

Data on Child Trafficking

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Question

How do OECD countries collect data on children trafficked into their own countries for the worst forms of child labour, and what data is publicly available?

Including data on: main routes for trafficking children, number of children that die in transit, cost of trafficking children, prosecution for various actors along the supply chain (suppliers vs. buyers).

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1. Overview

This rapid review synthesises findings from rigorous academic, practitioner, and policy references published in the past fifteen years that discuss child trafficking and human trafficking more generally. The focus is on the most predominant data produced by OECD countries, reports produced by international organisations that collect data from OECD countries, as well as available literature on the methods utilised by OECD countries to collect data. According to the ILO definition for the worst forms of child labour (article 3 of ILO No. 182) all victims of child trafficking are classified as being a worst form of child labour.¹ Therefore, this review will examine child trafficking as a whole, although it is important to note that much of the data does

¹ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182

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not differentiate between the forms of child labour of the victims, with the exception of those referring to the sexual exploitation of internal trafficking victims. According to the UN '2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children', children are considered trafficked when they are 'recruited, moved or received for the purpose of exploitation' (Rafferty, 2016: 4). As children cannot consent, no fraud or deception needs to take place for it to be considered trafficking and children are classified as all those under the age of 18.

Estimates on child trafficking are challenging to generate and subject to much debate. The criminal and hidden nature of child trafficking makes it difficult to estimate the scale of unidentified cases. Published data mostly focuses on human trafficking rather than child trafficking specifically, and therefore it is difficult to analyse the data beyond the percentage of identified child trafficking victims. Thus, there is a lack of data on issues such as death in transit, cost of trafficking children, etc.. Although there is published data on prosecutions, it has not been analysed to differentiate between buyers and sellers. UNODC, however, does provide a detailed database of prosecutions which can be further analysed to produce data on suppliers vs. buyers and to differentiate between the trafficking of children and adults.²

The OECD has formed a taskforce called Countering Illicit Trade, which includes human trafficking in its mandate. Although this task force was established to co-ordinate international expertise in the quantification and mapping of illicit markets, it does not openly publish data. Among OECD countries, Germany and the US are seen to publish the most comprehensive data. However this is focused on human trafficking and the data on child trafficking specifically only forms a minor part of these reports. The most comprehensive data available is from UNODC, who not only routinely publish reports on human trafficking, but also have an online portal of data.

Most OECD countries do not publish data on child trafficking publicly and therefore also do not identify how they collect data. The EU does recommend a method of collating both victim- and trafficker-centred databases using all the agencies that come into contact with traffickers and victims of trafficking. However, based on the EU's statistical office report on trafficking it would seem that most of the data is collected through the police and data sharing between agencies is minimal (Eurostat, 2015: 21).

Key findings are as follows:

- There are a number of methodological issues with collecting data on trafficking, making it difficult to accurately estimate the scale of the problem.
- There is a lack of data available that differentiates between child and human trafficking with most reports devoting little space to child trafficking and often not differentiating between the two on key aspects such as routes, prosecutions, etc..
- Issues such as death in transit and the cost of trafficking children are almost completely ignored in the published data.
- There are two approaches to collecting data: victim-centred and trafficker-centred, which should be combined to give a thorough overview of the issue. However, there are

² <https://www.unodc.org/cld/v3/htms/cldb/index.html?lng=en>

significant shortcomings in how this data is collected, managed, analysed, and disaggregated.

- In the EU, data is predominantly collected by the police and the multi-agency data repository suggested by the EU is not always in place.
- Trafficking does not necessarily mean crossing borders: children are often trafficked within their own country. For instance, in Germany 45 percent of minor victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation reported were German nationals (BKA, 2015: 9).
- According to UNODC, 20 percent of victims of trafficking reported are girls, whilst eight percent are boys. Africa and the Middle East have the highest proportion of child trafficking with 62 percent of the victims reported as children (UNODC, 2014).
- The ILO estimates that as many as 1,225,000 children are in a forced labour situation as a result of trafficking.³
- In the EU most victims of trafficking reported are Bulgarian, Romanian and Latvian, with Nigerians being the highest non-EU citizens reported. However, the information is not further disaggregated by the age of these citizens and the only data available is that 15 percent of cases recorded within the EU between 2010 and 2012 were of minors (Eurostat, 2015: 21-41).

