



Home Office



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2018

April 2020

Contents

1. Key Points	3
2 Overview	5
3 Forced Marriage Unit Statistics	7
3.1 Gender of Victims	9
3.2 Age of Victims	9
3.3 UK regions where victims live.....	10
3.4 Focus Country Overview	11
3.5 Sexual Orientation of Victims.....	11
3.6 Victims with Disability.....	11
3.7 Case Status	12
3.8 Repatriations	13
3.9 Focus Countries Breakdown	14

1. Key Points

In 2018, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,507 cases.¹ These figures include contact that has been made to the FMU in relation to a new case of actual or potential forced marriage through the public helpline or by email, and does not include general enquires.

Between 2011 and 2017 the FMU provided support in an average of 1,338 cases per year. The number of cases in 2018 represents a 13% increase upon that average and is the highest number since these statistics were first produced in the current format in 2011. This does not necessarily represent an increase in the prevalence of forced marriage in the UK.

There are other potential reasons for the increase in cases:

- A greater awareness of forced marriage being a crime and the support available, caused by:
 - Two court cases which received significant amounts of media attention and resulted in prosecutions
 - Wider media attention possibly raising awareness of forced marriage
 - The launch of the Home Office communication campaign about forced marriage.
- An improved data recording process.

Of the cases that FMU provided support to:

- 517 cases (34%) involved victims below 18 years of age; and a further:
- 495 cases (33%) involved victims aged 18-25.
- 139 cases (9%) involved victims aged 26-30.
- 113 cases (7%) involved victims aged 31-40.
- 40 cases (3%) involved victims aged 41 and over.
- 203 cases (13%) involved victims whose age was unknown.

In 2018, the majority of cases (1,129 - 75%) - involved women, with 267 cases (18%) involving men (gender in the remaining cases was unknown). These proportions are in line with previous years.

Forced marriage is not a problem specific to one country or culture. Since 2011, the FMU has handled cases relating to countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

¹ The figures in this document were revised in April 2020 and now exclude general enquiries not related to forced marriage. Figures published in an earlier document included general enquiries not related to forced marriage, which the FMU recorded for the first time in 2018. In order to ensure comparability between the 2018 figures and those in previous years, we have revised the 2018 figures.

In 2018, the FMU handled cases relating to 64 'focus²' countries. The six non-UK countries with the highest number of cases in 2018 were:

- Pakistan - 687 cases (46%)
- Bangladesh - 133 cases (9%)
- India - 85 cases (6%)
- Afghanistan - 41 cases (3%)
- Somalia³ - 38 cases (3%)
- Romania - 37 cases (2%)

The proportion of cases relating to Pakistan has increased by around 9%⁴ compared with the previous year. However, the proportion of cases relating to Pakistan in 2018 is stable compared to 2011-2016. After a large increase in 2017, the number of cases linked to Somalia has decreased. There has been a noticeable increase in cases linked to Romania. In 2018, the FMU provided support in 37 such cases compared with 29 across the whole period 2011-2017.

In 2018, 102 cases (7%) had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. This is a decrease compared with previous years, but continues to highlight that forced marriages can take place in the UK.

These statistics represent only the cases that have been reported to the FMU. Forced marriage is a hidden crime, and these figures are unlikely to reflect the full scale of the abuse.⁵

² The 'focus country' is the country to which the forced marriage risk relates. This could be the country where the forced marriage is due to take place, the country where it has taken place, or the country that the spouse is currently residing in (or all).

³ Including Somaliland

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, the proportional changes referred to are percentage point changes.

⁵ A study conducted by NatCen in 2009 found that there were between 5,000 and 8,000 reported cases of forced marriage in England (not including 'hidden' victims who have not come forward). <http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/forced-marriage/>

2 Overview

Forced marriage is a criminal offence⁶. A forced marriage is one in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities or mental incapacity, cannot) consent to the marriage, and violence, threats, or any other form of coercion is involved. Coercion may include emotional force, physical force or the threat of it, and financial pressure. In an arranged marriage, by contrast, both parties have consented to the union but can still refuse to marry if they choose to.

This publication provides information on the number of cases reported to the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) via its public helpline and email inbox from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018. A record of all calls and emails is registered on the FMU's case logging tool to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the records. The main categories of data that are captured by the FMU case log include (if volunteered, as some callers may wish to remain anonymous):

- details of the caller/source of information;
- focus country;
- UK region;
- sex and age of the person at risk;
- disability – be it physical, learning or both; and
- sexual orientation (if volunteered).

