modern slavery in the UK narratives in the Voices archive by gender

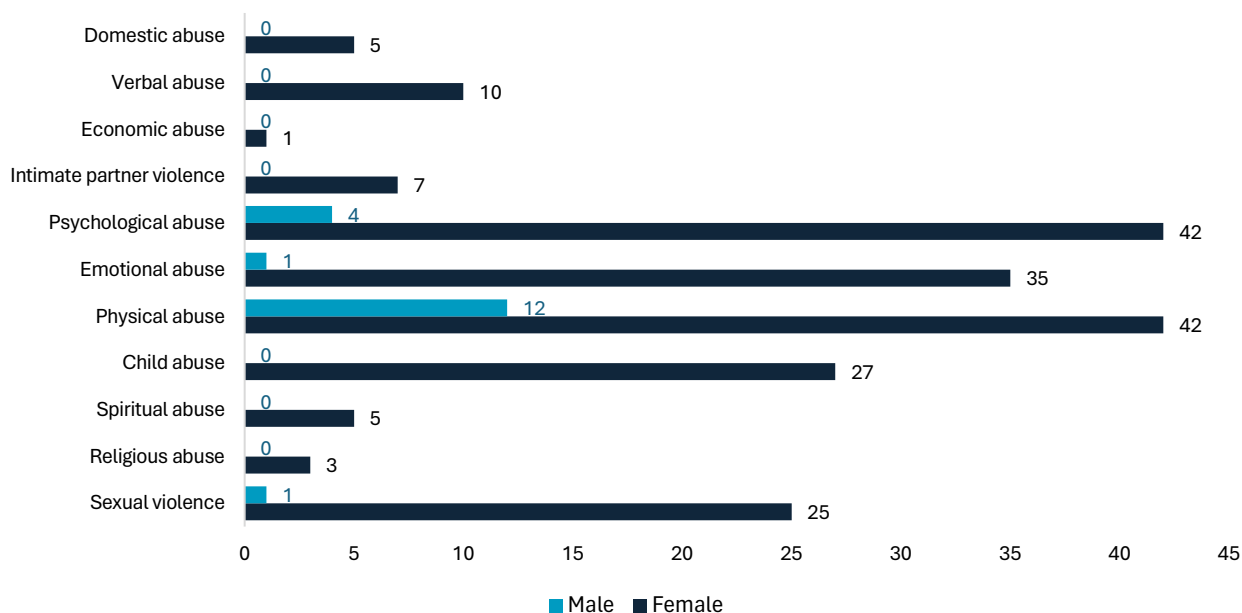


Survivors in the archive also highlighted experiencing additional forms of abuse within their modern slavery context. In total, 59 (62%) narratives reported other forms of abuse. There was no statistically significant difference between the rates at which survivors of different genders reported experiencing other forms of abuse: 62% (44) of all narratives from women and girls and 58% (14) of narratives from all men and boys in the archive.

It is likely that most people exploited in modern slavery in the UK also experience other forms of abuse, such as sexual violence, physical abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, domestic abuse, economic abuse, child abuse, religious abuse, spiritual abuse, and verbal abuse.

Figure 2 illustrates the number of references to these forms of abuse by survivors in the Voices archive. That is, rather than the number of survivors who individually reported these forms of abuse, Figure 2 accounts for the number of times in which these forms of abuse were mentioned (and therefore coded) by survivors.

Figure 2. References to additional forms of abuse in UK narratives in the Voices archive by gender



Although women and girls and men and boys experience additional abuses at similar rates, the forms of additional abuse they report differ along gendered lines. There are 25 references from women and girls reporting experiencing sexual violence within the context of their exploitation.²⁶ Within this form of abuse, there are 23 references to rape and 3 references to experiences of sexual harassment (all of whom were children).²⁷ There is only one reference to experiences of sexual violence from a man/boy. John A was trafficked from Uganda to the UK and locked in a room by himself for a month before “a white man in his 40s came and said he could help me [...] we drove away and after some time he stopped and told me to perform a sexual act on him.”²⁸ The low reporting of sexual violence in men and boys is likely impacted not only by the relative presence of such experiences, but by a range of factors that inhibit both the identification of sexual violence experienced by men and boys by antislavery organisations and self-reporting of such experiences (e.g. stereotypes, social and gender norms, stigma and shame, and ideal victim archetypes).

The most commonly referenced form of additional abuse experienced by survivors in the archive was physical abuse, which was referenced 54 times. This includes 42 references from women and girls, which can be attributed to 25 individual narratives (35% of all female narratives) and 12 references from men and boys, which can be attributed to 11 individual narratives (46% of all male narratives). This shows men and boys reporting a higher rate of physical abuse in addition to their modern slavery experience than that reported by women and girls.

Figure 2 also shows that while women and girls reported and referenced each additional form of abuse, men and boys were only coded as experiencing physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, and sexual violence. This does not mean that men and boys did not (and do not) experience all other forms of abuse, but that these forms of abuse are not reported by men and boys in the UK narratives in the Voices archive, and as such research findings are not reflective of these experiences among men and boys.

Other demographics

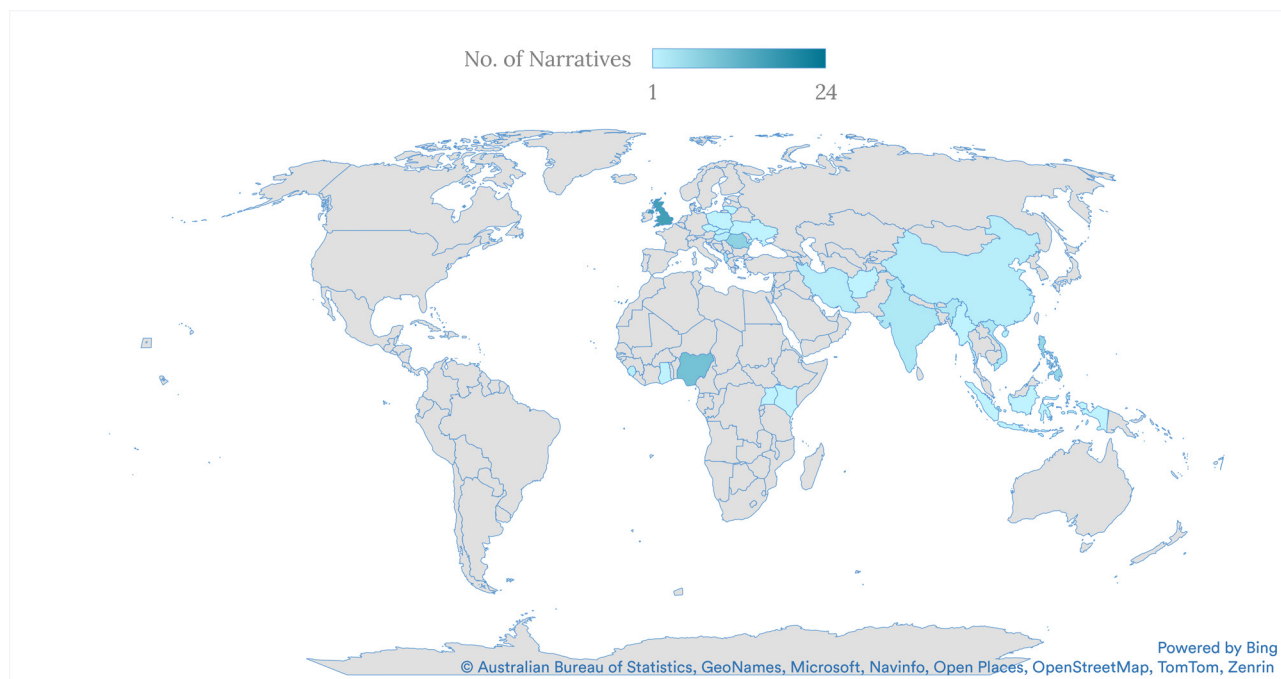
In addition to coding for age and gender, the project team coded narratives for other demographic factors, including sexuality, disability, race, and countries that people were trafficked from. The latter of these codes is particularly relevant for analysing narratives for potential policy recommendations in the context of the introduction of recent legislative provisions in the UK that conflate immigration and modern slavery and position modern slavery as an immigration issue (see section 2.6). People in the Voices archive did not often reference identity factors of sexuality, ability, or race unless such factors were perceived to be drivers of their exploitation and/or to have directly shaped the kinds of exploitation and abuse experienced. As a result, these factors were only known to researchers (and therefore coded) if they were directly referenced.

There are two narratives in which survivors mention their sexuality as a key identity factor for shaping their experience. No survivors of modern slavery in the UK narratives referred to their race as being a driving factor.

Narratives were also coded for the nationality of survivors who experienced modern slavery in the UK. In 24 of the narratives, survivors either did not detail their nationality or gave only regional and/or continental level information about where they were from. This included 3 survivors who said they were from Eastern Europe, 3 survivors from an unidentified African country, and one survivor who reported that they were from West Africa. These 24 narratives were coded as 'unknown'.

Figure 3 shows the density and geographic spread of nationalities of survivor narratives in the Voices archive who were exploited in modern slavery in the UK. UK citizens are most represented in the archive, with 16 narratives (17%), followed by 10 survivors (11%) from Nigeria, 7 (7%) from Romania, and 6 (6%) from the Philippines. Other nationalities represented are: Albania (4); India (3); Vietnam (3); China (2); Hungary (2); Iran (2); Sierra Leone (2); Afghanistan (1); Czech Republic (1); Ghana (1); Indonesia (1); Kenya (1); Lagos (1); Lithuania (1); Myanmar (1); Poland (1); Slovakia (1); Trinidad (1); Uganda (1); and Ukraine (1).

Figure 3. Nationality of survivors in the Voices archive exploited in modern slavery in the UK



The nationalities present in the Voices archive among survivors exploited in modern slavery in the UK correspond to national statistics on the nationality of those referred to the NRM. In the most recent UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery (2021), Home Office statistics showed that the most common nationality of potential victims in 2020 was UK nationals (34%), followed by Albanian nationals (15%) and Vietnamese nationals (6%). Albanian and Vietnamese nationalities are also represented in the Voices archive, although not in the top three represented, which were UK, Nigerian, and Romanian nationals.

The geographical scope of nationalities in the Voices archive points to the necessity of resisting a framing of modern slavery as solely an issue of immigration. There is a need for robust support and resources for the identification, intervention, and support of both those trafficked to the UK from different countries and UK citizens exploited in modern slavery in the country.

3.2.2. Perpetrators

When analysing perpetrator identities, the research team coded any mention of an individual who was directly involved in a survivor's exploitation or who acted as a facilitator. This did not include members of the public who unknowingly interacted with a person in modern slavery, for example children or young adults in a household where someone was in domestic servitude or people who had purchased sexual services but were unaware of the exploitative context within which a person was being forced to perform such services. However, if adults in a household or someone who had purchased sexual services were made aware of the exploitative nature of services being provided, and then subsequently continued to participate in the exploitation, they were coded as a perpetrator. Furthermore, if it was detailed that someone purchased sexual services from a minor under the age of 18-years old, they have been coded as a perpetrator.

There were several cases in which demographic data for perpetrators was not given, with survivors referring to 'they' or 'the traffickers' in place of any identifying information. This can be a method employed by people with lived experience of modern slavery and other forms of trauma (PLE) to prevent having to recount details about their exploiters that could be triggering and/or re-traumatising. Nevertheless, the archive contains information about perpetrator identities that has relevance for the development of public policy recommendations, particularly information about perpetrator relationships to victims.

In 53% of UK narratives survivors reference their relationship to their perpetrator(s). In 68% of these narratives, the perpetrator(s) was someone the person being exploited already knew.

