

DATA CULTURE IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING

TECHNICAL RESEARCH REPORT II



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Data culture in human trafficking

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Presentation

Dear Readers,

Today we present this work, which responds to an urgent and growing need in our country: the fight against data ignorance, which will help us to combat human trafficking. Data Culture in Human Trafficking is a comprehensive strategy that places data at the center of efforts to combat human trafficking. By improving the collection, analysis, and use of data, this approach seeks not only to make the true extent of trafficking visible, but also to develop more effective responses and improve coordinated actions among all stakeholders.

Human trafficking is recognized worldwide as a form of modern-day slavery that continues to devastate lives and communities. This criminal phenomenon not only constitutes a serious violation of human rights, but also represents one of the most lucrative illicit businesses globally, after drug and arms trafficking.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, various international organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have worked tirelessly to strengthen the fight against this heinous crime. In Europe, and particularly in Spain, significant efforts have been made to combat trafficking, most notably the implementation of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, as well as the recent approval of the Draft Comprehensive Organic Law against Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings.

In this context, the collection and analysis of accurate and reliable data is essential to understand the magnitude and characteristics of human trafficking at our borders and to develop effective public policies. This report, developed within the framework of the “Data Culture in Human Trafficking” project, underlines the importance of a robust data culture that not only makes this problem visible, but also allows for the accountability and empowerment of key actors in the fight against trafficking.

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive and detailed overview of the current situation of human trafficking in Spain, examining both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of this phenomenon. Through the Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) methodology and qualitative techniques, we seek not only to identify the visible victims, but also to unveil the hidden number of those who still remain in the shadows.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the organizations and individuals who have contributed to this report. Their commitment and dedication have been essential in advancing the protection of human rights and the eradication of human trafficking.

As we move forward in this fight, it is crucial to remember that behind every fact and statistic there are human lives. The protection and dignity of victims must always be our priority. We hope that the findings and recommendations in this report will serve as a useful and effective guide for all actors involved in the fight against human trafficking.

Sincerely yours,

Cecilia Estrada Villaseñor and Adam Dubin Edelstein,
Principal Investigators of the project.



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1

Introduction

1. Who are the key players in data culture?
2. Differences between detection and formal identification





Data culture is defined as the routine practice of methodically collecting, examining and using data to provide information and improve government decisions and strategies. In the field of combating human trafficking, a strong data culture plays a crucial role in understanding the scope and characteristics of this problem, recognizing patterns, and assessing the efficiency of implemented measures. The importance of data stems from its ability to facilitate greater protection of human rights and allow for a more informed, targeted approach to meet the genuine needs of those affected by such atrocities.

A robust data culture with established good practices also makes it possible to identify victims early and prevent their re-victimization by collecting detailed, up-to-date information on their situations. Accurate data enables authorities and non-governmental organizations to develop more effective intervention strategies, ensuring that resources are directed to the areas of greatest need and tailored to the specific circumstances of each case.

In addition, a culture of data promotes transparency and accountability, which is fundamental to maintaining public trust and ensuring that the policies and programs implemented actually contribute to the eradication of human trafficking. Data analysis can identify gaps and areas for improvement allowing for continuous adjustments in policies and practices to optimize results.

Interoperability of data systems between different organizations and jurisdictions is equally important. An integrated data infrastructure facilitates information sharing and collaboration between government agencies, law enforcement, NGOs and other relevant entities, creating a united and cohesive front against human trafficking. This collaborative approach not only improves efficiency with identifying and supporting victims, but also strengthens preventive actions and prosecution of traffickers.

All regulatory frameworks imply internal limitations. First, because laws always establish minimums standards, while solutions to social problems require maximums ones. Secondly, because all regulations pursue a horizon that always generates a conflict of interests. The institutions involved have different purposes and responsibilities within the framework of our democracy. For example, border control, which is the responsibility of the State Security Forces and Corps, may have other purposes than the protection of fundamental rights, in the case of foreigners in an irregular situation. The prosecution of those responsible for human trafficking can generate situations of revictimization, as will be explained below.

Thirdly, the Organic Law on Data Protection, in its interest in protecting the privacy of every citizen, becomes a veil when it comes to situations of human trafficking when there are objective impediments to the cross-referencing of data, even when the



institutions are willing to work collaboratively, which is not always the case. Fourthly, our configuration as a State of autonomous regions facilitates the attention of citizens with the delegation of responsibilities, including many social ones, but this fragments the coordination structures and hinders the necessary traceability of the networks and their victims, whose structures may be transcended national boundaries. For this reason, the report assumes as one of its main objectives to resolve the need for collaboration and data contrast dynamics to avoid duplication as well as the configuration of spaces where the legal vacuum detracts from the objectivity of the data.

1. WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE DATA CULTURE?

Effective implementation of a data-driven culture in the fight against human trafficking requires the collaboration of a variety of key actors, each with specific and complementary roles. The main actors involved and their contributions to this comprehensive approach are described below:

- ▶ NGOs are key to building a culture of collecting data on human trafficking. Their closeness to the victims and their role in providing
- ▶ Assistance gives them with a unique and valuable perspective that enriches the available database.
- ▶ The Center for Intelligence for Terrorism and Organized Crime is key in the coordination and analysis of information at national and international level.
- ▶ Its ability to integrate data from various sources and its analytical approach contribute significantly to the identification of trafficking patterns and networks.
- ▶ Prosecutors play a critical role in utilizing data for the legal prosecution of trafficking cases. The effectiveness of legal action depends to a great extent on the quality and accuracy of the data collected during investigations.
- ▶ Collaboration between these actors, based on a robust data culture, is essential to make progress in the fight against human trafficking and ensuring that the data is available to the public to provide greater protection of the human rights of the victims.





2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DETECTION AND FORMAL IDENTIFICATION



When talking about data on victims of human trafficking, it is important to differentiate between the detection of victims and their identification. Detection is considered the process by which different actors, not necessarily experts in the field (health personnel, state security agents, personnel from educational entities, professionals from NGOs or public intervention institutions, etc.), detect a series of indicators in a person that lead them to suspect that he or she may be a victim of human trafficking. It is after this detection, and with the consent of the possible victim of trafficking, that they can make a referral to the responsible authority so that, if necessary, they can formally identify the person as a victim. Formal identification is a criminal legal procedure by which the person will be able to enjoy certain rights arising from the recognition of his or her status as a victim.

The detection process is carried out through the recognition of indicators to assess whether the person is a potential victim of human trafficking. One of the main problems regarding the indicators for detecting victims of trafficking is that there is no consensus on what they are, since several sources recognize similar elements, while others do not match those of other organizations. In addition, some indicators can be included in several categories at the same time, and it is common for the manuals to mention that the list of indicators is not exhaustive and that the particularities of each case should be taken into account in the detection process. In addition, the structure in which the indicators are listed may differ. For example, some manuals classify them as general indicators and according to the type of exploitation (UNODC, n.d.); others do so according to whether they are physical, psychological, psychosocial or other more general indicators (PHIT, 2023); whether they are indicators of recruitment by deception, recruitment by coercion, recruitment by abuse of vulnerability, coercion or abuse of vulnerability at destination (ILO, 2009); or whether they are general or relate to one of the three phases of the crime (recruitment, transport or transfer and exploitation) (IOM, 2011). Others offer an approach to detection that is less explicitly focused on indicators and incorporates other types of tools (TIA-TAS, 2023; UNODC, 2007).

Another common classification organizes detection indicators according to which element of the crime of trafficking they correspond to: action, means or purposes (TrafGuID, 2012). This diversity how to detect signs of trafficking illustrates the lack of homogeneity in the work of organizations and experts. In order to give examples of the indicators that are commonly used, the following table is based on the manuals of different projects, entities and international organizations (PHIT, 2023; UNODC n.d.; ILO, 2009; TrafGuID, 2012; TIATAS, 2023). It includes a series of specific examples of indicators, taking into account the classification according to action, means or end elements. In addition, other indicators not included in the previous structure are included because they are signals that indicate a trafficking situation in a cross-cutting manner to any of the elements of action, means or ends, and not just to one in particular. The latter can be general indicators or risk factors, psychological indicators, behavioral indicators and appearance indicators (PHIT, 2023; UNODC n.d.; ILO, 2009; TrafGuID, 2012).



Table 1. Introduction. TSH detection indicators

Indicators of action, means and goals		
Type of indicator according to the element of the crime to which it responds	Indicator subtype	Examples of indicators
Action indicators	Of catchment	The person is "rescued" from an initial situation, does not know what he/she is going to do or where, and has been offered an unsolicited opportunity.
	Transportation or transfer	The person does not organize his or her transportation, lies at border control, does not know the people he or she is traveling with, identifies companions who organize your trip, refers that the trip was an altruistic help.
	Reception, lodging or reception of persons	The person lives in a controlled place, has limited freedom of movement, lives in overcrowded conditions or in inadequate places, only knows routes related to exploitation.
	Contracting	The person pays fees for his or her own hiring, has no employment contract or finds it incomprehensible.
Indicadores de medios	Threats or coercion	The person is subjected to threats of physical and/or psychological violence or arbitrary disciplinary measures, has been induced to take drugs, receives threats related to its administrative situation or that it will be handed over to the authorities.
	Use of force	The person is a victim of aggression, presents injuries that appear to be the result of attacks or the application of control measures.
	Seizure or restriction of movement	The person wants to leave the exploitative situation and cannot, limited ability to travel, limited access to means of communication, limited contact with other people, lives and/or works in a place where there are cameras or security personnel.
	Fraud or deceit	The person is the victim of false promises of assistance to be provided, was offered a job that has worse conditions than those described.
	Abuse of power or vulnerability	The person comes from an area affected by disasters, armed conflict or other types of crises, has a limited or no social and/or family support network, does not speak the local language, belongs to a minority or discriminated group, has dependents in the country of origin, is in a situation of multiple dependencies, has no previous experience in decision making.
	Withholding of identity documents	
	Granting or receiving payments	The person has a debt related to the exploitation situation or their migratory path; expenses related to their lodging or to the development of their work such as tools, products, etc. are deducted from their salary.



1. INTRODUCTION



Operating indicators

General

The person is obliged to work under certain conditions; he/she receives little or no remuneration, is bound by debts, has no rest days.

Exploitation of children and adolescents

The child is traveling unaccompanied by adults or with adults other than parents, does not have access to parents or guardians, is inappropriately sized or dressed, has age-appropriate resources such as a taxi phone.

Depending on the type of operation

Labor exploitation (general)

The person does not have the proper protective equipment for the work he/she performs, is denied breaks, is required to exercise regardless of health status, does not keep the money he/she earns, is not paid for the work he/she performs but gives it to someone else, or does not know how to obtain documentation to work.

Exploitation in domestic service

He lives with a family, but has no space for privacy, does not eat with the rest of the cohabitants, sleeps in an inadequate space, never leaves the house for social reasons and/or without his employer, receives only leftovers to eat.

Sexual exploitation

The person is forced to engage in prostitution without methods of protection, is unable to refuse clients.

Exploitation for the commission of illicit activities

The local language knows only vocabulary related to sex, has clothing that mostly coincides with that used in the exercise of prostitution.

Mendicity and misdemeanors

The person begs for many hours, is forced to commit petty crimes.

The group moves from one place to another to carry out these activities, belongs to gangs made up of people with the same ethnic profile, presents mobility problems apparently derived from mutilations.

The person has a physical disability that may be the result of mutilation, moves in groups with others of the same ethnic origin, begs in public places.



1. INTRODUCTION

Transversal indicators	
Other types of indicators	Examples of indicators
General indicators or risk factors	The person comes from a place where human trafficking is common, is a migrant in an irregular administrative situation, is a young woman traveling alone, has no identity documents, does not see human trafficking as a crime, distrusts the authorities.
Psychological indicators	The person shows signs of fear, emotional instability, self-injurious behaviors, symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder or Stockholm syndrome, anxious, depressive or dissociative symptoms, etc.
Behavioral indicators	The person presents an automated account of his/her life history or migratory route, allows other people to speak in his/her place when addressed directly, shows nervousness or secrecy, is perceived as lying, shows hostility or irritability, shows distrust of the generation of new social ties.
Aspect indicators	The person presents a deteriorated general state of health, physical marks of violence, identifying tattoos potentially made by the traffickers, extreme fatigue.

Own elaboration based on manuals for the detection of human trafficking indicators from various entities (P HIT, 2023; UNODC n.d.; ILO, 2009; Tragulids, 2012).

One of the problems of detection is self-identification, since there may be cases in which the agents involved detect the victims through indicators, but the victim does not self-identify as a victim due to different circumstances. If the person refuses to go to the authorities, he/she does not formally identify him/herself, and therefore does not have access to the corresponding rights as a victim of trafficking and to protection mechanisms.

Another problem has to do with the stage of the trafficking process in which the potential victim is at the moment of detection. For a person of legal age who is a victim of human trafficking to be considered as such, he or she must have been subjected to at least one of the actions, through at least one of the means for at least one of the purposes of exploitation (Penal Code, 2015, art. 177 bis). The detection procedure by the agents involved presents greater complications if the potential victim is in the trafficking situation without having reached the exploitation phase. For example, it is possible that entities involved in social intervention with migrants who have recently arrived in a territory may detect a series of indicators of human trafficking in a person's life story and migratory trajectory. These indicators may be linked to certain actions, such as transportation or transfer from the country of origin, through a series of methods, with a view to exploitation that the professional in question can foresee but which has not yet occurred. This means that self-identification becomes even more difficult, with all the implications for intervention and prevention work. In both cases, the victims cannot formally identify themselves and therefore do not appear in official records.

In the case of children and adolescents, detection presents additional challenges. On the one hand, if they are foreign children, it is also necessary to detect their age, which would entitle them to special protection. However, given the prohibition in Spanish law



1. INTRODUCTION



on the exercise of prostitution and certain types of work for those under 18 years of age, traffickers may provide them with false documentation or keep them in hiding (Penal Code, 2015, art. 188). On the other, because exploited children are outside the usual circuits of detection of trafficking victims (prostitution sites, factories, plantations), where the main police operations pursuing this crime are carried out. As we have already pointed out in previous reports, there are situations, that we know about through the media, that will not be considered as trafficking or exploitation, despite the indicators found.



2

Human trafficking as a global phenomenon



Human trafficking is often referred to as slavery in the 21st century. Since the beginning of the 20th century, efforts have been made to strengthen the fight against human trafficking with the creation of specialized agencies by the UN such as the **International Labor Organization (ILO)** or the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Organized Crime (UNODC)**. As soon as the seriousness of the situation was recognized, a distinction was made between “sex trafficking” and “Labor trafficking.” Regarding the first form, one of the first instruments of the fight was the **International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic** (League of Nations, 1904). With regard to the second, one of the first instruments to be published was the **Geneva Slavery Convention** (League of Nations, 1926).

Since then, the legislative systems of the different countries have begun to adapt to international standards (Reina, 2019). Other legal instruments approved within the framework of the UN were “**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**,” which establishes that human trafficking is a crime that directly affects the fundamental rights of human beings (General Assembly of the United Nations, 1948); the “**International Convention against Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others**” of the United Nations (UN, 1949); the “**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women**” (UN, 1979), which refers to the commitment of



states to eliminate trafficking and sexual exploitation of women; the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UN, 1989) and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography of 2000. However, it was not until 2000 that the legal definition of trafficking was introduced by the **Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children**, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This document is one of the most important because it defines trafficking in human beings in order to identify the victims of this crime and establishes the necessary rules to pursue and prosecute the perpetrators (Reina, 2019).

