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# Understanding Factors Associated with Victim Engagement in Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Police-Recorded Cases

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### Authorship and funding:

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Justice and Care is a British non-governmental organisation. It has worked in South Asia for over a decade, helping the state and law enforcement agencies rescue men, women and children from slavery, trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Justice and Care works to join forces to prevent human trafficking in the most at-risk communities, to protect victims and help them recover, and, where appropriate, to support the state's efforts to bring criminals and their wider networks to justice.

The **Victim Navigator programme** was co-designed with lived experience and police leaders to fill a specific and important gap in existing service provision by forming a trusted bridge between the police and victims of modern slavery; and by flexibly and independently brokering support from external specialist services according to individual victims' needs. The aim was to improve victim care and, subsequently, victim engagement with the police, to increase the likelihood of successful investigations, the identification of perpetrators, prosecutions, and convictions by embedding independent, specialist support within policing contexts.

The authors would like to especially thank the police force that collaborated on this study for providing the data that enabled the development of this report.

## Terminology

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### **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT)**

“Modern Slavery” serves as an umbrella term encompassing the offences of human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour. For the purpose of the report, the term Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) will be used throughout.

### **Victim and Potential Victim**

The terms ‘Survivors’ or ‘People with lived experiences’ are often the preferred terminology for organisations working with victims of MSHT offences. Yet, the terms ‘victim’ and ‘potential victim’ are used within policing and legislative contexts to refer to those who have been subject to MSHT criminality. As this report concerns victim engagement in policing operations, the term ‘victim’ will be used throughout.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Aim:

The report aims to identify if, and which, factors related to the victim, perpetrator, offence and case were associated with victim engagement in modern slavery human trafficking (MSHT) cases<sup>1</sup>.

## Methodology:

We conducted a statistical analysis of MSHT police-recorded cases (2018-2023) from a police force database to examine associations between victim engagement and factors related to victim, offender and case characteristics.

## Key findings:

1. Analysis of MSHT police case-recorded data revealed that most identified victims were already known by the police. In less than 20% of the cases analysed, the victim was offered support, and in less than 30% of those cases, the victim accepted the offer. It should be noted that between 2018 and 2021, the proportion of cases in which victims were offered support services was significantly lower than in 2021 and later years.

2. The prevalence of engaging with police was higher amongst:

- Those in older age groups (p<0.01)
- Those with non-UK nationality (p<0.01)
- Those cases in which offenders were in older age groups (p<0.01)
- When an NRM<sup>2</sup> referral was made (p<0.01)
- Those cases which did not involve sexual exploitation (p<0.01)
- Those cases which involved domestic servitude (p<0.001)
- Those cases which involved labour exploitation (p<0.05)

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. whether victims were offered, and/or accepted support; and/or, whether victim engagement was positive or negative in those cases which offenders were identified.

<sup>2</sup> National Referral Mechanism.

- Those cases in which the victims had more data entries as a victim than as a perpetrator ( $p < 0.05$ )

## Recommendations

- 1. Improved data recording practices:** to prevent data limitations related to accuracy, consistency, completeness and duplication, and data recording.
- 2. Co-production of a National Framework for the recording of MSHT cases with relevant agencies and researchers:** to enrich the available data and facilitate data sharing among agencies, enhancing opportunities to undertake a much more evidence-based response to MSHT.
- 3. Active use of police database:** to ensure data actively informs decision-making and reduces instances of missed opportunities for victim identification.

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) criminality imposes a significant economic burden on UK policing and society. The estimated socio-economic impact of MSHT in the UK is £60bn annually, with an estimated £450,000 per victim<sup>3</sup>. Police forces grapple with the two-fold challenge of responding to the criminal activities associated with people exploitation and then of identifying and engaging with the vulnerabilities (and safeguarding) of victims. Shortfalls in securing victim engagement have been found to undermine legal and policing efforts to secure the prosecution and conviction of offenders<sup>4</sup>. However, the police response to MSHT has been criticised for being reactive and not sufficiently victim-centred<sup>5</sup>, leading to low numbers of victim identifications (in part because often MSHT victims do not self-identify as victims), and poor victim engagement and protection (in part due to victims' lack of trust in authorities). Therefore, opportunities are missed to obtain evidence for prosecution and to prevent future victimisation by identifying further victims and offenders<sup>3,6</sup>.

Strengthening operational victim engagement is therefore core to victim safeguarding, police efficiency, and cost savings. While qualitative examinations of practitioners' experiences interacting with victims in MSHT cases and of victims' experiences engaging with police provide insight into "what works" to promote and secure successful engagement (see Pajon, 2026<sup>7</sup>), the statistical evidence on factors associated with victim engagement in police operations is limited.

We therefore designed this study to empirically establish which factors (if any) related to the victim, the perpetrator, the offence, and the case were associated with victim engagement in MSHT police operations. To do so, we obtained and statistically analysed data from MSHT police-recorded cases from one large police force in England.