This publication does not provide a breakdown of reported cases to the FMU by religion; no major faith in the UK advocates forced marriage. Freely given consent is a prerequisite of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

The FMU is a joint Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) unit. It was established in 2005 to lead on the Government's forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. The unit operates both inside the UK, where support is provided to any individual, and overseas, where consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals.

The FMU's helpline is available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Consular assistance is available 24/7 by contacting the nearest overseas Embassy or High Commission, or by calling 020 7008 1500 in the UK. The FMU may receive information about a forced marriage from either a person at risk, a friend or relative, or professionals within agencies charged with responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

⁶ Forced marriage legislation is devolved (see links below); the FMU provides support and advice regardless of where in the UK the victim/potential victim is based.

England and Wales <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/section/121/enacted>

Scotland <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/section/122/enacted>

Northern Ireland <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/2>

Further information about forced marriage and the work of the FMU is available on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>, by emailing fmu@fco.gov.uk or by writing to:

Forced Marriage Unit
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Consular Directorate
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
+44 (0)20 7008 0151

3 Forced Marriage Unit Statistics

In 2018, the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,507 cases via its public helpline and email inbox. This represents an increase of 13% compared with the average of the previous seven years.

Table 1: Number of cases in which the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support, 2011 to 2018

Year	Number
2011	1,468
2012	1,485
2013	1,302
2014	1,267
2015	1,220
2016	1,428
2017	1,196
2018	1,507

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

These statistics represent only the cases that have been reported to the FMU. Forced marriage is a hidden crime, and these figures are unlikely to reflect the full scale of the abuse.⁷

The majority of referrals (62%) came from professionals such as those in the education, legal and health sectors, as well as from other third parties, for example non-governmental organisations. The other calls/referrals came from victims (19%)⁸ and the remaining ones from friends, partners, family members and anonymous callers (19%).

The fact that only about a fifth of cases were notified to FMU by victims who were self-reporting may reflect the hidden nature of forced marriage and the fact that victims may fear reprisals from their family if they come forward.

In 2018, victims' ages varied widely. Cases involving young children often involve the promise of a future marriage or the younger sibling of someone at a direct risk rather than an imminent marriage. In a small number of cases involving older victims, the forced marriage may have happened many years previously or the victim may have lacked capacity.

⁷ A study conducted by NatCen in 2009 found that there were between 5,000 and 8,000 reported cases of forced marriage in England (not including 'hidden' victims who have not come forward). <http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/forced-marriage/>

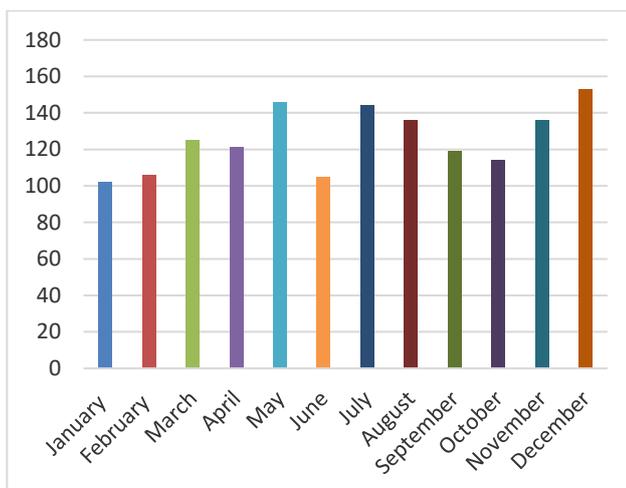
⁸ The use of the term 'victim' includes people thought to be at potential risk of future forced marriage, those currently going through a forced marriage, and those who have already been forced to marry.

In 2018, there was an increase in the number of callers who wished to remain anonymous, resulting in an increase in the level of unknown data across all categories.

The chart below shows the monthly breakdown of cases coming in to the Forced Marriage Unit. Whilst some months show an increased number of referrals (May, July, December) there is a continuous risk of forced marriage throughout the year.

Table 2: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by month, 2018

Month	Numbers	Percentages
January	102	7%
February	106	7%
March	125	8%
April	121	8%
May	146	10%
June	105	7%
July	144	10%
August	136	9%
September	119	8%
October	114	8%
November	136	9%
December	153	10%
Total	1,507	



Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The following sections provide further information about the cases that the FMU handled in 2018.

3.1 Gender of Victims

In 2018, 1,129 cases (75%) involved female victims and 267 (18%) involved male victims; in the remaining cases the gender of the victim was unknown. This demonstrates that forced marriage is a crime which disproportionately affects women, but that it is also not an issue which only women face; men can also be forced into marriage.