According to this definition, trafficking indicates a situation in which people are or have been in a process of recruitment by means of violence, deception or abuse of a position of vulnerability, or other forms of coercion to persuade and control, and to be moved to another place or transferred to a third party, with the purpose of being exploited. The term “**exploitation**” refers to situations of abuse at work or in activities that deviate significantly from standard working conditions as defined by legislation or other binding legal regulations, concerning in particular, remuneration, working hours, leave entitlements, health and safety standards and decent treatment. When the conduct involves a **minor**, it is considered trafficking even if none of the means of mentioned above have been used to commit the exploitation.

The various “**forms of exploitation**” constitute a continuum of serious abuses ranging from begging, sexual exploitation, organ trafficking, forced labor and forced marriage. Human trafficking is often accompanied by other abuses of fundamental rights, such as, for example, theft of documentation, deprivation of liberty, etc. While taken separately, these abuses may or may not meet the threshold of being qualified as trafficking, they can be important indicators of a situation of severe exploitation.

Subsequently, at the European level, the concept of human trafficking is essentially outlined in the **Warsaw Convention** and in **Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating human trafficking and protecting victims and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA**. The Directive is part of a global action against trafficking in human beings, which includes measures involving third countries as stated in the “Action-oriented paper on strengthening the Union’s external dimension for action against trafficking in human beings: towards a global EU action against trafficking in human beings” adopted by the Council on 30 November 2009. In this context, they should act in developing nations from which they originate or transfer victims to raise awareness, reduce vulnerability, support and assist victims, combat the root causes of trafficking and provide support to developing nations to develop appropriate anti-trafficking legislation (Council of the European Union, 2011). The aforementioned European Directive (Directive 2011/36/EU) broadens the definition of exploitation to include situations such as **forced begging, the commission of illegal activities such as theft or drug trafficking, illegal adoption or forced marriages**.

In relation to the **means** (“threats or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person” Art. 3 Palermo Protocol) used to bring a victim into a situation of exploitation, two points should be noted. On the one hand, the element of the victim’s



2. HUMAN TRAFFICKING AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

consent is considered irrelevant with respect to the situation of exploitation as long as it has been reached through one of the means set forth in the definition. On the other hand, and with respect to child victims of trafficking, the Palermo Protocol defines them as such even if the means taken into account to define an adult as a victim of trafficking in human beings are not present. Thus, child trafficking is defined as follows: **“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation, even if none of the above means are used.”**

Despite the fact that a large number of trafficking victims are foreigners (according to the Prosecutor’s Office in its 2023 report, only 0.8% of trafficking victims estimated as such in sentencing between 2018 and 2022 were of Spanish nationality) it is pertinent to differentiate the crime of human trafficking from that of migrant smuggling. The term **“smuggling of migrants”** refers to supporting the illegal crossing of a border. The major difference between “smuggling” and “trafficking” is that smuggling violates the laws of the State that is being entered irregularly, while trafficking violates a person’s human rights. The crime of migrant smuggling is characterized by the facilitation of the illegal entry of a person into another country, the creation or provision of a false identity document or passport, and the enabling, by illegal means, of the permanent stay of a non-national or non-resident (IOM, 2024). It is clear that both actions, smuggling and trafficking, are often related, however, there are differences between both phenomena. On the one hand, the smuggling of migrants involves crossing international borders, but trafficking does not because victims are also trafficked into the territory of their nationality.



3

The situation in Europe

1. Towards a Data Culture. Context and realities from the legal framework
2. Human Rights and Data





3. THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

1. TOWARDS A DATA CULTURE. CONTEXT AND REALITIES FROM THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Human trafficking is a serious crime, often committed within the framework of organized crime, and constitutes a fundamental violation of human rights that attracts the attention, as we have seen above, of international organizations such as the United Nations or the European Union. At the European level, trafficking is explicitly prohibited by the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** (Council of the European Union, 2011). In this context, the European Union adopted the Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA of 19 July 2002 on combating human trafficking and the EU Plan on best practices, standards and procedures for combating and preventing human trafficking. In addition, the Stockholm Program - An open and secure Europe serving and protecting the citizen, adopted by the European Council, gives clear priority to the fight against human trafficking. Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA was repealed by **Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011** on preventing and combating human trafficking beings and protecting victims. Fundamental in this respect has been the **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings - also known as the Warsaw Convention**. Both instruments have a similar definition, although it is important to note that the Warsaw Convention does not include the transnational character or the requirement of the presence of organized crime as requirements for its application, thus broadening its material scope of application (Vigano, 2024). The Warsaw Convention also intends to strengthen and develop the protection provided by the United Nations framework, making a clear reference to the Palermo Protocol on trafficking. The Warsaw Convention incorporates in its articles many provisions focused on the protection of victims. As a result, this instrument approaches trafficking from a dual perspective: criminal law and human rights, albeit with different intensities. Thus, in actions related to prosecution, prevention and protection, States Parties must necessarily take into account the rights of victims (Jordana, 2020).

However, the EU itself advocates that the 2011 Directive represents a step further than the aforementioned international instrument in a victim-centered approach to the problem of human trafficking (Villacampa, 2011). The Directive adopts an integrated, global and human rights-based approach to the fight against human trafficking, and in its implementation, the following must be taken into account



3. THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

The European Parliament and Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of human trafficking or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration and who cooperate with the competent authorities, as well as Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 establishing minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals, are also taken into account.

This Directive 2011/36/EU requires Member States to develop or strengthen their policies to prevent human trafficking (including measures aimed at deterring and reducing demand, which stimulates all forms of exploitation) and measures aimed at reducing the risk of becoming a victim of trafficking, through research (including on new forms of trafficking in human beings), information, harmonized data collection, awareness-raising and education (Council of Europe, 2011). Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings Directive) sets out, in Articles 19 and 20, the requirements for EU Member States to collect and report statistics on trafficking in human beings.

Data collection and analysis are essential for governments to understand the manifestation of human trafficking within their borders and among their nationals abroad, to track progress toward anti-trafficking goals, and to innovate anti-trafficking responses in collaboration with key stakeholders. The availability of fair and comprehensive data is crucial to highlight trends and inform decision-making. To develop effective public policies that address the true magnitude of the problem, governments, NGOs and other stakeholders must have at their disposal accurate data that reflect the true magnitude of the problem.

Especially in the case of a phenomenon such as human trafficking, accurate data are difficult to obtain and may never fully reflect the extent of this crime. Estimates generated with scientific methodologies As Fabra et al. say, “If you can’t quantify a real number of victims, then you can’t quantify a real number of victims, and you can’t quantify a real number of victims. As Fabra et al. say, “If you cannot quantify a realistic picture of trafficking in persons, you can’t quantify it. The problem cannot be solved, it is not possible to make public policy, nor to generate adequate budgets, nor to evaluate the impact and the effectiveness of the proceedings.” Estimates of the number of people treated vary from year to year.

Eurostat has been compiling and providing data at EU level since 2008. This data collection has been carried out as a coordinated effort between the national rapporteurs and/or equivalent mechanisms for reporting statistics on





3. THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

trafficking in human beings and the European Commission (Eurostat). However, the data are not adjusted and are published as reported by the EU Member States.

Table 2. The situation in Europe. Towards a Data Culture

	Sexual exploitation	Forced labour or services	Organ removal and other purposes ⁽²⁾
2008	3.946	1.225	678
2009	3.227	755	538
2010	5.004	911	758
2011	4.659	1.235	1.111
2012	5.759	1.483	1.377
2013	4.231	1.063	450
2014	4.093	875	408
2015	3.157	900	799
2016	4.208	1.047	1.407
2017	3.979	1.052	1.097
2018	3.857	980	1.144
2019	3.909	2.028	830
2020	3.047	1.912	658
2021	3.811	1.950	1.083
2022	4.014	3.990	1.699

(¹) Calculated on responding countries and on known values. No adjustments were made. More than one form of exploitation can be recorded for a victim.

(²) Organ removal and other purposes including use for benefit fraud, criminal activities and forced begging.

Data obtained from Eurostat as of July 11, 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Trafficking_in_human_beings_statistics#cite_note-1

According to data published by Eurostat, in 2022 there were 10 093 registered victims of human trafficking in the EU, of which 63% were women or girls. In addition, 37 % of the victims of trafficking registered in the EU were citizens of the Member States (Eurostat, 2024). The data provided by Member States represent an increase of 41 % of detected victims compared to the previous year 2021. This increase may be due to higher detection rates of victim's thanks, to the awareness raising actions carried out across the EU in 2022 to prevent trafficking in persons fleeing the military aggression against Ukraine (European Commission, 2024). As in previous years, the actual number of victims is likely to be significantly higher than the data suggest, as these statistics only capture victims known to one of the registering entities and many victims remain undetected (European Commission, 2024).

3. THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

The hidden criminal nature of the phenomenon makes it difficult to identify victims. In addition, many of the people involved in this phenomenon are immigrants in an irregular situation and from countries that vary according to political and economic changes, a fact that contributes to the inaccuracy of these figures and the government's ability to combat it.

The need for reliable data collection is already a global challenge in the fight against human trafficking, as shown in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where especially Goal 16.2 highlights the need to increase reliable statistical data on this phenomenon in order to be able to monitor it (Colmenar Calvo, 2020). Likewise, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Member States are committed to leave no one behind and to reach the most vulnerable people first (Unstarts, 2015).

2. HUMAN RIGHTS AND DATA

The definition of trafficking in the Protocol has been widely adopted by many countries in their national laws. However, certain difficulties remain in the interpretation of aspects of the definition (e.g., the interplay between the use of prohibited “means” and the victim’s consent as a potential defense, and what is meant by “exploitative purpose” and “abuse of a position of vulnerability”). States should prioritize addressing and resolving these issues in their legislation and jurisprudence because characterizing certain conduct as trafficking has significant consequences for both perpetrators and victims (UNODC, 2014).





3. THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

Some support a conservative or restrictive interpretation of the concept of trafficking, while others advocate its expansion. The former position is concerned that having too broad a definition may result in the inclusion of practices that do not meet the serious crime threshold of “trafficking in persons.” The latter position is of the opinion that a narrow definition may prevent investigation, prosecution and conviction for practices that should fall under the definition of trafficking (UNODC, 2014).

This discrepancy between the different actors with competencies in detection and identification makes trafficking in human beings a phenomenon where there is no uniformity of criteria. Several authors point to the complex conceptual delimitation (often distorted by its intrinsically hidden nature and a stereotyped use of its content) as a factor that hinders the task of data collection. This makes it difficult to assess the extent of the problem, which hinders decision-making in the formulation of public policies and their implementation (Villanueva, 2019). For this reason, it is particularly important for States to unify criteria for collecting data on the phenomenon, to ensure that they are updated and to ensure that the data are provide for a reliable exchange of information as indicated in CEDAW General Recommendation No. 38 (2020), which, moreover, obliges States to identify victims of trafficking, regardless of whether or not the victim identifies him/herself.

The concept of “**data**” is used in a general way and is not limited to the field of statistics. It is considered to encompass a wide range of standardized quantitative or qua-laxative information that has been compiled by national statistical offices and other governmental and non-governmental entities, at the local, national, regional or international levels (OHCHR, 2018). Proper collection, division and analysis of data collected by governments, NGOs and others can improve living conditions and development opportunities for those people in societies that are often overlooked when it comes to data collection (OHCHR, 2022). Consequently, there is a lack of planning and budgeting for the necessary services, as well as the development of effective policies for those affected. The correct identification of victims is a central component of human rights protection.

Data also serve another function. It serves as a form of accountability so that stakeholders can ensure that the government is working adequately to protect, respect and fulfill human rights, particularly for vulnerable populations such as trafficked persons. By ensuring the availability of accurate data, governments can not only be more politically responsive, but also more accountable when they fail to do so. At the same time, data is also a form of empowerment. From NGOs fighting for the rights of trafficked persons to other stakeholders, the availability of data is an important aspect of strengthening their ability to advocate for and demand meaningful government responses. **As the UN points out, “returning collected data to disadvantaged population groups and strengthening their ability to use it is essential for accountability.** When data is used by groups affected by policymakers to advocate for change, it adds weight to their arguments and helps decision-makers understand the problems and devise solutions.”

4

Human trafficking in Spain

1. The situation in Spain

1.1. Legal Framework for Human Trafficking in Spain





4. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SPAIN

1. THE SITUATION IN SPAIN

Spain continues to be a transit and destination country for human trafficking due, in part, to its geographical proximity to Africa and cultural ties with Latin America, which makes it an attractive destination for human trafficking and exploitation networks¹. Another factor that influences Spain as a destination for trafficking victims (beyond its proximity to the victims' countries of origin) is its tourism, which has been identified as one of the platforms for trafficking for sexual and labor purposes. In addition, there are several legal loopholes regarding the lack of regulation or express prohibition of prostitution, or the term "forced labor," which influences Spain as a possible place to be used by trafficking networks as a destination for exploitation. Because of this, Spain is a sex tourism destination, where most of the prostitution consumption establishments are concentrated in tourist areas, more in coastal provinces than in the interior.

Trafficking in Spain has evolved significantly in recent years, thanks to an improvement in early detection, prevention and prosecution of the crime, protection and assistance to its victims, and inter-institutional cooperation and coordination at the national and international level (Ministry of the Interior, 2024). Thus, in 2022, the National Police and the Civil Guard identified a total of 1,180 victims of human trafficking and exploitation. The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe (GRETA) has recognized this evolution in its report prepared on the occasion of the Third Evaluation Round to Spain, approved at the 32nd meeting of the Committee of the Parties on June 16, 2023 (GRETA, 2023). According to GRETA's 2023 annual report, Spain remains primarily a destination and transit country for victims of trafficking. In 2017-2022, 1,687 victims were identified, according to data from the Ministry of Interior, mostly sexually exploited women. However, there has been an increase in the identifications of victims of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation, mostly men, although the number of identified child victims remains low (GRETA, 2023).

Statistics for the year 2023, prepared by the Intelligence Center for Terrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO) of the Secretary of State for Security with data provided by the State Security Forces and Corps (FCSE) show that a total of 1,466 victims of human trafficking and exploitation crimes were formally identified (18 of them minors). Forty-four percent of the total number of victims were men y 56 percent were women.

The predominant nationality of the victims reported was Colombian, while Moroccan was the majority in cases of labor exploitation. The predominant nationality of the

1 Ministry of the Interior, 2024.

4. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SPAIN

victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and of crimes of sexual and labor exploitation was Colombian, while Moroccan was the majority in cases of labor exploitation.

In the area of trafficking and sexual exploitation, 664 victims were identified in 2023 (294 for trafficking and 370 for exploitation), the vast majority of whom were women (98%) from South American countries, including 12 minors. As for labor trafficking and exploitation, the trend in Spain confirms the latest data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which shows a gradual increase in labor trafficking worldwide, placing it at the same level as sex trafficking.

As for the other purposes of trafficking, despite being less known and of low incidence, in 2023 the State Security Forces and Corps carried out 5 trafficking operations for forced marriages, 2 for forced crime associated with organized crime (one related to the commission of theft and the other to marijuana cultivation), and 2 more trafficking operations for begging (Ministry of the Interior, 2024).