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<sup>3</sup> Unseen (2024). [The economic cost of modern slavery: policing](#)

<sup>4</sup> Heys, A. (2025). [Barriers to prosecution and conviction under the Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

<sup>5</sup> HM Government (2022). [The hidden victims: Report on Hestia's super-complaint on the police response to victims of modern slavery](#)

<sup>6</sup> Pajon, L. & Walsh, D. (2024). Investigating organised human trafficking crimes: case studies of police investigations in England. *Police Practice and Research*. DOI: [10.1080/15614263.2024.2406841](#)

<sup>7</sup> Pajon, L. (2026). [Promoting Victim Engagement in Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Police Operations](#)

This report begins by outlining the methodology and data analysis. It then provides a descriptive overview of the MSHT police-recorded cases analysed, considering the sociodemographic characteristics of victims and offenders, as well as other case-level factors (e.g., exploitation type, referral type). Next, it provides an overview of those factors that are associated with (a) victims being offered support services, (b) victims accepting the support offered, and (c) victims supporting police investigation actions on those cases in which offenders were identified.

The project has complied with the ethical and safeguarding policies of both organisations. Ethical approval was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University (Ethics reference number 24/LCP/006).

## 2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

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### 2.1 Research purpose

We sought to identify if, and which, factors related to the victim, perpetrator, offence and case were associated with victim engagement. We assess victim engagement by whether victims were offered and/or accepted support, and by whether victims supported (or not) police actions on those cases in which offenders were.

### 2.2 Data Source

Data was obtained from one large police force in England covering the period from 2018 to 2023. We combined three databases covering information on:

- MSHT cases: including information on offence (e.g. exploitation type), and case-related details (e.g. referring agency, case outcome, National Referral Mechanism [NRM] submission).
- Victims: including victims' sociodemographic characteristics and any previously recorded victim interaction with the police (including all police data entries ever recorded about any incidents the victim of the MSHT case was involved in, with details on their role in such incidents; i.e. perpetrator, victim, witness).
- Offenders: including offenders' sociodemographic characteristics.

Information from all three databases was merged using either unique offence-occurrence numbers or unique victim-identification numbers. After removing duplicate entries/cases, we examined 2,428 MSHT police-recorded cases.

### 2.3 Measures

We utilised three measures to explore victim engagement:

- Whether victims were offered support services
- Whether victims accepted the support offered
- Whether victim engagement was positive or negative on those cases in which offenders were identified. We coded cases in which the offence outcome variable

stated ‘*Suspect identified – evidential difficulties – victim supports action*’ as positive victim engagement. We coded cases in which the offence outcome variable stated ‘*Suspect identified – evidential difficulties – victim not supporting*’ as negative victim engagement. Where the variables indicated that the investigation was ongoing or that there was no crime, this was coded as such. All other data entry for this variable was coded as unknown, as the victim’s level of engagement could not be determined.

The factors examined included:

<b>Victim sociodemographic characteristics</b>	
Sex	Male; Female
Age (years)	17 and under; 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55+
Nationality	UK; non-UK
<b>Offender sociodemographic characteristics</b>	
Sex	Male; Female
Age (years)	17 and under; 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55+
Nationality	UK; non-UK
Ethnicity	White ethnicities; Asian ethnicities; Black ethnicities; mixed/multiple ethnicities; other ethnicities
<b>Case-level factors</b>	
Type of referral	NRM form; MS1 <sup>8</sup> form
Referring agency	Internal by the police force; External by other agencies
Exploitation type <sup>9</sup>	Criminal exploitation; Labour exploitation; Sexual exploitation; Domestic servitude; Other types/undefined exploitation
Exploitation location	In the UK only; overseas only; both in the UK and overseas
County lines involvement	Yes; No
<b>Factors related to other police-recorded incidents in which the victim was involved</b>	
Number of individual entries in the police database	
The individual’s role in any incidents (i.e., victim, perpetrator, or other) and the number of times recorded in such a role	

<sup>8</sup> MS1 - Notification of Potential Victim of Modern Slavery Form.

<sup>9</sup> Police could record more than one type of exploitation for a case, as such individuals may have more than one type of exploitation recorded.

## 2.4 Data analysis

Quantitative analyses were undertaken in SPSS (v.29). We conducted descriptive analysis followed by Chi-square test for independence to examine associations between victim engagement and factors related to victim, offender and case characteristics.

## 2.5 Data coding and quality

When merging and coding data from the three police databases, we accounted for data limitations related to:

- Data accuracy: Inconsistencies in data recording, such as sociodemographic characteristics.
- Data duplication: A number of duplicate data entries or entries where data had been updated on an incident, but as a separate data entry from the initial data entry.
- Data consistency: Data being recorded differently despite the same meaning.
- Data completeness: Missing data (e.g. individual-level ID numbers appearing in data files that were not in the main modern slavery file and not always easily able to tell an individual's role in an incident).
- Data insight and context: Lack of detail or description/explanation on variable codes (e.g. what is the type of support provided), which limits deep understanding of the meaning of the codes and/or insight.

