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# Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2016

9 March 2017

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# Key Points

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In 2016, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,428 cases. These figures include contact that has been made to the FMU through the public helpline or by email in relation to a new case.

Of the cases that FMU provided support to:

- 371 cases (26%) involved victims below 18 years of age; and
- 497 cases (34%) involved victims aged 18-25.

In 2016, the majority of cases 1,145 (80%) involved women victims, while 283 cases (20%) involved male victims.

Forced marriage is not a problem specific to one country or culture. Since it was established in 2005, the FMU has handled cases relating to over 90 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

In 2016, the FMU handled cases relating to 69 'focus' countries which a victim was at risk of, or had already, been taken to in connection with a forced marriage. The six highest volume countries in 2016 were:

- Pakistan - 612 cases (43%).
- Bangladesh - 121 cases (8%).
- India - 79 cases (6%).
- Somalia - 47 cases (3%).
- Afghanistan - 39 cases (3%).
- Saudi Arabia - 16 cases (1%)

In 2016, 157 (11%) of the cases that were handled by the FMU had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK.

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Overview

Forced marriage is a criminal offence. 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 physical force, and, financial pressure. In an arranged marriage, 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 2016 to 31 December 2016. All calls and emails are registered on the FMU's case logging tool to ensure accuracy and reliability of records. The main categories of data that are captured by the FMU case log include:

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

This publication does not provide a breakdown of reported cases to the FMU by religion; no major faith in the UK advocates forced marriage. It is also important to note that 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 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. An out of hours service is provided by the FCO's Global Response Centre, which is based in the UK. The FMU may receive information about a forced marriage from either a person at risk, a friend or relative, or from professionals within agencies charged with responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Information on forced marriage is becoming more widely available and can be accessed in a range of ways, for example, through social media or smart phone apps. There are also other help lines available through charities which can offer advice on forced marriage.

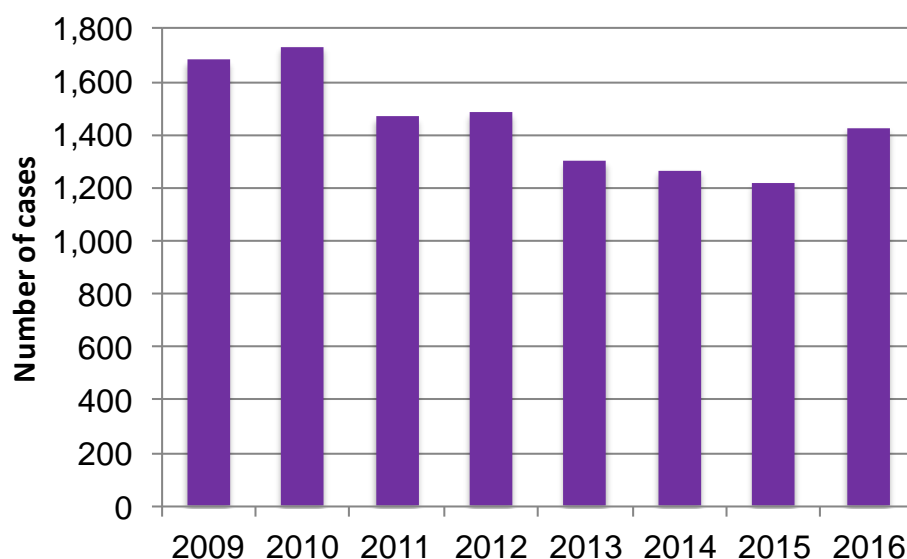
Further information about forced marriage and the work of the FMU is available on GOV.uk or by emailing [fmu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmu@fco.gov.uk) or writing to:  
Forced Marriage Unit  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
Consular Directorate  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

## 2 Forced Marriage Unit Statistics

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In 2016, the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,428 cases via its public helpline and email inbox. This represents an increase of 14% (208 cases) compared with the previous year. This is the first increase, and the highest number of calls since 2012 (*Figure 2.1*). The FMU also delivers an extensive outreach programme of training and awareness events to a wide range of professionals, which may account for the increase in reports.