3.2 Age of Victims

Where the age was known, 19% of cases involved victims under 16 years of age and a further 16% involved 16 and 17 year olds.

Table 3: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by age, 2018

Age	Numbers	Percentages
15 and under	279	19%
16-17	238	16%
18-21	281	19%
22-25	214	14%
26-30	139	9%
31-40	113	7%
41+	40	3%
Unknown	203	13%
Total	1,507	

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.3 UK regions where victims live

As in previous years, in 2018 the UK region associated with the greatest number of cases was London (268 cases, 18%). Whilst this is a decrease of over 10% compared with 2017, it is in line with the proportions in previous years. The proportions linked to the other regions remain at a similar level to previous years.

Table 4: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by region, 2018

UK region	Numbers	Percentages
London	268	18%
North West	228	15%
West Midlands	176	12%
Yorkshire & The Humber	167	11%
South East	132	9%
East	105	7%
East Midlands	60	4%
South West	40	3%
Wales	28	2%
Scotland	25	2%
North East	24	2%
Northern Ireland	<5	-
Unknown	252	17%
Total	1,507	

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.4 Focus Country Overview

The 'focus country' is the country to which the risk of forced marriage relates. This could be the country where the forced marriage is due to take place, the country where it has taken place, or the country in which the spouse is currently residing (or all). Since 2011, the FMU has dealt with cases from all over the world. In 2018, the FMU handled cases relating to 64 countries: the UK, and 63 other countries to which a victim was at risk of being, or had already been, taken in connection with a forced marriage.

For more analysis for each of the top focus countries please see section 3.8.

Table 5: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by focus country, 2018

Focus country	Numbers	Percentages ⁹
Pakistan	687	46%
Bangladesh	133	9%
United Kingdom	102	7%
India	85	6%
Afghanistan	41	3%
Somalia	38	3%
Romania	37	2%
Iraq	33	2%
Egypt	9	1%
Saudi Arabia	8	1%
Other (54 countries)	140	9%
Unknown	194	13%
Total	1,507	

3.5 Sexual Orientation of Victims

In 2018, 12 cases (1%) involved victims who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

These statistics are based on the information that is volunteered to the unit at first contact; victims are not routinely asked to disclose their sexual orientation.

3.6 Victims with Disability

In 2018, 93 cases (6%) involved victims where there was a concern that they may have a learning disability. The sex and age of victims, as well as the focus country, are shown in Table 6.

A higher proportion of victims in cases which involve a learning disability are male compared to other forced marriage cases. Victims are more likely to be older than in other cases - in cases where a learning disability has been

⁹ Percentages in some of the tables in this document do not sum to 100, owing to rounding.

reported, 43% of victims were aged over 25 compared to an overall figure of 19%.

Table 6: Number of callers with a learning disability the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2018

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	54	58%
Male	35	38%
Unknown	4	4%
Age Range		
15 and under	5	5%
16-17	7	8%
18-21	12	13%
22-25	23	25%
26-30	17	18%
31-40	15	16%
Over 41	8	9%
Unknown	6	6%
Focus Country		
Pakistan	44	47%
Bangladesh	18	19%
India	8	9%
United Kingdom	6	6%
Other (9 countries)	11	12%
Unknown	6	6%
UK Region		
London	20	22%
North West	15	16%
West Midlands	10	11%
East	9	10%
South West	8	9%
Yorkshire & The Humber	7	8%
South East	6	6%
East Midlands	6	6%
North East	<5	-
Wales	<5	-
Scotland	<5	-
Unknown	6	6%
Total number of callers with a learning disability		93

3.7 Case Status

The status of cases is classified under four main categories. This is to enable FMU's caseworkers to judge the risk and provide the best support based on the individual circumstances. These categories are:

- UK Pre (this means that the victim is in the UK and the marriage is yet to take place; the marriage could be in the UK or overseas)
- UK Post (the victim is in the UK and the marriage has taken place)¹⁰
- Overseas Pre (the victim is overseas and the marriage is yet to take place)
- Overseas Post (the victim is overseas and the marriage has taken place)

The risks and potential consequence for the victim are different at each point. When a victim is overseas, the risk is often elevated because it can mean the wedding is imminent. The security situation in certain countries or regions within countries also affects the risk and the level of support the FMU is able to provide.