The above data limitations are likely due to a number of reasons, such as data entry being undertaken manually by multiple staff, data recording practices developing over time, not having pre-defined recording practices across different variables, having to record data that was not necessarily always readily available to staff, and a need to capture the complexity of modern slavery cases.

Because of the above limitations, we excluded from the analysis those cases in which:

- The victim had no ID number, or there were two entries for the same victim ID with the same date, but the occurrence numbers and the sociodemographic information differed.
- Where the victim ID number was the same, the date was the same, and all other variables were the same except for the occurrence number (different because it was a different data entry), these data entries were treated as duplicates and removed from the dataset.
- When the victim ID number did not match an ID number from the MSHT case data file, as we could not guarantee that these individuals were victims of MSHT.
- When the offender's data file information could not be matched to entries in the MSHT case data file using the occurrence numbers.

## 3.0 DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW OF MSHT- POLICE RECORDED CASES





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### 3.1 Victims' sociodemographic characteristics and case-level factors

From the 2,428 MSHT police-recorded cases analysed, 1,790 individuals were identified as victims. Of those, the majority (94.0%, n=1682) had only one instance of MSHT victimisation; however, a small proportion (6.0%; n=108) had more than one instance (range: 1-6). As shown in Table 1, most victims were male (73.1%; n=1299) and adults (58.2%; n=1014), with a split between UK nationals (50.7%; n=892) and non-UK nationals. The majority of MSHT police-recorded cases analysed had an NRM referral (84.6%; n=2052), and over half (57.1%; n=1262) were referred by agencies external to the police force. Criminal exploitation was the most commonly identified form of exploitation (59.5%; n=1411), followed by labour exploitation (20.1%; n=477), sexual exploitation (12.7%; n=302), and domestic servitude (3.9%; n=92), while a small proportion (4.6%; n=108) of cases had an undefined (or other) type of exploitation. In over six in ten (62.7%; n=329) cases, exploitation occurred only in the UK. Three in ten cases (30.8%; n=332) involved a victim who was involved in county lines exploitation.

The prevalence of the victims' demographic characteristics by type of exploitation is shown in Table 1. It can be observed that, whilst across all MSHT types, the majority of victims were adults, non-UK nationalities and had an exploitation location as overseas, this was not the case for criminal exploitation, where the majority were aged under 18 years, of UK nationality and were exploited in the UK. Further, victims of criminal and labour exploitation were mostly male, whilst victims of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude were mostly female. See Appendix 1 for a full overview of victim sociodemographic characteristics and Appendix 2 for a full overview of the police-recorded MSHT case-level factors analysed.

Table 1. Victims' sociodemographic characteristics by MSHT type

	All MSHT cases		Criminal exploitation 59.5% of MSHT cases		Labour exploitation 20.1% of MSHT cases		Sexual exploitation 12.7% of MSHT cases		Domestic servitude 3.9% of MSHT cases	
<b>Victim sex</b> 	Male 73.1%	Female 26.9%	Male 86.2%	Female 13.8%	Male 87.8%	Female 12.2%	Male 7.7%	Female 92.3%	Male 18.5%	Female 81.5%
<b>Victim age</b> 	17 / under 41.8%	Adult 58.2%	17 / under 52.1%	Adult 47.9%	17 / under 18.8%	Adult 81.2%	17 / under 25.3%	Adult 74.7%	17 / under 9.2%	Adult 90.8%
<b>Victim nationality</b> 	UK 50.7%	Other 49.3%	UK 71.5%	Other 28.5%	UK 7.8%	Other 92.2%	UK 28.9%	Other 71.1%	UK 3.4%	Other 96.6%
<b>Exploitation location</b> 	UK only 62.7%	Overseas 37.3%	UK only 85.8%	Overseas 14.2%	UK only 30.0%	Overseas 70.0%	UK only 53.3%	Overseas 46.7%	UK only 37.5%	Overseas 62.5%

### 3.2 Previous victims' records in police databases

Most individuals identified as victims in the MSHT police-recorded cases (85.5%; n=1549) had multiple entries in the police database (related to various offences/crime types), with a **median of 8 entries per victim** (range 1 – 476)<sup>10</sup>. While nearly all victims (99.8%) had at least one police-recorded incident in which they were recorded as a victim, two-thirds (66%; n=1196) had at least one incident in which they were recorded as perpetrators. A comparison of the number of individuals' previous police records as victims versus perpetrators reveals that 43.2% (n=782) of individuals were **recorded more often as perpetrators than as victims**.

### 3.3 Offenders' sociodemographic characteristics

From the 2,428 MSHT police-recorded cases analysed, 17.5% (n=426) of cases had one identified offender, and 5.8% (n=141) had more than one offender (range 2-7) identified. Most offenders were male (85.9%; n=499), aged 18 years or older (74.5%; n=408), and had UK nationality (73.8%; n=346). Just over half (53.3%; n=169) of offenders were white. See Appendix 3 for a full overview of offender sociodemographic characteristics.

