Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify Statistics

UK, Quarter 2 2020 – April to June second edition

This statistical bulletin provides a summary and breakdown of the number of **potential** victims of modern slavery referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or via the Duty to Notify process from 1 April to 30 June 2020 (quarter 2). Please also refer to the [data tables] published alongside this bulletin for further data.

Key results

In quarter 2 2020, 2,207 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the NRM; **a 23% decrease** from the preceding quarter, and a 5% decrease from the same quarter in 2019.

Of the 2,207 potential victims, 75% (1,650) claimed exploitation in the UK only, whilst 15% (336) claimed the exploitation took place overseas only.

Just over a third (38%) of the referrals were for individuals claiming exploitation as adults, with the remainder claiming exploitation as children (57%) or their age at exploitation was unknown (5%).
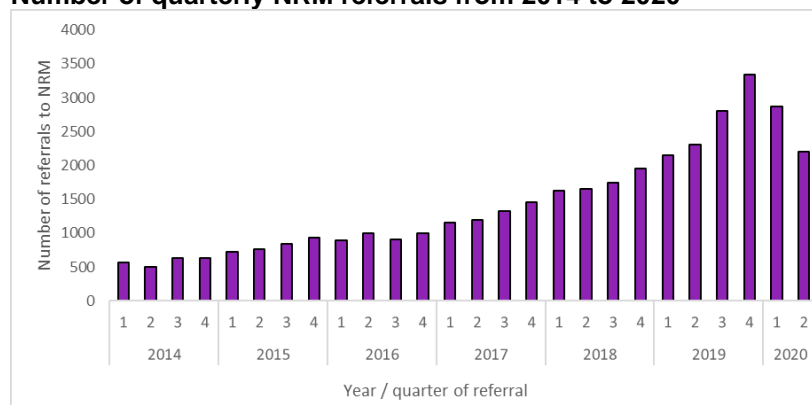
Labour exploitation was the most common exploitation type for adult potential victims, whilst criminal exploitation was most commonly reported for child potential victims.

Potential victims from the UK, Albania and Vietnam were the three most common nationalities referred to the NRM, as in the preceding quarter.

The Single Competent Authority made 2,270 reasonable grounds and 833 conclusive grounds decisions in this quarter. Of these, 94% (2,136) of reasonable grounds and 90% (750) of conclusive grounds decisions were positive.

During this quarter, 447 adults were referred to the Home Office via the Duty to Notify process.

Number of quarterly NRM referrals from 2014 to 2020

Contents

1   Introduction

Modern slavery is a term that includes any form of human trafficking, slavery, servitude or forced labour, as set out in the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Potential victims of modern slavery in the UK that come to the attention of authorised 'First Responder' organisations are referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Authorised 'First Responder' organisations include local authorities, specified non-governmental organisations (NGOs), police forces and specified government agencies. Adults (aged 18 or above) must consent to being referred to the NRM, whilst children under the age of 18 are not required to give consent to be referred. NRM referrals can also be made for individuals exploited as children but who are now adults. As specified in section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, public authorities in England and Wales have a statutory duty to notify the Home Office when they come across potential victims of modern slavery. This duty is discharged by either referring a child or consenting adult potential victim into the NRM, or by notifying the Home Office if an adult victim does not consent to enter the NRM.

When referred to the NRM, the Single Competent Authority (SCA) within the Home Office makes a 'reasonable grounds' decision on whether an individual could be a victim of modern slavery.

Adults given a positive reasonable grounds decision have access to support (including accommodation, subsistence, legal aid and counselling) pending a 'conclusive grounds' decision on their case. Children are supported by local authorities.

Adults with a positive conclusive grounds decision are currently entitled to at least a further 45 days of support to allow them to 'move on' from NRM support, whilst those with a negative decision receive 9 days of support. See further information regarding the NRM process.