1.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN SPAIN

The crime of human trafficking was first introduced by Organic Law 5/2010, of June 22, 2010, amending the Penal Code. The reform was carried out following the international commitments that Spain had accepted. Following the assumption of international obligations by our country and in order to comply with them, an autonomous classification of the crime of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants was introduced (Villacampa, 2011). Previously, the crime of human trafficking in was not included as such, and the criminal activity was prosecuted under offenses related to prostitution and corruption of minors, or to rights related to foreign citizens and the need to control migratory flows. The reform expressly recognizes that “the unified criminal treatment of the crimes of trafficking human beings and illegal immigration contained





4. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SPAIN

in Article 318 bis was insufficient, in view of the great differences that exist between the two criminal phenomena. Therefore, it was decided to separate the regulation of these two realities as it was essential both to comply with the mandates of international commitments and to put an end to the constant interpretative conflicts.” The 2010 reform configured the crime of trafficking human beings, later slightly remodeled in 2015, for the full transposition of European law. This included Title II bis “Trafficking human beings” and Article 177 bis, which criminalizes the crime of trafficking human beings agreed at the international level. Until then, the criminalization of these conducts had been autonomously included, for example, through Article 188.2 of the Penal Code included in 1999 and now repealed, against trafficking for sexual exploitation. The legal definition of the crime consists of the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person, including the exchange or transfer of control over a person, by using violence, intimidation or deception, or by abusing a situation of superiority or of need or vulnerability of the national or foreign victim, or by giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of the person having control over the victim, for any of the following purposes: the imposition of forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or begging; sexual exploitation, including pornography; exploitation to carry out criminal activities, the removal of their bodily organs, the celebration of forced marriages.

In addition to the above, for the improvement of the prosecution of human trafficking, there are other aspects contemplated in the Penal Code (PC) that have been strengthened in recent years are relevant, such as the liability of legal persons (article 31 bis) or the confiscation of assets derived from the crime (article 127 and following), in addition to other crimes related to sexual exploitation, in particular those that refer to any form of child sexual exploitation. Similarly, Circular 5/2011 of the Prosecutor’s Office, following the dictates of international law, explains the interpretation to be given to Article 177 bis of the Penal Code, structuring the basic type of crime on the basis of constructing the typical action through three elements (recruitment, means and purpose) that must necessarily concur for the crime to occur.

Two are of an objective nature, the alternative conducts and the means of commission that it relates; and another is subjective, the purpose pursued, exploitation or domination in its three modalities. Article 177.1.b bis of the Penal Code is complemented with the sexual exploitation characterized in Art. 188 CP (crimes related to prostitution, sexual exploitation and corruption of a minor or persons with disabilities). It does not typify that the victim carries out some type of sexual activity, but that the victim is sexually exploited, and includes other forms of exploitation that are not prostitution (pornography, etc.). Likewise, Article 187 PC criminalizes coercive prostitution as a n autonomous crime.

In this context, the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings-GRETA, in its second evaluation report to Spain published in June 2018 urged the Spanish authorities to adopt, as a matter of priority, a comprehensive plan to tackle trafficking in persons whatever the form of the crime, improving the identification and assistance of their victims.

The draft law is aimed at improving the identification of and assistance to victims of human trafficking. The Council of Ministers has recently approved the Preliminary Draft of the Comprehensive Organic Law against Trafficking and Exploitation of Human



4. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SPAIN

Beings, for the purposes provided for in article 26.4 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, of the Government. In accordance with international recommendations derived from the Palermo Protocol, the Warsaw Convention, Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and the Council, the International Labor Organization Protocol, or the Council of Europe's Group of Experts against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), this draft bill addresses in a comprehensive manner all forms of trafficking that represent the most serious violation of the fundamental rights of a human being, from sexual exploitation to begging and organ trafficking, to labor exploitation.

Alongside this, the specialized units of the public institutions involved in the detection and identification process are regulated. Together with the Draft Bill, the Government has developed the National Strategic Plan against Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings 2021-2023. The plan focuses on the detection and prevention of human trafficking, for the correct referral, protection, assistance and recovery of victims of human trafficking. The GRETA group is aware of the progress made in recent years and highlights some recent legislative developments, such as the Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents, the National Strategic Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings and the National Action Plan on Forced Labor, both for the period 2021-2023 (GRETA, 2023).

In Spain, methods for quantifying trafficking victims are mainly based on the collection of data from formally identified victims. The Center for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organized Crime of the Ministry of the Interior (CITCO), the Prosecutor's Office for Immigration and Trafficking in Human Beings and the General Council of the Judiciary of the Ministry of Justice periodically publish information that makes it possible to identify trends in human trafficking. In this regard, GRETA's 2023 report makes recommendations to Spain, including: strengthening the proactive detection of trafficking victims, especially among asylum seekers and migrants arriving in Ceuta, Melilla and the Canary Islands; redoubling efforts to proactively identify victims of trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in all its forms, including victims of Spanish nationality; and strengthening inter-institutional coordination in the identification of victims with the participation of specialized NGOs.

Having said this, there are other publications, mainly of a thematic nature from public bodies, which contribute to providing a description of human trafficking in Spain. This would be the case of the Ombudsman's Report "Human Trafficking in Spain: Invisible Victims (Ombudsman 2012)"; the "Informe Trata de Seres Humanos/ delitos de Odio," carried out by the Ministry of the Interior, in which the updates from the State Security Forces and Corps (FCSE) against trafficking are featured; and the UNICEF study that focuses on the impact of human trafficking on minors, who belong to one of the most vulnerable and hidden groups, "Son niños y niñas, son víctimas. Situation of minors victims of trafficking in Spain."

5

Methodologies

1. Methodology of the study (Quantitative)
2. Statistical concepts of SSM
3. Current limitations in the collection of trafficking data
4. Compilation of trafficking data in this report
 - 4.1. Methodology
 - 4.2. The algorithm
 - 4.3. Algorithm Development
5. In-depth interviews with coordinators in data collection, dynamics of focus groups and experts
 - 5.1. Stakeholders. Data culture involves all stakeholders
 - 5.2. Findings on interaction at the national level





1. STUDY METHODOLOGY (QUANTITATIVE)

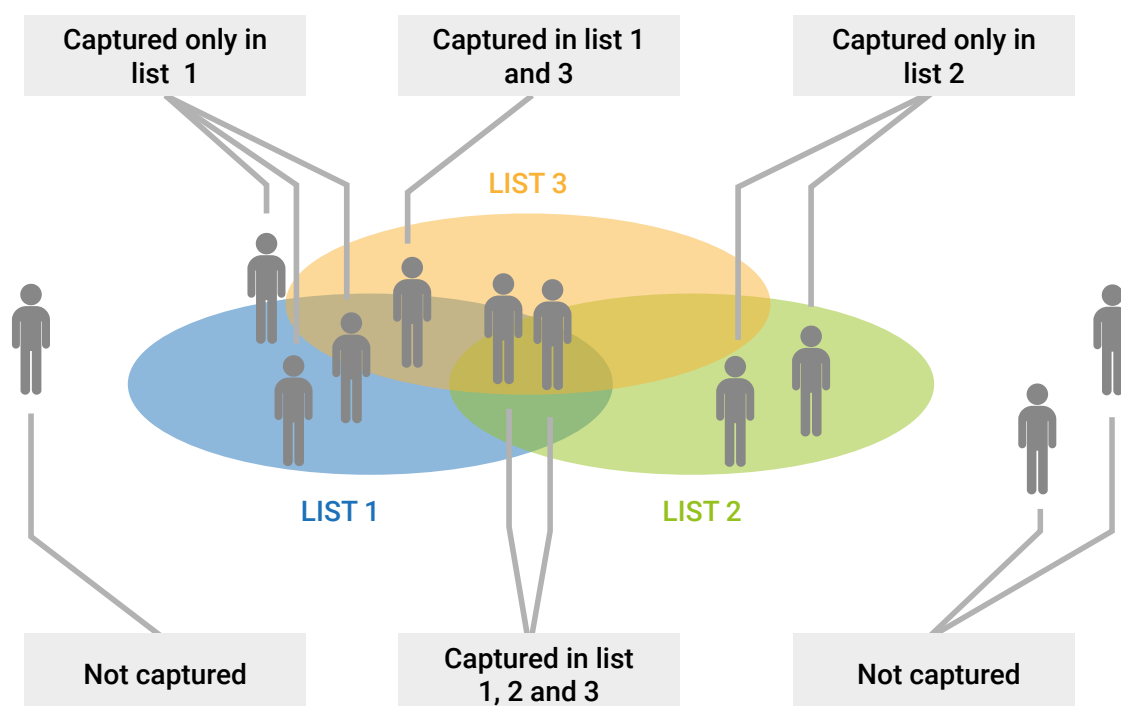
For the following work we have used the **Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) methodology**, which is the backbone of the “Data Culture in Human Trafficking” project, whose primary objective is to reveal the real magnitude of trafficking, focusing attention on those victims who, for various reasons, remain hidden from the view of the authorities and society as a whole. This quantitative technique, originally designed for population studies in the biological field using the capture-recapture method, is now being adapted to confront one of the most complex challenges in the social and humanitarian field: the identification of victims of human trafficking.

The MSE algorithm is based on marine biologist Petersen’s capture-recapture procedure for studying the size of fish populations in ponds. The researchers first caught, for example, ten fish, tagged them and put them back in the water. Later, they fished the same pond again to see how much of a new batch of fish caught was tagged. When this amounted to, say, two fish out of ten they knew that of the ten tagged fish in the pond, one in five had been caught. Since the other fish in the pond had about the same chance of being caught, they concluded that there were about fifty fish in the pond, ten of which they tagged and forty of which they did not. This estimation procedure is known as the Petersen estimator.

The crux of the MSE methodology is to establish the overlaps between the different lists of victims and use that information to estimate the number of victims who do not appear on any list. To do this, analysts must determine how many of the different lists contain the same individual victim. This is done through a matching process, or linking of individual records, which clarifies, victim by victim, the number of lists on which each victim appears.

Thus, Multiple Systems Estimation stands as an innovative and powerful methodological tool in the fight against human trafficking. By revealing the existence of a significant number of unaccounted for victims, MSE sheds light on current and critical problems in this field, emphasizing the need for intervention strategies and more informed and effective public policy. This quantitative approach seeks not only to quantify the phenomenon in its true dimension but also to promote a substantial change in the way societies address and combat human trafficking, placing special emphasis on the protection and recovery of all victims, both visible and invisible.

Figure 1. Methodology of the study (quantitative)



Graph of MSE Methodology obtained from UNODC.

2. MSE STATISTICAL CONCEPTS

The application of the Multiple Systems Estimation Methodology (MSE) in the field of human trafficking is a pioneering initiative that transcends traditional approaches to quantifying the problem. This methodology is based on a set of advanced statistical concepts, including statistical inference. This branch of statistics focuses on drawing conclusions and making decisions based on the analysis of data obtained from representative samples. In the context of SSM, statistical inference is essential for making valid estimates about the total size of trafficked persons population, including those who have not been directly observed or recorded by the relevant authorities or entities.

Poisson regression models are another conceptual pillar of SSM and play a crucial role in the treatment and analysis of the data collected. These models allow the examination of relationships between categorical variables through the use of logarithms, facilitating the identification of patterns and correlations in the context of non-numerical or classificatory data. In practice, these models are applied to analyze the interactions between different lists of victims, making it possible to estimate the number of individuals not registered on any list by calculating the probabilities of capture and recapture. That is, Poisson regression models help to determine the probability that a victim is identified by more than one organization, and from there, to infer the size of the hidden population.



5. METHODOLOGIES

The process of applying the SSM involves handling complex data and interpretation of overlaps between different sources of information. This quantitative approach demands a detailed analysis of overlaps between victim lists provided by various organizations. Accuracy in identifying these overlaps is critical to the success of the estimate. Each victim recorded in more than one list provides valuable information on the connectivity between the databases, which, in turn, influences the accuracy of the estimate of the total number of victims. **The methodology, therefore, not only highlights the importance of accurate and detailed data collection but also the need for effective collaboration between the organizations involved at all levels.**

SSM and its reliance on advanced statistical concepts reinforce the need for multidisciplinary approaches in the fight against human trafficking. The success of this methodology is not limited to the accumulation of data alone, but also depends on the ability of researchers to effectively apply and interpret complex statistical methods. This challenge underscores the importance of training and professional development in the field of applied statistics, as well as the creation of teams composed of statisticians, social researchers, and legal and humanitarian professionals. Ultimately, SSM offers a powerful tool to improve our understanding of human trafficking, but its successful implementation depends on the collaboration, expertise, and continued commitment of all stakeholders.

A robust data culture fosters the development and implementation of advanced technologies and statistical methodologies such as Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE), which can reveal the “**hidden figure**” of victims not identified by conventional systems. By identifying patterns and trends within the data collected, stakeholders can anticipate and respond to changes in traffickers’ tactics, as well as identify vulnerable populations that may be at risk. This proactive approach is critical to prevent victimization before it occurs and to provide a more nimble and effective response when trafficking cases are identified.

Adopting a data-driven culture in the field of trafficking also implies a commitment to transparency and collaboration between different entities and jurisdictions. By sharing data and analysis, organizations can mutually benefit from lessons learned, avoid duplication of efforts and optimize the use of limited resources. This exchange facilitated by secure technology platforms and rigorous privacy protocols ensures that sensitive information is handled ethically and that the dignity and safety of victims are kept at the center of all data collection and analysis efforts.

3. CURRENT LIMITATIONS IN THE COLLECTION OF TRAFFICKING DATA

In the present investigation, multiple challenges were detected in the data collection processes. On the one hand, there is a lack of unification in the victim registration systems used by the different actors involved. On the other hand, there is considerable variability in the methodologies used to collect these data. As a result, this complicates the uniform interpretation of the information collected. This fragmentation and lack of standardization in the registration processes can lead to a lack of uniformity in the interpretation of the information collected.

This may result in incomplete or duplicate data, making it difficult to create a consistent and accurate database of trafficked persons.



5. METHODOLOGIES

In particular, in the case of registration of child victims of trafficking, there are several implications:

- ▶ Inadequate visibility: children, especially those trafficked with their mothers or under the control of others, are often left invisible in official records. This prevents the formulation of adequate policies for their protection.
- ▶ Limited protection and assistance: lack of accurate data on minors makes it difficult to provide adequate assistance and protection. Without clear information about their situation, responses may be ineffective or inappropriate.
- ▶ Fragmentation of efforts: different organizations may have partial and uncoordinated registers of children and adolescents, which duplicates efforts and cannot track these children through different systems and stages of the assistance process.

4. DATA COLLECTION ON TRAFFICKING IN THIS REPORT

The data collection methodology in this research is based on the principles established in the initial *Data Culture in Human Trafficking I* project, improving and adapting the data collection and analysis processes to address the challenges identified and to determine the national estimate of the hidden population of trafficking victims.

The following is a detailed framework for understanding the quantitative approach adopted in the study, highlighting the relevance of data culture in the fight against human trafficking and the need to overcome current limitations in data collection and analysis in order to improve protection and assistance to victims.