### 3.4 Victim engagement

From the 2,428 MSHT police-recorded cases analysed, in **less than 20% of cases** (17.2%; n=394) **the victim was offered victim service support**, and in less than 30% of these cases (28.2%; n=111) the victim accepted the offer of support. To assess whether there were differences in the number of cases in which victims were offered support (and accepted it) over the years, we compared data before and after 2021. We found that before 2021, the proportion of cases (10.7%; n=117) in which victims were offered support services was significantly lower than in 2021 and later (23.3%; n=276; p<0.001). However, there was no difference by date of referral in whether victims of MSHT cases accepted an offer of support services (pre-2021, 27.4%, n=32; 2021 and later, 28.3%, n=78).

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<sup>10</sup> Two individuals were removed from the analyses here as they were outliers with an exceptionally high number of data entries (i.e., 2,475 and 1,828).

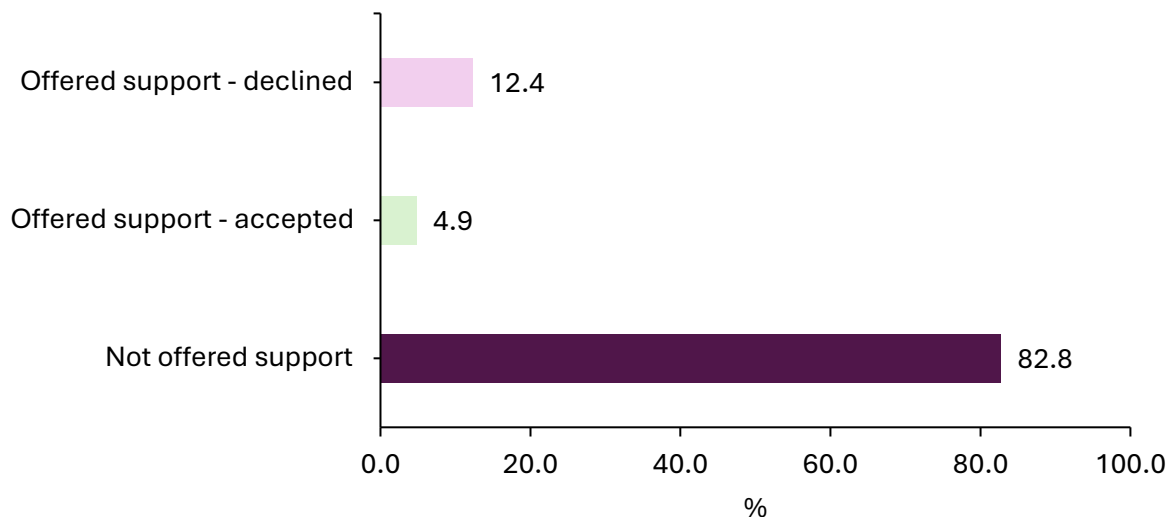


Figure 1. Offer of support services in MSHT cases

There was positive engagement<sup>11</sup> in over 10% of the cases<sup>12</sup> (12.4%; n=182); and negative engagement<sup>13</sup> in nearly 20% of the cases (19.9%; n=292). For most cases analysed (67.7%; n=993), the victim's level of engagement with the police force/relevant authorities was unknown.

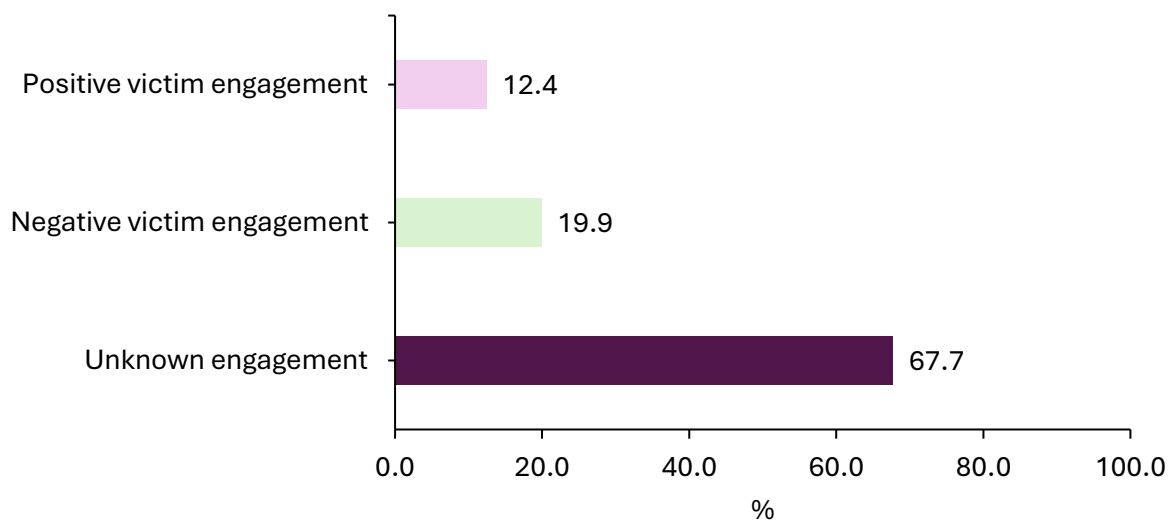


Figure 2. Level of MSHT victim engagement with the police force/relevant authorities

<sup>11</sup> Positive engagement = 'Suspect Identified – Evidential Difficulties – Victim supports action' recorded as the police outcome.