USER FEEDBACK SURVEY

The user feedback survey on NRM statistics ran for 6 weeks and closed on 1 May 2020. We received 50 responses from a range of stakeholders and would like the thank those who responded. We have made some suggested changes and will consider further changes to future bulletins that will be highlighted in each of the releases:

- Data on exploitation type are presented in descending order in the data tables.

- Addition of county lines data (table 27 in data tables).

- Addition of quarterly decision (reasonable grounds and conclusive grounds) outcomes and conclusive grounds waiting times (tables 28 to 30 in data tables).

- Addition of Duty to Notify (DtN) data (tables 31 to 34 in data tables).

Please email NRMStatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk if you have any further comments or questions regarding these statistics.

CORRECTION

An error in data processing was identified that resulted in the incorrect classification of some exploitation types, primarily sexual exploitation, as 'Not recorded or unknown'. This has been corrected in the updated bulletin/data tables using an updated cut of data taken 1 February 2021. This error is related to data processing for the statistical bulletins, and did not affect the classification of referrals within the NRM system itself.
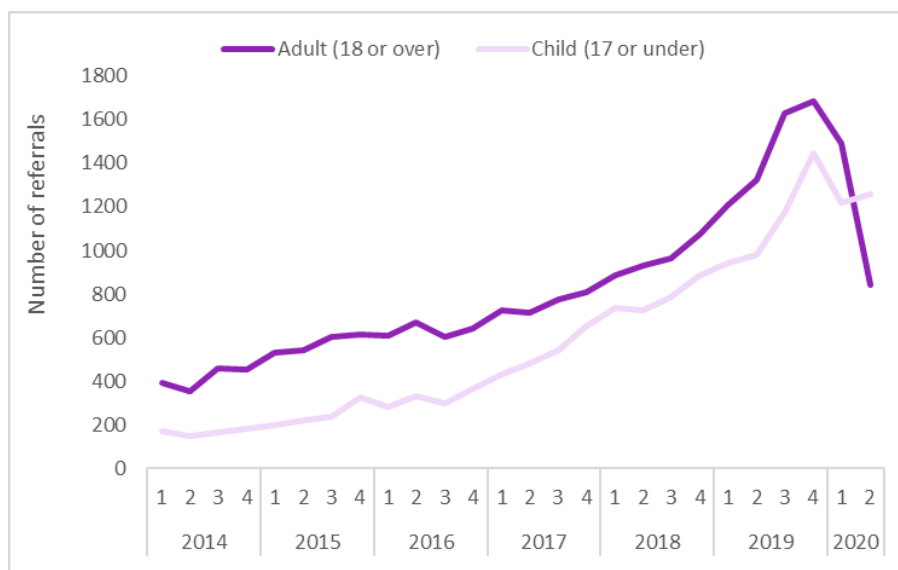
2   National Referral Mechanism (referrals)

NUMBER OF REFERRALS BY AGE GROUP

In the second quarter of 2020, the NRM received 2,207 referrals of potential victims of modern slavery. This represents a 23% decrease in referrals compared to the preceding quarter (2,864) and a 5% decrease from quarter 2 in 2019 (2,312). This is the second quarter-on-quarter decrease in the number of referrals since the third quarter of 2016 (Figure 1, data table 1). The decrease in these quarters is understood to be influenced by the effects of restrictions implemented in the UK as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of quarterly NRM referrals for both adults and children had increased at a similar rate from 2014 to 2019, though there was a decrease in both adult and child referrals in the first quarter of 2020. However, in quarter 2, for the first time, more referrals were received for child potential victims than adults (Figure 1). Just over a third (38%; 843) of the NRM referrals were for potential victims who claimed exploitation as adults (compared to 52% in the preceding quarter), whilst 57% (1,260) claimed exploitation as children (Figure 1). The age group at exploitation was unknown in 5% of cases (104).