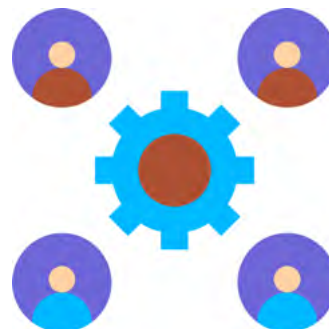
1.1. METHODOLOGY

It consisted of requesting lists from organizations working at the national level, cleaning and analyzing the data and implementing the MSE methodology on them. Before applying SSM, in-depth interviews were conducted with key actors that register victims and potential victims of trafficking, third sector organizations and public authorities. The interview process was carried out

to understand the criteria applied by each in collecting data on trafficking victims. The interviewed agents provided the lists that were used for the implementation of the SSM in this project. In this research, the lack of homogeneity in the criteria for data collection by each agent was observed, as there were different strategies for collecting data and different criteria for what data to include in the lists.

1.2. THE ALGORITHM

For the calculation, a cross analysis was made of the lists registered by the organizations and CITCO at the national level. Due to the heterogeneity of the records, criteria and identifying variables were established to ensure the unique identification of each victim, thus avoiding duplication of the same person on a list. The variables used to ensure the unique identification of the victim





5. METHODOLOGIES

were sex, nationality, age and type of exploitation. After homogenization, the data were cleaned and analyzed to compare the lists of the different key actors and, subsequently, to apply the SSM.

The lists provided by key actors correspond to victims registered between the years 2019 and 2022. Two lists were used in the analysis, which we will refer to as list R1 and R2.

Statistical inference was used to decipher this data through the use of capture and recapture with a sample population. The following formula is used to decipher the algorithm:

$$\log m_{ij} = u + u_{1(i)} + u_{2(j)}$$

(l/j) represents the expected values and can be understood as ($1/0$). The numerator, 1 in this case, refers to when the victim has been observed in a list, and the denominator, 0, when he/she has not been observed. The variable “ u ” represents the victims.

- Variable u_0 represents structural zeros, which are cases where the victim is not found in any record.
- Variable u_1 represents the victims that have been observed in list R1.
- Variable u_2 represents victims that have not been observed in the R2 list.

The result is the product of the total number of observations in each category. B_0 represents the trafficked population that is not registered in any of the lists. The total population is calculated by adding all the variables in the regression, both the observed and unobserved population.

The factors used in collecting the data determine an identifying number for each victim and include: date of birth, country of birth, sex of the victim, type of exploitation and date of detection. To combine the use of these data, a logistic regression is used to analyze sex, a polynomial regression for the province of detection and nationality, and an ordinal logistic regression for the date of detection, which in this case would be 2019-2022.

In the development of the methodology, three main challenges were identified:

1. The method of data collection differs greatly among organizations dedicated to collecting data from trafficked persons.
2. There is incomplete and inaccurate data, due to lack of documentation, difficulty of victims to provide information and inconsistencies in data such as date of birth.
3. Not all groups are correctly identified, creating an imbalance in the representation of victims. Underage victims are not recorded as such and the distinction between children of victims and direct victims is difficult to decipher.

1.3. ALGORITHM DEVELOPMENT

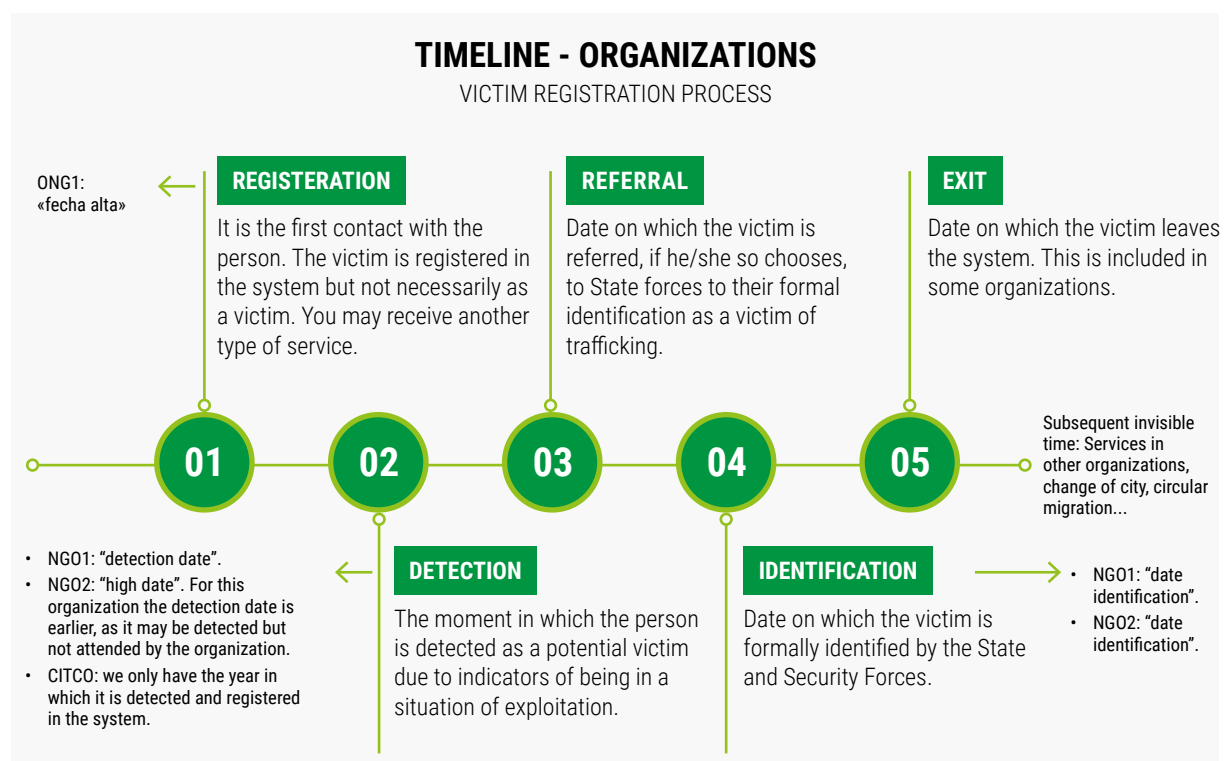
4.3.1. DATA COLLECTION

To develop the algorithm, it was determined that each victim needed to be associated with an identifying number that would be linked to the date of birth, country of birth, sex of the victim, type of exploitation and date of detection. Interviews were conducted with organizations that collect this data to understand the procedures followed by each. For example, among the organizations interviewed, they differed on whether only formally recognized victims or presumed victims should be included in the records. The Center for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO) only includes formally identified persons while the rest of the organizations include all the detected victims by trafficking indicators. For the algorithm developed in this research, it was decided to take all victims into account.

Regarding the variables included and the methodology of each organization: for the variable of sex, if the victim had documentation, the sex recorded in his or her identity document was taken into account, and if not, the sex reported by the victim was taken into account.

In relation to the country of birth, the data were included in the same way: the one described by the victim or the one stated in the document, with the possibility of having a nationality other than the country of birth. Regarding the dates of detection, discrepancies were found not only in the terms but also in the procedure of each of the organizations. The following guide shows the differences between the dates used by each organization.

Figure 2. Compilation of data on trafficking in this report



Although the first two letters of the first and last name had been requested, not all organizations shared this data, so there was a process of adapting the unique code to achieve comparability between the lists. Thus, the letters of the first and last name were omitted and only the sex, year of birth, country (ISO code) and type of farm were included.

5. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH DATA COLLECTION COORDINATORS, FOCUS GROUP DYNAMICS AND EXPERTS

Of all the possible strategies, and given the lack of specific studies and the described difficulty of obtaining sufficient data, a field study can be carried out based on a network of locations that seeks to establish a map of significant places to understand this dynamic: Bilbao, Canary Islands, Ceuta, Melilla, Malaga, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia. Given the nature of the study, focused on the localization of data and the

verification of its quality, and given the described difficulty of having a scientific approach to the subject of the Prosecutor's Office, the strategy is complemented with a thematic cross-sectional study that seeks to verify the hypotheses beyond the geographical aspect. In both directions, expert interviews and focus groups have been used, seeking dialogue with all possible interlocutors involved in the problem: security forces and corps, Public Prosecutor's Office, state and regional institutions, civil society, social services, NGOs and religious institutions.

Qualitative methodology, with its focus on rich and detailed data collection, offers us a window into the complex human experiences and perspectives in the context of human trafficking. Through techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, this methodological approach has allowed us to explore the





5. METHODOLOGIES

qualitative dimensions of the problem, capturing the personal narratives, emotions and sociocultural contexts that underlie the experiencing of being trafficked.

These techniques facilitate an in-depth understanding of victims' motivations, vulnerabilities and resistance, as well as the operational and structural dynamics of traffickers.

In-depth interviews have been a powerful means of gaining detailed *insights* into the organizations' individual experiences and their impression of the victims' journey, allowing for a thorough exploration of their life journeys before, during and after their trafficking experience. This technique allows for an intimate interaction in which participants can share their stories in a safe space, revealing not only the challenges and traumas faced but also their strengths and survival strategies. Similarly, **focus groups** provide a platform for multiple participants to collectively discuss and reflect on their experiences, providing a wealth of perspectives and encouraging comparative analysis of common and divergent themes.

Participant observation complements these techniques by allowing researchers to immerse themselves in the environments and communities where human trafficking occurs, providing a contextual understanding of the day-to-day interactions and social dynamics that influence vulnerability to trafficking and opportunities for intervention. This method provides an insider's perspective on the complexity of trafficking situations, capturing subtle, unspoken details of daily life that may go unnoticed in interviews or focus groups.

The combination of these qualitative techniques in research on human trafficking significantly enriches the body of available knowledge, providing a solid foundation for the development of context-sensitive and person-centered public policies, intervention programs and prevention strategies. By highlighting the voices and experiences of those directly affected by trafficking, qualitative methodology ensures that proposed solutions are relevant, effective and respectful of the rights and dignities of victims, contributing to a more humane and empathetic approach in the fight against this complex global phenomenon.

For this work, in particular, **different Autonomous Communities were chosen in order to capture the regional and socioeconomic diversity of Spain**. This allowed us to explore how the dynamics of human trafficking vary in different local contexts and thus provide a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon at the national level. By including autonomous communities with different demographic, economic and cultural profiles, we were able to identify specific factors that influence vulnerability and intervention strategies in each region.

1.4. THE ACTORS. DATA CULTURE INVOLVES ALL STAKEHOLDERS

In the anti-trafficking arena, "all actors" includes a wide range of stakeholders: from NGOs providing direct services to victims, to government agencies such as CITCO, to judicial entities such as the Prosecutor's Office. Each actor brings a unique perspective to the issues and plays a critical role in the development and implementation of effective anti-trafficking strategies.



1.5. FINDINGS ON INTERACTION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The participation of diverse actors in the fieldwork enriched the research perspective by offering a wide range of viewpoints, thus allowing the detection of common and divergent points in the development of the work of all those involved in the fight against human trafficking. Understanding the work carried out by each agency is essential for observing good practices and areas for improvement in the strategies employed by each agency and as a whole. They also contribute to understanding the network of other relevant actors in the sector, facilitating the direction of research into other areas and entities of interest.

NGOs are critical on the ground, providing direct assistance to victims and collecting vital data on their needs and circumstances. Qualitative interviews with NGO staff can reveal how their interactions with other actors facilitate or hinder their work, how they use data in their intervention, and what are the gaps and opportunities for improving data collection and victim assistance.

The State Security Forces and Corps (FCSE) and judicial authorities are indispensable actors in the prosecution of crime and, in collaboration with the entities, in the protection of victims. Their role is crucial in the identification and official recognition of victims, facilitating their access to rights, as well as in the prosecution of perpetrators.

The Center for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO) plays a key role in coordinating data collection and intelligence analysis on trafficking networks. Interviews with members of CITCO can provide insights into how collaboration with NGOs and the Prosecutor's Office enriches the national database and how this information is used to formulate intervention and prevention strategies.

The Prosecutor's Office is essential in the use of data for the prosecution of trafficking cases. Through interviews with prosecutors and analysis of court documents, it is possible to identify the ways in which information collected by NGOs and CITCO contributes to building strong cases against traffickers. In addition, it can be explored how the interaction between prosecutors and other actors influences the success of prosecutions and the protection of victims during trial.

Qualitative research in this context seeks to understand the dynamics of collaboration, information flows, and barriers between different actors. Findings can illuminate critical areas for strengthening the data culture at the national level, improving coordination among actors, and ultimately increasing the effectiveness of anti-trafficking interventions.

6

Results

1. The hidden number
2. The story behind the number
 - 2.1. Organizational
 - 2.2. Data logging
 - 2.3. Processes to detect or identify victims
 - 2.4. Coordination
 - 2.5. National dynamics
 - 2.6. Local or regional dynamics
3. Experiences
 - 3.1. Evolution of dynamics
 - 3.2. Allocation of funds
4. Challenges in meeting the objectives of the Data Culture project
 - 4.1. Major difficulties
 - 4.2. Major challenges



1. THE HIDDEN NUMBER

To study the distribution of the data and ensure comparability between sources, an exploratory analysis of the different variables was carried out for each year included. The analysis made it possible to understand the detection patterns, similarities and differences between the lists, considering the populations reached and the methodology followed in terms of the services provided. This observation was based on the CITCO *dataset*, which collected the following variables in each case: sex of the victim, date of birth, age, legal majority or minority, country of birth, date of detection, type of exploitation, means of recruitment and administrative status (regular or irregular).

From the analysis of the data, the following main observations emerge:

In terms of the **number of** recorded **victims**, we can see a noticeable decreasing trend from 2019 to 2022. In the years 2020 and 2021 the lowest number of victims was recorded, coinciding with the Covid-19 global pandemic.

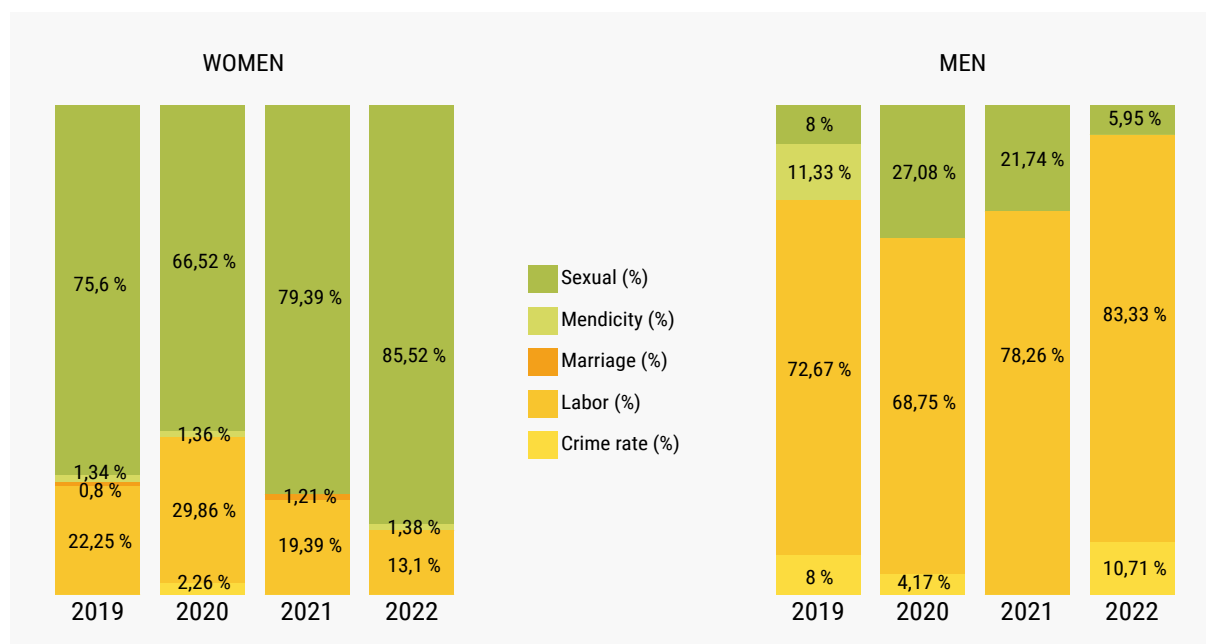
Regarding the **administrative status** of the victims, the sharp drop in the number of victims in regular status in 2020, which coincides with the Covid-19 pandemic, is striking. The number of victims in an irregular situation, on the other hand, has experienced a more progressive fall, especially after the pandemic, which may have been influenced by new means or virtual trafficking networks that are more difficult to detect.