Table 7: Proportion of cases by marriage status which the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2011-2018

Marriage Status	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Pre	42%	37%	42%	46%	46%	45%	49%	60%
UK Post	40%	33%	32%	28%	30%	28%	28%	23%
UK Unknown	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	2%	1%
Overseas Pre	8%	8%	11%	10%	9%	13%	13%	9%
Overseas Post	2%	3%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Overseas Unknown	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	5%	3%	2%
Unknown	3%	15%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	2%

Since 2012, there has been a broad increase in the proportion of cases being reported whilst the victim is in the UK and before the marriage has taken place. FMU has greater capability in these types of cases to prevent the marriage from taking place, mitigating the risk to the victim.

3.8 Repatriations

In 2018¹¹, the FMU supported the repatriations¹² of 23 individuals. This is a slight decrease compared with 2017 (29 cases), however, repatriation figures are not fully representative of the assistance provided to forced marriage victims overseas.

For example, the figures do not include cases where:

¹⁰ These cases often involve victims who are being forced to sponsor the visas of their spouses. They are referred to as reluctant sponsors.

¹¹ This is the first time this data has been included in the annual statistics.

¹² To come back to the UK or their country of ordinary residence.

- A Forced Marriage Protection Order¹³ was used to facilitate direct repatriation;
- Victims did not require assistance from the FCO to return to the UK;
- Direct contact with the victim resulted in no further forced marriage concerns;
- Victims wanted only advice and support, not repatriation;
- The victim was not eligible for consular assistance i.e. not a British National (safeguarding advice by the FMU was still provided).

3.9 Focus Countries Breakdown ¹⁴

Pakistan

Pakistan is routinely the focus country with the largest number of forced marriage cases reported to FMU. Cases related to Pakistan come from a wider age and regional range than other focus countries. 85% of cases were handled entirely in the UK, where the focus was on preventing the marriage before it was due to take place, or where the marriage had taken place and the victim was being forced to sponsor a spousal visa.

35% of Pakistani cases are linked to the North West (122 cases) and Yorkshire and Humber (119 cases) regions, with 47 cases linked to Manchester and 45 to Leeds.

Bangladesh

In 2018, there was a slight increase in the proportion of cases linked to Bangladesh. The age of the victim – where known – was most likely to be between 18 and 21 or between 22 and 25.

London was the region involving the largest number of reported Bangladeshi cases, with the boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets having the most reported cases.

UK

In 2018, 102 (7%) of the cases had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. This is a decrease compared with previous years, but continues to highlight that forced marriages can take place in the UK.

¹³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778583/fi701-eng.pdf

¹⁴ See the figures and tables spreadsheet for a further breakdown for each country.

India

The proportion of cases linked to India in 2018 was similar to those in previous years. There was a higher proportion of older victims as well as male victims compared to most other focus countries. This is most likely because many of these cases involved reluctant sponsors. 29% of cases were linked to London. There were cases linked to 11 of the 32 London boroughs.

Afghanistan

The number of cases linked to Afghanistan (41 cases) in 2018 more than doubled compared with 2017 (19 cases). However, cases were of a similar level compared with 2011-2016. Victims linked to Afghanistan were more likely to be aged 16-21 compared with those from other countries. Over 50% of cases were linked to London, with cases linked to 14 of the 32 London boroughs.

Somalia¹⁵ *(including cases in Somaliland)*

The number of Somali cases (38 cases) reported to the FMU in 2018 has decreased by more than half compared with 2017 (91 cases). Despite this, the number of cases is still higher than in the years before 2017. There is a heightened overall risk in these cases, as 53% of the victims are overseas when contact with FMU is made. 55% of cases are linked to London, with cases linked to 12 of the 32 London boroughs.

Romania

In 2018, the FMU supported 37 cases linked to Romania, which is more than the total number of cases across the years 2011-2017. Victims in these cases were significantly younger than for other countries, with nearly 84% aged 15 and under.

The overall risk in these cases was higher than in other cases, as a higher proportion (compared to all cases) of victims were overseas when the FMU was contacted. These cases were also complex as they involved EU nationals who were resident in the UK. As the UK can only provide consular assistance to British nationals overseas, other provisions were found to support these victims. Almost 43% of Romanian cases were linked to Leeds.

Note: the FMU will continue to review the arrangements for producing this annual statistics release to ensure that it fully captures the range of cases handled by the unit.

¹⁵ The British Embassy in Mogadishu does not provide consular services. Forced marriage victims in Somalia (excluding Somaliland) can contact the British High Commission Nairobi. Victims in Somaliland should contact the British Embassy in Addis Ababa.