<sup>12</sup> Excluding cases that were recorded as either investigation ongoing (n=165) or where 'no crime' was indicated (n=796).

<sup>13</sup> Negative engagement = 'Suspect Identified – Evidential Difficulties – Victim not supporting' recorded as the police outcome.

## 4.0 FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH VICTIM ENGAGEMENT

The results presented below in Tables 2,3 and 4 reveal those statistical associations between sociodemographic characteristics, case-level factors and a) victims being offered support, b) accepting support and c) victim engagement. For a full overview of these data analysis results, see Appendix 4.

Table 2. Factors related to the MSHT victim, perpetrator, offence and case associated with being offered support services








The prevalence of being offered support was higher amongst:			
 <b>Those in older age groups (p&lt;0.01)</b>	17 years and under (15.7%, n=139)	18-24 years (15.2%, n=57)	25 or older (21.3%, n=194)
 <b>Those with UK nationality (p&lt;0.001)</b>	UK nationals (21.5%, n=232)	non-UK nationals (13.4%, n=158)	
 <b>Those referred by the police (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Cases referred by the police (24.7%, n=220)	Cases referred by external agencies (11.5%, n=137)	
 <b>Those cases which involved criminal exploitation (p&lt;0.01)</b>	Criminal exploitation (19.5%, n=259)	No criminal exploitation (14.3%, n=130)	
 <b>Those cases which did not involve labour exploitation (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Labour exploitation (11.0%, n=49)	No labour exploitation (19.0%, n=340)	
 <b>Those who had multiple recorded police incidents (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Multiple recorded police incidents (23.4%, n=370)	No previous records (10.0%, n=24)	
 <b>Those cases that had an offender identified (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Offender identified (31.9%, n=130)	No offender identified (14.0%, n=264)	

Table 3. Factors related to the MSHT victim, perpetrator, offence and case associated with victims accepting the offer of support services











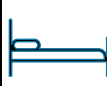



<b>The prevalence of accepting the offer of support was higher amongst:</b>			
 <b>Those in older age groups (p&lt;0.001)</b>	17 years and under (8.6%, n=12)	18-24 years (24.6%, n=14)	25 or older (42.6%, n=67)
 <b>Females (p&lt;0.05)</b>	Females (36.4%, n=44)		Males (24.6%, n=14)
 <b>Those cases which did not involve county lines activities (p&lt;0.05)</b>	County lines (15.7%, n=11)		No county lines (31.6%, n=49)
 <b>Those cases which did not involve criminal exploitation (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Criminal exploitation (20.5%, n=53)		No criminal exploitation (43.8%, n=57)
 <b>Those cases which involved labour exploitation (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Labour exploitation (51.0%, n=25)		No labour exploitation (25.0%, n=85)
 <b>Those cases in which the victims had more data entries as a victim (p&lt;0.001)</b>	More data entries as a victim than as a perpetrator (35.0%, n=76)		More data entries as perpetrator than as a victim (19.8%, n=35)

Table 4. Factors related to the MSHT victim, perpetrator, offence and case associated with victims engaging with police

<b>The prevalence of engaging with police was higher amongst:</b>			
 <b>Those in older age groups (p&lt;0.01)</b>	17 years and under (30.3%, n=47)	18-24 years (34.2%, n=25)	25 or older (45.2%, n=108)
 <b>Those with non-UK nationality (p&lt;0.01)</b>	UK nationals (33.4%, n=101)		non-UK nationals (47.3%, n=78)
 <b>Those cases in which offenders were in older age groups (p&lt;0.01)</b>	17 years and under (28.1%, n=25)	18-24 years (32.5%, n=27)	25 or older (45.2%, n=95)
 <b>When an NRM referral was made (p&lt;0.01)</b>	NRM (41.3%, n=166)		MS1 (22.2%, n=16)
 <b>Those cases which did not involve sexual exploitation (p&lt;0.01)</b>	Sexual exploitation (23.2%, n=16)	No sexual exploitation (41.0%, n=165)	
 <b>Those cases which involved domestic servitude (p&lt;0.001)</b>	Domestic servitude (77.3%, n=17),	No domestic servitude (36.5%, n=164)	
 <b>Those cases which involved labour exploitation (p&lt;0.05)</b>	Labour exploitation (50.8%, n=32)	No labour exploitation (36.5%, n=149)	
 <b>Those cases in which the victims had more data entries as a victim (p&lt;0.05)</b>	More data entries as a victim than as a perpetrator (43.5%, n=100)		More data entries as perpetrator than as a victim (32.2%, n=69)

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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Although the study and examination of secondary data from police databases related to MSHT cases has been limited (in part due to limitations in data access and confidentiality), such data has the potential to strengthen and expand the evidence base on MSHT and its policing response<sup>14</sup>, as findings from this report demonstrate.