6. RESULTS

For the analysis, the **perspective of gender** was applied to the observations, from which it was learned that the total numbers of victims vary widely between women (maximum greater than 200 in 2019) and men (maximum approximately 80 in 2019). It was observed how the variables of gender and year of detection interacted with those of **means of recruitment and type of exploitation**, obtaining the following graphs:

Graph 1. Percentage of victims according to type of exploitation, sex and year of detection



Bar chart based on data obtained from CITCO's registry lists of human trafficking victims: type of exploitation, date of detection and percentage of male and female victims.

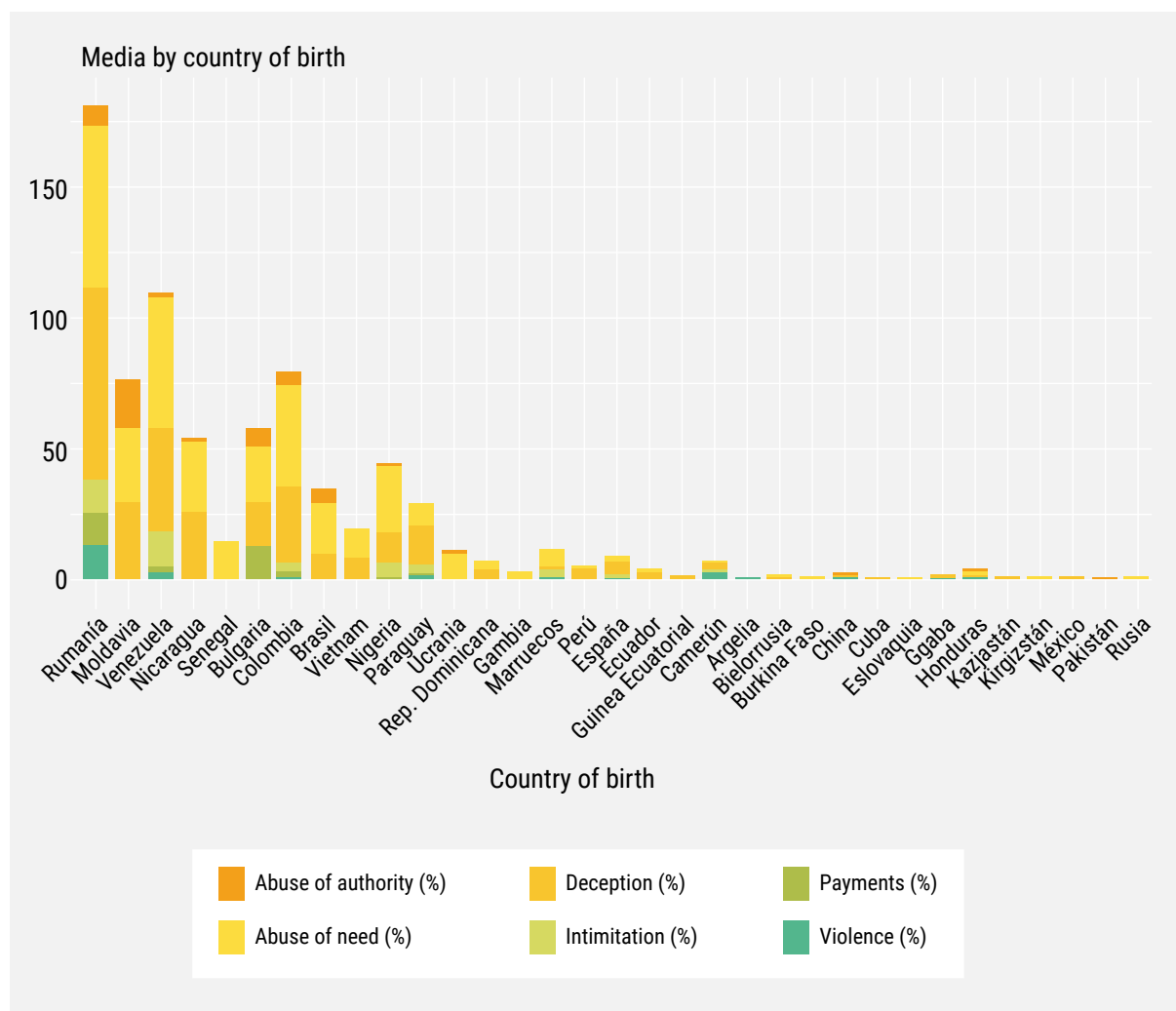
The data were further explored to look at these issues by comparing them according to the victims' country of origin and age. A comparative analysis was then performed between the four categories to understand the distribution of data, frequencies of variable combinations and discrepancies between them.

It was considered important to analyze the percentages as a percentage of the total in order to obtain a more complete picture of the reality of trafficking in Spain.

We can observe that, in the case of men, the majority of victims are trafficked for labor exploitation. In 2020 and 2021 the number of identified cases of labor trafficking was lower, so the percentage of sex trafficking increased with respect to the total (this does not mean an increase in sex trafficking victims of men, with only one more victim of this type). We also found cases of begging in 2019, and of forced criminality in 2019, 2020 and 2022. On the other hand, in the case of women victims of trafficking, the main purpose is sexual exploitation, with some cases of labor trafficking, forced marriage and criminality. In 2019 there was also a case of begging.

Next, the media variables were used to delve into the way trafficking networks operate according to the sex of the victim or the victim's country of origin.

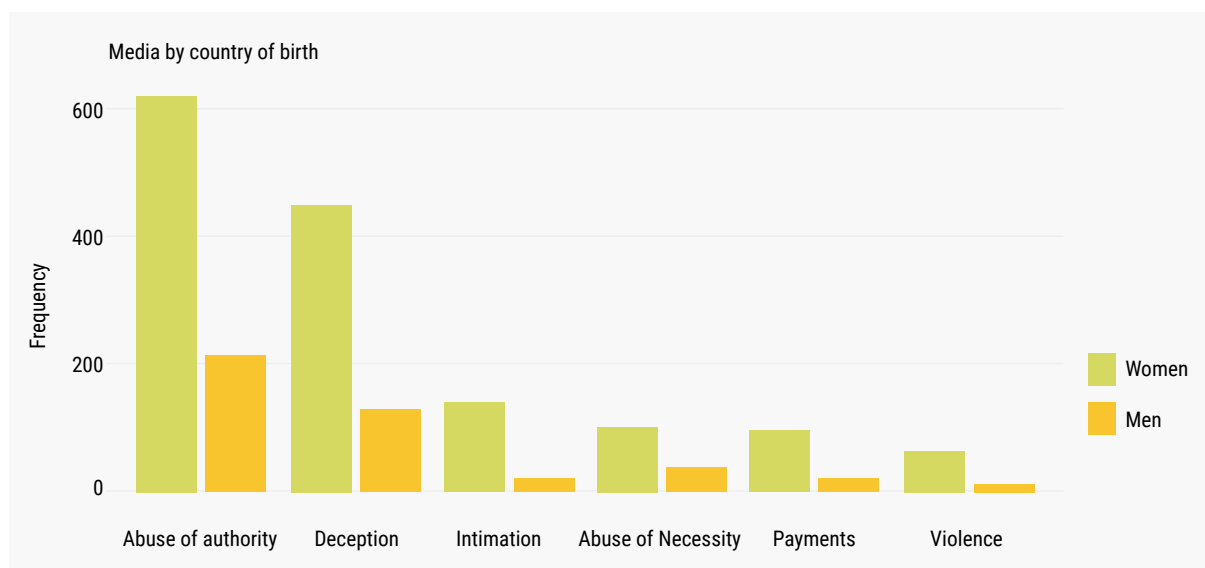
Graph 2. Victims according to means of recruitment and country of origin



Bar chart based on data obtained from CITCO's registry lists of victims of human trafficking: means of recruitment, country of birth of the victim and number of victims.

As demonstrated, the most common means are abuse of the victim's situation of need or vulnerability, and deception. The graph shows certain trends in means depending on the victim's country of origin: the use of violence is more common, for example, in victims whose country of birth is Romania, Venezuela or Paraguay. In Moldova, however, there are far more cases of abuse of authority than of other means.

Gráfico 3. Victims according to means of recruitment and gender

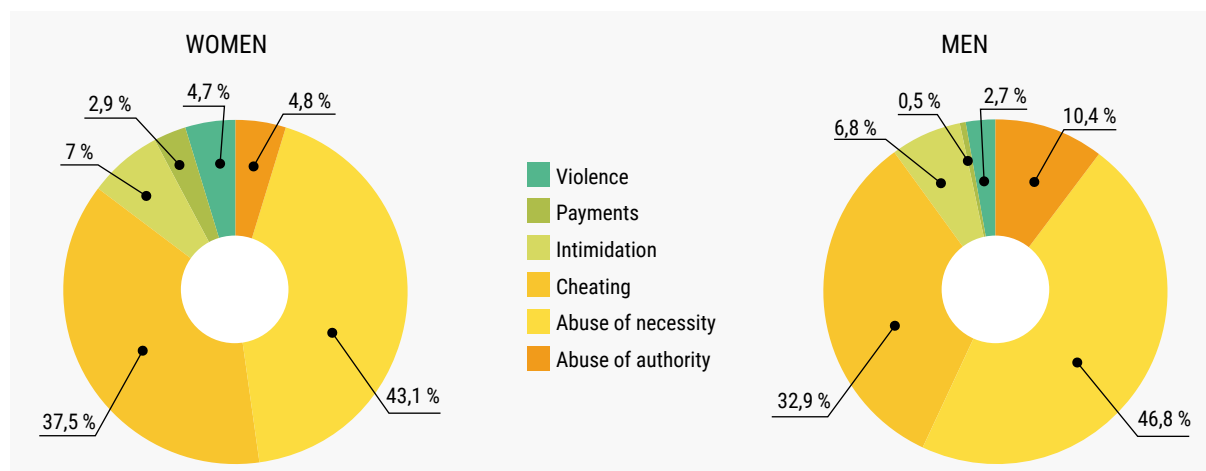


Bar chart based on data obtained from CITCO's registry lists of victims of human trafficking: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims.

If we analyze the number of recruitments means used, we can detect the difference in cases of abuse of the victim's need or vulnerability or deception for female victims. It should be noted that the "Frequency" axis represents the number of means used by traffickers, as there may be several means of recruitment for the same victim. Therefore, there are more means used than victims. We can also observe a greater number of means used for female victims (percentages will be analyzed later). The means of abuse of intimidation, authority, payments and violence are considerably lower than those of deception and abuse of authority.

Of the 1209 total victims in Spain between 2019 and 2022 identified by CITCO, approximately 800 were in a situation of vulnerability or need. Many of them were also recruited through other means, mostly deception.

Gráfico 4. Percentage of victims according to means of recruitment and gender 2019

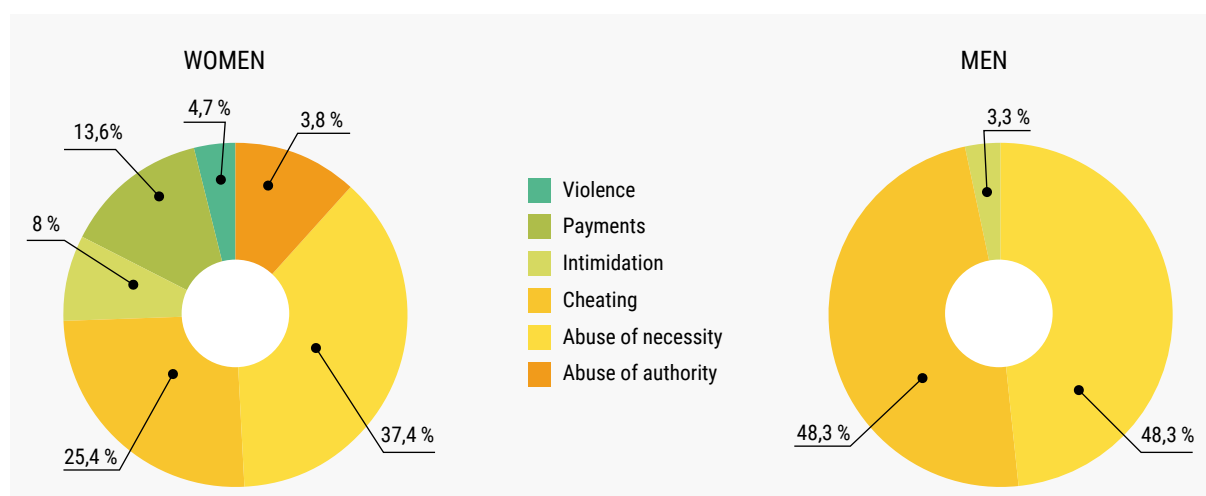


Pie chart prepared from data obtained from CITCO human trafficking victim registration lists: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims in 2019.

In 2019, the most common means for women was abuse of the person's situation of need, followed by deception. However, in men the percentage of deception is lower and in comparison, the percentage of abuse of authority is somewhat higher.

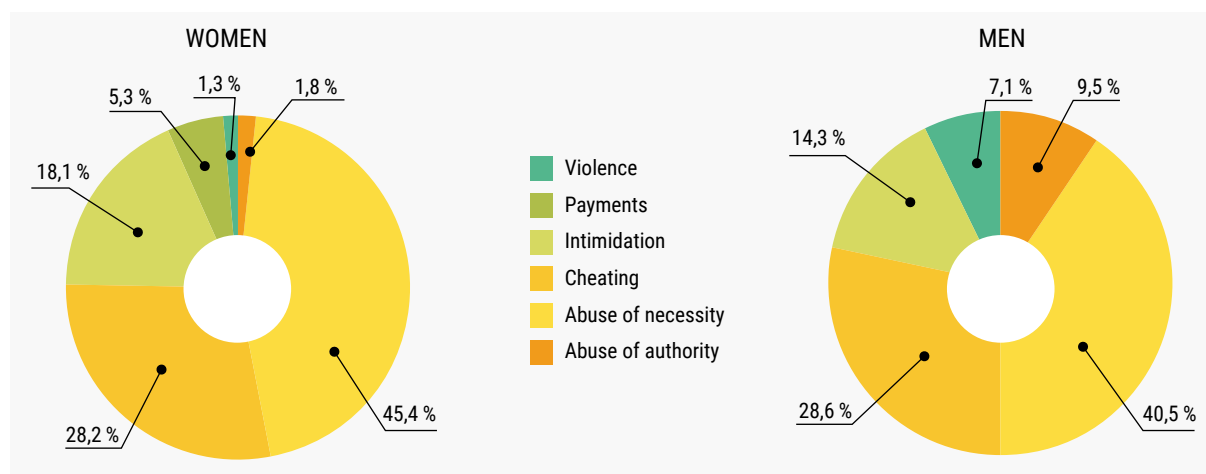
In 2020, we can observe the lack of victims captured by payments, violence or abuse of authority. In the case of women, the means of payment increase by 10.5%. And those of abuse of authority by 7%. This reflects significant pre- and post-Covid-19 differences in the way trafficking networks operated. However, it should be kept in mind that detection depends on multiple factors that are influenced by resources, contexts, and political and legal measures.