2. Issues with Data

The literature clearly highlights shortcomings in available data. According to Todres (2010) the data on child trafficking is severely lacking, whilst Feingold (2010) argues that no one really knows the true value of the trade of human trafficking. Even in the European Union – where there is a Europol taskforce whose mandate includes child trafficking – collecting reliable data can prove difficult (Europol, 2016). Goodey (2008) suggests that very few governments in the EU collect and publish data on trafficking – though it should be noted that her article was published in 2008 and inroads have been made since then. However, the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children still complains of the lack of reliable estimates and highlights the need to do more with regard to data collection (Dutch National Rapporteur, 2014).

Child trafficking is a difficult topic to assess for a number of reasons:

- Not only is it hidden in the criminal underworld, it is often also hidden behind other crimes. For instance, victims are often exploited in multiple ways, so in cases where the crime is detected it may not be recorded as child trafficking.
- Moreover, in Europe there has been an increase in unaccompanied children migrating to the EU; their vulnerability makes them a target for traffickers and makes them less likely to be identified as victims. They are also often identified as perpetrators of crime rather than as victims of trafficking (European Commission, 2016).
- Goodey (2008) argues that it is difficult to verify the data given by both governmental and non-governmental organisations with regard to trafficking.
- This is further compounded by the fact that victims are often unaware of how to report their abuse or are unable to do so, particularly when they are minors.

³ <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Traffickingofchildren/lang--en/index.htm>

UNICEF's report 'Child Trafficking in Europe' provides a good summary of the issue with data collection:

With regard to children affected by trafficking, there is a dramatic absence of harmonized and systematic data collection, analysis and dissemination at all levels – international, regional and national. Few reliable estimates exist of the magnitude of the phenomenon. The data available are rarely disaggregated by age, gender, national origin or forms of exploitation. Where disaggregated data exist, they enhance understanding of child trafficking and provide important evidence that informs national policies and responses (UNICEF, 2008: IV).

The US Department of State's (2016) 'Trafficking in Persons Report', which was identified as one of the more comprehensive reports on trafficking by an expert contacted for this report also highlights the difficulties with collecting reliable data on the topic and the need for more resources and effort.

3. Data Collection

The EU's International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has written a handbook on anti-trafficking data collection focusing on its implementation in the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia (Surtees, 2007). As this was written based on past EU experiences of data collection and is written as a working document for data collection it gives a good sense of the methods used. The handbook divides data collection into two datasets: victim-centred data and trafficker-centred data.

Victim-centred data

Creating a victim-centred dataset requires law enforcement agencies and organisations already working with victims to collect data and to share non-identifying data in the data repository. This allows multiple agencies to access data on the victims of trafficking to inform their work, whilst saving the victim from being subjected to multiple interviews. Additionally, this process ensures that the data is collected by someone the victim already has a relationship with, making the process easier for the victim and generally providing a more thorough overview of trafficking (Surtees, 2007).

However, there are still a number of limitations with this approach (Surtees, 2007):

- As it only deals with those already detected as victims of trafficking, it is difficult to draw conclusions on victims in general – it deals with an unknown percentage of the victims.
- The victims caught up in the system arguably form a subgroup within those trafficked and may be systematically different from other trafficking victims.
- It is not possible to estimate accurately the number of people trafficked from the numbers detected.
- The data is subjective as it is informed by the individual experiences of the victims interviewed.

There are also a number of methodological issues with how this data is collected that need to be addressed (Surtees, 2007):

- There is a varying capacity between the agencies that collect data, therefore criteria may be applied unevenly and misidentification may take place.
- If any agencies do not submit data or do not follow a standardised methodology the data will not be complete and could misrepresent the situation.
- There may be a lack of trust or tradition of sharing data, which would prevent some agencies or organisations from sharing data.
- As the dataset does not use personal information, there may be duplication of cases and vigorous cross-referencing of other information is needed.
- The data shared by the victims could differ based on the environment of their interview, interviewer, etc..
- Victims may have experienced multiple trafficking experiences and these may be ignored and classified as one case, rather than being differentiated yet linked.
- The data within the repository may not be updated as new information is gathered.
- There may be delays in data being transmitted due to the workload/systems-in-place of the different agencies.

Trafficker-centred data

Creating a trafficker-centred dataset involves law enforcement agencies submitting data about alleged and convicted traffickers. As the legal process takes time, the individual will be identified as either an alleged or a convicted trafficker. The dataset provides background information about individual traffickers as well as the stage of the justice system that they are at, thus providing a longitudinal perspective of trafficking. It also identifies where the criminal justice process is being effective and where gaps, shortcomings and issues exist in efforts to arrest and penalise traffickers (Surtees, 2007).