Of the narratives that reported their relationship to their perpetrator:

- 16% reported being exploited by an intimate partner
- 12% reported exploitation from someone with whom they had a familial relationship (8% extended family, 2% parents)
- 16% reported the exploitation being family facilitated (where a family member arranges or sells their child into exploitation but does not exploit them themselves)
- 20% reported exploitation by a friend
- 20% mentioned exploitation by an employer
- 60% of narratives mentioned either a single or additional perpetrator who was a stranger to them

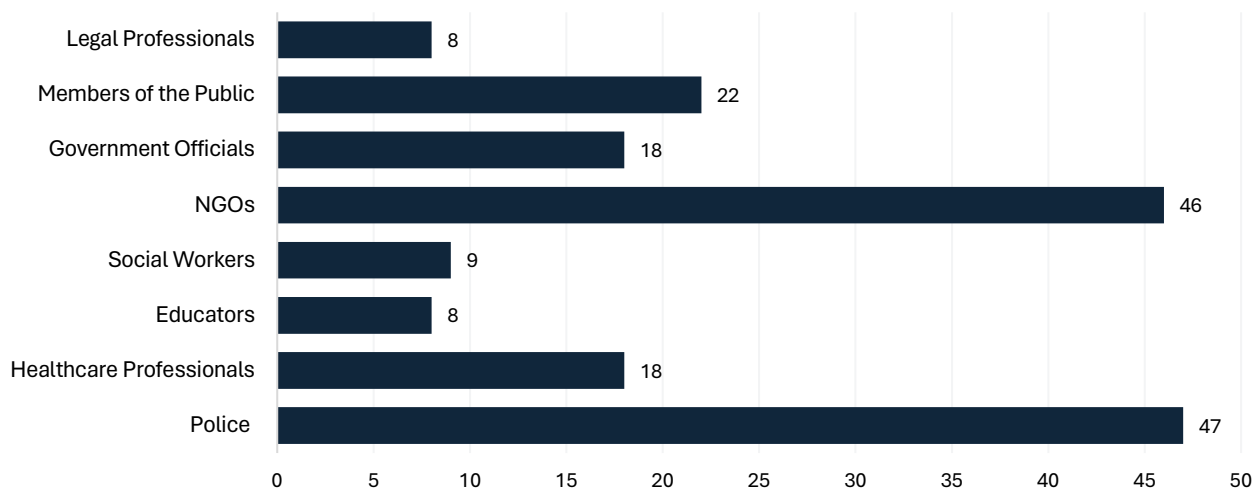
That perpetrators of modern slavery, as experienced by UK survivors in the Voices archive, are often people whom those at risk of exploitation already know, and that for some are people with whom they live (in the cases of intimate partners, family and extended family) suggests the potential for integration of domestic abuse and child abuse policies and processes into efforts to prevent escalation to exploitation in modern slavery.

Based on the form of exploitation experienced, those in sexual exploitation or forced labour were more likely to be exploited by a stranger than someone they knew. In cases of sexual exploitation, family members were more commonly facilitators rather than perpetrators. Of the 6 forced marriage narratives, all referenced direct family members as perpetrators of exploitation.

3.2.3. Key policy actor interactions

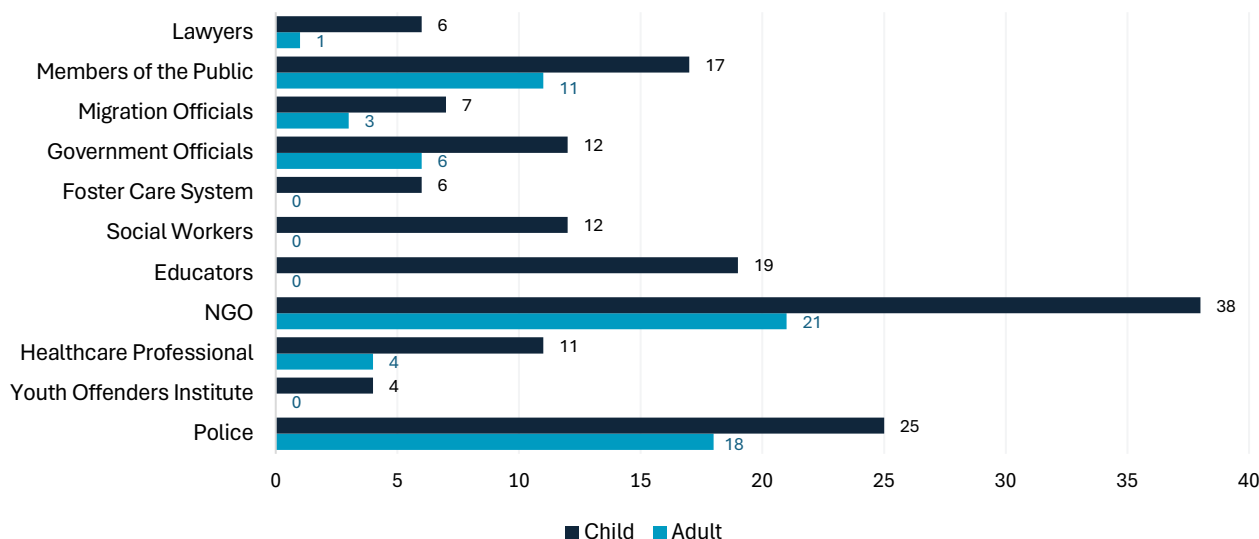
The majority of survivors—71 survivors (75%)—reference interactions with key policy actors in their narratives. As shown in Figure 4, of these, 47 narratives (66%) reported interactions with the police, positioning police as key policy actors and policing as a key policy area for addressing modern slavery in the UK. Following closely behind were interactions with NGO workers and support services, with which 46 survivors (65%) engaged. Other key policy actors coded were healthcare professionals, educators, social workers, government officials, members of the public, and legal professionals. It is these key actors, identified through analysis of the UK survivor narratives that are the focus of the project’s analysis and key policy recommendations (Sections 4-7).

Figure 4: Number of narratives in the Voices archive by interaction with policy actors



There was no significant distinction between the extent to which survivors of modern slavery in the UK interacted with different policy actors by gender, with both men and boys and women and girls both referring to interactions with the police and NGOs most often. However, age did have an impact on these interactions. As Figure 5 shows, there are several identified key policy actors with whom only children under the age of eighteen years old reference interacting. This includes social workers and the foster care system, educators, and youth offenders’ institutes as a sub-section of policing. Results from the survivor narratives illustrate the need for age-sensitive and tailored provisions among policy actors, as well as for those actors more likely to be responsible for intervening and supporting in instances of exploitation among children.

Figure 5: References to interactions with policy actors by age among UK narratives in the Voices archive



Interactions with the NRM

As the government framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in the UK, and ensuring they have the appropriate support, it is interesting that only 11 survivors (12%) reference their experience in the NRM. Though relatively few, the UK narratives give insights into individual's experiences in the NRM, which can be useful for policy. For example, Mary B reported that though she received a positive reasonable grounds decision, she did not have the right to work, which made being in the system "really quite hard." She suggests that the NRM is not really "for us domestic workers. We are workers; we can work. This is what I want: just for us to be allowed to work, just like any other workers."²⁹ Other narratives also cite the inability to work while in the NRM as a barrier to recovery from exploitation as it limits survivors' capacity for economic independence. In doing so, it leaves people vulnerable to re-exploitation, particularly when socio-economic factors acted as a driver for their initial exploitation. Natalie recalled how, when her time at the safehouse ended after her 45 days in the NRM:

"I pretty much left with what I arrived with, my clothes. I had no home to go to, no job nothing major changed in my life other than wasting 6 weeks of my life in a house where I felt suffocated, controlled, and vulnerable again."³⁰

Survivors also pointed out the limited time in which the NRM provides support for survivors, with four of the narratives citing this as a significant limitation and barrier to recovery. Maya A recalled that 'Although I am extremely grateful to have been in a safehouse, 45 days isn't enough time to establish the needs in each individual case, let alone recover from them.'³¹ Survivors' experiences of support and aftercare services, including in the NRM, are discussed in more detail in Section 5.6. However, it is evident from survivors' accounts of being in the NRM that it does not account for the longer-term recovery needs of those who have experienced trauma and exploitation. The low number of narratives in the Voices archive who were referred to the NRM also suggests that may have been a failure among key policy actors to comply with their duties under the Modern Slavery Act (2015). This is particularly the case among those policy actors with the highest numbers of survivor interactions in the archive: the police and NGO workers. Of the 47 survivors who interacted with the policy actors in their modern slavery cases, just five also report being referred to the NRM (Layla, Maya A, Natalie, Ope, and Sarah). Of the 46 survivors who interacted with NGO workers, just four were referred to the NRM (Natalie, Sarah, Witness A, and Witness B). The narratives therefore suggest the need for improved implementation of effective training to increase key policy actors' awareness of their legal obligations to those who are identified as having experienced modern slavery in the UK.





4. Drivers of Modern Slavery in the UK in the Voices archive

4.1. Socio-economic factors

“Our life there was very hard, and it was difficult for me to find work to support my family. One day a very good friend told me that he could get me work in the UK. He told me that I would be able to earn enough money to send some home to my family.” – Jaroslava

Socio-economic push and pull factors were the most referenced driver in the narratives that led people to become vulnerable to exploitation. Over half of all survivors—49 survivors (52%)—report experiencing economic pressure and/or homelessness, which pushed people to seek employment and economic security. For example, Abdul reported that he was “struggling to support my family when I saw an ad for chefs in London.” Acute and long-term financial pressure can lead people to take greater risks to support their families, accepting false job or education offers that required them to resettle in the



UK. Abdul was told to pay up front for his visa, “so I borrowed £15,000 from moneylenders.” However, once he arrived in the UK, rather than working as a chef in London “I was to get on a bus to Ballachulish, Scotland. It was so remote. I was the only worker for 37 hotel bedrooms, and two tourist coaches would arrive every day. Every month I needed to send money home, but I never got paid. The trafficker didn’t just take my money. He took everything from me.”³²

Some survivors for whom their economic situation was a driving factor of their exploitation referenced having nothing to lose, illustrating how economic pressure can push people into risky decision-making. Dinh was polishing shoes in Vietnam when a regular customer offered him the opportunity to go to school in England, where he could stay and have his own room with food provided. He recalled that “as I was homeless and had nothing to lose, I agreed.” However, upon arrival in the UK he was handed over to two men who “told me that we had all been trafficked and sold and that we should do what we are told otherwise we would be beaten up and killed.”³³

For some, the perception of the UK as a country in which people have the opportunity to earn a living and get a good education can make it a draw and can increase the risk of exploitation in modern slavery in the country among those already made vulnerable by their economic circumstances. This is often manifested in promises of a ‘better life’ in the UK that go unquestioned, such as in the case of Dorina who met a man who promised her “a job and a house and a better life in the UK.” However, upon arrival she was “forced to have sex with lots of different men and often beaten.”³⁴

Economic factors can be compounded by exploitation in modern slavery, with support services in the UK post-exploitation providing limited and sometimes ineffective provision for survivors to improve the economic circumstances that drove their exploitation in the first place. This creates a high risk of people becoming re-exploited as they become unable to support themselves and their families. As noted in Section 3.2.3., this is particularly the case when survivors are denied the right to work while in the NRM system and waiting a decision on their migration status. The effects of either real or perceived economic limitations prevent victims from risking leaving their current situation or being able to return to their home state. The lack of economic opportunity while within the NRM often generated a sense of hopelessness and inability to consider possibilities in the future.

4.2. Discrimination

4.2.3. Sexuality

Systemic oppression and persecution were reported in several narratives as a driver of modern slavery. This included 2 narratives (4%) in which survivors said that experiences of discrimination based on their sexuality contributed to their modern slavery vulnerability. In her narrative, Promise, who is from Nigeria, highlighted that “LGBT people are not allowed there. They see them as a witchcraft. I was meant to be sacrificed to the Gods. To appease them for the crime I did for loving a girl.”³⁵

Similarly, Ugandan citizen John A recalled that “When I was around 15 years old I realized that I was gay. I was often threatened and harassed by other people because being homosexual in Uganda was forbidden. Anyone exposed could face imprisonment and torture.”³⁶ Later in his life, John A moved back in with his mother and tells of how rumours about his sexuality led to his mother’s death and his exploitation in the UK:

“Rumours spread about me quickly and our neighbours started harassing her.