The descriptive analysis of the data reveals important insights, including that in most cases the victims were previously known by the police (e.g. 85.5% of the victims having multiple entries in the police database) and that, in some cases, victims might have had previous negative experiences engaging with police (e.g. 43.2% of individuals being recorded more often as perpetrators than victims). These findings may support existing evidence that in some cases of MSHT, victims are being misidentified as offenders and their victimisation is being missed by police, leading to victims of exploitation being arrested rather than safeguarded<sup>15</sup>.

In turn, the statistical analysis reveals the association between individuals with more data entries as victims than as perpetrators and their higher prevalence of both engagement in the police investigation and acceptance of the offer of support services. These findings suggest that when exploited individuals are treated more as offenders than as victims by the police, they are less likely to engage with a police investigation and receive support, providing empirical support for the need to promptly equip officers and practitioners with the skills needed to effectively identify potential victims of trafficking to promote engagement and secure effective safeguarding<sup>16</sup>.

To maximise the potential that police data has for research, policy and practice, we propose the following recommendations:

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<sup>14</sup> Cockbain, E., Bowers, K., & Vernon, L. (2019). Using law enforcement data in trafficking research. In *The Palgrave International Handbook of human trafficking* (pp. 1709-1732). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

<sup>15</sup> Barrick, K., Panichelli, M., Lambdin, B. Dang, M. & Lutnick, A. (2020). Law enforcement identification of potential trafficking victims. *Journal of Crime and Justice*. DOI: 10.1080/0735648X.2020.1837204

<sup>16</sup> IASC (2025) *Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner: strategic plan 2024 to 2026*

## Recommendations:

### 1. Improved data recording:

To prevent data limitations related to accuracy, consistency, completeness and duplication, data recording should and could be improved by different means:

- Utilising pre-defined categories for different variables and using drop-down options could improve data consistency. Because of the complexity of MSHT cases, categorisations (where relevant) should include the option to select 'other' and provide a free-text response.
- Ensuring that where there is new information to update on an incident, this is applied to the previous data entry for that incident to reduce the number of duplicate data entries.
- Recording reasons for missing data (e.g. data not available, data not known, not applicable) may also help to improve data completeness and allow for future completion of the data.
- As changes are made to data recording procedures, staff should receive training to ensure consistency in data recording practices and to help identify and address any potential problems with the data. New staff to the force should also receive this training.
- A data dictionary could be created, detailing what each of the data fields is used for and when different categories should be applied. This may help staff when recording data and help data analysts and officers who do not know the case in their understanding of the data/case.
- Data quality could be monitored on an ongoing basis by a named lead to identify any problems in terms of data recording practices, data consistency, data accuracy, and data completeness.

### 2. Co-production of a National Framework for the recording of MSHT cases

To minimise data completeness limitations and facilitate comparison (and data aggregation) across different agencies, a national framework for recording MSHT cases could be co-designed with relevant agencies (e.g. police, local authorities, charities and

NGOs, health, home office), based on their prior agreement on the database's purpose and the collection of different data. Having an accessible and accurate evidence base would enrich the available data, facilitate data sharing among agencies, and ultimately support first responders in their response to perpetrators and the safeguarding of victims.

The national framework would support police officers and other first responders with the collection and collation of insights and intelligence from NRMs and MS1s' referrals, providing opportunities to undertake a much more evidence-based response to MSHT. Having accurate, consistently collected data across agencies would enhance the evidence-based understanding of patterns of offending and victims' needs, while enabling the development of more robust and rigorous MSHT profiles for specific counties and regions that incorporate data gathered from multiple and diverse organisations/agencies. Furthermore, such a co-productive approach would reduce institutional bias, thus enhancing the generalisation of the results. Such a framework should utilise standardised data entry where possible to ensure consistency in data recording across different organisations and areas. However, free-text data entry should be utilised where appropriate to ensure that relevant information is recorded, given the complexity and diversity of MSHT cases. This may also help provide officers and data analysts who are unfamiliar with the case with a deeper understanding of relevant case-level details.

We would also encourage the involvement of researchers in such a co-productive approach for two main purposes: a) to allow for the later production of outcome-oriented empirical evidence that can serve to inform policing practices and wider MSHT responses, and b) to advise on how best to record data to allow for advanced statistical analysis, including the development of predictive models.

### **3. Active use of police database**

Information from databases should be more readily available to police officers or utilised more proactively. Findings highlighting how many times the victim has been recorded in the police database reveal limitations in data flagging and in the use of available information. Training and workshops should be conducted with front-line officers and detectives to ensure their decision-making takes into consideration database

information, thereby reducing the likelihood of misidentifying (potential) victims as offenders and increasing the likelihood of safeguarding victims.

