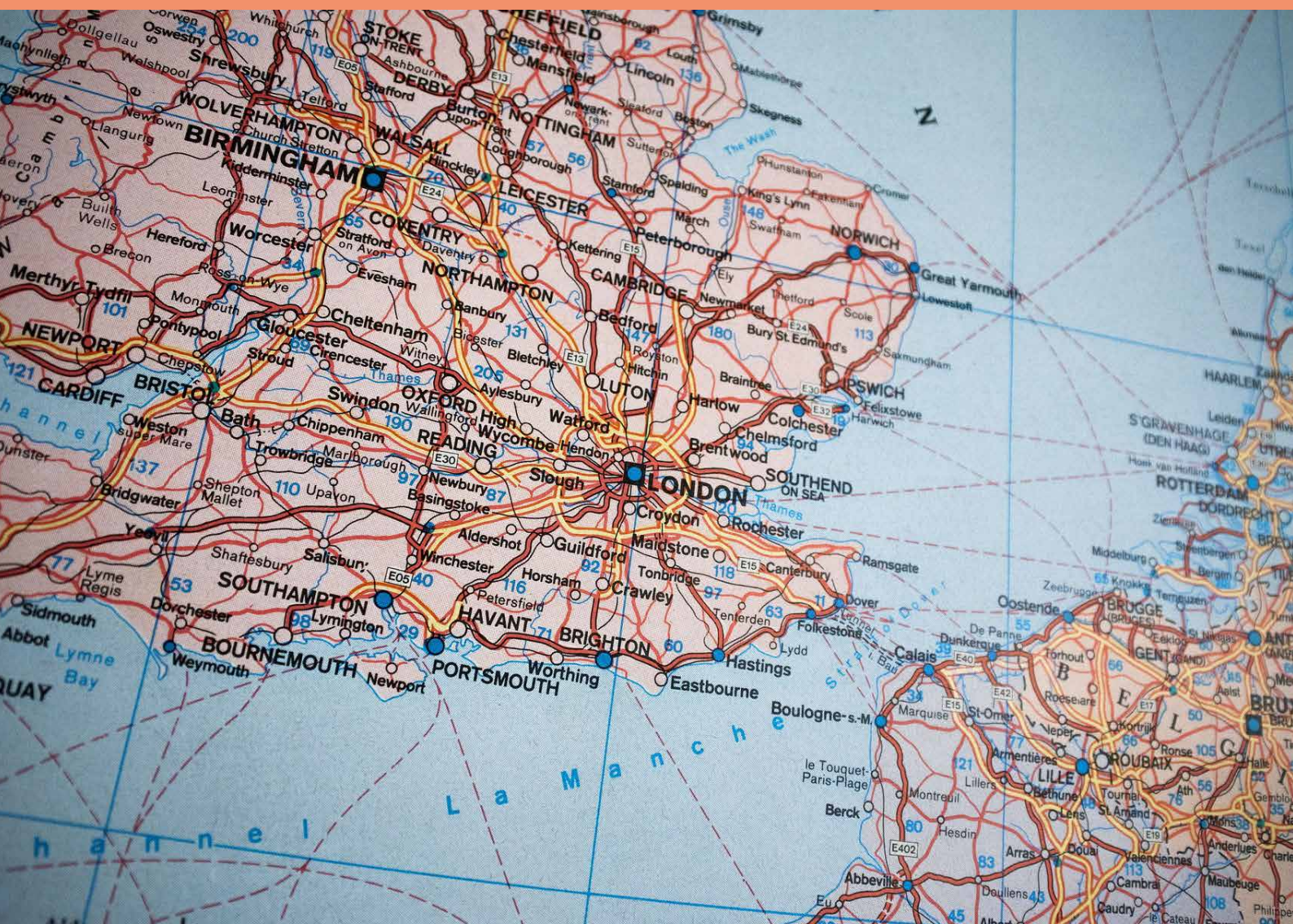


# The top 20 non-UK source countries for modern slavery in the UK

Research Summary for UK-focused actors

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This is a Research Summary of the report *The top 20 non-UK source countries for modern slavery in the UK*, focused on actors in the UK, with a separate Research Summary [modernslaverypec.org/resources/top-20-source-countries-international](https://modernslaverypec.org/resources/top-20-source-countries-international) looking at the implications of the research for internationally-focused actors. This research was funded by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) and proposed, developed, and delivered by a collaboration of researchers from the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham, the Wilberforce Institute at the University of Hull, and the Centre for the Study of International Slavery at the University of Liverpool. You can find the full report at the Rights Lab website at [www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/index.aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/index.aspx). The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Modern Slavery PEC.