One night someone set fire to our house and my mother died inside. As if this was not heart-breaking enough, the rest of our family blamed me for her death and disowned me.

I was so unhappy and scared. The people who burnt down our house were looking for me in order to kill me. I didn’t know what to do. In the end, I contacted a friend who knew someone who could get me out of the country. I sold my car and managed to put together the \$2000 I needed to pay for my travel, without knowing where I would end up. This person helped with my visa application and promised to take me to a place where I could have a good job and future.”³⁷

Homosexuality is criminalised in both Nigeria and Uganda, as is the gender expression of trans people. Evidence on the contours of LGBTQIA+ experiences of modern slavery is limited, and this is an under-researched area. However, it is essential that modern slavery policy in the UK takes into account the extent to which a person’s identity can be criminalised and persecuted, and that LGBTQIA+ people’s lives can be at risk when making asylum decisions. It is not just LGBTQIA+ people from abroad that are at increased risk of exploitation in modern slavery and as such tailored support and service provision for those whose gender or sexuality has contributed to their vulnerability is required across the UK regardless of a person’s nationality or migrant status.

4.2.4. Religion

“When I decided to convert to Christianity my parents threw me out of the house, so I went to live with a friend and worked in a restaurant to support myself.” – Ada B.

Three narratives (6%) in the Voices archive reference religious persecution as a driver of their modern slavery (Ada B, Mo, and Olabisi). Fleeing religious persecution in one’s home country increases a person’s vulnerability to modern slavery as they seek safety and security, sometimes through irregular migration. Mo was born in Myanmar and fled religious persecution at 6 years old with his family because “Burmese people don’t like Muslim people. And they tried to kill everybody, so we ran away.” Mo and his family escaped to Bangladesh where he stayed for eight years. At 14-years-old, Mo ran away from the camp to escape the extreme poverty he was living in. He came to the UK by lorry, where he was subsequently exploited in domestic servitude. He describes how, upon arriving, “they put me in to one house like... two years I put up with that I was like... cleaning, cooking, serving, moving.”³⁸

The poverty and associated hardships experienced by those forced to leave their homes because of systematic oppression increase a person’s willingness to take risks in order to improve their lives and earn a living. Like Mo, Olabisi was forced to leave his village, in his case in Nigeria, “when my family were killed for being Christians.”³⁹ Olabisi fled to Auchi and begged on the streets before moving to Lagos where he “met a man who promised to find me work in the UK.”⁴⁰

“The man gave me a passport and paid for my flight to the UK. A man was waiting for me at the airport. He took me back to his flat and made me have sex with him lots of times. I heard him discussing selling me, but in the end, he decided to keep me for himself. I was told that if I tried to escape or ruin his reputation, he would kill me and sell my body to people who did voodoo for money.”⁴¹

The inter-connection between religious persecution, and socio-economic factors can be seen in the examples of Mo and Olabisi who were both made homeless, the former forced to live in a refugee camp, and the latter on the streets, when they were forced to leave their countries to escape violence. This link increased vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking as people sought safety and security.

4.2.5. Gender

Gender oppression and patriarchal societal norms are a driver of modern slavery in the UK as reported by survivors in the Voices archive. Though this is the case for different forms of modern slavery, in the archive it is particularly pronounced in instances of forced marriage. The ways in which heteronormative patriarchal constructions of male and female social roles shape vulnerabilities to forced marriage are apparent in Laila’s narrative. Laila’s family was forced to leave her home country of Iran because of her father’s political activities. They eventually resettled in the UK after her mother was diagnosed with leukaemia. After her mother died when she was 12-years old, “my dad got remarried, to an Iranian woman, who had been married before as a child when she was 13. Everything changed. She was strict and controlling.”⁴² Laila recalls that her new stepmother “talked constantly about how women and girls should behave. She was training us to be good housewives. This is all she thought our futures should hold.”⁴³ Her narrative reveals the necessity of promoting gender among young people to combat narratives about ‘traditional’ societal roles that limit women’s lives to the domestic sphere of wife and mother at the expense of their participation on equal footing with men in public and political life.

4.2.6. Previous experiences of violence and abuse

Over a third of narratives—34 narratives (36%)—in the Voices archive were coded as referencing previous experiences of abuse and/or violence as drivers of their modern slavery. Figure 6 illustrates that sexual abuse and physical abuse were the most common former experiences of abuse reported by survivors as drivers of their exploitation in modern slavery, closely followed by child abuse experienced by 11 survivors in the archive.

Figure 6: Previous experiences of abuse by gender among UK narratives in the Voices archive

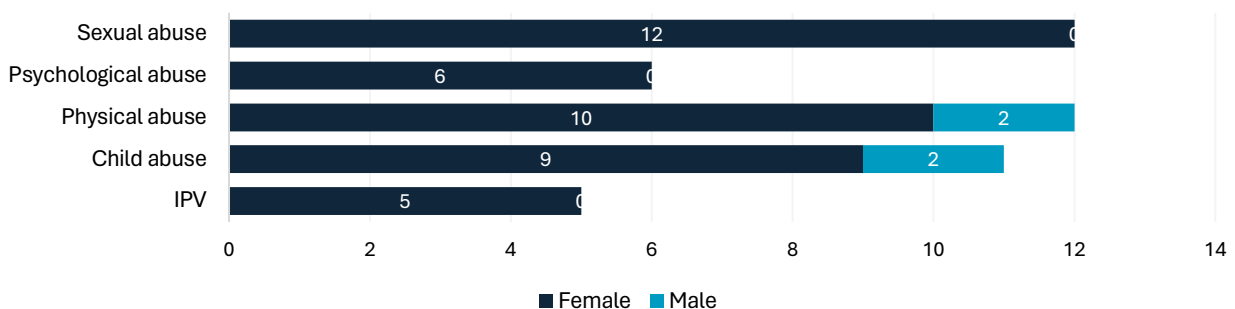


Figure 6 also shows the gender distribution of those who cited previous experiences of abuse as a driver. While women and girls are represented by each form of abuse reported by survivors, men and boys in the archive only reported experiencing child abuse and physical abuse prior to their modern slavery experiences. This points to the gendered nature of these forms of abuse and like the discussion of additional forms of abuse experienced *within* the modern slavery experience, suggest the need for integration of modern slavery policy and practice with that of related policy for domestic abuse. The data here also suggest links between modern slavery and sexual violence, violence against women and girls, and child safeguarding for consideration in policy and practice.



5. Barriers to identification, intervention, and support

“There were a lot of opportunities for various agencies to identify the trafficking and they hadn’t identified it from a young age.” – Witness A

In their narratives, survivors often detailed interactions (or lack of) with key policy stakeholders including the police, social workers, educators, government officials, and healthcare professionals, as well as members of the public. Analysis of UK-based survivor narratives revealed instances of missed opportunities and barriers for identification, intervention, and for providing adequate aftercare and support. This included key moments in which an individual demonstrated indicative signs of being exploited or being at risk of exploitation. In some cases, interactions were with key actors who have legal obligations to act on signs of potential exploitation and upon suspicion of crimes being committed. The result is prolonged periods of preventable exploitation, increased exposure to additional forms of violence and abuse, an increased risk of re-exploitation, and prolonged recovery periods.

Six key issues that hinder identification, intervention, and support in the UK were identified through the survivor narratives in the Voices archive. These issues are cross-cutting across policy actor responsibilities and shaped people’s experiences, perceptions, and interactions with different actors:⁴⁴

1. Limited knowledge and awareness
2. Misconduct
3. Discrimination and harmful stereotypes
4. Criminalisation of victims
5. Lack of adequate support and aftercare
6. Fear

These issues often intersect and work together alongside systemic factors to impact people’s ability to access help, safety, and security at different stages of their exploitation experience.

5.1. Limited knowledge and awareness

“I didn’t know I was being trafficked. I didn’t know that trafficking happened here, and even up to this day people are saying, ‘Which country were you trafficked from? How can you be a British citizen and be trafficked?’” – Witness A

The lack of knowledge and awareness about modern slavery, who it happens to, what it looks like, how it can occur, and the effects it can have on people among and across key policy actors—including police, social workers, educators, healthcare professionals, and members of the public—was highlighted as a key factor in survivors’ experiences. While systems and procedures are in place across different policy actors for training and knowledge building, including ‘spot the signs’ training, since at least the introduction of the Modern slavery Act 2015 (MSA), even post-2015 narratives demonstrated clear instances in which actors lacked sufficient applicable knowledge to act on signs of modern slavery and other forms of violence and abuse. This led not only to missed opportunities for intervention, but also missed opportunities to prevent exploitation before it could occur and further harm from occurring.

10%

of UK narratives reference a lack of knowledge among key actors

5.1.1. Identification

One issue reported by survivors was a lack of understanding across different policy actors about who is exploited in modern slavery, which often led to failures to identify despite the presence of key indicators of exploitation. For example, Amy A, who was sexually exploited from the ages of eleven to thirteen by a man that lived in the same village as her in the UK, reflected that “the authorities didn’t know this sort of abuse happened,” and that her exploitation went unnoticed because “they [the police] were on the lookout for international trafficked victims.”⁴⁵ Witness A also emphasises how a lack of knowledge and awareness of the exploitation of British citizens in the UK among healthcare professionals impacted her case. After having to undergo surgery for injuries they acquired because of sexual exploitation, Witness A noted that “because of the fact that I was British they would often say, “So where were you trafficked?” So straight away you would think they are not understanding.”⁴⁶ They suggest that “even to this day people are saying, ‘Which country were you trafficked from? How can you be a British citizen and be trafficked?’”⁴⁷

Misinformation and misunderstanding regarding victim and survivor identities, such as nationality, impacts on a person’s ability to be identified and removed from their exploitative situation because stakeholders are not looking for signs among people whom they have already decided cannot be victims of modern slavery and exploitation. In Crystal B’s case, it was because she was her age that she suggests her exploitation in domestic servitude was not recognised, because “a lot of people think of trafficking if you’re an adult you can think for yourself, why do you stay in it?”⁴⁸ It suggests a lack of efficacy and/or effective implementation of existing stakeholder training as well as a more general lack of knowledge and awareness among the general public. Crystal B also stresses the importance of fostering better knowledge and understanding of modern slavery, as well as associated forms of violence and abuse that can act as methods of control, because “it’s a vicious cycle. Unless you can understand what happens with grooming and with being coerced, you wouldn’t begin to understand what it’s all about.”⁴⁹ Her narrative suggests a necessity for education, training, and awareness raising efforts on modern slavery to go beyond spot the signs information about what to look out for. She calls for a deeper and more holistic understanding of “what it’s all about.” That is, why and how it happens, the ways in which people become exploited, and why they cannot leave their exploiters.

Survivors in the archive also emphasised their own lack of ability to identify themselves as experiencing modern slavery, which compounds key policy actor’s lack of knowledge and awareness. Layla, who travelled to the UK to escape religious persecution in Kenya and found herself exploited in forced labour, recalled that when being flagged as a potential victim of trafficking under the National Referral Mechanism:

“I didn’t understand what they meant, and I had to do my own research in order to grasp my own case. In my mind, trafficking meant sex trafficking and I knew I hadn’t experienced that. ‘Trafficking’ is usually portrayed in the most extreme and violent ways by the media, or politicians. But my experience shows that exploitation can be seriously distressing and have a lifelong impact, even if the abuse doesn’t look the same as it does in the headlines.”⁵⁰

Layla’s narrative, given in 2020, points to a continued over-emphasis on sex trafficking in the media and among politicians and the ways in which this leads to a lack of understanding about trafficking for other forms of modern slavery among those at risk and the general public. This issue is particularly acute when taking into account the most recent global estimates published by the International Labour Organisation and Walk Free Foundation that 86% of forced labour cases are imposed by private actors, with 63 percent in the private economy in sectors other than commercial sexual exploitation.⁵¹ Moreover, 2022 end of year summary statistics identified criminal exploitation as accounting for 30% of all cases referred to the NRM.⁵² An over-representation of sexual exploitation in depictions of modern slavery and human trafficking therefore reduces people’s ability to identify other forms that statistically are more prevalent in the UK, and globally.