**Figure 2.1: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2009 to 2016**



Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Foreign and Commonwealth Office

These statistics only represent the cases that have been reported to the FMU. Forced marriage is a hidden crime, and these figures may not reflect the full scale of the abuse.

The FMU also received approximately 350 telephone calls per month in 2016. However, this included repeat calls about cases and calls not about forced marriage (for example queries about divorces, annulments, sham marriages, domestic violence etc).

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.

The majority of calls about cases (almost 80%) come from professionals as well as other third parties (e.g. non-governmental organisations, colleagues, friends, or family). The fact self-reports represent a smaller proportion of calls may reflect the hidden nature of forced marriage and that victims may fear reprisals from their family if they come forward.

In 2016, victims' ages ranged from young children to people post-retirement age.

Cases involving young children often involve the promise of a future marriage rather than an imminent marriage. In a small number of cases involving older victims, the forced marriage may have happened many years previously or where the victim has a learning disability.

There has been a decrease in the proportion of cases that are domestic only (11% in 2016 compared with 14% in 2015). This could indicate that more cases are being handled by UK non-governmental organisations which may not be referred to the FMU.

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

## 2.1 Sex

In 2016, 1145 cases (80%) involving female victims and 283 (20%) involved male victims. This demonstrates that men can also be forced into marriage.

## 2.2 Age

Where the age was known, 15% of cases involved victims below 16 years of age, and 26% involved under-18 year olds. The largest proportion of cases (35%) involved 18-25 year old victims (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by age, 2016

<b>Age</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
15 and under	220	15
16-17	151	11
18-21	290	20
22-25	207	15
26-30	137	10
31-40	91	6
41+	28	2
Unknown Adult	285	20
Unknown Minor <sup>2</sup>	19	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,428</b>	<b>100</b>

1. Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Foreign and Commonwealth Office

2. A minor refers to any child under the age of 18.

## 2.3 UK region

As in previous years, in 2016 the UK region with the greatest number of cases was London (307 cases, 21%).

Table 2.2: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by region, 2016

<b>UK region</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
East of England	72	5
East Midlands	65	5
London	307	21
North East	15	1
North West	180	13
Northern Ireland	0	0
Scotland	28	2
South East	145	10
South West	36	3
West Midlands	202	14
Wales	14	1
Yorkshire and the Humber	131	9
Unknown	233	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,428</b>	<b>100</b>

1. Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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## 2.4 Focus country

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, or the country that the spouse is currently residing in (or both). Since 2005, the FMU have dealt with cases from over 90 countries. In 2016 the FMU handled cases relating to 69 countries to which a victim was at risk of, or had already, been taken to in connection with a forced marriage (Table 2.3).



**Table 2.3: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by focus country, 2016**

<b>Focus country</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Pakistan	612	43
Bangladesh	121	8
India	79	6
Somalia	47	3
Afghanistan	39	3
Saudi Arabia	16	1
Iraq	14	1
Kenya	14	1
Nigeria	14	1
Turkey	14	1
UAE	12	1
Sri Lanka	11	1
Iran	8	1
Egypt	7	>1
Algeria	7	>1
54 other countries	109	9
UK (domestic only)	157	11
Unknown	132	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,428</b>	<b>100</b>

1. Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Foreign and Commonwealth Office

## **2.5 Sexual orientation**

In 2016, 30 cases (2%) involved victims who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

FMU 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.

## 2.6 Disability

In 2016, 140 cases (10%) involved victims who had a learning disability. The sex and age of victims, as well as the focus country is shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Number of callers with a learning disability the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2016

**Table 2.4: Number of callers with a disability the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2016<sup>1</sup>**

	Numbers	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	50	39
Male	90	61
<b>Age</b>		
17 and below	<6	
18-21	19	14
22-25	30	21
26-30	27	19
31-40	29	20
41+	12	9
Unknown Adult	18	13
<b>Focus country</b>		
Pakistan	88	63
Bangladesh	13	9
India	11	8
UK (domestic only)	10	7
Other	12	9
Unknown	6	4
<b>Total number of callers with a disability</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

1. Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Foreign and Commonwealth Office

*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.*