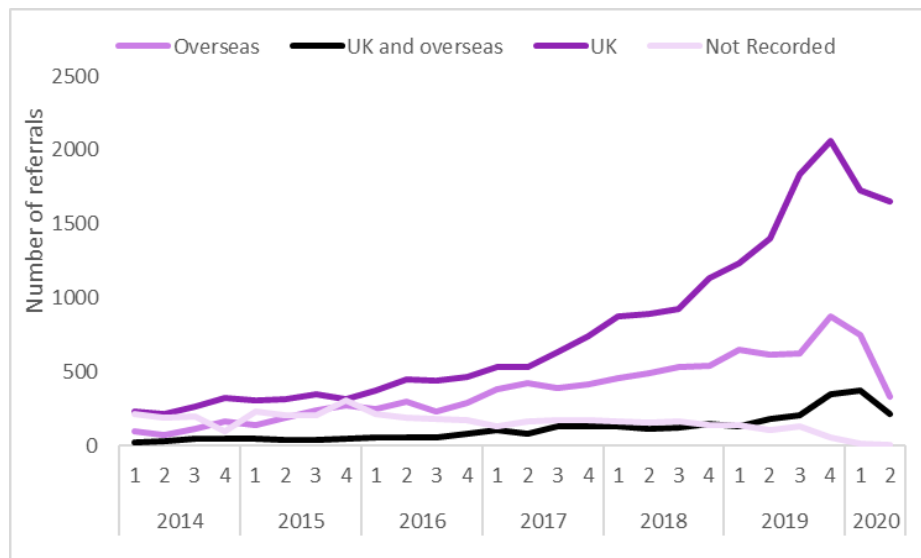**Figure 1: Number of quarterly NRM referrals by age group of exploitation, 2014 to 2020**

Source: SCA
Notes: Excludes data pre-2014 due to data reliability. Referrals where the age group at exploitation is unknown are not shown.

LOCATION OF EXPLOITATION

Quarterly NRM referrals for potential victims exploited in the UK only and overseas only have increased from 2014 to 2019, though fell in the first half of 2020. In quarter 2 2020, 75% (1,650) of potential victims claimed exploitation in the UK only, compared to 60% in the last quarter, whilst 15% (336) claimed exploitation overseas only (data table 2; Figure 2). Referrals of potential victims who claimed exploitation both in the UK and overseas (10%; 216) also decreased compared to the previous quarter.

Figure 2: Number of quarterly NRM referrals by location of exploitation, 2014 to 2020

Source: SCA
Notes: Excludes data pre-2014 due to data reliability.

Of those referrals for UK-based exploitation only, a higher proportion were child potential victims (64%; 1059) than adults (32%; 527). Just over half of the referrals for overseas only exploitation were adults (54%; 183) and 38% (127) were child potential victims.
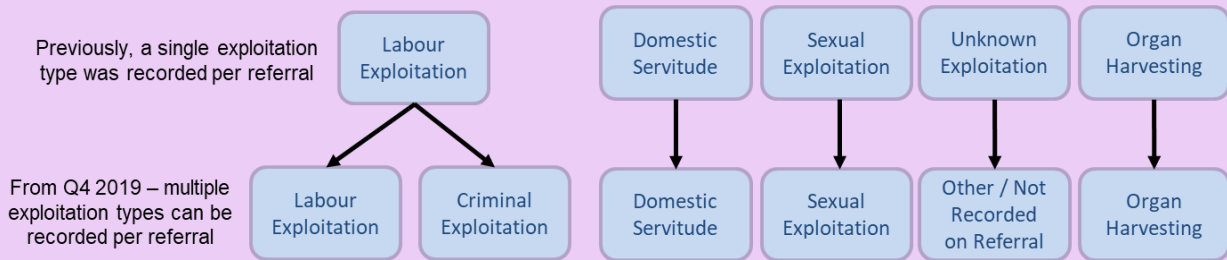
REFERRALS BY GENDER AND EXPLOITATION TYPE

Overall, of the 2,207 potential victims referred in this quarter, 72% (1,582) were male and 28% (618) were female; these proportions are similar to the previous quarter. For adult potential victims, 63% (534) were male and 37% (309) were female, whilst for child potential victims, 77% (976) were male and 22% (277) were female.