Survivor's inability to identify themselves as having experienced modern slavery because of media depictions is also emphasised by Amy A, who when giving her narrative stated that "even now I struggle to see myself as a victim."⁵³ In addition to the way in which the media focuses on sexual exploitation, Amy A points to how it also often portrays sensationalised stories that feature extreme forms of violence and exploitation that prevent people from being able to identify more covert forms. In her instances she notes how her abuse was "mainly emotional and I never ended up in hospital," but that "all the published cases involve crimes that I feel are far more horrific than my own," which prevented her from being able to know that what happened to her "wasn't a choice."⁵⁴ Consequently Amy A suggests that "If this crime was published in all its brutal honesty rather than dramatised for TV with 'key points' like a particular beating, other girls might realise, just because they aren't being drugged, battered or held prisoner, they are still very much a victim."⁵⁵

A survivors' inability to recognise their own exploitation prevents them from being able to advocate for themselves in the context of a key policy actors' lack of knowledge and awareness. Such a situation points to the necessity to take action for the development and implementation of effective education programming and initiatives in policy and practice.

5.1.2. Appropriate responses

A lack of knowledge and awareness of what modern slavery is, who it happens to, and how to identify it has implications for knowledge about how to respond to modern slavery when it is occurring. As a result, those at risk or experiencing modern slavery can be placed in more danger when key policy actors respond inappropriately and inadequately. This is evidenced in Laila's narrative, who along with her two sisters was at risk of forced marriage. Laila's stepmother began "training us to be good housewives," and her grades at school dropped. Though this caught the attention of her teachers, Laila notes "they clearly did not understand honour-based violence and they did not know what to do with us. They wanted to call my dad and stepmother in [...] not realising that in honour-based violence cases it is dangerous to mediate with the perpetrators."⁵⁶ Forced marriage is a form of honour-based abuse (HBA) and modern slavery and is often perpetrated by a person's immediate family with support from their community, creating a culture of impunity and sometimes results in those at risk not having anyone to turn to.

Those responsible for children such as educators, social workers, and foster carers play a key role in identifying those at risk of different forms of modern slavery and exploitation. Laila's case demonstrates the necessity of understanding dynamics and responding appropriately to safeguard those at risk to prevent additional harm. In Laila's case, while her change in behaviour at school was recognised, her teachers were not equipped with the knowledge to identify the change as indicative of forced marriage risk and intervene appropriately to safeguard the person at risk.

5.2. Misconduct

"I was completely overlooked. I was in a school, I had a social worker, I had foster carers, I was known to the police but not one of them asked questions or seemed to care about what was right in front of them." - Sarah

Failures on the part of police, social workers, educators, healthcare professionals and government officials all present key barriers for assistance at identification, intervention, and aftercare stages. Failures to fulfil duties and responsibilities associated with their respective roles sometimes rises to the level of misconduct, resulting in people with lived experience being returned to their perpetrators, put at risk of re-exploitation, and damaging their mental health and wellbeing.

17%
of UK narratives
reference
misconduct of
key actors

5.2.1. Failure to investigate

The police were the most common policy actor for which survivors in the UK narratives in the Voices archive detailed instances of misconduct and failure to act. Lack of compliance with their duties and legal obligations represented failures of the police that placed survivors at increased risk. Several survivors recalled that the police failed to adequately investigate their case when they reported the exploitation. A, who experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), noted that on one occasion “the police found me naked and said, ‘Are you a prostitute? Get in the back of the van. Here’s a jacket and we’ll drop you back.’”⁵⁷ Their lack of action resulted in A’s return to her perpetrators. This was despite the fact that there were notes on her file that stated she had been trafficked. Instead, A, recalled that “when I turned 18, I was told by the police that it was a lifestyle choice because I had access to a mobile phone.”⁵⁸ The Modern Slavery Act (2015) requires public authorities, including the police, to notify the Home Office of any individual encountered in England and Wales who they believe may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking. In A’s case, as in the case of other survivors in the archive, the police failed to do so despite modern slavery and trafficking being reported to them.



The consequences of police misconduct in failing to take adequate measures to investigate reports of modern slavery and human trafficking are evidenced in Natalie’s narrative. Natalie was trafficked to England and forced into CSE. Though she escaped, she was left homeless and pregnant. While trying to apply for a national insurance number and applying for jobs, Natalie made an anonymous report to the police through her case worker “but received no response.”⁵⁹ It was not until one year later that Natalie’s caseworker was contacted by the police and soon after she “met a couple of police officers for a chat and they introduced me to the NRM system.”⁶⁰ However, through the course of the investigation and subsequent court case, Natalie “started to discover that the police misled me on many occasions,” noting that “It got so bad that we had to involve a mediator between myself and the leading detective as I felt as if he found it easy to lie to me.”⁶¹ A failure to promptly investigate her case, and thus to access any support offered to survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, led Natalie to fall back into homelessness and to get an abortion she did not want because she thought she would be unable to support her child. A failure to effectively communicate led to feelings of vulnerability when Natalie learned that her traffickers were on the run “and it is still unknown where they are at this time.”

A lack of investigation and effective communication was also referenced by Amy A who, after reporting a number of incidents related to her CSE once she had turned 18, “was treated with total disregard,” and though they “said they would have a look, see if the offenders were still at the same address,” she reported that “they never followed up or got in touch with me again regarding this.”⁶² It was made clear to Amy A, that “I could push, if I wanted to, but they were very clear that they would not back my case and saw it as a waste of time and resources, not even noting the names or dates I gave.” This is in violation of Section 23(1) of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act, which outlines police officers’ duty to record, retain, and reveal material relevant to a criminal investigation. Similarly, Ellie who was trafficked into CSE in the UK recalls that when she spoke to the police “they didn’t believe me. They didn’t even listen to me. They just detained me to a police station [...] the next thing I knew I was in a removal centre to be deported back to my country.”⁶³ Ellie’s narrative points to the need for trauma-informed police responses and more effective training and monitoring to ensure policy actors are fulfilling their legal obligations and duties.

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5.2.2. Failure to assist

Several survivors detailed instances in which key policy actors failed to fulfil their obligation to assist, support, and safeguard them to both prevent exploitation and after exploitation. Layla, who was trafficked from Kenya to the UK and subjected to forced labour, gave her narrative in 2020 and highlights the systemic nature of this issue:

“Last year, 1,256 potential victims were held in prison-like settings as ‘immigration detainees’. And since 2016, as many as 1,091 potential victims of slavery were discovered by authorities but never referred for support. Authorities must recognise rather than stigmatise exploited people and refer them for support. This means taking time to explain details of the NRM to exploited people even when they may not immediately understand they have been ‘trafficked’.”⁶⁴

Failure to assist survivors and refer them for support results in continued vulnerability and an increased risk of further violence and abuse. Melody spent nine months homeless and begging for food after escaping her exploitative situation. She “went to a lot of different agencies to see if they could help me but none of them seemed to be bothered or had much interest to help me out.”⁶⁵ Melody consequently experienced sexual violence while sleeping on the street, an experience which could have been prevented if key policy actors fulfilled their duties and obligations. The issue exists across different policy actors and survivors categorise stakeholders’ failure to act in line with their duties and legal obligations as systemic failure. Sarah was trafficked for CSE from the ages of 12 to 16 and emphasises that despite being in a school, having a social worker and foster carers, and being known to the police:

“Nobody wanted to find out why, no one cared as to why a 14-year-old was seen working on the street at 2am or why a 15-year-old was going in to hotel rooms with older men, why a child was barely in school or when she was exhausted. Because of the continual system failures, it took me seven years to be seen. Seven years of torture, control and hell.”⁶⁶

Y also gives an example of misconduct experienced on the part of social workers who treated him with disregard and disrespect while conducting his age assessment:

“During the age assessment the two social workers were quite disrespectful towards me, twisted my answers and manipulated what I said. They did not believe my answers and they rolled their eyes. It was as though they had made their decision already. I was concerned that social services, when assessing my age, seemed to ignore the view of my schoolteachers despite the fact they see me every day. On the other hand, I have hardly had any contact with social services. When questioned by the local authority as part of the age assessment I was only able to give estimates, especially in relation to the ages of children in the families I was living with. My life was not regulated by times and dates, but rather dictated by the people I lived with and worked for. I believe that I may appear to be mature for my age but this may well be due to the life I have experienced. I was never given the opportunity to have a normal childhood. I have been through experiences that few young people could relate to or understand and this has forced me to grow up quickly. I was also never treated as a child and was burdened with a high level of responsibility from a young age. I was never aware of dates and times and was largely illiterate for the majority of my childhood.”⁶⁷

Layla, Melody, Sarah, and Y’s narratives point to the need for improved monitoring and training among different policy actors to ensure they are adhering to their duties and legal obligations, as well as for the development of policies and procedures for obtaining key information from survivors who, because of their exploitation, may not know accurate details about their age or for how long they have been exploited. Y’s narrative in particular highlights the importance of sensitivity training among policy actors with consideration for how experiences of exploitation can impact on behaviour.

5.2.3 Insensitive treatment

Survivors are sometimes met with insensitive and inappropriate treatment when interacting with key policy actors, which constitutes misconduct and can result in re-traumatisation.

Healthcare professionals have a duty of care to survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, as laid out in the Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards. However, survivors in the archive report instances of insensitive treatment and inadequate medical care that impacted on their physical health. Rebecca was subjected to CSE from the age of 14. After violence from her perpetrator resulted in her admittance into hospital, she recalls that “the nurse yelled at me for being a prostitute. She sewed me up without anaesthesia and I left the hospital. I was paralysed for 3 days.”⁶⁸

A lack of survivor-informed care can lead to re-traumatisation. Witness A required surgery for injuries acquired in her experiences of CSE but notes that “with the doctors and the care received, there was nothing tailored for survivors. Even though the injuries were as a result of human trafficking, the way it was done was quite traumatizing.”⁶⁹

Re-traumatisation because of misconduct is also detailed in survivor interactions with the police. Sade was pregnant when she managed to escape her traffickers and received help from a member of the public to reach a police station to report the crime. However, instead of support and assistance, she was met with accusations and hostility:

“Inside the station, the woman left us alone, she said she needed to check something. The man started interrogating me. He questioned everything I told him. How can you say you’re running away if you have a coat on? Is it this cold in Nigeria? I told him I grabbed a coat that was by the door when I escaped but he didn’t like my answer. How come it fits so well? How come you have warm clothes for your son? He even questioned why I spoke English. He said they don’t speak English in Africa. I said we speak English in Nigeria. He didn’t believe me.

He then started searching me. He emptied my bag and took out every item. He made me empty out my pockets and take off my shoes. It was so traumatizing I cannot remember it all. He said he’d throw me out if I didn’t tell the truth. He shouted at me to speak up. When I asked him to slow down because I didn’t understand him, he accused me of insulting him. The officer at the counter was rude to me too. He told me to get up and told the other man to search me.” – Sade

Instances of insensitive and hostile treatment are often rooted in systemic discrimination and harmful stereotypes, which are discussed in more detail in the following section (Section 5.3.). Like Y’s narrative in Section 5.2.2., Sade’s narrative points to the need for improved monitoring of policy actor’s behaviour and treatment of survivors, as well as more robust implementation of sensitivity training on how to interact with survivors of modern slavery in respectful ways to prevent re-traumatisation and a lack of trust in public services.