Gráfico 5. Percentage of victims by means of recruitment and gender 2020



Pie chart compiled from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims in 2020.

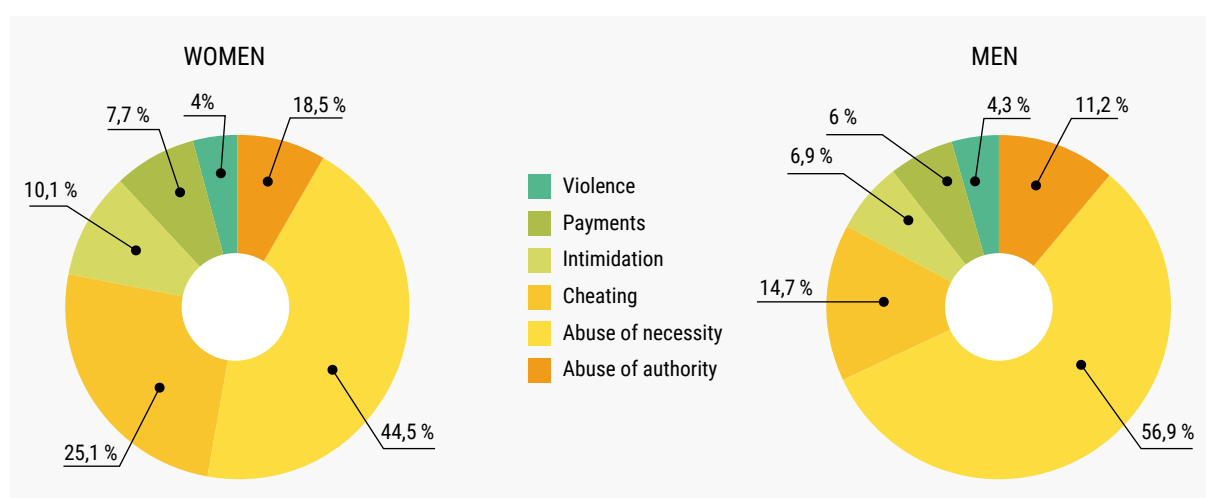
Gráfico 6. Percentage of victims according to means of recruitment and sex 2021



Pie chart prepared from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims in 2021.

Following the analysis of the means, in the year 2021, the number of cases of recruitment by means of intimidation increases considerably, from 8 % and 3 % to 18 % in women and 14 % in men. Cases of violence in the recruitment of male victims also show an increase of 7 % compared to the previous year, when there were no such cases. It should be noted that the percentages only reflect the frequency with respect to the total for that year, and may be affected by an increase in cases of violence, but also by the decrease in cases of deception or abuse of necessity, among others. It does not reflect a greater number of cases, but it does reflect a greater probability compared to the total.

Gráfico 7. Percentage of victims according to means of recruitment and gender 2022

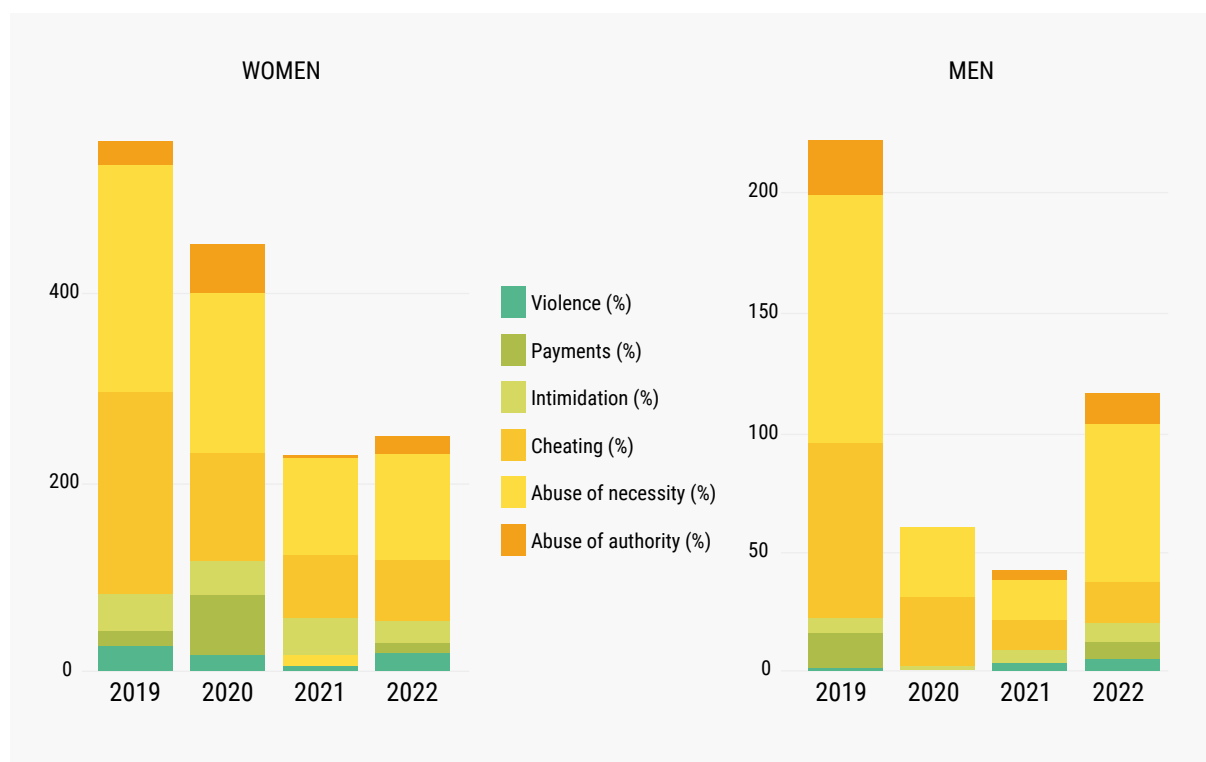


Pie chart prepared from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims in 2022.

6. RESULTS

Finally, in the year 2022, abuse of need was reflected in a higher percentage of cases in men, although abuse of authority continued to account for 11%. In the case of women, the percentage of means of recruitment through intimidation decreased and violence and abuse of authority increased, as well as abuse of the victim's situation of need or vulnerability.

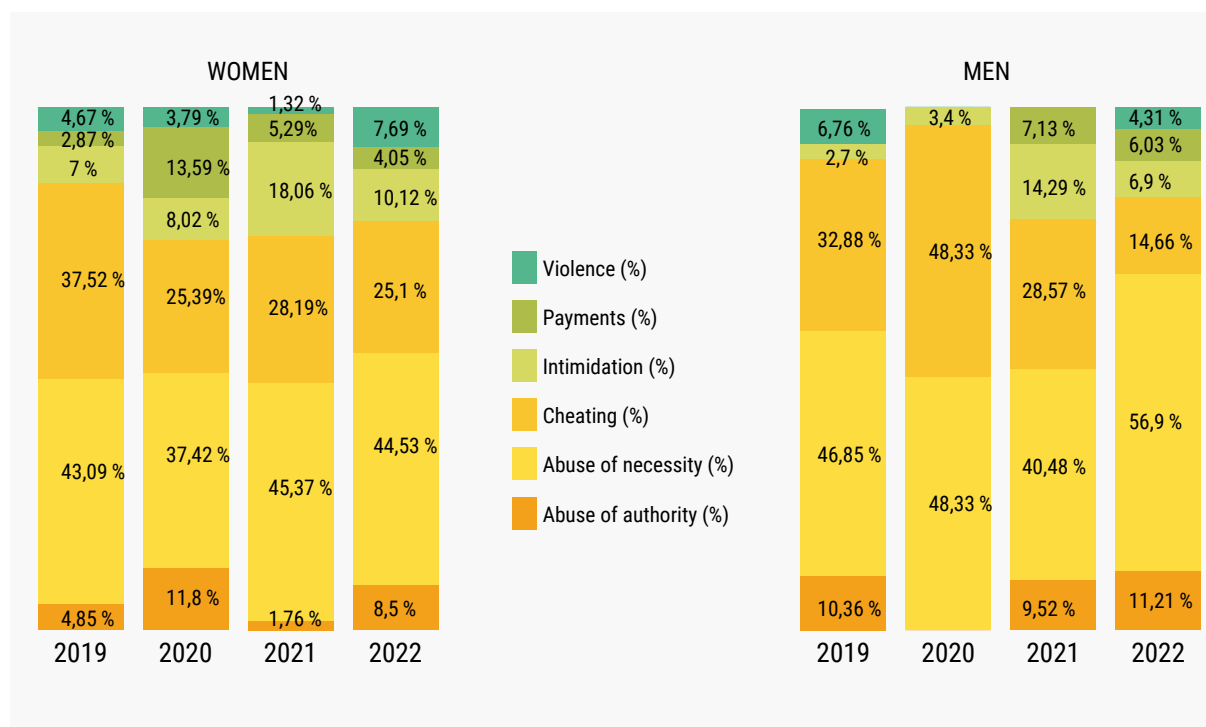
Gráfico 8. Victims according to means of recruitment, sex and year of detection



Bar chart developed from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims from 2019 - 2022.

In terms of total numbers, in the case of female victims, all means are present (a consequence of the greater number of victims and therefore the visualization of a more complete reality and with greater variability of situations). Generally speaking, there were more cases of women victims captured through payments than men, as well as through intimidation and violence.

Gráfico 9. Percentage of victims according to means of recruitment, sex and year of detection



Bar chart developed from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: means of recruitment and percentage of male and female victims from 2019-2022.

If we look at total percentages with respect to the number of cases of the same sex, deception is more frequent in men in 2020, although less so in the other years. The percentages of payments and violence continue to be higher in women, except in the year 2021 where there was an increase in cases of men captured through the use of violence.

We continued with the analysis by age. For this purpose, the year of detection was subtracted from the year of birth of the victim, and we found minor victims who were only a few months old. In these cases, 0 years were computed.

Gráfico 10. Victims according to age and year of detection

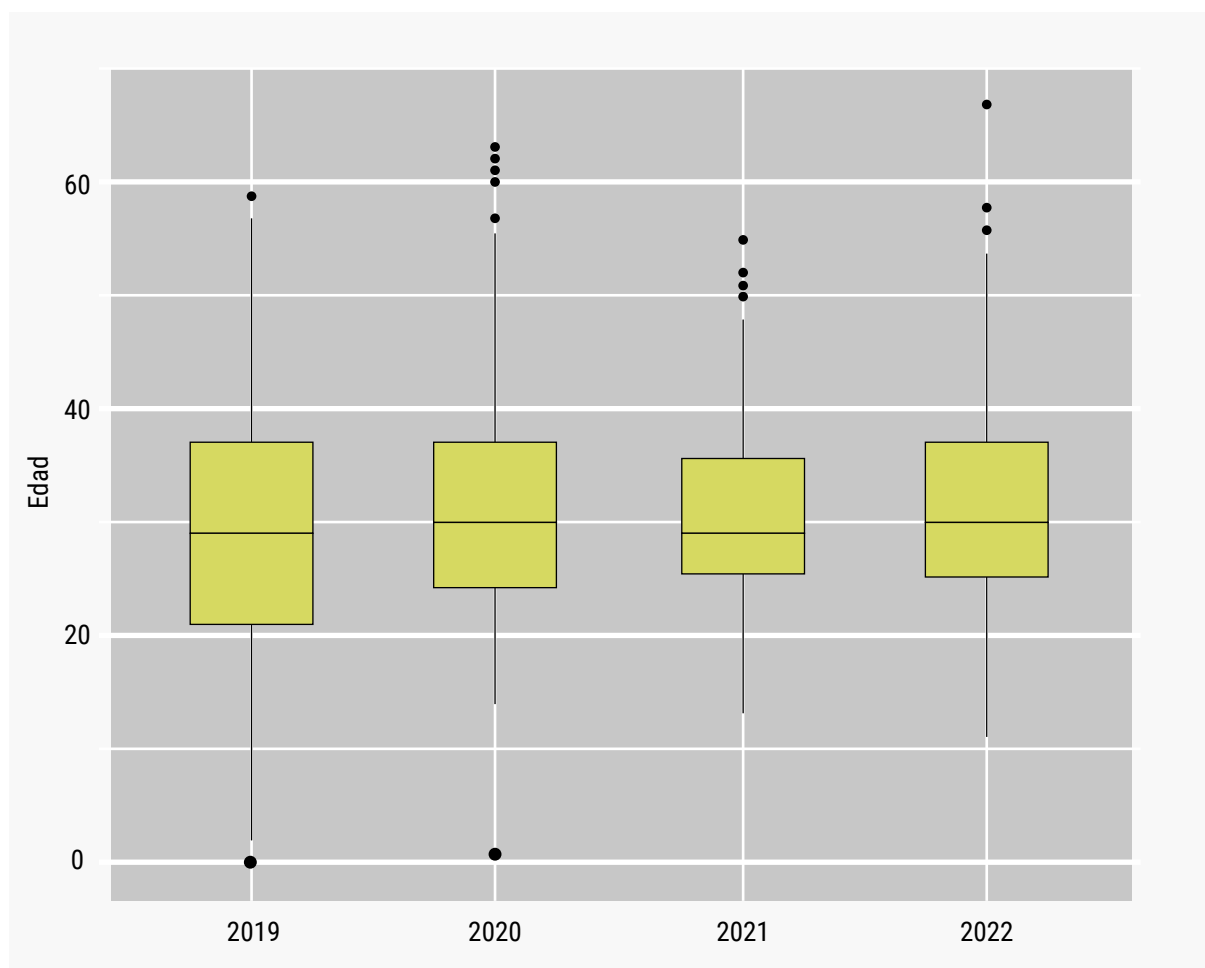
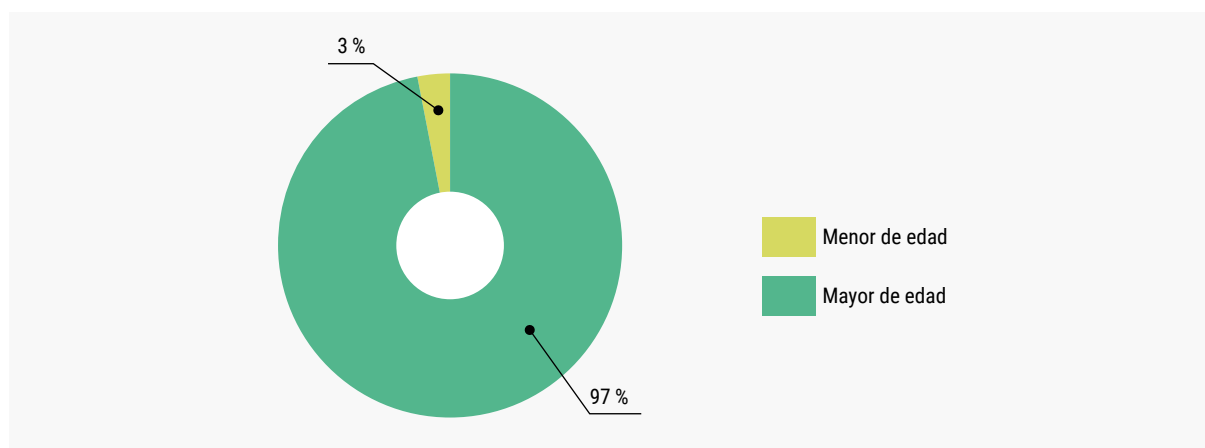


Chart prepared from data obtained from CITCO human trafficking victim registration lists: year of victim detection from 2019-2022 and age of victim.