However, there are still a number of limitations with this approach (Surtees, 2007):

- Data refers only to those charged with trafficking and ignores those not in the system or those charged with other crimes.
- The dataset represents a particular subgroup, which are often lower level criminals.
- There is no methodology to accurately assess the total numbers of traffickers.

There are also a number of methodological issues with how this data is collected that need to be addressed (Surtees, 2007):

- If any agencies do not take part in the data collection or follow a different methodology the dataset will be incomplete.
- Lack of trust and co-operation between organisations and institutions may inhibit information sharing about alleged/convicted traffickers.

- As the dataset does not use personal information, there may be duplication of cases and vigorous cross-referencing of other information is needed.
- Initially, the data set will be incomplete because the criminal justice process can take months to complete and, in some cases, even years.
- It is important that a clear determination be made about which crimes, beyond those of human trafficking, are to be considered relevant for the trafficker-centred data set.
- Traffickers may be involved in multiple trafficking operations and these should be differentiated in the dataset, but also linked.

Data collection in Practice

The majority of the reports examined for this review do not discuss how the data used was collected and often just refer to it being sourced by local governments. However, analysis of the reports makes it evident that the methods discussed above are used. There are distinct differences between countries in how the data is disaggregated and crosschecked. Correspondingly, there are often very few details beyond the basics, making it difficult to gain thorough insights from the data. Moreover, the failure to institutionalise data sharing seriously undermines the process: often the data is collected by the police only rather than involving a multi-agency dataset, as recommended above.

The Report 'Child Trafficking in the Netherlands' by Defence for Children-ECPAT Netherlands and UNICEF gives a good example of data collection in practice in an OECD country and highlights the issues that are faced. In The Netherlands victims of human trafficking are registered with the coordination centre for human trafficking - CoMensha. To avoid duplication, the case registration contains the name, sex, date of birth and form of exploitation of the victim, however, reports to CoMensha are made anonymous in the statistics. The police, the Royal Military Police (KMar) and the Social Affairs and Employment Inspectorate (Social Affairs Inspectorate) are obliged by law to report to CoMensha. The police only have an obligation to report at the first indication of human trafficking and not on any follow up information. Therefore, if the case turns out not to be human trafficking the reports made earlier are often not removed from the system and as a result statistics can be misleading.

Not all care agencies report adequately to CoMensha and victims of human trafficking are not always recognized as such, resulting in an incomplete dataset. Dutch victims of trafficking (including victims of loverboys⁴) are often unreported, as they are directly referred to care institutions that have no formal obligation to report. The youth care sector scarcely reports victims of loverboys; victims are therefore not known by CoMensha as victims of human trafficking. In these cases registration is done according to the form of care deployed in response to the problem, not according to what happened in advance (human trafficking). Care organisations in The Netherlands have indicated that they already have to register with various national systems and that they are unfamiliar with CoMensha (Kaandorp & Blaak, 2014).

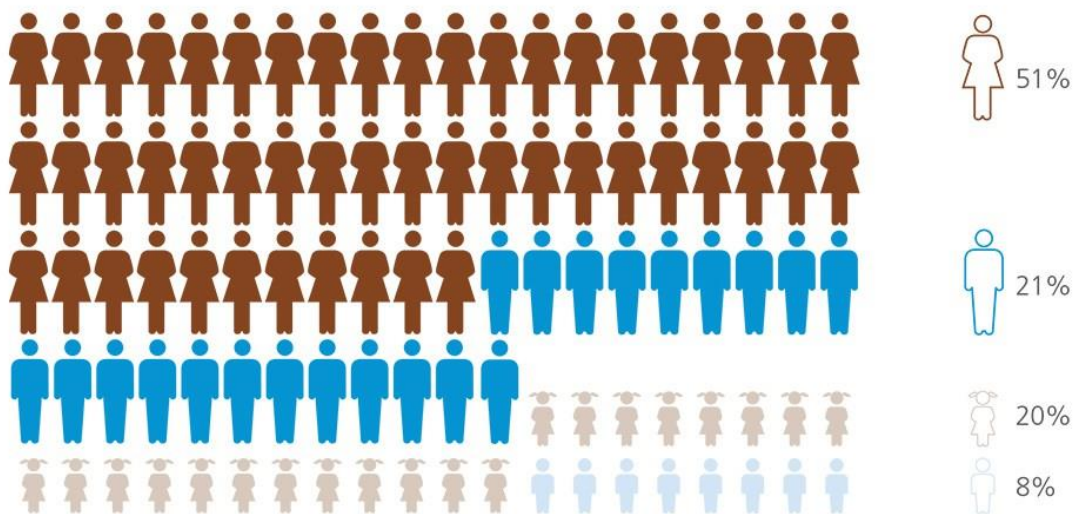
⁴ In this phenomenon males, usually in their 20s, attract younger girls to form a relationship with them and then convince or force them to have sex for money.