5.3. Discrimination and harmful stereotypes

Discrimination and harmful stereotypes based on race, gender, and nationality, impede effective identification, intervention, and support. Survivors reported that the attitudes and behaviours of key police actors, including police, members of the public, and healthcare professionals were at times overtly hostile and disrespectful. People who have experienced modern slavery and human trafficking have already experienced severe trauma, including through direct and indirect threats, restrictions of movement, surveillance, and enaction of sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological abuse by their perpetrators. When met with hostility, disrespect, and discrimination by the people they have come to for help and who have obligations to assist and protect them, survivors can become re-traumatised (as noted in Section 5.2.3.) Re-traumatisation can have lasting impacts on immediate and longer-term recovery and can result in a lack of trust in authorities and the wider system, as well as leading to non-cooperation.

5.3.1. Race and nationality-based discrimination

After being re-traumatised by a police officers' race-based interrogation and accusations of theft, Sade refused to support a police investigation into her traffickers. Consequently, though Sade may have escaped her perpetrator, they remained active and able to continue exploiting others.

Layla had doubts about reporting her traffickers to the police because her “experiences in Kenya has shaped my view of police as corrupt and ruthless officials and I had little trust in their UK counterparts.”⁷⁰ While thinking that her trafficker was securing her immigration status, he was actually claiming benefits she was entitled to after she was diagnosed with cancer. She notes that “it was this fraudulent activity that saw me get arrested.” The police claimed that she was “part of a criminal ring, controlling people and money,” with one officer telling her that he “did not believe that I was Kenyan but I was part of a ‘Nigerian scam,’ lying about my cancer to get my hands on medicine to sell in Africa.”⁷¹ It was only during her interrogation that her lawyer realised she had been trafficked and assisted her in applying for asylum. As a result of her experience, Layla emphasised that “authorities must recognise rather than stigmatise exploited people.”

Discriminatory attitudes and behaviours prevent the identification of people at risk of exploitation and those that are being exploited. With provision entrenched in systemic racism, improving service provision and assistance to survivors requires holistic cross-sectoral and public education, training, and awareness raising about harmful stereotypes and assumptions about vulnerable people based on race and nationality. This issue is particularly acute in the context of recent legislation, which sees the conflation of modern slavery with immigration and the constricting of opportunities to identify and subsequently help those who have been trafficked and exploited as the UK government moves towards policies that seek the accelerated removal of people deemed to have entered the UK ‘illegally’ (see Section 2.6.).

Race-based stereotypes do not only impact on interactions between policy actors and those who have been trafficked from another country to the UK into exploitation. In Laila’s case, assumptions that forced marriage and honour-based abuse are ‘cultural issues’ that occur only in communities of certain cultures and religions has led to a postcode lottery of service provision across the country. However, forced marriage occurs across a range of different communities and is not sanctioned by any religion. Laila’s narrative highlights the danger that can result from these harmful stereotypes:

“We called the police. They said that because the house was tidy and clean and we didn’t have any bruises to show them, there was nothing they could do. When we told them about the imminent forced marriage, they said ‘that’s your culture isn’t it?’ That really shocked us. They were supposed to protect us, but they were just going to leave us to face abuse.”⁷²

Laila and her sisters noted that the police did not understand the danger that they were in and felt that “we were on our own.” They had no choice but to run away. The lack of understanding rooted in harmful stereotypes and assumptions based on race, religion, and culture prevents identification and intervention in forced marriage and HBA cases. Such assumptions can also lead to an under-identification in other cases when key actors are afraid of accusations of racism. The situation calls for a comprehensive public education campaign to combat these harmful stereotypes among key actors and the general public, as well as the integration of forced marriage and HBA education into school curriculums and highly specialised cross-sectoral training.

5.3.2. Harmful gender stereotypes

“No one really listens to or believes prostitutes.” – Rebecca

Gender discrimination and harmful stereotypes detailed in the narratives focus specifically on those exploited in CSE. Some survivors in the archive reported that the attitudes of some key policy actors, including police officers, social workers, legal professionals, and educators was not gender-sensitive and in some cases were overtly disrespectful.

Both Witness A and Amy A reported how negative stereotypes about women who work in the sex industry negatively impacted on their interactions with police and healthcare professionals. As noted above, Witness A was given stitches by a nurse without anaesthetic after they had “yelled at her” for being a “prostitute,” and was told by the police that her CSE was a “lifestyle choice” because she had access to a phone. There is a need for improved public policy campaigning surrounding combatting these harmful gender norms and stereotypes that are embedded in patriarchal assumptions about the way in which women in society should act. For policy actors—in particular those who often come into contact with women in the sex industry—improved implementation of gender sensitivity training, anti-discrimination training and monitoring, and training on the differences between forced and voluntary sex work, including spot the signs, is necessary for identification, intervention, and support for those in sexual exploitation.

5.4. Criminalisation of victims

“After 5 weeks the police raided the house and arrested me. They told me that the plants I was looking after were cannabis and that I’d been helping to grow illegal drugs. The police charged me with drug offences and I was sentenced in court to 18 months custodial sentence in a Young Offenders Institute.” - Lam

The criminalisation of victims runs across other barriers to identification, intervention, and support for those who have experienced modern slavery in the Voices archive. A lack of understanding, misconduct, and harmful stereotypes work together to create a situation in which survivors are treated as criminals rather than victims of exploitation. This results in custodial sentences, an increased risk of deportation, and a lack of faith and trust in government agencies.

5.4.1. Forced criminal activity

Hung, Dinh, and Lam all reported being arrested, charged, and sentenced to prison for cultivating cannabis. However, as detailed in their narratives, they had all been trafficked to the UK for forced criminal activity. While Dinh was eighteen years old, both Hung and Lam were under eighteen when they were arrested. In Hung’s case, “no one believed I was 16, and I had no ID.”⁷³ In each case, it was eventually realised that Hung, Dinh, and Lam were victims of trafficking, but not before they had spent time in prison, and in Lam’s case a year in a youth detention centre. The wrongful conviction of victims of modern slavery for crimes committed is in violation of Section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act (2015), which offers a defence to those who are faced with criminal liability for a criminal act committed because of their modern slavery or human trafficking experience. It also goes against the non-punishment principle codified in Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings which entered into force in the UK on 01 April 2009.

Dinh reported that after spending over seven months in prison—before authorities realised what happened to him, he was found not guilty, moved to a detention centre, and then transferred to a safe house—he was “malnourished, weak, scared, and suffering from depression when I arrived.”⁷⁴ Criminalisation of those who have experienced modern slavery can re-traumatise them and impact severely on their mental health. It can also impact on their future opportunities, as Hung reports that he “still has a criminal record.”⁷⁵

Criminalisation also fosters a lack of faith and trust in government authorities, which can prevent those experiencing modern slavery from disclosing to the police and thus hamper identification. Mark, who was trafficked to the UK into forced labour from Sweden, notes that “I couldn’t see the police taking me seriously. Erm everything the police had visited us on worksites for examples, they’d treat the victims as the criminals. So, there was no way I was going to go to the police.”

5.4.2. Immigration issues

Whether a person has consented to illegally enter the UK (has been smuggled) or been trafficked (deceived into illegally entering the UK for the purposes of exploitation) has significant consequences for their treatment because it defines whether they have committed or been victim of a crime. Therefore, correctly identifying victims is essential to ensure people have access to support to which they are legally entitled under the Modern Slavery Act (2015). A failure to identify potential victims of modern slavery can result in their detention and/or return to potentially dangerous situations, rather than the support they are entitled to under UK and international law. For example, Ope, who was trafficked into CSE in the UK, tells of how she was arrested after escaping her traffickers:

“After a while they let me out to buy things, because they didn’t think I would run away. One day I went to the market, I saw this wallet on the floor. I was thinking maybe there is some money inside, at least I have some money. When I opened it there was this ID card. It was a Belgium ID card. That night I had a small suitcase and put some clothes in it. I went to their bedroom and took some money, one hundred or something. I wanted to leave, to get to France. So, I took a bus to the town centre to the national express. And they sold me a one-way ticket to London. I went to Kings Cross to board the train. Then the immigration officer, he looked at me and said, what other ID do I have? I said ‘I don’t have anything. I don’t have anything’.

I spent the night in a police cell, then they sent me direct to HMP Holloway. I was thinking I should’ve stayed back, I shouldn’t have run away. If there was a way I could go back to my traffickers, I would have gone back instead of me being in this place, in prison.”⁷⁶

Similarly, Andrei B, a Romanian national who was trafficked for criminal exploitation in the UK, was arrested after escaping his perpetrator when he told the police he has stolen a van, three laptops, phones, and some money. This resulted in Andrei B missing his flight home to Romania and “at that point, I became homeless [...] I didn’t know where to turn I had no money.”⁷⁷ The criminalisation of victims is a violation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Ope and Andrei’s narratives suggest the need for improved victim identification among police and migration officials through the implementation of more effective spot the signs training and knowledge building around their duties and obligations.

5.5. Fear

“On that day the lady went out as she usually did and I took the key, unlocked the door, and ran. I went to meet the man, he showed me a police station and he told me to go and report myself to the police. I was afraid to go to the police, so I just continued walking on the street and I begged a woman on the street for money.” – Charlie

Fear was a common barrier reported by survivors in the Voices archive which prevented them from seeking out assistance from key policy actors. This included fear of retaliation or getting caught by the perpetrator, fear of not being believed, and fear or mistrust of key policy actors. Those at risk of and experiencing exploitation in modern slavery need to be made to feel safe and protected and be made aware of their rights to protection and the availability of support services.

35%

of survivors in the Voices archive reported fear as a barrier to receiving assistance

5.5.1. Fear of retaliation

A fear of retaliation or being found by perpetrators after they have escaped their modern slavery experience can prevent survivors from reaching out to key policy actors, including police, educators, social workers, healthcare professionals, and members of the public. Eight narratives in the archive detail being threatened by their perpetrators, which made them fear reaching out for help for fear of being injured or even killed. For example, Natalie recalled that she was “scared for my life as well as that of my family.

They threatened they would harm my family if I did anything they didn't like. I was scared to leave this situation." Threats to the life of those exploited and those they care about are used as methods of control to prevent people from escaping and seeking help.

The covert nature of modern slavery as it occurs behind closed doors makes self-disclosure and reporting to key policy actors an important way to combat the issue. But those at risk and who are experiencing exploitation are often unable to see a way out and fear physical harm if they do.

In some instances, the fear of retaliation led to re-exploitation. When the police raided the flat where Idora was being exploited in CSE, she was placed in a detention centre and then a hostel. Her traffickers threatened, "to harm my mother in Lagos if I didn't return as a sex worker. I had to go back."⁷⁸ Idora spent a further seven months in CSE before she was rescued in a second police raid. This time she was placed in a shelter where she received essential help and support.

A fear of repercussions can also prevent those who have escaped their modern slavery experience from giving evidence and vital identifying information against their perpetrator to authorities. Ah Jing reported that, "they [the traffickers] said they knew how to find me and take revenge on me. So, I didn't say anything about the snakeheads when I was interviewed by the Home Office staff."⁷⁹ Even if survivors are able to escape their situation, feelings of unsafety remain and impact their ability to assist key policy actors, in this instance the Home Office, in modern slavery and human trafficking investigations. Implementation of robust and comprehensive support services, including improving resources for and access to safehouses, that foster feelings of safety are required to improve survivor willingness to reach out to key policy actors and to be able to leave their exploitative situations.

5.5.2. Fear of authorities

In addition to direct threats to their lives, those exploited in modern slavery are often taught to fear key actors, particularly the police, by their perpetrators as a means of control and to prevent their escape. When a person has been trafficked from outside of the country, perpetrators will often use threats of deportation and prison. For example, Grace A was trafficked to England from Nigeria for CSE and recalled that her perpetrator told her that "the passport she got me was fake and if I went to the police I would be put in prison and if I tried to go back to Nigeria, her family would find me and kill me."⁸⁰ Such fears inhibit people's ability to escape and can have a significant impact on mental health. Henrick was forced to steal petrol and scrap metal, and open false bank accounts in his name but reports that "I was afraid to escape as I thought that the police would deport me because I had no ID. It was awful. At times I felt suicidal."⁸¹ It is vital that those at risk and who have experienced modern slavery are aware of their rights as survivors under the National Referral Mechanism and the process of application to remain in the UK. This is particularly important in the context of recent immigration legislation. Consequently, it is also essential for survivors to have access to and be aware of their right to legal aid under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 after receiving a positive reasonable or conclusive grounds decision through the NRM.⁸²

While police were the most common key actor referenced in relation to being afraid of punishment, Laila also reported that a fear that actors would not act appropriately prevented her from reaching out for help from educators at school. This fear was very much tied to her perception of teachers' lack of knowledge and awareness about forced marriage and HBA. She stated that "I did not trust that I could be open about the full extent of the abuse that we were experiencing," because "I didn't trust that our schools would know how to protect us and feared that they would try to speak to our step-mother and father if we approached them."⁸³ As well as survivors being aware of their rights, key actors must be trauma-informed and trained on how to communicate with and act toward survivors of exploitation whose trust in people has been broken down by their perpetrator(s).