Thanks to this graph, we can analyze the age distribution of the victims identified by CITCO between 2019 and 2022. In it, we can see that the ages are mostly between 22 and 38 years of age, approximately. The median is around 29 years old; the first quartile is around 24 years old and the third quartile is around 37 years old. Generally speaking, there is more age variability in 2019, which coincides with a much higher number of victims detected. In this year there were also many younger victims (less than 10 years old). It appears that these types of victims were not detected in 2020, 2021 or 2022.

It is noteworthy that in 2019 and 2020 there are some victims younger than 1 year old. In 2020 and 2022, some victims over 60 years old were also detected. These were women from Uruguay (sex trafficking), Morocco and Lithuania (labor trafficking).

Gráfico 11. Percentage of victims by age group



Pie chart prepared from data obtained from CITCO's registration lists of victims of human trafficking: percentage of victims by age group.

The Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) methodology has proven to be an essential tool in the fight against human trafficking, allowing for a significant estimation of the hidden number of victims in Spain. The active collaboration of key organizations such as the lists of law enforcement agencies and NGOs were fundamental in the successful implementation of MSE and the obtaining of accurate estimates for the period 2019-2022. This methodology has allowed substantial advances in the detection and protection of victims, as well as in the detailed understanding of the phenomenon by including crucial covariates such as sex, age and type of exploitation.

This table shows the data on observed and estimated victims of human trafficking, broken down by year, category (sex and majority/minority of age), and the estimation ratio. The ratio indicates how many estimated victims there are for each observed victim. The results by year and category are detailed below:



Table 3. Covariates: victims according to sex, majority/minority of age and year

Covariates Sex - Age of majority/age of majority				
Year	Category	Observed	Estimated	Ratio
2019	Woman	643	1203	1,87
	Man	165	383	2,32
	Girls	17	36	2,13
	Boys	3	15	5,04
2020	Woman	414	955	2,307
	Man	72	175	2,43
	Girls	6	22	3,58
	Boys	0	3	Inf
2021	Woman	516	973	1,88
	Man	81	339	4,19
	Girls	16	37	2,36
	Boys	17	162	9,55
2022	Woman	587	1398	2,38
	Man	140	644	4,59
	Girls	48	156	2,41
	Boys	35	153	4,38

Table compiled from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: data on observed and estimated human trafficking victims, broken down by year, category (sex and majority/minority of age), and the estimation ratio.

From these observations, it stands out that the highest ratio is found in boys in 2021, at 9.55, indicating a high underestimation of the male child population compared to other categories.

Overall, the estimate ratio is higher for males than for females in all years, suggesting that there is a higher proportion of unidentified male victims compared to females.

Girls and boys have high estimation ratios, reflecting the difficulty in identifying and registering trafficked children.

These figures highlight the need to improve detection and identification mechanisms, especially for the most underestimated populations, such as men and minors, in order to provide them with the necessary protection and assistance.

The tables below show data on observed and estimated victims of human trafficking, broken down by year, category (sex and majority/minority of the victims) and the estimation ratio. The ratio indicates how many estimated victims there are for each observed victim. Each category is explained below on a year-by-year basis:

Table 4. Victims by sex and year

Sex				
Year	Category	Observed	Estimated	Ratio
2019	Woman	660	1239,382	1,877
	Man	168	397,8808	2,368
2020	Woman	420	976,88	2,32
	Man	72	178,42	2,47
2021	Woman	532	1011	1,9
	Man	98	502	5,1
2022	Woman	635	1513,61	2,383
	Man	175	796,83	4,55

Table compiled from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: observed and estimated human trafficking victims, broken down by year, category (sex), and the estimation ratio.

Table 5. Victims according to minority/majority in age by year

Age by year of registration				
Year	Category	Observed	Estimated	Ratio
2019	Adult	808	1585,96	1,962
	Minor	20	51,29	2,56
2020	Adult	486	1130,8	2,32
	Minor	6	24,5	4,08
2021	Adult	597	1313	2,2
	Minor	33	200	6,1
2022	Adult	727	2041,43	2,8
	Minor	83	269,11	3,24

Table compiled from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: observed and estimated human trafficking victims, broken down by year, category (majority/age of majority), and the estimation ratio.

Gender difference: the ratios for men are consistently higher than for women, suggesting a higher proportion of unidentified male victims compared to women.

Age difference: the ratios for minors are higher than for adults in all years, indicating a greater underestimation of the population of trafficked child.

High ratios in 2021 and 2022: especially for males and minors, the ratios are notably high in these years, which may reflect an increase in the difficulty of identifying these victims during this period.

6. RESULTS

These figures underscore the need to improve detection and identification mechanisms, especially for the most underestimated populations, such as men and minors, in order to provide them with the necessary protection and assistance.

Table 6. Victims by type of exploitation and year

Type of operation				
Year	Category	Observed	Estimated	Ratio
2019	Sexual	571	888,46	1,55
	Laboral	175	533,104	3,16
	Other	82	195,68	2,38
2020	Sexual	334	766,33	2,29
	Laboral	102	169,56	1,66
	Other	56	219,4	3,91
2021	Sexual	519	816	1,6
	Laboral	84	361	4,3
	Other	27	334	12,4
2022	Sexual	549	808,2	1,47
	Laboral	203	1233,17	6,07
	Other	58	269,16	4,64

Table compiled from data obtained from CITCO's human trafficking victim registration lists: observed and estimated human trafficking victims, broken down by year, category (type of exploitation), and the estimation ratio.

As can be seen in Table 6, we focused on three main types of exploitation: sexual, labor and other forms of exploitation in the four years observed (2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022). The ratios obtained provide a better understanding of the disparity between identified and estimated victims, highlighting the need to improve detection and data collection systems to address all forms of trafficking. This quantitative approach makes the magnitude of the situation visible.

In 2019, data on human trafficking in Spain reveal different levels of identification and estimation according to the type of exploitation. For sexual exploitation, 571 victims were observed, but the actual number is estimated at 888.46, indicating a ratio of 1.55. This means that, for every victim of sexual exploitation observed, there are an estimated 1.55 victims in total, including those not observed. In terms of labor exploitation, 175 victims were identified, with an estimate of 533,104 victims in total, reflecting a ratio of 3.16. For each victim of labor exploitation observed, there are an estimated 3.16 victims in total. In other forms of exploitation, 82 victims were observed, while the total estimate is 195.68, with a ratio of 2.38, indicating that, for each victim observed, there are an estimated 2.38 victims in total.



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In 2020, the year of pandemic and confinement, sexual exploitation continued to be one of the most common forms of human trafficking. There were 334 victims observed, but the total number is estimated to be 766.33, giving a ratio of 2.29. This reflects that, for every victim of sexual exploitation observed, there are 2.29 victims in total. For labor exploitation, the figures indicate 102 observed victims and an estimate of 169.56, resulting in a ratio of 1.66. This means that, for each victim of labor exploitation observed, there are an estimated 1.66 victims in total. In other forms of exploitation, 56 victims were identified and an estimated total of 219.4, with a ratio of 3.91, indicating that, for each victim observed, there are 3.91 victims in total.

The year 2021 showed a significant increase in the estimates of victims in various forms of exploitation. In sexual exploitation, 519 victims were observed, but estimates suggest a total of 816, with a ratio of 1.6. This implies that, for every victim of sexual exploitation observed, there are an estimated 1.6 victims in total. In the area of labor exploitation, 84 victims were identified, while estimates total 361, resulting in a ratio of 4.3. This suggests that, for each victim of labor exploitation observed, there are 4.3 victims in total. For other forms of exploitation, significantly fewer victims were observed, 27 in total, but estimates indicate 334, resulting in an alarming ratio of 12.4. This means that for every victim of other forms of exploitation observed, there are an estimated 12.4 victims in total.

In 2022, the data on sexual exploitation shows 549 observed victims and a total estimate of 808.2, with a ratio of 1.47. This indicates that, for every observed victim of sexual exploitation, there are an estimated 1.47 total victims. In labor exploitation, a significant increase was observed, with 203 victims identified and a total estimate of 1233.17, giving a ratio of 6.07. This means that, for each victim of labor exploitation observed, there are 6.07 victims in total. For other forms of exploitation, 58 victims observed were recorded, with an estimate of 269.16, resulting in a ratio of 4.64. This implies that, for each victim of other forms of exploitation observed, there are an estimated 4.64 victims in total.

The differences in observation and estimation ratios underscore the need for improved identification and data collection methods to address all forms of exploitation from an informed perspective.

General remarks

- ▶ On sexual exploitation: the estimation ratios for sexual exploitation are relatively consistent, ranging from 1.47 to 2.29 over the years. This suggests a minor underestimation compared to other types of exploitation.
- ▶ On labor exploitation: the estimation ratios are considerably high, especially in 2022 with 6.07, indicating a large proportion of victims not identified in this category.
- ▶ On other types of exploitation: the ratios vary significantly, with a notable peak in 2021 of 12.4. This high ratio suggests that other forms of exploitation, which could include forced begging, forced marriage, and other types of exploitation, are highly underestimated and not easily identified.

In terms of trends, variations in ratios from year to year indicate changes in the effectiveness of identification mechanisms and possible fluctuations in the prevalence of different types of farms.

6. RESULTS

These figures underscore the need to improve detection and identification mechanisms for all forms of exploitation, with special emphasis on labor exploitation and other less common but equally severe forms of trafficking.

The following table presents summary data on observed and estimated victims of human trafficking, broken down by year, variable (sex, age, type of exploitation), category within each variable, and the estimation ratio. In addition, the percentage of observed victims out of the estimated total is included. Each category by year is explained below:

Table 7. Overall results

Year	Variable	Category	Observed	Estimated	Ratio	Observed
2019	Sex	Woman	660	1239,382	1,877	53 %
	Sex	Man	168	397,8808	2,368	42 %
	Age	Adult	808	1585,96	1,962	51 %
	Age	Minor	20	51,29	2,56	39 %
	Type	Sexual	571	888,46	1,55	64 %
	Type	Laboral	175	533,104	3,16	33 %
	Type	Other	82	195,68	2,38	42 %
2020	Sex	Woman	420	976,88	2,32	43 %
	Sex	Man	72	178,42	2,47	40 %
	Age	Adult	486	1130,8	2,32	43 %
	Age	Minor	6	24,5	4,08	24 %
	Type	Sexual	334	766,33	2,29	44 %
	Type	Laboral	102	169,56	1,66	60 %
	Type	Other	56	219,4	3,91	26 %
2021	Sex	Woman	532	1011	1,9	53 %
	Sex	Man	98	502	5,1	20 %
	Age	Adult	597	1313	2,2	45 %
	Age	Minor	33	200	6,1	17 %
	Type	Sexual	519	816	1,6	64 %
	Type	Laboral	84	361	4,3	23 %
	Type	Other	27	334	12,4	8 %

6. RESULTS

Year	Variable	Category	Observed	Estimated	Ratio	Observed
2022	Sex	Woman	635	1513,61	2,383	42 %
	Sex	Man	175	796,83	4,55	22 %
	Age	Adult	727	2041,43	2,8	36 %
	Age	Minor	83	269,11	3,24	31 %
	Type	Sexual	549	808,2	1,47	68 %
	Type	Laboral	203	1233,17	6,07	16 %
	Type	Other	58	269,16	4,64	22 %
					Average ratio	Average ratio
					2,4265	41 %

Table compiled from data obtained from CITCO's registration lists of human trafficking victims: results of data on observed and estimated human trafficking victims, broken down by year, variable (sex, age, type of exploitation), category within each variable, and the estimation ratio. In addition, the percentage of observed victims out of the estimated total is included.

Females tend to have lower estimation ratios than males, indicating that females are identified more frequently than males. Ratios for minors are consistently higher than for adults, suggesting greater difficulty in identifying minors.

Labor exploitation and other forms of exploitation show significantly higher rates than sexual exploitation, highlighting the underestimation and difficulty in identifying these types of exploitation.

In all years, the proportion of victims observed is higher for women and for sexual exploitation, which may reflect a more intense focus on identifying these groups.

For each victim detected, there are about **4.6 victims of trafficking in Spain, taking into account the observed population. Thanks to the development of the MSE methodology, it was possible to elucidate the lack of visibility of trafficking victims, detecting only 27.76% of the total number of victims.** This ratio changed according to the sex of the person, with a higher ratio for men (in other words, there was a higher percentage of hidden population than observed). The identification of minimal overlaps in cases of boys and girls highlights the lack of consensus, legal protection and resources devoted to the detection and protection of this vulnerable group. The ratios were much higher for minors, so that the percentage of victims was much higher than in the case of children.

The estimated number of victims was much lower (detecting 39% versus 51% of older victims) when applying the covariates.

The hidden figure ratios were similarly higher for forms of labor exploitation, begging, and forced marriage, among others. This is due to the low detection rate of these forms of exploitation, with most of the victims observed being women experiencing sex trafficking. The fact that labor trafficking exhibits the highest ratio underscores the need to focus resources and detection strategies in this area.

The challenges faced during the application of the MSE methodology for the estimation of the hidden number in Spain highlight the need for a single action protocol for data collection in the context of trafficking. The centralization of these processes would not



6. RESULTS

only improve the traceability of victims but would also make it possible to detect crucial trends. This approach would enable data-driven decision making, thus providing a more effective platform for victim protection. In addition, it would provide a global view of the trafficking phenomenon, enabling authorities and organizations to address effective protection and prevention measures in a more efficient and coordinated manner.

2. THE STORY BEHIND THE NUMBER

The problem of the hidden number of trafficking victims that this research aims to expose through its quantitative methodology is explained by the operations of the complex network of actors involved in the fight against the phenomenon. In order to shed light on the issue, this section, based on the results of the qualitative analysis methodology of the research, describes aspects related to the internal functioning of the organizations involved, their strategies for recording victim data, intra- and inter-institutional coordination and the dynamics of mobility of the phenomenon in which their work is framed.

In this regard, the objectives, priorities and work and funding strategies of the organizations are reflected, as well as the tools used to record data on victims and the difficulties they face. The types of coordination between institutions and those used internally are described, as well as the challenges faced in following up cases. Finally, the dynamics detected at the local, regional and national levels are explored, as well as trends in the profile and mobility of victims and in the phases of recruitment, transfer and exploitation, and the implications of this complex reality for the work of the actors.