Although potential victims from a significant proportion of the world's countries have been referred into the UK's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) since its inception, a small group of countries have consistently represented the majority of cases. From 2013-2019, the top twenty non-UK source countries have represented almost 70% of all referrals into the NRM. Understanding the specific experiences and dynamics of modern slavery for these national groups is therefore valuable in enriching UK programming and decision making to protect victims, pursue accountability, and prevent future exploitation.

Our research explored the different journeys and experiences of potential victims of modern slavery from the top twenty non-UK countries of origin referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK's framework for referring and identifying potential victims of modern slavery and providing support. This was combined with consideration of decision making in the NRM and in UK asylum processes.

## Key findings

- The profile of potential victims of modern slavery varies substantially between the 20 countries assessed.
- Potential victims of modern slavery from different nationalities experienced diverging NRM and asylum decision outcomes.
- The dynamics of modern slavery and transnational trafficking from the different source countries should be fully accounted for in the UK's NRM, immigration, and asylum decision making.



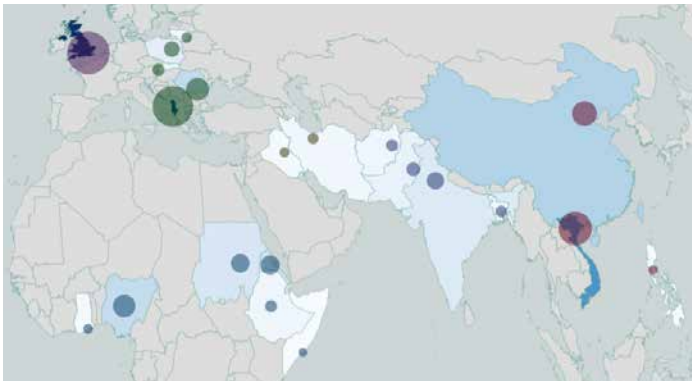
## Methodology

The research drew on analysis of evidence reviews and secondary data, as well as previously unpublished data secured through Freedom of Information requests.

The outputs include:

- 1) twenty individual Source Country reports providing an overview the dynamics of trafficking from these countries to the UK; and
- 2) a comparative analysis report investigating common themes.

The research provides a secondary review of key dynamics and trends across the top twenty non-UK source countries, conducted over a six-month period in 2020. Reports are therefore limited by the availability of data and evidence on key points of concern, and are not an exhaustive review of all available evidence.



## The top 20 non-UK source countries

### By total referral numbers 2013-2019

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

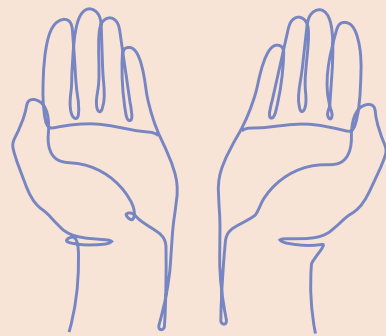
## Profile of potential victims by nationality

**The profile of potential victims of modern slavery in the UK varies substantially when broken down by nationality, highlighting the importance of support being tailored to individual needs.**

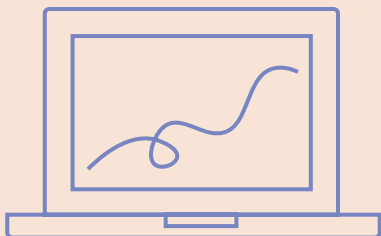
It is widely recognised that people affected by modern slavery should be provided with support tailored to their individual needs. However, nationality is one of several key factors that can significantly shape victims' experiences. The profile of potential victims from the top twenty non-UK source countries in the UK varies by age, gender, forms of exploitation experienced, routes travelled, and the sectors in which individuals are more likely to be exploited. A range of factors affect vulnerability to exploitation in the UK, including immigration status, social marginalisation, racism, language skills, and social, cultural, and religious norms and pressures. These factors often operate on multiple levels to enable modern slavery to occur in the first instance, to perpetuate and maintain situations of exploitation, prevent reporting and identification, and inhibit support and care efforts.

Contextual features of victims' source country contexts can substantially impact victims' and survivors' engagement with officials in the UK, as well as the risks they face upon repatriation. For instance, victims and survivors from unstable source countries with high levels of corruption and official complicity in abuses may experience higher obstacles to trusting UK officials, with implications for their engagement with police, service providers, and other actors. This creates risks that victims will not self-report, provide information to officials they come into contact with to enable identification, or access support mechanisms available to them. This creates further risks that victims from these source countries will disappear within the UK, leaving them without support and vulnerable to re-trafficking, new forms of exploitation, and destitution.