5.6. Aftercare and support

“I wasn’t treated as a criminal; I wasn’t treated as a poor victim. But as a woman, as a human being that has rights to have care in the most difficult days.” – Bella A

The importance of aftercare and support services was emphasised by 28 survivors in the Voices archive. References to positive interactions with key policy actors in relation to this issue were overwhelmingly in relation to charities and NGOs. This included references to emotional support and community building, facilitating practical support in linking survivors up with other key services, and ensuring the physical safety of survivors through safehouse and refuge provision. Survivors also emphasised the necessity of long-term support and highlighted shortcomings in current policy provisions.

29%

of survivors in the Voices archive reported the need for improved aftercare and support

5.6.1. Safety

Survivors suggested that they benefitted from having a single case worker at support organisations who could walk with them through the recovery process. Ava B recalled that “I had a support worker [...] who was really nice and went with me to appointments with the police, solicitor and doctor.” After leaving their modern slavery situation, survivors can continue to feel a sense of confinement, unsafety, and unfreedom despite being physically ‘free.’⁸⁴ For example, when Agnes arrived at the safehouse “I almost ran away as I could not comprehend the kindness; instead, I was expecting a repayment to be required at some point soon or find out it was yet another trap.”⁸⁵ Consequently, it is beneficial for them to have a single person support them throughout the recovery process with whom they can build trust. This can take time but with the support of NGO staff, can be managed effectively.

Survivors also highlighted the necessity of tailored support. A remembers that she was put in a domestic violence refuge after being trafficked into CSE, but was then told that she did not fit the criteria because there was more than one perpetrator. She stated that it wasn’t until she called a specialist organisation “and after I’d explained and they got the referral and I was taken to the safehouse and they said, ‘yes this is tailored for this person.’”⁸⁶

Amelia points to the importance of providing basic necessities such as clothes to survivors who often arrive at safehouses with nothing. She praised her support worker and the daily communication she received, but most of all, she emphasised the importance of listening to survivors and providing compassion when they are feeling “hopeless and destroyed”:

“The first thing that they do... I came here without clothes, without money, without nothing, just me. And then I came here and they were very helpful for me. My support worker speak to me every day, and listen me. And just gave me heart, and this I needed in that moment because when you are hopeless and you feel you are destroyed and everything, [...] My passion, it was gone, and my confidence and everything, I was dying inside me, basically.”⁸⁷

5.6.2. Practical support and community building

A central aspect of fostering feelings of safety among survivors of modern slavery, as reported by those in the Voices archive, was providing practical support throughout recovery, criminal justice, and NRM processes. For example, Ellie recalled that she was left “in the detention centre, I was there helpless, I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know where to start from. I was just there waiting to be taken back to my traffickers.”⁸⁸ Her narrative emphasises the connection between a lack of knowledge about government policy and processes regarding victim of modern slavery, and her continued feelings of unsafety that she was going to be taken back to her traffickers.

Experiences of exploitation and associated abuse in modern slavery can be severely traumatising. Moreover, having to relive that exploitation when telling their stories to key policy actors and for criminal investigations can be re-traumatising. Survivors acknowledged the importance of having support

throughout legal processes and criminal cases in which they were giving evidence. Henrick noted how the charity helping him “stood by me as I relived my experience to the police. They never left my side through the whole process.”⁸⁹

However, some survivors also pointed out ways in which current processes and certain actors were, in their experience, detrimental to their recovery. Crystal B stated that she went through “a tremendous and traumatic time giving evidence with the Home Office” who were trying to deport her from the UK after she had been trafficked there into domestic servitude. In her testimony she points to the support of local organisations whom she called “silent heroes,” because “They work on our behalf. They knock on the door with home office and say listen this is wrong, you can’t treat people this way. And just say well okay you’ve been saved now, go back to your country [...] I put all my credits to people who contributed to helping me get to where I am today. I’m a free woman.”⁹⁰ It is essential that survivors not only have someone providing moral and emotional support as they retell their story, but also receive legal assistance and have people who are able to walk them through complex legal and criminal processes. Crystal’s experience also points to the need for victim-centred policymaking and decision making on the part of government agencies such as the Home Office.

Angela A’s narrative points to how robust service provision, support, and aftercare is required across policy actors and recounts her positive experience with an NGO support worker who worked with her to become registered with a GP, obtain legal advice, and eventually get in touch with counselling services where Albanian was spoken. Her narrative also illustrates the importance of the availability of services in different languages for those who have been trafficked to the UK and do not speak English.

5.6.3. Physical and mental health

“Being a victim of trafficking leaves its mark mentally and physically, 4 years on and I am still dealing with the effects of this crime.” – Maya A

Generating feelings of safety and recovering from trauma are often long-term processes for survivors of modern slavery as they work towards building back their confidence and trust in people. As such, survivors in the Voices archive underscored a need for long-term support provision, in the form of both physical housing, but also emotional and psychological wellbeing and in relation to their physical health.

Twenty-six survivors in the Voices archive referenced how their modern slavery experience impacted on their mental health and the necessity of long-term counselling and emotional support as part of robust aftercare provision. Amelia recounted that after leaving her exploitation and entering a shelter she “was just crying every day and night. I was so slim without eating, without sleeping and depressed, definitely depressed.”⁹¹ For 12 of the survivors in the archive (46% of those who referenced experiencing decreased mental health), mental health struggles rose to the level of self-harm and thoughts of suicide.⁹² Mental health provision in the form of “counselling and information, in particular as regards their legal rights and the services available to them, in a language that they can understand” is guaranteed under Article 12 (d) of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Such obligations are written into the UK’s Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance, in which Section 8.3 states that “Local Authorities also have existing obligations to offer long-term support to Adults at Risk,” including during the move-on period and reach-in support that includes mental health services.⁹³

However, survivors in the Voices archive highlight barriers to accessing mental health provision, particularly in the longer-term. Witness B detailed some of these barriers to accessing both physical and mental health, reporting that:

“There is not much support, like psychologists. It’s hard. For most of us, there are no psychologists. We can’t go to a GP, even if we are registered with Doctors of the World. We go to a GP; we present the letter from Doctors of the World, and they will not register us. It is not enough. They will ask for this paper and that paper. How can we get those documents to present to them?”⁹⁴

Everyone is entitled to register and consult with a General Practitioner free of charge when registered with Doctors of the World. Witness B's experience of being turned away when unable to produce ID or other relevant documents such as proof of address, is at odds with NHS guidance which states that an inability to produce paperwork is not grounds to refuse patient registration.⁹⁵

Thirty-one survivors reported how modern slavery impacted on their physical health and the necessity of access to comprehensive healthcare both when experiencing exploitation and during recovery. Witness A recalled that after entering the NRM she needed "to have surgery for some of the injuries from the experiences, and in the hospital, with the doctors and the care received, there was nothing tailored for survivors."⁹⁶

The need for long-term mental and physical healthcare was emphasised by Maya A:

"Long term support is crucial for any survivor's recovery, without it you may as well not have been rescued at all. I spent the first 2 years of my recovery moving to 4 different places, all which claimed to support survivors of trafficking. Unfortunately, they did not have the knowledge and training so there was no recovery. Those 2 years were unbearable and as a result my mental health and physical health suffered hugely."⁹⁷

This was echoed by Mitos, who recalled that "it doesn't matter how many times I forget; it always pops up in my mind."⁹⁸ It is therefore essential that training for mental and physical health provision is trauma-informed and sensitive to survivor's needs and experiences. Healthcare professionals should receive training and support in fulfilling their statutory obligations and increased monitoring should ensure action is taken when people fall short of doing so.

The impact of positive interactions with policy actors is represented most readily in survivor narratives in expressions of hope for the future and the possibility of recovery.

"Life now is quite different. I am more happy, I'm at peace. I've finally been reunited with my kids, I feel more empowered. I feel more assertive. And if I can in some small way, give someone else that opportunity to hope and to see that there is light. That's where I see myself. I'm excited for what's to come." – Miriam A





6. Conclusion and recommendations for antislavery public policy and practice

Survivor inclusion in slavery research has become increasingly prioritised within the sector, as has recognition of the expertise of those with lived experience to identify gaps in public policy and service provision among key policy actors. Survivors can give insights into areas for structural and systemic intervention, as well as offering direct recommendations for how actors can more fully and effectively live up to their statutory duties and giving defined examples of areas for public policy development.

Engagement with survivors' narratives contained in the Voices archive has revealed several factors impeding the efficacy of antislavery public policy and survivor support:

1. Policy actors do not always fulfil their legal obligations and statutory duties.

- Survivors detail examples of multi-sector failures across public policy actors who have professional responsibilities to identify, intervene, and support survivors of modern slavery in line with international and national legislation and statutory guidance.

2. Current support and aftercare provision is insufficient.

- Survivors' access to aftercare and the level of support provided—including physical and mental health, accommodation, practical, emotional, and financial support—does not often meet levels established in antislavery policy. Survivors also emphasised the lack of long-term aftercare as a particular limitation of current public policy provision.

3. Rather than identifying, intervening, and supporting survivors of modern slavery, key policy actors can contribute to their re-traumatisation and criminalisation.

- Survivors' interactions with key policy actors are often dismissive, condescending, discriminatory, and re-traumatising. Misconduct, harmful stereotypes, and discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and nationality (and/or migration status) shape survivors' experiences. Such treatment often results in the criminalisation of survivors who are subsequently denied their rights to assistance under existing law and policy.

These findings underscore the necessity of engaging survivors and their stories to better understand areas of antislavery public policy and practice that require intervention and development. While survivors highlight some areas of positive interaction, this is largely focused on specialised NGO support and there is a need for reform and improvement across the system, as well as within individual policy actors and key stakeholder groups. In order to improve antislavery policy and practice in the UK, development must focus on those it is ultimately meant to support – those who have experienced modern slavery. As such, public policy and practice needs to be more trauma-informed and survivor centred to address the issues survivors themselves have raised with current antislavery policy and processes in the UK.

7. Recommendations for policy and practice

Since the adoption of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act, the UK has positioned itself as a global leader in the anti-slavery space. However, while some narratives commend the actions of UK policy actors, most reflected on the damaging interactions they had with actors who failed to act or acted on harmful assumptions, stemming from a lack of adequate knowledge, heteronormative patriarchal norms, and systemic discrimination on the basis of race and gender. This suggests that UK policy for preventing, protecting, and prosecuting modern slavery still has significant areas for improvement. This includes examples such as the need for increased knowledge and awareness, improved knowledge and skills building with regards to policy actors' legal obligations and statutory duties, as well as improved monitoring, addressing harmful stereotypes, improved and prolonged aftercare and support provision and, in the long-term, improved legislation and governance practises.

This report should be considered as an example of further evidence for such recommendations and an example of narratives being applied to the context of policy and practice development. Analysis of UK survivor narratives in the Voices archive suggested the following 6 overarching recommendations for the improvement of antislavery policy and practice:

1. Increase knowledge and awareness of modern slavery
2. Improve implementation of existing law and policy
3. Advance gender and racial equality
4. Improve support for survivors
5. Increase accountability among policy actors
6. Integrate survivor-centred and trauma-informed approaches into policy and practice

7.1.1. Increased knowledge and awareness of modern slavery

Survivors in the Voices archive reported relatively low levels of knowledge and awareness about modern slavery in the UK across key policy actors. The narratives suggest that improving the implementation and efficacy of modern slavery training for public sector professionals including law enforcement, social workers, educators, and government officials is essential for the successful identification of modern slavery in the UK.