4. Examining the Data

UNODC

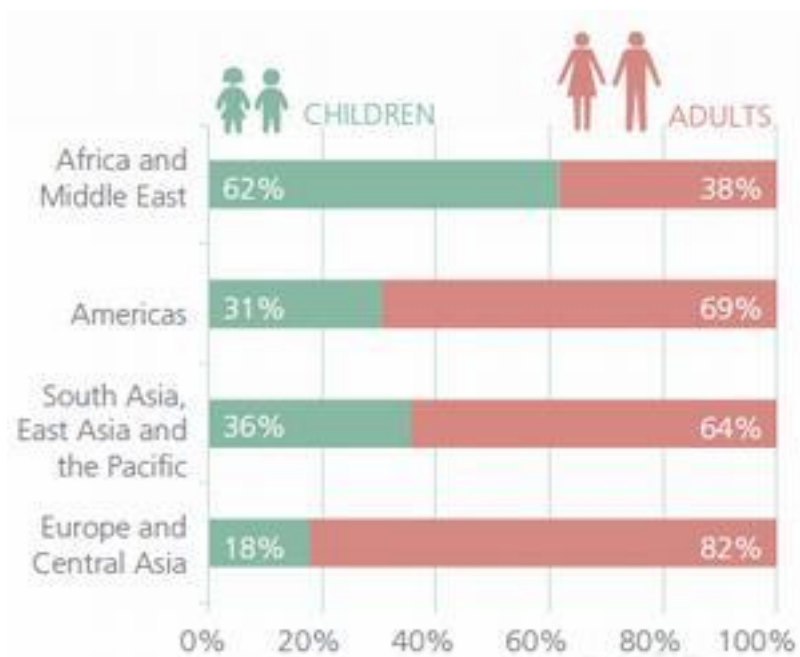
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is seen to provide some of the most comprehensive data on trafficking (Feingold, 2010; Goodey, 2008; Todres, 2010). The 2014 UNODC report consisted of data submitted by 128 countries, whereas the 2016 report consists of data submitted by 136. However, it is important to note that there have been many questions about its methods when it comes to estimating numbers involved in trafficking (Goodey, 2008). Although UNODC does highlight statistics for child and adult trafficking it does not differentiate between the two when referring to traffickers. Furthermore, the differentiation between child and adult trafficking only looks at percentage shares (as demonstrated in the two tables below) and not at any other aspects, e.g. flows, prosecutions, deaths in transit. For traffickers, the differentiation of those convicted is into foreign or local (which can be further analysed with regard to flows), and does not go as far as buyer/seller. The reports also do not address the costs of trafficking children, but rather focus on the money that can be earned through trafficking (UNODC, 2014, 2016).

Trafficking victims can be women, men, boys and girls



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

Taken from UNODC (2016:7)



Taken from UNODC (2014: 11)

According to the UNODC (2014) the majority of offenders convicted globally of trafficking are citizens of the country where they were convicted, while roughly 35 percent are foreigners. This is a higher share of convicted foreigners than the average for crime in general (foreign citizens comprise approximately 10 percent of those convicted). Western and Central European countries convict citizens of their own country and foreigners in near equal proportions. Two-thirds of the human trafficking victims reported to UNODC over the period 2010–2012 were exploited in cases that involved at least one border crossing. However, it is important to note that scholars have identified that internal trafficking is often not acknowledged as trafficking per se and there is also a greater focus on cross-border trafficking (Bradley & Cockbain, 2014; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2013; Rafferty, 2016). According to UNODC’s data, origin countries for cross-border trafficking convict mainly local citizens (about 95 per cent of all convictions), whereas destination countries convict more foreign citizens (58 per cent foreigners, 42 per cent locals) The foreign citizens involved usually come from countries that are relatively close geographically (UNODC, 2014: 34-40).