Changes to recording of exploitation type

Prior to 1 October 2019, potential victims of modern slavery were recorded as having a single 'primary' exploitation type, grouped into five distinct categories: labour, sexual, domestic servitude, organ harvesting or unknown exploitation (Figure 3). Following changes to the way NRM data are collected, recording of exploitation types has changed to give a better picture of the exploitation experienced by potential victims. As a result, for referrals received from 1 October 2019, criminal exploitation has been split from labour exploitation. In addition, potential victims can be also be recorded as experiencing multiple exploitation types and, as such, caution should be taken when comparing exploitation type statistics from quarter 4 with previous quarters, as the primary exploitation type is unknown. Furthermore, some breakdowns provided in previous statistical releases by certain characteristics and exploitation type have not been provided in the data tables to avoid comparisons with previous quarters.

Figure 3: Changes introduced to recording procedure of exploitation types in the NRM, from 1 October 2019

It is important to note that the exploitation types recorded in this statistical bulletin are those that are reported for potential victims at the referral stage.

Overall, potential victims were most commonly referred for criminal exploitation only, which accounted for 41% (906) of all referrals. An additional 16% (361) of referrals stated that potential victims had been referred for criminal exploitation and other exploitation types. Sexual exploitation accounted for 12% (273) of all referrals, with a further 7% (163) of referrals including sexual exploitation in combination with other exploitation types.
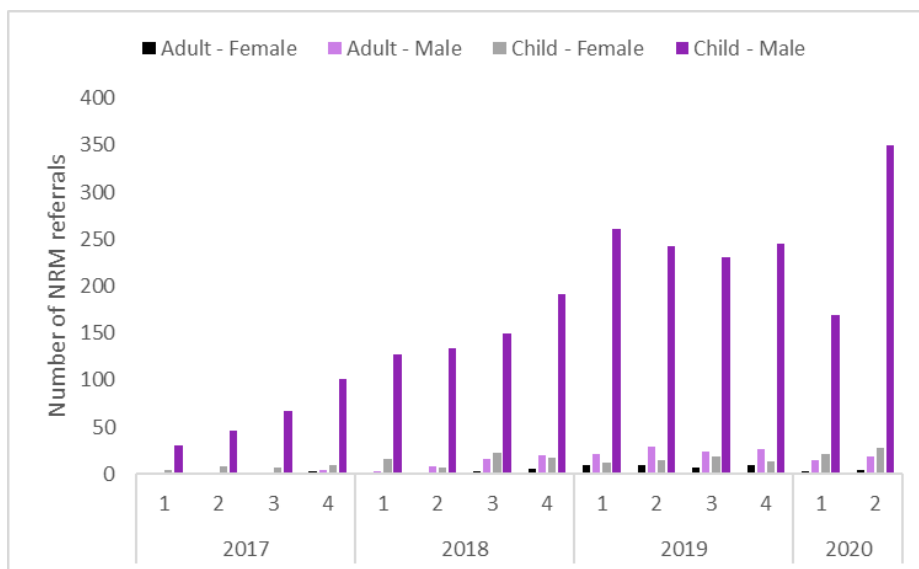
For adult potential victims, labour exploitation was most commonly reported (23% of adult referrals; 192), and most of those potential victims (88%; 168) were male. However, for child potential victims, criminal exploitation was most common (55%; 697) and the majority (94%; 652) of those were male. For both adult and child potential victims, most referrals for sexual exploitation (95% and 91% respectively) were for female potential victims. See further information on types of exploitation.

For those exploited as children, criminal exploitation is partially driven by an increase in the identification of 'county lines' cases. County lines are used to describe drug gangs in large

cities expanding their reach to small towns. Often, vulnerable individuals are exploited to transport substances, and mobile phone 'lines' are used to communicate drug orders. See further information on county lines.

In quarter 2, 418 referrals were flagged as county lines referrals, accounting for 19% of all referrals received in the quarter (data table 27). The majority (84%; 350) of these referrals were made for male children.