This should include taking measures to increase take-up of existing modern slavery training for public sector professionals, including spot the signs and modern slavery risk training, particularly among non-specialist staff.

It should be ensured that modern slavery training includes information about who can become a victim of modern slavery to support better identification of British nationals who have been exploited in modern slavery in the UK. As such, it is necessary for public sector professional training to combat existing assumptions that modern slavery and human trafficking only happens to foreign victims in the UK.

There is a clear need for the development and implementation of forced marriage and honour-based abuse (HBA) training across public sector professionals, but particularly among educators. Educators in schools are often the first point of contact for those at risk of forced marriage and HBA and have statutory safeguarding responsibilities for child welfare. Survivor narratives suggest the need for improved integration of forced marriage and HBA training into existing safeguarding and child protection training. This training should include information about the specific dynamics of these forms of abuse and how staff might need to act differently than they might in other safeguarding cases, for instance, not calling a child's parents.

7.1.2. Improve implementation of existing law and policy

The existing law and policy infrastructure in the UK goes some way to respond to modern slavery. While some survivors comment on the need for amendments and development of current processes, most barriers to identification, intervention, and support in this study concern implementation.

Where survivors did comment on the need for development of existing law and policy, this referred to NRM processes and the need for reform with regard to the 45-day recovery and reflection period. Action should be taken to extend the period in which survivors can access support and legal services under the NRM to reflect survivors' lived realities of legal processes and how long recovery takes —including mental, physical, emotional, and financial recovery.

The lack of implementation of existing law and policy is compounded by a lack of awareness among public sector professionals and key policy actors about their legal obligations and statutory duties in modern slavery cases. Provision needs to be made for greater implementation of this training and improved monitoring mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that those coming into contact with potential victims of modern slavery are aware of their duties and how they should respond in line with existing laws and policies.

7.1.3. Advance race and gender equality

Systemic oppression and discrimination are both a driver of modern slavery in the UK and identified by survivors in the Voices archive as a barrier to receiving assistance. Some survivors reported being met by policy actors with suspicion and disrespect because of entrenched gender and racial stereotypes, particularly (though not exclusively) among law enforcement.

Local authorities and relevant agencies should take measures to combat discriminatory practices and harmful behaviours among public sector professionals that impede survivor identification and subsequently their rights to support as survivors of modern slavery, and which serve to re-traumatise survivors and play on fear of policy actors generated by perpetrators as a method of control.

In line with these measures, there is a need for improved implementation of culturally sensitivity and anti-discrimination training that combat negative stereotypes and harmful norms about survivors of modern slavery along lines of race, nationality, gender, religion, and culture.

7.1.4. Improve support for survivors

A lack of access to adequate support and aftercare was a key characteristic of survivors' experience as reported in narratives from the Voices archive. This included a lack of access to housing, legal support, economic support (the right to work), and physical and mental healthcare and counselling.

While support and aftercare is supposed to be provided within the NRM to those who have been referred, this is often found lacking. As suggested in recommendation 7.1.2, action should be taken for the provision of long-term support to address the complex and long-lasting trauma often experienced.

In particular, survivors reported experiencing both acute and long-term negative mental health as a result of their modern slavery experience, and sometimes as a result of negative interactions with key policy actors. Mental health provision in the country more broadly is underfunded and overburdened, leaving vulnerable people (in this instance survivors of modern slavery) without the help they need to not only survive but thrive post-exploitation.

The government should ensure that funds for addressing modern slavery are directed in an evidence-based and data-driven manner that is considerate of the lived realities and needs of survivors. As such, additional funds and resources are required in the areas of support and aftercare for survivors, particularly, for mental health provision and to increase specialised non-governmental and charity organisation resources. In particular, the government and Department of Health and Social Care should increase funding and resources to the NHS for mental health provision.

Employment-related support is stated to be available to survivors of modern slavery in the NRM. However, it is clear from survivors' narratives that it is not often provided. This issue is particularly acute in such situations where, though identified as a victim of modern slavery, those who have been trafficked from a different country do not have the right to work due to their immigration status.

The government should ensure the provision of support services for the development of employment skills and experience to more readily foster financial independence and prevent continued vulnerability that can lead to re-exploitation.

The support and aftercare survivors do access is not always reported to be survivor-centred or trauma-informed. There exists a minimum standard of care for support of adult victims of modern slavery as laid out in the Slavery and Trafficking Care Standards. Relevant policy actors should ensure adherence to these care standards across public sector staff.

Healthcare professionals and social workers have a duty of care to provide a reasonable standard of care to patients and act in ways to protect their safety. Survivors' experiences reveal instances in which professionals' actions or failure to act has contradicted this duty. The Care Quality Commission should improve monitoring on the rate of services and, when necessary, take steps to improve quality of care and prevent misconduct.

7.1.5. Increase accountability among policy actors

Existing limitations of policy and practice processes are compounded by the actions of individual actors across public sector services. Often rooted in systemic prejudices as laid out in recommendation 7.1.3., a lack of accountability among those treating victims with contempt, disrespect and in a discriminatory manner further denies survivors' ability to receive assistance and access support.

Regulatory bodies for key policy actors—including for educators, healthcare professionals, legal professionals, social care, and law enforcement—should increase monitoring and oversight to ensure that all actors fulfil their statutory duties and combat wrongdoing.

The Care Quality Commission and Social Work England should ensure that the lack of trauma-informed care provided by healthcare professionals and social workers is addressed through ongoing training and discipline for misconduct.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct should ensure that a lack of gender-sensitivity, cultural-sensitivity, and trauma-informed support provided by police is also addressed through ongoing training and discipline for misconduct.

7.1.6. Address the interconnections between modern slavery and other forms of abuse

Survivors' experiences as detailed in the Voices archive reveal that most people exploited in modern slavery are likely to experience additional harms and abuses, including physical, emotional, economic, religious, spiritual, domestic, child, and sexual abuse. The complex and overlapping nature of abuses and exploitation can hinder identification in situations where people do not seemingly fit existing individual criteria.

The government should take steps to investigate more thoroughly the connections between modern slavery and other forms of abuse and integrate findings into statutory guidance. This includes ensuring consistent policies and messaging across related guidance for overlapping forms of abuse.

Relevant authorities should ensure that key policy actors are trained on potential links between different forms of abuse and consequences for how a survivor of modern slavery might present, the support they might need, and professionals' statutory duties in these cases. They should also work to promote cross-institutional co-operation and data sharing to promote better understanding of overlapping forms of abuse for the development of future policy and practice processes.

Annexes

Annex 1: Voices tracker codebook

Case classifications: classify all cases against the form of exploitation.

Case Classification	Description
Gender	The survivors' gender, where detailed in the narrative.
Female	Female survivors, women and girls. This is a gender identity classification rather than a biological classification and should include trans women and girls where presented as such in the transcript.
Male	Male survivors, men and boys. This is a gender identity classification rather than a biological classification and should include trans men and boys where presented as such in the transcript.
Non-binary	Non-binary survivors
Trans	Trans survivors irrespective of gender/gender identity. This may intersect with one of the other gender codes above where the transcript speaks to such.
Age	Age details of survivors
Adult	Survivors aged eighteen years and over
Child	Survivors under the age of eighteen
Nationality	Survivors' nationality, where detailed in the narrative.

Code	Description
1. Form of exploitation	References to the form of exploitation experienced
1.1. Forced Labour	References to experiences of forced labour.
1.1.1. Domestic Servitude	References to experiences of domestic servitude
1.1.2. Sexual Exploitation	References to experiences of commercial sexual exploitation
1.1.3. Forced criminal activity	References to experiences of forced criminal activity
1.2. Forced Marriage	References to experiences of forced marriage
1.3. Human Trafficking	References to experiences of human trafficking
1.3.1. Trafficking for sex	References to experiences of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation
1.3.2. Trafficking for forced marriage	References to experiences of trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage
1.3.3. Trafficking for labour	References to experiences of trafficking for other forms of labour, not including for sexual exploitation

2. Additional form of abuse	References to additional forms of abuse experienced within modern slavery
2.1. Sexual violence	References to sexual violence in any form.
2.1.1. Rape	References to rape as a specific form of sexual violence.
2.1.2. Sexual harassment	References to sexual harassment as a specific form of sexual violence.
2.2. Physical abuse	References to physical violence.
2.3. Emotional abuse	References to emotional abuse.
2.4. Psychological violence	References to psychological violence.
2.5. Domestic abuse	References to domestic abuse, including abuse and violence between any members of the same household irrespective of the nature of the relationship, as well as violence within a family unit.
2.6. Intimate partner violence	References to intimate partner violence, including violence between spouses, civil partners, de facto partners, and those in a relationship as a girlfriend or boyfriend.
2.7. Economic abuse	References to economic violence.
2.8. Verbal abuse	References to verbal abuse.
2.9. Religious abuse	References to abuse related to an individuals' religious beliefs.
2.10. Spiritual abuse	References to abuse related to an individuals' spiritual beliefs.
3. Policy Actors	References to interactions between the exploited individuals and actors outside of their exploitation situation.
3.1. Police	References to any interaction with the police before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.2. Healthcare workers	References to any interaction with healthcare workers before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.3. NGOs	References to any interaction with NGOs before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.4. Educators	References to any interaction with educators before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.5. Social workers	References to any interaction with social workers before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.6. Policymakers	References to any interaction with policymakers before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.7. Government officials	References to any interaction with government officials before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
3.7.1. Migration officials	References to any interaction with migration officials before, during, or after their experience of exploitation

3.8. Members of the public	References to any interaction with members of the public before, during, or after their experience of exploitation.
4. Relationship to Perpetrator	Reference to the relationship between victim/survivor and perpetrator involved in the exploitation
4.1. Intimate partner	References to an intimate partner relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator, described as such.
9.11.1. Spouse	References to a spousal relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
9.11.2. Boyfriend/girlfriend	References to a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
9.12. Familial	References to a familial relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
9.11.1. Parent	References to a parent-child relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
9.11.2. Sibling	References to a sibling relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator, whether biological, adoptive, or other.
9.11.3. Extended family	References to an extended familial relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator (e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents etc).
9.13. Friend	References to a friendship relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
9.14. Stranger	References to offending where there is no pre-existing relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
9.15. Caregiver	References to a caregiver relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator (e.g. childminders, babysitters, caregivers for the elderly or those with disabilities)
9.16. Employer	References to an employer-employee relationship between the victim/survivor and the perpetrator.
5. Perpetrator identities	Reference to the relationship between victim/survivor and perpetrator involved in the exploitation
5.1. Gender	References to the gender of perpetrators.
5.1.1. Female	References to female perpetrators, women and girls. This is a gender identity classification rather than a biological classification and should include trans women and girls where presented as such in the transcript.
5.1.2. Male	References to male perpetrators, men and boys. This is a gender identity classification rather than a biological classification and should include trans men and boys where presented as such in the transcript.
5.1.3. Non-binary	References to non-binary perpetrators.