Of non-Europeans convicted in Western and Central Europe, the largest share (10 percent) is made up of traffickers from Africa and the Middle East. Most of these offenders are citizens of countries in West and North Africa. However, the share of West African traffickers (some 6 percent of the convicted offenders) is limited in comparison to the large share of victims from this region that are detected in Western and Central Europe (UNODC, 2014: 59-67).

The UNODC data shows clear increases in child trafficking between 2010 and 2012 in Africa, the Middle East, North and Central America, as well as some countries in South America. However, in Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, child trafficking remained relatively stable. According to the 2014 UNODC report, the majority (over 60 percent) of victims of child trafficking in the 2010-2012 period were detected in Africa and the Middle East. In Europe and Central Asia, recorded trafficking mainly involved adult victims (83 percent). South

Asia, East Asia, the Pacific and the Americas report similar breakdowns, with adults comprising about two-thirds and children making up the remaining one-third (UNODC, 2014).

On average, countries in Western and Central Europe detect more adult victims and more women victims than other regions. The detection of child trafficking in Western and Central Europe is not as common as in other regions. Children account for almost 20 percent of the detected victims, whereas globally, this group made up nearly one third of victims in the 2010-2012 time period. Out of every five children reported trafficked to UNODC in Western and Central Europe, four are girls and one is a boy (UNODC, 2014). However, according to Rafferty (2016) there is more focus on girls trafficked for sexual exploitation and boys trafficked for begging, forced labour, etc. often go unreported. Rafferty goes on to highlight that boys trafficked for sexual exploitation are less likely to report or admit to their experience.

In the 2016 UNODC report the share of detected child victims returned to levels seen in 2009, after seven years of increases (UNODC, 2016). However, more than a quarter of the detected trafficking victims in this time period (2012-2014) were still children. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean the majority of the detected victims are children. UNODC highlights the relation between a country's level of development and the age of detected trafficking victims; in the least developed countries children comprise large shares of the detected victims. There are also clear regional differences in the sex of detected child victims. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa detect more boys than girls, which seems to be connected with the large shares of trafficking for forced labour, child soldiers (in conflict areas) and begging. In Central America, the Caribbean, and South America, girls make up a large share of the detected victims, which could be related to the fact that trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most frequently detected form there (UNODC, 2016).

UNODC (2014, 2016) reports that at least 510 trafficking flows were detected globally, but the actual number is likely to be significantly higher. About 70 percent of detected victims between 2010 and 2012 were trafficked cross-border. However, only 27 percent experienced transregional trafficking. Victims of transregional trafficking are mostly detected in the affluent areas of the Middle East, Western Europe and North America. There is diversity of trafficking flows associated with Western and Central Europe, as it is simultaneously a significant origin and destination area. Victims are largely trafficked from Central Europe and the Balkans towards the other countries in the region. Western and Central European countries detected victims from more than 130 different countries.

UNICEF

UNICEF's 2008 report 'Child Trafficking in Europe: A Broad Vision to Put Children First' does not provide much data with regard to the enquiry for this report, but rather focuses on the relevant legislation. It does however provide some data on trafficking routes. The report highlights that although Western Europe is predominantly a destination sub-region, Central and Eastern Europe are both destination and origin areas. The report also finds that in half of European countries internal child trafficking occurs, although it goes on to highlight that this is a vastly unreported within the trafficking data (UNICEF, 2008).

US Department of State

The US Department of State routinely produces a detailed report on human trafficking, based on information from embassies, government officials, nongovernmental and international

organizations, published reports, news articles, academic studies, research trips to every region of the world, and information submitted to a designated email address. However, there is very little analysis of child trafficking into OECD countries. The sections on child trafficking mainly focus on non-OECD countries and there is significant analysis of child trafficking in conflict zones. The country profiles do give some information on child trafficking into OECD countries, but this is very limited and void of numerical values. Nevertheless, for some countries, like the US itself, data is provided based on prosecutions. For instance, an eligibility letter⁵ was given to 240 foreign children in 2015, of which 78 percent were labour trafficking victims (US Department of State, 2015: 390).