Figure 4: Number of NRM referrals flagged as county lines, by age group at exploitation and gender
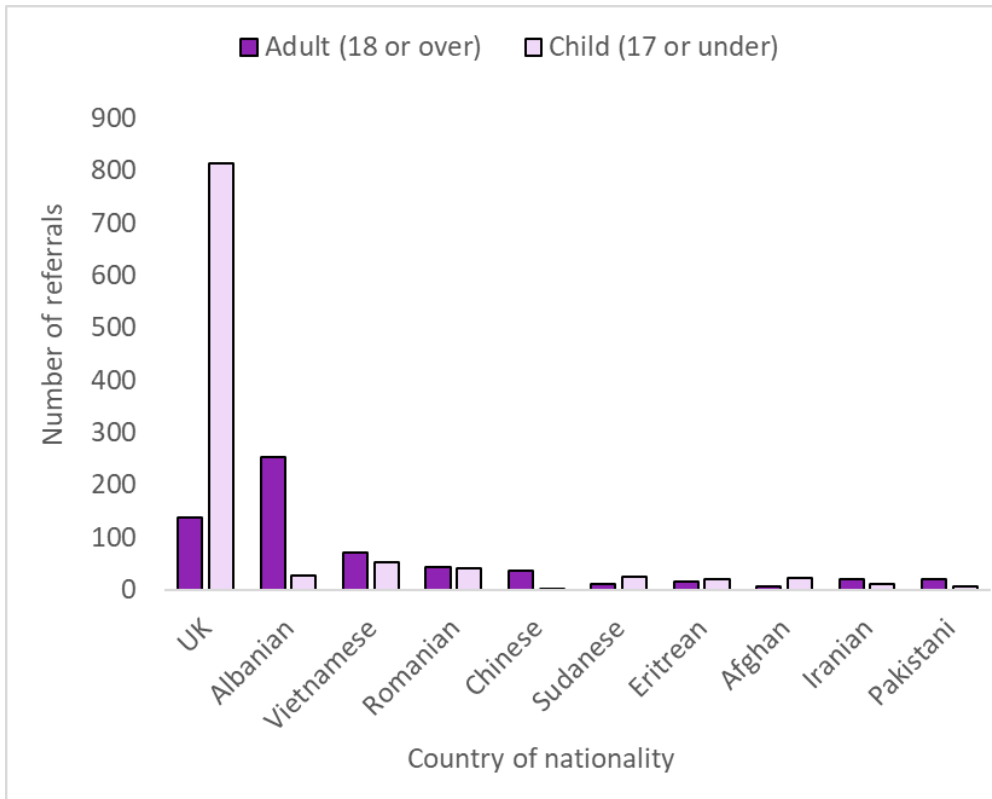

Source: SCA
Notes: County lines referrals were classified as a sub-type of labour exploitation prior to quarter 4 2019. Since January 2020, county lines referrals are identified by a 'flag' on the system.

REFERRALS BY NATIONALITY

The most common nationality referred were UK nationals, which accounted for 44% (977) of all potential victims (compared to 26% in the previous quarter). A large proportion of these referrals were made for child potential victims (Figure 5). The second most commonly referred nationality was Albanian (14%; 304). The majority (83%; 813) of referrals for UK nationals were for child potential victims, whilst for Albanian nationals, the majority (83%; 253) were for adult potential victims (Figure 5).

Please note that a change to data recording means that as of 1 October 2019 the dual nationality of potential victims is reflected in NRM data in separate categories. To see total counts of a particular nationality, please refer to the reference tables.

Figure 5: Number of NRM referrals for the most common nationalities of potential victims in Q2 2020, by age group at exploitation; the top 10 nationalities shown here account for 77% of referrals

Source: SCA
Notes: Potential victims with an unknown age at exploitation are not shown. There are separate categories for dual-nationals.