5.1.4. Trans	References to trans perpetrators, irrespective of gender/gender identity. This may intersect with one of the other gender codes above where the transcript speaks to such.
5.2. Age	References to the age of perpetrators
5.2.1. Children	References to children, either described as such or relating to people under 18 years of age.
5.2.2. Youth	References to youth or young people.
5.2.3. Young adults	References to young adults, either described as such or relating to people between the ages of 18-25.
5.2.4. Adults	Reference to adults, either described as such or relating to people 18 years of age or older.
5.3. Sexuality	References to the sexuality or related identity of perpetrators.
5.3.1. LGBTQIA+	References to LGBTQIA+ communities/individuals broadly, including reference to a more limited acronym (e.g. LGBT).
5.4. Disability	References to the ability of perpetrators
5.4.1. Physical disability	References to physical disability as a subset of disability.
5.4.2. Mental disability	References to mental disability as a subset of disability.
5.5. Race	References to the race or ethnicity of perpetrators.
5.6. Migration status	References to the migration status of perpetrators.
6. Barriers to receiving assistance	References to barriers individuals face to receiving or seeking assistance
6.1. Shame	References to feelings of shame preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance
6.2. Fear	References to feelings of fear preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance
6.3. Isolation	References to feelings of isolation preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance
6.4. Threats	References to threats preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance
6.5. Restrictions of movement	References to restrictions of movement preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance
6.6. Surveillance	References to surveillance preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance
6.7. Withholding of documents	References to withholding of documents preventing survivors from receiving or seeking assistance, including withholding of passports and other identity documents
6.8. Harmful stereotypes	References to stereotypes about survivors of modern slavery as well as along lines of race, gender, sexuality, and culture

6.9. Lack of knowledge and awareness	References to a lack of, or insufficient, or inaccurate knowledge and awareness among policy actors and survivors.
6.10. Criminalisation	References to the criminalisation of victims and survivors of modern slavery by policy actors.
6.11. Misconduct	References to misconduct by policy actors, such as failing to fulfil their legal obligations to act.
6.12. Delays	References to waiting times and delays in criminal, legal and recovery processes, as well as modern slavery mechanisms such as the NRM.
6.13. Language barriers	References to language as a barrier to receiving assistance.
6.14. Corruption	References to corruption among policy actors.
6.15. Discrimination	References to discrimination associated with modern slavery experiences impacting on survivors' interactions with policy actors, including instances of racism, sexism and homophobia
7. Methods of Control	References to methods of control experienced by people in situations of exploitation
7.1. Threats	References to threats as a method of control
7.2. Substance Abuse	References to using substance abuse as a method of control
7.3. Wage withholding	References to wage withholding as a method of control
7.4. Debt	References to debt as a method of control
8. Drivers	References to barriers to justice and shortcomings in the justice system
8.1. Gender	References to a person's gender as a driver of their modern slavery experience.
8.2. Socio-economic	References to a person's socio-economic position as a driver of their modern slavery experience.
8.3. Race	References to a person's race as a driver of their modern slavery experience.
8.4. Religious persecution	References to experiences of religious persecuting as a driver of a person's modern slavery experience.
8.5. Experiences of abuse	References to previous and existing experiences of abuse as a driver of a person's modern slavery experience.
8.6. Sexuality	References to a person's sexuality as a driver of their modern slavery experience.
9. Recommendations	References to potential areas of focus or priorities for policy, as well as references to existing efforts.
9.1. Existing	References to existing advocacy, campaigning, or litigation interventions that have been conducted, are currently taking place, or are planned to begin in the short-term.

9.2. Priority areas	References to priority areas of focus for advocacy, campaigning, and litigation interventions.
9.3. Campaigning	References to campaigning interventions.
9.4. Litigation	References to litigation interventions.
9.5. Awareness raising	References to awareness raising interventions.
9.6. Policy	References to policy interventions.
9.7. Government	References to government interventions.
9.8. Education	References to education interventions.
9.9. Systemic change	References to systemic change needed to combat GBV.
9.10. Training	References to training interventions for justice actors.
9.11. Health	References to health needs of survivors of modern slavery and areas for intervention.
9.11.1. Physical health	References to physical health needs of survivors and areas for intervention.
9.11.2. Mental health	References to mental health needs of survivors and areas for intervention.
9.11.3. Reproductive and sexual health	References to reproductive and sexual health needs of survivors and areas for intervention.

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- ¹ Walk Free, Global Slavery Index 2022, <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/map/#mode=data>.
- ² Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022>.
- There remains a lack of reliable and accurate data on prevalence of modern slavery in the UK due to its covert nature with exploitation often occurring behind closed doors. National Referral Mechanism statistics are most often used to gauge the extent of modern slavery in the UK. End of year summary data for 2023 was not yet available at the time of writing this report. As such, we consulted the most up to date statistics available.
- ³ Embedding survivor inclusion in research and policy development was a key recommendation made by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre
- ⁴ Kelli Lyon Johnson, "The new slave narrative: Advocacy and human rights in stories of contemporary slavery." *Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 2 (2013): 246.
- ⁵ Coretta Phillips, "Utilising "modern slave" narratives in social policy research" *Critical Social Policy* 40, no.1, (2019): 34.
- ⁶ Cooper et al., A Typology of Modern Slavery Offences in the UK, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a822a42e5274a2e8ab57d66/typology-modern-slavery-offences-horr93.pdf>.
- ⁷ Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives>.
- ⁸ Hannah-Rose Murray, *Voices: Idea for using survivor testimony in antislavery work*, Rights Lab, (2019) <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1336/voices-ideas-for-using-survivor-testimony-in-antislavery-work.pdf>.
- ⁹ Recent Rights Lab research has found these ancillary orders to be an 'uncommon tool' in criminal justice responses to modern slavery cases, a result of a lack of awareness, understanding, training, and guidance, as well as insufficient mechanisms for coordination, data collection, information sharing and monitoring. See Rebecca Brown, Katarina Schwarz and Vicky Brotherton, "Slavery and Trafficking Risk and Prevention Orders: A background review of history and use to date," (2023).
- ¹⁰ UK Parliament, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debate*, 29th March 2023 (Mr Peter Bone) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-03-29/debates/94D8E0EB-45AC-41F6-B53A-B71C90CDA48A/HumanTraffickingAndModernSlavery#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20there%20were%2093,342%20prosecutions%20and%20114%20convictions>.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² First responder organisations authorised to refer to the NRM are: police forces; certain parts of the Home Office: UK Visas and Immigration, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, National Crime Agency, local authorities, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), Salvation Army, Migrant Help, Medaille Trust, Kalayaan, Barnardo's, Unseen, NSPCC (CTAC), BAWSO, New Pathways, Refugee Council.
- ¹³ The National Referral Mechanism, Anti-slavery Partnership, <https://www.aspartnership.org.uk/the-national-referral-mechanism-nrm#:~:text=The%20NRM%20was%20introduced%20in,against%20Trafficking%20in%20Human%20Beings>.
- ¹⁴ UK Government, National Referral Mechanism Guidance: Adult (England and Wales), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms/guidance-on-the-national-referral-mechanism-for-potential-adult-victims-of-modern-slavery-england-and-wales#Section-6>.
- ¹⁵ National Referral Mechanism, <https://www.ecpat.org.uk/national-referral-mechanism>.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ The Rights Lab has previously published a full policy paper on Confirmations, Commitments and Concerns – How will Part 5 of the Nationality and Borders Act on Modern Slavery be enacted? It can be read here: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2022/november/confirmations-commitments-concerns-how-will-part-5-of-the-nationality-and-borders-act-on-modern-slavery-be-enacted.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Illegal Migration Act 2023, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/37/enacted>
- ¹⁹ Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre, "Explainer: The Illegal Migration Act modern slavery provisions," <https://modernslaverypec.org/assets/downloads/Modern-Slavery-PEC-Explainer-Illegal-Migration-Act-v.2.pdf>.
- ²⁰ For a more in-depth analysis of the negative implications of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 on victims of modern slavery, see Anti-slavery international, "The "Illegal Migration" Act has passed into law. How did we get here and what

should come next?, <https://www.antislavery.org/latest/the-illegal-migration-act-has-passed-into-law-how-did-we-get-here-and-what-should-come-next/>; Rights Lab and Human Trafficking Foundation, “Assessing the Potential Impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on Victims of Modern Slavery – A briefing for Peers, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2023/may/house-of-lords-2nd-reading-briefing-assessing-the-potential-impact-of-the-illegal-migration-bill-on-victims-of-modern-slavery.pdf>.

²¹ Female genital mutilation involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is extremely painful and has serious health consequences both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a755af1e5274a3cb2869c59/Fact_sheet_-_FGM_-_Act.pdf.

²² UK Government, Official Statistics: Forced Marriage Unit statistics

2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2022/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2022#:~:text=The%20FMU%20is%20a%20joint,marrriage%20policy%2C%20outreach%20and%20casework.>

²³ UK Government, National Statistics: Family Court Statistics Quarterly: July to September 2023,

[https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023#forced-marriage-protection-orders-and-female-genital-mutilation-protection-orders.](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023#forced-marriage-protection-orders-and-female-genital-mutilation-protection-orders)

²⁴ Cristina, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2913>.

²⁵ Sheila, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1784>.

²⁶ This is separate to those who experienced this form of abuse as fundamental to the form of modern slavery they experienced, i.e. those who experienced sexual exploitation were not coded as also experiencing sexual violence in the context of that sexual exploitation. However, cases in which sexual violence was experienced in addition to, and separate to that of their sexual exploitation, this was coded.

²⁷ Here we define sexual harassment as when someone carries out unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person that makes them feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated. It is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/types-of-sexual-violence/what-is-sexual-harassment/>.

²⁸ John A, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1876>.

²⁹ Mary B, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2689>.

³⁰ Natalie, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2103>.

³¹ Maya A, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1720>.

³² Abdul, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1682>.

³³ Dinh, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2159>.

³⁴ Dorina, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1428>.

³⁵ Promise, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2153>.

³⁶ John A.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Mo, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2182>.

³⁹ Olabisi, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1479>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Laila, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1935>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ This list is not definitive but rather representative of findings from survivors’ experiences in the Voices archive.

⁴⁵ Amy A, Narratives: Voices by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2104>.

⁴⁶ Witness A, Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2727>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Crystal B, Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1741>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Layla, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2769>.

⁵¹ International Labour Organization and Walk Free Foundation, Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, 3, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf.

⁵² The UK government has acknowledged existing challenges to producing an accurate measure of prevalence on modern slavery given the hidden nature of the crime, lack of definitive data sources, and a lack of accurate methodology to quantify data. As such, NRM statistics are most often used to give an indication of the nature of

modern slavery. This report has consulted the most up-to-date NRM end of year summary statistics available at the time of writing.

⁵³ Amy A.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Laila, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1935>.

⁵⁷ A, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/narratives>.

⁵⁸ A.

⁵⁹ Natalie.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Amy A.

⁶³ Ellie, Narratives: Voices by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1800>.

⁶⁴ Layla.

⁶⁵ Melody, Narratives: Voices by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2818>.

⁶⁶ Sarah, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1821>.

⁶⁷ Y., Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2822>.

⁶⁸ Rebecca, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1487>.

⁶⁹ Witness A.

⁷⁰ Layla.

⁷¹ Layla.

⁷² Laila.

⁷³ Hung, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1440>.

⁷⁴ Dinh.

⁷⁵ Hung.

⁷⁶ Ope, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1635>.

⁷⁷ Andrei B, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2580>.

⁷⁸ Idora, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1441>.

⁷⁹ Ah Jing, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/1403>

⁸⁰ Grace A.

⁸¹ Henrick

⁸² For more information see <https://modernslaverypec.org/assets/downloads/Legal-advice-report.pdf>.

⁸³ Laila

⁸⁴ See Minh Dang, Epistemology of Survival

⁸⁵ Agnes

⁸⁶ A.

⁸⁷ Amelia

⁸⁸ Ellie

⁸⁹ Henrick.

⁹⁰ Crystal B.

⁹¹ Amelia, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, . <https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/2795>.

⁹² See Ayesha, Edward, Grace, Henrick, Jasmine A, Jonas, Mary B, Natalie, Nick, Promise, Rebecca and Ying B in Voices, Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery, <https://antislavery.ac.uk/narratives>.

⁹³ UK Government, Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance for England and Wales and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

⁹⁴ Witness B, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery,

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/what-we-stand-for/advocacy/access-to-primary-care/>.

⁹⁶ Witness A

⁹⁷ Maya A, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery

⁹⁸ Mitos, Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery



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