In sum, despite the US Department of State producing some of the most comprehensive data on human trafficking, it does not give the sort of data required for this query and is limited to quantitative data on child trafficking in general (US Department of State, 2015). What the report does do is highlight how limited the data published on child trafficking is, as looking through the country sections the data provided by the national governments all too often does not differentiate between the numbers of children and adults trafficked. For example, although the Argentinian authorities identified 424 potential human trafficking victims in 2015, they did not highlight how many were adults and how many were children (US Department of State, 2015: 76). It should also be noted that the US Department of State report makes data from OECD countries, which otherwise would not be published, publicly available. However, due to the way the report is formulated it is extremely difficult and time consuming to extract data and statistics on the topic of child labour and the information with regards to this query is limited.

German National Situation Report

Although the German National Situation Report 'Trafficking in Human Beings' focuses on human trafficking, it does make more of an effort to breakdown the data between children and adults. For instance the latest (2015) report highlights that, of the cases prosecuted for trafficking for sexual exploitation, one out of every five was a minor and that 91 percent of these were female (BKA, 2015: 9). As this is a national dataset it is also easier to breakdown the data by nationality than it is for UNODC in its international dataset. The German National Situation Report highlights that 45 percent of minor victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were German nationals, whilst 12 percent were Romanian. It goes on to highlight that one-third of the perpetrators prosecuted were under 24 and the majority of these had attracted their victims using the 'loverboy method'. However, the report does not address child trafficking in the same detail as other forms of labour, predominantly due to the lack of prosecutions (BKA, 2015: 9).

ILO

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provides some data on child trafficking: it estimated in 2005 that between 980,000 to 1,225,000 children - both boys and girls - were in a forced labour situation as a result of trafficking.⁶ The report highlights that gender and age seem closely correlated with the purpose of trafficking. Boys tend to be trafficked for forced labour in commercial farming, petty crimes and the drug trade, whereas girls appear to be trafficked for

⁵ This allows immediate access to federally-funded benefits and services to the same extent as refugees when credible information indicates a child is or may be a victim of trafficking.

⁶ <http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Traffickingofchildren/lang--en/index.htm>

commercial sexual exploitation and domestic service. Trafficking patterns and routes are often highly complex, ranging from trafficking within one country to cross-border flows between neighbouring countries to inter-continental and globalised trade (ILO, 2002). While the ILO plays an important role in coordinating the fight against child trafficking, it does not make as much effort in the production of data or the coordination of the production of data on child trafficking.

Eurostat

Eurostat, the EU statistical office, compiles statistics on trafficking from all EU member countries, but offers very limited data on child trafficking and rather focuses on the increase/decrease of trafficking as a whole. It does however highlight that 23 countries provided data for 2011 and 2012 and categorised the victims as minor or adult, and of these 15 percent were minors (Eurostat, 2015: 25). 17 EU countries further categorised the registered victims between 2010 and 2012, and of these two percent are from the age group 0-11 years and 17 percent from the age group 12-17 years (Eurostat, 2015: 26). The report also signposts that there was an increase in child victims of trafficking in Romania over this time period.

The Eurostat report does identify how data on trafficking is collected within the EU. Of the 25 member states providing data for 2012, 18 provided data from the police, seven from NGOs, and three each from border guards and immigration departments (Eurostat, 2015: 21). Although the report does not breakdown citizenship of the victims trafficked by age, Bulgarians, Romanians and Latvian citizens were the most detected victims in Europe. Of non-EU countries, Nigerians were the most detected victims in the EU. Although the report does not quantify the age of the victims, it does highlight that a significant number of these were teenage girls trafficked for the sex industry. However, it is important to note that 65 percent of the victims registered were trafficked within the EU and of these the majority were trafficked within their own country (Eurostat, 2015: 41).

National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children

The Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children reports extensively on the concepts of child trafficking and the lack, or inefficiency, of data collection, but does not publish much data itself.⁷ However, it does help to further conceptualise child trafficking by encompassing many previously ignored elements, such as arranged marriages, children joining the Islamic State, migrants who are then trafficked, and marginalised communities such as Roma, and it performs an important role in working to better document cases that should be considered as child trafficking (Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al, 2016).

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⁷ <https://www.dutchrapporteur.nl/>

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Key websites

- International Labour Organisation (<http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>)
- OECD Task Force on Countering Illicit Trade (<http://www.oecd.org/gov/risk/oecdtaskforceoncounteringillicittrade.htm>)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- UNODC Case Law Database (<https://www.unodc.org/cld/v3/htms/cldb/index.html?lng=en>)
- Digital library on child trafficking (www.childtrafficking.com)

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About this report

This report is based on five days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

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