REFERRALS BY LOCATION OF CRIME INVESTIGATION

Once the SCA receives an NRM referral, it determines the responsible geographic police force for investigation based on the information provided on the referral form and the referral is transferred for investigation. As further information is gathered, it can mean the police force for a referral is updated in the case-working system, and this will be reflected in the statistics.
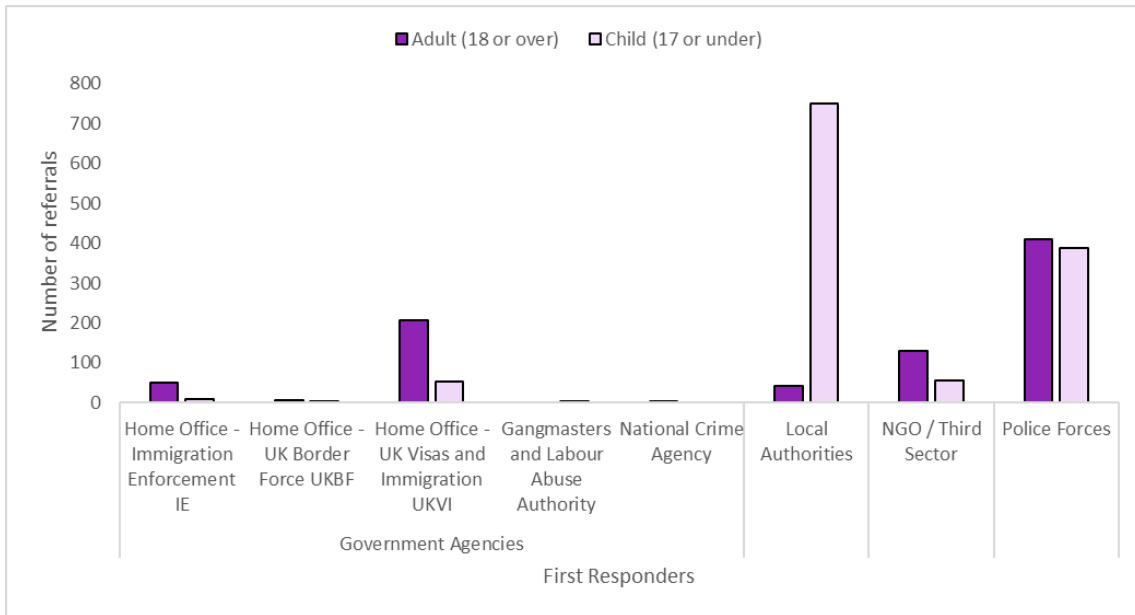
As in previous quarters, most (91%; 2,009) of the NRM referrals were sent to police forces in England; 3% (76) were sent to Police Scotland, 5% (101) were sent to Welsh police forces and 1% (18) to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (data table 2). Of all referrals, 28% (609) were sent to the Metropolitan Police Service.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Authorised First Responder organisations include local authorities, specified NGOs, police forces and specified government agencies. In quarter 2 2020, 16% (364) of the referrals came from government agencies, a decrease from 43% in quarter 1 2020. Of these referrals, 18% (66) came from Home Office Immigration Enforcement, down from 53% in the previous quarter, whilst most came from UK Visas and Immigration (79%; 288) (Figure 6 and data table 9).

Figure 6: Number of NRM referrals by First Responder types

Source: SCA
Notes: Potential victims with an unknown age at exploitation are not shown.

Police forces accounted for 38% (836) of NRM referrals in quarter 2, up from 28% in quarter 1. As in the previous quarter, NGO / third-sector organisations accounted for 9% (190) of referrals. Local authorities accounted for 37% (817) of referrals, most which were for child potential victims (Figure 6 and data table 9).

3 National Referral Mechanism (decisions)

REASONABLE GROUNDS DECISIONS

The SCA made 2,270 reasonable grounds decisions in quarter 2, 2020. It is important to note that these decisions could have been made on referrals received in previous quarters. Of these decisions, overall 94% (2,136) were positive and 6% (134) were negative, whereas in the previous quarter 89% were positive decisions. The proportion of positive reasonable grounds decisions was slightly higher for child potential victims (97%; 1,225) than adults (92%; 823) (data table 28).