# Appendix 1

## Sociodemographic characteristics of victims of MSHT offences

Sociodemographic	% (n)
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	73.1 (1299)
Female	26.9 (477)
<b>Age group (years)</b>	
17 and under	41.8 (728)
18-24	16.9 (294)
25-34	18.4 (320)
35-44	13.2 (230)
45-54	6.3 (109)
55+	3.5 (61)
<b>Nationality<sup>17</sup></b>	
UK nationality	49.5 (869)
Other European region nationalities	17.6 (309)
Eastern Mediterranean region nationalities	9.1 (160)
Western Pacific region nationalities	8.7 (152)
African region nationalities	8.0 (140)
South-East Asia region nationalities	4.6 (80)
Region of the Americas nationalities	1.3 (23)
Multiple nationalities	1.3 (23)

<sup>17</sup> Nationality region was assigned using World Health Organization regions. A small number of territories/countries could not be assigned to a region, these were instead assigned to a region by the research team depending on the area that they fit best with (e.g. West Indies – Region of the Americas). The number who had UK nationality is higher than the number of those assigned to UK nationality in the above Appendix Table. This is because those with Multiple nationalities often had UK nationality in addition to a non-UK nationality.

## Appendix 2

### Characteristics of the police-recorded MSHT cases

Case-level factors	% (n)
<b>Referral type</b>	
MS1 referral	15.4 (374)
NRM referral	84.6 (2052)
<b>Referring agency</b>	
Internal (from the police force)	42.9 (948)
External (from other agencies)	57.1 (1262)
<b>Police recorded exploitation type<sup>18</sup></b>	
Criminal exploitation	59.5 (1411)
Labour exploitation	20.1 (477)
Sexual exploitation	12.7 (302)
Domestic servitude	3.9 (92)
Other types of/undefined exploitation	4.6 (108)
<b>Exploitation location</b>	
UK	62.7 (329)
Overseas	32.0 (168)
Both the UK and overseas	5.3 (28)
<b>County lines involvement</b>	
Has county lines involvement	69.2 (747)
No county lines involvement	30.8 (332)

<sup>18</sup> Police could record more than one type of exploitation for a case, as such percentages here do not sum to equal 100%.

# Appendix 3

## Sociodemographic characteristics of offenders of MSHT offences

Sociodemographic characteristics	% (n)
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	85.9 (499)
Female	14.1 (82)
<b>Age (years)</b>	
17 and under	25.5 (140)
18-24	23.7 (130)
25-34	26.8 (147)
35-44	13.3 (73)
45-54	6.4 (35)
55+	4.2 (23)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White ethnicities	53.3 (169)
Asian ethnicities	21.8 (69)
Black ethnicities	15.5 (49)
Mixed/multiple ethnicities	8.2 (26)
Other ethnicities	1.3 (4)
<b>Nationality</b>	
UK nationality	71.0 (333)
Other European region nationalities	15.4 (72)
Eastern Mediterranean region nationalities	3.6 (17)
Multiple nationalities	3.2 (15)
Western Pacific region nationalities	2.8 (13)
Region of the Americas nationalities	1.5 (7)
African region nationalities	1.1 (5)
South-East Asia region nationalities	0.9 (4)

## Appendix 4

### Victim engagement and victim sociodemographic characteristics

	Positive victim engagement <sup>19</sup>	Offered victim support services	Accepted support from victim support services <sup>20</sup>
<b>Overall % (n)</b>	38.4 (182)	17.2 (394)	28.2 (111)
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	38.1 (117)	16.3 (272)	24.6 (67)
Female	39.2 (65)	19.7 (121)	36.4 (44)
$\chi^2$	0.015	3.377	5.123
<i>p</i>	0.901	0.066	0.024
<b>Age group (years)</b>			
17 and under	30.3 (47)	15.7 (139)	8.6 (12)
18-24	34.2 (25)	15.2 (57)	24.6 (14)
25+	45.2 (108)	21.3 (194)	42.8 (83)
$\chi^2$	9.446	11.906	47.279
<i>p</i>	0.009	0.003	<0.001
<b>Nationality</b>			
Has UK nationality	47.3 (78)	21.5 (232)	27.2 (63)
Does not have UK nationality	33.4 (101)	13.4 (158)	29.7 (47)
$\chi^2$	8.058	25.476	0.197
<i>p</i>	0.005	<0.001	0.657

<sup>19</sup> Analyses exclude cases where engagement was unknown, no crime, and the investigation was ongoing.

<sup>20</sup> Analyses are of those who were offered victim support services.