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



Published NRM data is not broken down by nationality for many key variables, making it difficult to identify and assess differences in experiences for potential victims from different source countries. The research presents new insights on the experiences and decision-making for nationality groups based on a combination of existing data and data accessed through Freedom of Information requests. Together, this reveals diverging experiences for different nationality groups that require further interrogation. Differences are identified in the forms of exploitation experienced, gender and age profiles, sectors in which exploitation occurs, the nature of trafficking journeys, methods of control and coercion employed, support needs, and NRM and asylum decision making.



**Recommendation 2:** The Home Office should release more granular NRM data encompassing a wider range of intersecting variables to enable more nuanced analysis of the specific trends and experiences of victims according to different factors. This should include working with the National Crime Agency to release disaggregated data for previous reporting years, to enable analysis of trends over time.

1. Secretary of State for the Home Department, 'New Plan for Immigration: Policy Statement' (HM Government 2021) available [here](#), 31-35.

## Diverging NRM and asylum decisions by nationality

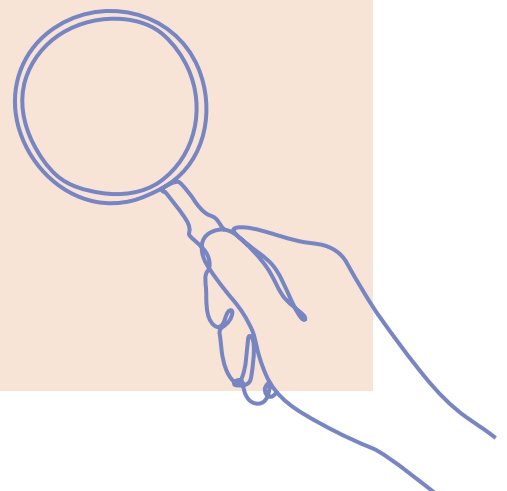
**Potential victims of modern slavery from different nationalities experienced different NRM and asylum decision outcomes, calling for deeper interrogation of decision making processes to ensure fair and unbiased treatment.**

NRM statistics released by the National Crime Agency and Home Office do not currently include a breakdown of NRM decisions by nationality. Newly obtained data following a Freedom of Information (FOI) request provides a breakdown of conclusive grounds decisions for the years 2015-2019 for nationals of the twenty countries included in the research. The data reveals that potential victims from certain source countries were less likely to receive a positive conclusive grounds decision than others—potential victims from China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan were the least likely to receive a positive conclusive grounds decision, while potential victims from Sudan, Poland, and Eritrea were the most likely to receive a positive decision. The difference between positive and negative conclusive grounds decision rates was over 45 percentage points.

Publicly available NRM, immigration, and asylum data provides little insight into decisions granting various forms of leave to remain available to conclusively identified modern slavery victims in the UK. Analysis of additional new data secured through FOI requests shows that decisions on asylum applications for victims with positive conclusive grounds decisions from the top twenty non-UK source countries differ from one another. They also differ from average asylum grant rates for nationals from those countries and all asylum applications in the UK. In several cases, people with positive conclusive grounds decisions from specific countries were more likely to be granted asylum than average for applicants from that source country. However, in others (notably China and Viet Nam) confirmed victims were less likely to secure an asylum grant than the average for applicants from that source country.

**Recommendation 3:** Further research is required to understand the other characteristics of these cases that may help to explain these differences – the sharp difference between source countries, as well as overall decision rates, make this investigation crucial to ensuring fair and unbiased decision making.

**Recommendation 4:** Home Office decision makers assessing claims for asylum and the Country Policy and Information Team in the Home Office should ensure vulnerabilities and drivers of modern slavery in countries of origin and transit are adequately considered in individual decisions given the relevance of these factors in assessing risks of re-trafficking, new forms of exploitation, effective protection thereof and evidence of past persecution.



## Modern slavery dynamics in UK decision making

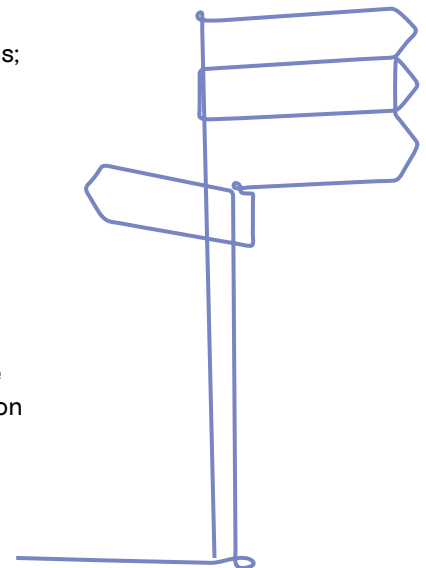
**The dynamics of modern slavery and transnational trafficking from the different source countries should be fully accounted for in various aspects of UK decision making, requiring further research and efforts to ensure various aspects of victims' modern slavery experiences are appropriately factored into decisions.**