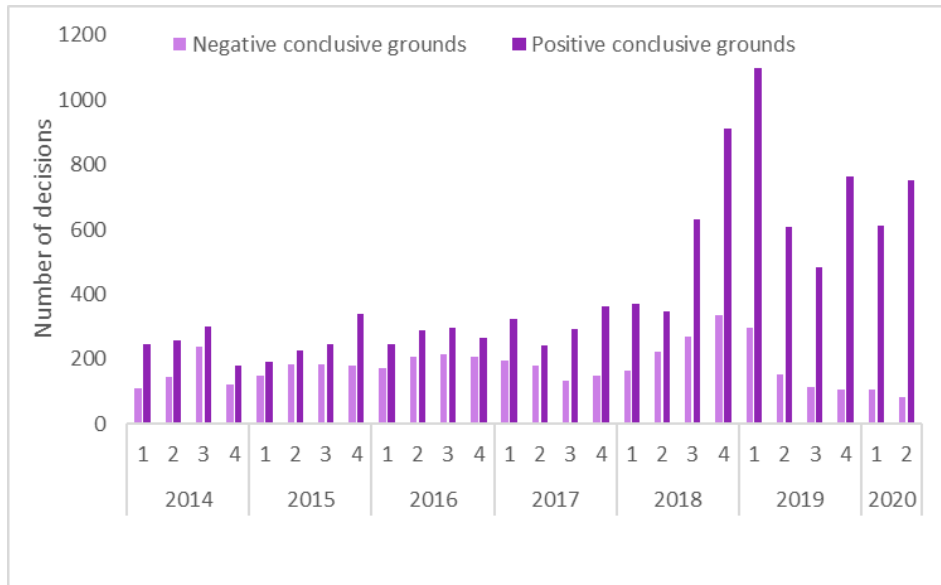**Figure 7: Number of NRM positive and negative reasonable grounds decisions**

Source: SCA
Notes: Based on the quarter/year that the decision was made.

CONCLUSIVE GROUNDS DECISIONS

In quarter 2, the SCA made 833 conclusive grounds decisions, an increase from 716 made in the previous quarter. Of the decisions made this quarter, 90% (750) were positive and 10% (83) were negative. The proportion of positive conclusive grounds decisions was higher for child potential victims (94%; 432) than adults (85%; 305) (data table 29).

Figure 8: Number of NRM positive and negative conclusive grounds decisions

Source: SCA
Notes: Based on the quarter/year that the decision was made.

The average (median) time taken to reach the decisions made in this quarter was 322 days, which is slightly higher than 302 days in the previous quarter.
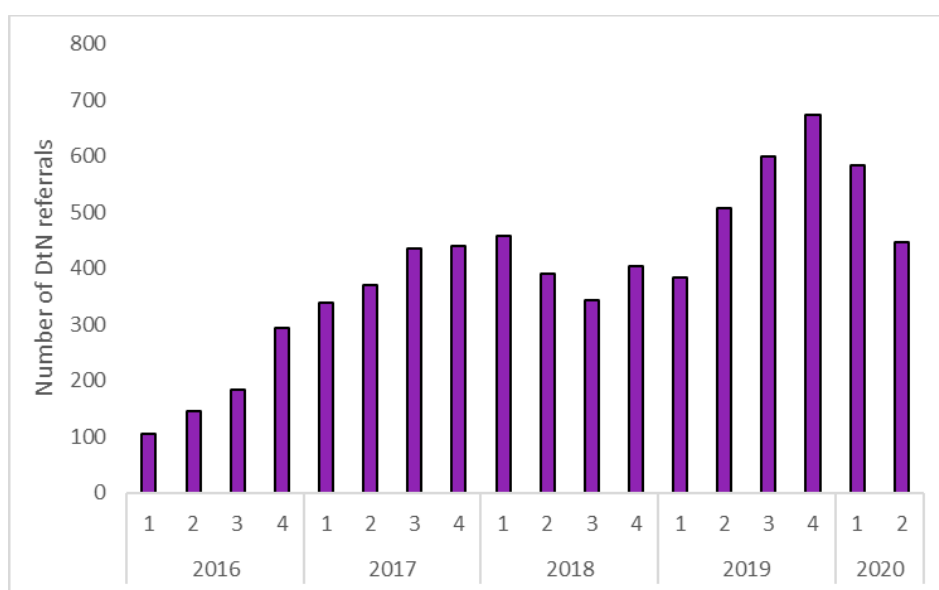
4 Duty to Notify