## Victim engagement and offender sociodemographic characteristics

	Positive victim engagement <sup>21</sup>	Offered victim support services	Accepted support from victim support services <sup>22</sup>
<b>Overall % (n)</b>	38.4 (182)	17.2 (394)	28.2 (111)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	37.4 (130)	31.5 (166)	32.5 (54)
Female	44.6 (25)	30.6 (26)	30.8 (8)
$\chi^2$	0.797	0.002	0.000
<i>p</i>	0.372	0.967	1.000
<b>Age group (years)</b>			
17 and under	28.1 (25)	34.6 (53)	30.2 (16)
18-24	32.5 (27)	30.6 (41)	29.3 (12)
25+	45.2 (95)	30.5 (90)	33.3 (30)
$\chi^2$	9.351	0.879	0.277
<i>p</i>	0.009	0.644	0.871
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White	37.4 (43)	34.6 (62)	22.6 (14)
Other ethnicities	31.8 (34)	29.9 (46)	26.1 (12)
$\chi^2$	0.544	0.655	0.038
<i>p</i>	0.461	0.418	0.846
<b>Nationality</b>			
Has UK nationality	31.8 (75)	33.0 (121)	31.4 (38)
Does not have UK nationality	34.9 (30)	31.3 (42)	28.6 (12)
$\chi^2$	0.153	0.056	0.022
<i>p</i>	0.696	0.813	0.882

<sup>21</sup> Analyses exclude cases where engagement was unknown, no crime, and the investigation was ongoing.

<sup>22</sup> Analyses are of those who were offered victim support services.

## Victim engagement and case-level factors

	Positive victim engagement <sup>23</sup>	Offered victim support services	Accepted support from victim support services <sup>24</sup>
<b>Overall % (n)</b>	38.4 (182)	17.2 (394)	28.2 (111)
<b>Referral type</b>			
MS1 referral	22.2 (16)	15.2 (55)	21.8 (12)
NRM referral	41.3 (166)	17.6 (339)	29.2 (99)
$\chi^2$	8.601	1.041	0.937
<i>p</i>	0.003	0.308	0.333
<b>Referring agency</b>			
Internal (from the police force)	43.7 (129)	24.7 (220)	32.7 (72)
External (from other agencies)	33.3 (41)	11.5 (137)	23.4 (32)
$\chi^2$	3.469	61.735	3.151
<i>p</i>	0.063	<0.001	0.076
<b>County lines involvement</b>			
Has county lines involvement	35.6 (26)	23.3 (70)	15.7 (11)
No county lines involvement	42.5 (57)	22.5 (155)	31.6 (49)
$\chi^2$	0.686	0.032	5.446
<i>p</i>	0.411	0.857	0.020
<b>Criminal exploitation</b>			
Criminal exploitation identified	35.8 (111)	19.5 (259)	20.5 (53)
Criminal exploitation not identified	43.5 (70)	14.3 (130)	43.8 (57)
$\chi^2$	2.322	9.884	22.195
<i>p</i>	0.128	0.002	<0.001
<b>Labour exploitation</b>			
Labour exploitation identified	50.8 (32)	11.0 (49)	51.0 (25)
Labour exploitation not identified	36.5 (149)	19.0 (340)	25.0 (85)
$\chi^2$	4.115	15.483	13.043
<i>p</i>	0.042	<0.001	<0.001
<b>Sexual exploitation</b>			
Sexual exploitation identified	23.2 (16)	20.1 (58)	39.7 (23)
Sexual exploitation not identified	41.0 (165)	17.0 (331)	26.3 (87)
$\chi^2$	7.199	1.414	3.716
<i>p</i>	0.007	0.234	0.054

<sup>23</sup> Analyses exclude cases where engagement was unknown, no crime, and the investigation was ongoing.

<sup>24</sup> Analyses are of those who were offered victim support services.

<b>Domestic servitude</b>			
Domestic servitude identified	77.3 (17)	18.2 (16)	37.5 (6)
Domestic servitude not identified	36.5 (164)	17.4 (373)	27.9 (104)
$\chi^2$	13.045	0.002	0.306
$p$	<0.001	0.961	0.580

## Victim engagement and factors of additional police recorded incidents

	Positive victim engagement <sup>25</sup>	Offered victim support services	Accepted support from victim support services <sup>26</sup>
<b>Overall % (n)</b>	38.4 (182)	17.2 (394)	28.2 (111)
<b>Number of police data system entries</b>			
One	47.4 (9)	10.0 (24)	37.5 (9)
More than one	37.6 (160)	23.4 (370)	27.6 (102)
$\chi^2$	0.375	21.479	0.663
$p$	0.540	<0.001	0.416
<b>More data entries as a perpetrator than as a victim</b>			
Yes	32.2 (69)	21.7 (177)	19.8 (35)
No	43.5 (100)	21.6 (217)	35.0 (76)
$\chi^2$	5.469	0.000	10.461
$p$	0.019	1.000	0.001
<b>Victim has a recorded offender related to case</b>			
Yes	36.7 (104)	31.9 (130)	33.1 (43)
No	40.8 (78)	14.0 (264)	25.8 (68)
$\chi^2$	0.642	73.438	1.959
$p$	0.423	<0.001	0.162

<sup>25</sup> Analyses exclude cases where engagement was unknown, no crime, and the investigation was ongoing.

<sup>26</sup> Analyses are of those who were offered victim support services.