The research indicates a range of specific vulnerabilities, experiences, and dynamics relevant for various aspects of UK decision making, both within and outside the NRM. The research suggests that specific considerations related to source country dynamics should be accounted for in identification procedures, official efforts to engage with potential victims and vulnerable populations, support provision, and decision making in NRM, immigration, and asylum processes. Yet, the research also identifies a relative lack of published evidence and data on specific experiences of vulnerability and exploitation relevant to individuals from the full range of different source countries. The twenty Source Country Reports produced by this research compile relevant evidence related to each of the countries, including official evidence sources where possible.

The research identifies key drivers of modern slavery operating in the top twenty non-UK source countries, across four levels: structural and environmental factors; social and community factors; family factors; and individual factors. Many of these factors are entrenched in the source country context, and without targeted interventions are likely to be ongoing influences on individuals in these geographies. The study further identifies key shortcomings in domestic anti-slavery governance frameworks in these source countries—including in the relevant law and policy frameworks, as well as in victim support and safeguarding mechanisms. Key issues of concern across the twenty countries considered include:

1. Gaps in the criminalisation of modern slavery practices beyond trafficking in persons and inconsistent penalties between offences;
2. Lack of understanding of the crime of human trafficking and other crimes relevant to modern slavery, including amongst identifying organisations;
3. Excessive focus on criminalisation to the detriment of protective approaches;
4. Insufficient funding for survivor support and care;
5. Complicity of State officials in human trafficking and slavery-related practices;
6. Tensions between immigration regimes and anti-slavery objectives; and
7. Lack of inter-departmental and international cooperation.

Low grant rates for leave to remain applications—particularly discretionary leave—calls for interrogation of whether decisions on discretionary leave and repatriation of victims adequately account for the source country dynamics driving transnational trafficking and modern slavery, and the support infrastructure to which these conclusive victims are to be returned. These dynamics should be considered in relation to the personal recovery needs of individual victims as they could be relevant to considerations of whether a stay in the UK is necessary. These dynamics should also be considered for minor victims accounting for the best interests of the child.



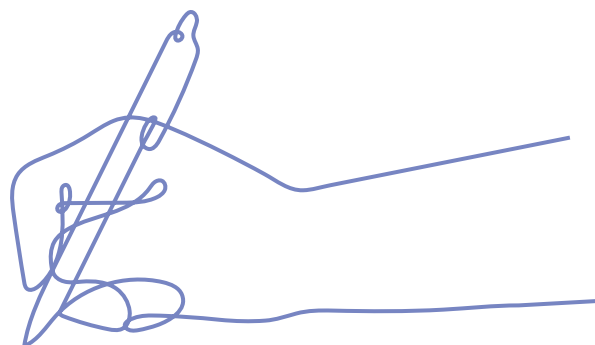
**Recommendation 5:** Home Office decision makers assessing discretionary leave applications and repatriation of conclusive victims should ensure that the source country dynamics that drive transnational trafficking and modern slavery, as well as the support and safeguarding infrastructure in origin countries, are adequately accounted for in discretionary leave and repatriation decisions.

**Recommendation 6:** The Home Office should continue to strengthen coordination with support infrastructure in place in source countries to which conclusive victims are being returned, seek to facilitate data sharing on returned victims, and monitor the long-term outcomes of returned victims to ensure protection for these individuals.

## Areas for future research

Overall, there is a notable lack of specific data and research on the diverging experiences of survivors of different nationalities. This affects the design of policies and services to prevent and address modern slavery in relation to these different nationality groups, which are therefore often ill-equipped to tailor interventions to these groups. This research highlights key areas that require tailored programming and strengthening to help prevent modern slavery, protect vulnerable populations, and support survivors' recovery and reintegration, with relevance for source country governance and UK policymakers. These include key drivers of exploitation operating at different levels, the evolving dynamics of vulnerability on trafficking journeys, and particular support needs. The situations in countries of origin can also help to explain trends in different experiences of survivors' journeys, experiences, and interactions with officials and UK institutions.

This research is preliminary in nature, identifying key trends based on existing and emerging evidence available at the time of publication. This includes identification of key knowledge and data gaps requiring further research and interrogation to ensure effective, evidence-based prevention and protection programming for these twenty countries. In particular, further investigation into the explanatory factors behind divergence identified in the data, specific experiences and care and support needs for victims from different countries of origin, and what works to ensure effective recovery and reintegration for victims of different nationalities are needed.



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