Since 1 November 2015, specified public authorities in England and Wales must notify the Home Office via the DtN process of suspected adult victims of modern slavery that do not consent to enter the NRM.

In quarter 2, the Home Office received 447 reports of adult potential victims that were reported via the DtN process (Figure 9), compared to 583 in the previous quarter. Of these:

- the most commonly referred nationalities were Romanian (26%; 115), UK (16%; 70) and Albanian (16%; 70) (data table 32)

- the most commonly referred exploitation types were labour (35%; 157), criminal (18%; 82) and sexual exploitation (17%; 75) (data table 33)

- in terms of first responders, most DtN reports were submitted by government agencies (48%; 213) and the police (46%; 207).

Figure 9: Number of Duty to Notify referrals

Source: SCA
Notes: Potential victims may be reported via DtN and subsequently also be referred to the NRM at a later point in time, so these figures should not be combined due to potential double counting.

5   Further information

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

It is important to note that the statistics presented in this publication relate to the number of **potential** victims of modern slavery that have been referred to the NRM or via the DtN process.

The statistics provided are taken from a live management information system and based on the situation as at 1 February 2021, when an extract was taken from the system. The figures presented here may differ from previous or future reports as new information comes to light and cases are updated accordingly.

NRM statistics were previously published by the National Crime Agency (NCA) prior to transfer of NRM decision-making responsibilities to SCA in April 2019 as part of the NRM Reform Programme. Publications prior to July 2019 can be accessed via the NCA website. With this transfer of responsibility, these data are now designated as official statistics and produced in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Data tables for further analysis can be found online alongside this bulletin.

This statistical bulletin is produced to the highest professional standards and is free from political interference. It has been produced by statisticians working in the Crime and Policing Analysis Unit in accordance with the Home Office's Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which covers Home Office policy on revisions and other matters. The Chief Statistician, as Head of Profession, reports to the National Statistician with regarding all professional statistical matters and oversees all Home Office National Statistics products regarding the Code, being responsible for their timing, content and methodology.

Police force data provided in associated reference tables are based on the location of the police force that received the NRM referral. Each referral is screened against the criteria below to identify the responsible geographic police force. Once identified, the referral is transferred to the relevant Force Intelligence Bureau, or stipulated point of receipt within the force, for action. In some cases, further information is received and processed regarding a referral which means it will be sent to a different police force. This will be reflected in the updated statistics.

Criteria applied to identify the relevant police force:

- the force has acted as First Responder, or the referral indicates that the force is already involved in the recording/investigation of the potential modern slavery human trafficking offences; **or**

- the potential victim has been exploited within the force area; **or**

- the potential victim has been exploited abroad or at an unknown location and the victim's address at the time of referral is within the force area; **or**

- the potential victim has been exploited abroad or at an unknown location and they have presented to another First Responder within the force area.

OTHER RELATED PUBLICATIONS

National Referral Mechanism Statistics Quarter 2 2019 – April to June

National Referral Mechanism Statistics Quarter 3 2019 – July to September

National Referral Mechanism Statistics Quarter 4 2019 – October to December

National Referral Mechanism Statistics UK, End of Year Summary, 2019

National Referral Mechanism Statistics UK, Quarter 1 2020 – January to March

Feedback and enquiries

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