1.1. ORGANIZATIONAL

At least 80% of the social entities and public organizations interviewed have as their primary objective the **detection and protection of persons at risk of being victims or victims of trafficking**. The organizations dedicated to the protection of victims seek to guarantee comprehensive care by adapting resources to the specific needs of the victims. Many of the organizations seek to detect potential victims or victims of trafficking through indicators; others offer protection resources to victims referred by other organizations or public institutions:

We have emergency shelter resources. And our work, above all, our objective is detection. That is to say, we do not have employment projects or anything else, because our objective is to detect cases of trafficking, to lend a hand to get them out. And in the case that they also want to report, how to do the whole process of identification.

F31. Focus group

In addition, 90% of the interviewees work to accompany trafficked persons, attending to their general and specific needs, capacities and potentialities in a comprehensive manner:

(...) we always try to make it a built-in accompaniment, both in the open environment and in the and in the home.

F29. NGO

Other organizations do not focus their main objective on the detection of trafficking victims. Their general objective would be to **identify situations of vulnerability** in the participants of their projects. Within the vulnerability of the potential victim, there may be signs of human trafficking. This is the case of the organizations interviewed that work for the defense of children's rights and combat the phenomenon of trafficking through prevention programs to eradicate the causes (poverty or discrimination) that influence the exposure of vulnerable children to exploitation. In the special case of children at risk of exploitation, it is important to have a multidisciplinary team that specializes in children with a psychosocial approach and training in vulnerable groups:

(...) mainly it is a child profile. And what, as I was saying before, more than trafficking cases we do, is case management because it does not fit in that short period of time. We have a team specialized in vulnerability and psychosocial support, that is, our mediators have a strong profile.

F31. Focus group

In the case of intervention with **children at risk of exploitation or victims of trafficking**, the priority is to attend to the possible trauma of the person. Children and adolescents are the most vulnerable victims of human trafficking, so it is necessary for public authorities to redouble their efforts and act in a comprehensive and coordinated manner to protect them in the most appropriate way. The primacy of the best interests of the child, whatever his or her personal or social situation or condition, should guide the protection actions of public and non-governmental entities aimed at children. **The best interests of the child must be the primary consideration in decision-making concerning children and adolescents.**

The participating organizations state that the immediate attention and protection of minor victims must be ensured at all times, under the criteria of minimum intervention, speed and specialization:

First, to address trauma, because we consider that the children that are at the center, all or almost all of them, have some kind of trauma, even if it is only because they have been torn away from their family and their environment, the children who have been removed, the guardianships of their parents, because of everything they have previously lived through of abuse, lack of protection, negligence, whatever. And the same with foreign children, that is, a migratory journey, their arrival in Spain, which is sometimes traumatic (...). So, well, we take care of the trauma and then we try to establish a bond, which is something that is very important between the children and the educators.

E12. NGO

The approach of detecting vulnerabilities allows for the detection of other human rights violations beyond trafficking. For example, as one of the interviewees explains, when the objective is not simply the detection of trafficking victims, but of vulnerabilities, cases susceptible to international protection can be observed:

(...) what we were trying to do here was not to focus on the fact that the situation was stagnant and that she was a victim of trafficking, but to focus on one more of the causes that exist in her life history situation. So, we did not only go with the objective



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of detecting if she had signs of being a victim of trafficking, but, with the whole argument of her life history, we found out that she had situations with signs of trafficking, but also health problems, susceptibility to international protection, etc., etc.

E7. NGO

There are also organizations that carry out detection and **offer resources** to potential victims or victims of trafficking. The work of these non-governmental organizations is basically to provide assistance, protection and accompaniment to individuals. The interviewees emphasize the need to have **qualified personnel trained in human trafficking issues**, so as not to re-victimize people, and to work diligently with victims without putting their integrity at risk and to ensure their protection. In this case, there are organizations that move away from the objective of prosecuting the crime or the trafficker, and only and exclusively attend to the needs of the victim. Therefore, their role is disassociated from the work of investigating the victim's trafficking situation; they only accompany and try to alleviate the victim's suffering:

You come to contribute to the protection of trafficked persons. We are intervening with vulnerable people in contexts of exploitation, and sometimes people who are in situations of prostitution, of survival, in which there is no sexual exploitation by a third party, there is not even trafficking, but they are in those contexts. We are there to reduce their suffering, to try to contribute to their improvement, that is, from that lower level to the free exercise of rights and to help them to improve their situation of whatever you want, restorative justice and such.

E1. NGO

Some of the organizations interviewed dedicate part of their functions to **raising awareness and training** professionals about the phenomenon of human trafficking in our country. The organizations carry out a variety of actions such as talks, conferences, exhibitions, workshops, group training, contests, games, street markets, sporting events or direct actions in the street, as we have seen above:

Prosecutors train judges on the subject. They emphasize the “fear” of judges to hand down convictions for human trafficking without being fully informed of the facts.

The prosecutors are sure of this, because the prison sentences are among the highest in the Penal Code. Prosecutors, in turn, are educated by reading European and Spanish case law on the subject.

E15. Public organization

2.11. OBJECTIVES

All of the entities interviewed point out that one of the biggest challenges in the phenomenon is that the **different key actors dedicated to assisting victims of trafficking do not share the same objectives**. Non-governmental organizations aim to protect and assist the victim or potential victim of trafficking as a priority, so it is not necessary for them to self-identify as a victim of trafficking. The State Security Forces and Corps understand that trafficking is a crime that is part of organized crime that



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must be prosecuted, so it is necessary for the victim to participate in the judicial procedure, filing a complaint, which could leave the victim unprotected:

For us, the priority is not identification. So, if the woman is not ready to speak, we are not going to force her to do so. Because we understand that it is a revictimization. So maybe there are women who, if we were to ask specific questions, we could increase our number, but no, for us it is not a final objective (...) In the end, what helps us is in the process and, of course, to provide them with (...) the legal possibilities that allow them to develop or exercise their right to all their protection measures, which would be the whole issue of documentation, etc., right? But this is not more important than their welfare.

X19. Expert

The State Security Forces and Corps as well as the Administration of Justice in Spain aim to **prosecute the crime, and prosecute the trafficker**, in addition to offering the victim a series of services to guarantee their protection. The State Security Forces and Corps argue that the greatest protection for the victim comes from the prosecution of the person who committed the crime. As can be seen from the interviews, both non-governmental organizations and public agencies seek to protect the victim, however, the organizations advocate the need for a more victim-centric approach, in which the priority is the needs of the victim, which does not always coincide with the person's participation in the criminal proceedings:

We put ourselves in the case that the mission of the police is one: to pursue crime, they constantly remind us of it, and we constantly remind them that ours is to take care of women who have their real recovery period, which is not just the 60 days that are marked. So, sometimes they clash.

F24. Focus group

The role of the State Security Forces and Corps is the **prosecution of organized crime in Spain**. Human trafficking constitutes a form of organized crime, therefore, in addition to attending to the needs of the victims, the FCSE are prosecutors of the crime of trafficking and the traffickers. One of the ways for the authorities to ensure the safety and protection of the victim is to arrest the offender:

But it is true that the law enforcement agencies have to prosecute the crime, in addition to protecting the victim, but one of the other ways to protect the victim is to arrest the offender. So, but that is where we arrive, in points of view, which are not divergent because they all converge in the protection of the victim, but each one of them has to protect the victim, but each one of them has to protect the victim one has a different approach.

E3. Public organization

State Security Forces (FCSE) and organizations **periodically visit the places where exploitation is taking place in** order to gain access to potential victims of trafficking. The purpose of going to the places where exploitation is taking place is to contact potential victims of trafficking and provide them with information on the protection resources available to them. Always with the consent of the potential victim of trafficking, a first approach is made, so that the person knows the organization and can go in case he/she needs any service.



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In many cases, as discussed below, victims do not naturally approach non-governmental organizations. However, it is the **organizations that approach the places where the exploitation is taking place in** order to gain access to potential victims:

They are also provided with preventive material, but it is like an excuse for this approach, isn't it? They are provided with information on the comprehensive care provided by the services, that, if they need legal, social, psychological or psychological care, they will receive it and also lodging.

F24. Focus group

2.2. DATA LOGGING

The Center for Intelligence Against Organized Crime in Spain (CITCO), which belongs to the Ministry of the Interior collects data collected on organized crime by the National Police, Civil Guard, Ertzaintza and Mossos d'Escuadra. It also supervises that the data collected by the agents are correctly recorded. CITCO was appointed the **national rapporteur for human trafficking crimes in Spain**, therefore, every two years it reports to the European Commission the statistics of identified victims of trafficking in Spain. In addition, CITCO performs functions of coordination and supervision of the competencies developed by the police forces.

(...) Coordinate, analyze the functions carried out by the police forces, supervise the recording in the trafficking database, (...) which is where we obtain all the information for the statistics, make reports on follow-up, distribution and everything that is requested of us in relation to support for the national rapporteur, international national reports, everything related to trafficking and exploitation.

E3. Public organization

It can be inferred from the interviews conducted that there continues to be a difficulty in obtaining quality data on potential victims of human trafficking in Spain. In the case of trafficking, self-identification is very unlikely and reporting remains exceptional. There are several reasons for this low level of reporting: **the victims of human trafficking** may not think of themselves as such.

Even if they feel exploited, they **may** believe that they have simply been unlucky to fall into the hands of bad recruiters or employers. **In addition, unfamiliarity with the language, fear, shame, guilt or lack of trust in a protection system** unknown to the potential victim are the main reasons why an abused person keeps silent. On many occasions, the person fears not being believed, believes he/she is guilty, fears being judged, is afraid of the aggressor, is afraid of not being protected by others, or may even feel ashamed of what he/she has experienced. All this makes it difficult for non-governmental organizations to detect the potential victim:

A woman you see in a prostitution context, who does not want to tell you her date of birth or, therefore, her age, you do not register her because you do not have her (...) It is not a failure of the machine (...) it is that, if she did not want to give it to you, you do not have it.

E1. NGO

6. RESULTS

The **absence of documentation** can lead to complications in the follow-up of cases and correct registration. This is because, if a victim is assisted by the same entity a second time after some time of having lost contact with it, it depends on the victim providing the same data that was provided the first time to avoid duplication of registration.

Interviewer: What happens when they go abroad, for example, and come back, and reapply for the service? What happens in those listings, too? Do they come in as new...?

Interviewee: No, it would be a follow-up, because we have already worked with them. Unless to give us another name.

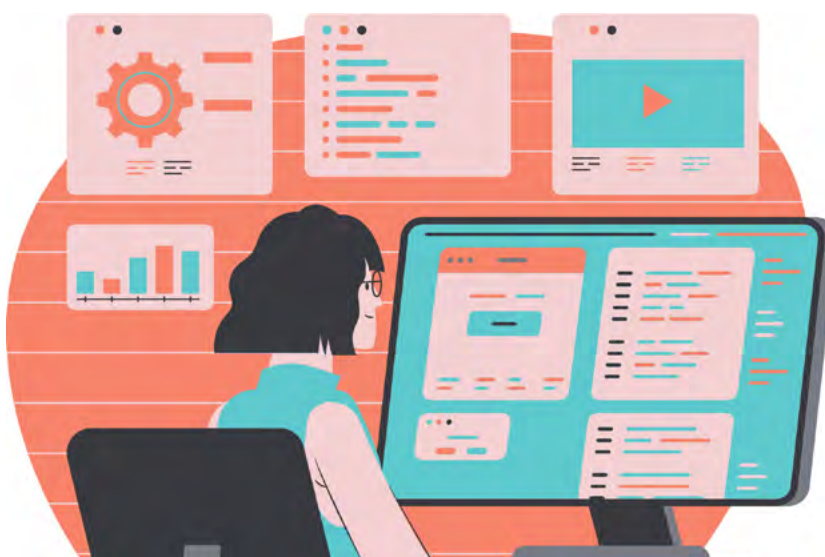
E13. NGO

The organizations interviewed emphasize that the information that is most difficult for potential victims of trafficking to follow is personal information. Therefore, when registering in their trafficking lists, there are variables of the personal information of these persons that they cannot collect. The variables and indicators that stand out because they are not included in the organizations' registration lists are as follows the questions of: who (personal data), what (type of exploitation), when, where, why, how and by what means:

It is true that there are times when you ask, "well, when were you born" or "when were you born?", "how old are you?", (...) they can say "I'm 30 years old," then, well, "but tell me your exact date of birth." We don't always have it.

E9. NGO

In many of these cases, in which the organizations do not have all the personal data of the victim, nor the testimony denouncing a trafficking situation, the organizations include in their lists the person in a vulnerable situation as a "potential victim" of trafficking. They do not have a set of confirmed trafficking indicators, but there are indications that raise the suspicion of front-line professionals that the person may be a





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victim of trafficking. In these cases the person is registered as a “potential victim” and is followed up to gather information over time:

As long as we understand that it is a possible victim, we say possible victim with these indicators. As we get to know them, we mark other types of indicators or we add more indicators or we describe why this is the case, (...) we increase, let's say, the person's file. When we have enough weight is when we coordinate with the State Security Forces and Corps and that is when we pass them all this information, all the indicators, the days when we even contact the person, and (...) the history, (...) the writing up of where they are, how we get indicators, how it reflects the person's situation, (...) the description of the person's situation, (...) the description of the person's situation, (...) the description of the person's situation, (...) the description of the person's situation.

We do a little bit of everything.

E8. NGO

On the other hand, there are **difficulties in the victim's access to the judicial system**, which conditions a correct detection and attention to the potential victim. On the one hand, the potential victim of trafficking is unaware of the laws and the protection system that can provide help, support or assistance, which means that potential victims do not trust and even fear the State Security Forces and Corps (fear of being deported, losing money, etc.). In addition, and in most cases, victims fear reprisals from traffickers against them or their families, in the workplace or in their country of origin:

I think that the NGOs do a good job, and filter a little (...) many times the NGO does its job, but nothing reaches us. Because maybe the girl does not want to or, as they say, it is not the right time now, she is going through a process, with her issues. So, I don't think so. Each one has its profile and its function. They have their role and we have ours. What I was telling you before, that maybe they detect ten people and from those ten they come to us and we get to know them and we end up with two.

XF35. Expert

In addition to the distrust of potential victims in the judicial system, there is also a **great lack of trust in non-governmental organizations**. The system is so focused on police raids, and so centered on the prosecution of the crime, that it repeatedly re-victimizes the victim and does not ensure his or her safety adequate protection. This determines whether or not the non-governmental organizations recommend the complaint:

We went through a process of discernment in this sense. Because of course, one thing is what we as an institution see, as an entity we see, and another thing is how it works legally, and then in the end the logical thing to do is to register in accordance with officialdom.

X19. Expert

The main criticism of this data collection is that trafficking is a hidden crime; organizations do not have sufficient tools for early detection; **nor are there nationally coordinated trafficking detection indicators**. Non-governmental organizations and public agencies handle different records and have their own system of data itemization. This prevents the available information from being homogenized. This distinction between



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information recording systems does not allow for disaggregation at least by the variables - Sex - Age - Type of exploitation - Country of origin:

(...) within the projects, it will depend a little on each region, where it is. We all use as a basis (...) the list established by the UN. The list of 50 indicators (...) There are a great many of them: 50 indicators.

E8. NGO

In addition to the difficulties - mentioned above - faced by both organizations and public agencies when collecting data, there are others, such as **the lack of a common platform and a common collection praxis**:

It was also a process that was being studied to integrate the autonomous police. Specifically, it was beginning with [FCSE] but it has not yet materialized. I know that there is a project being studied for them to record as well, for them to have access to the database so that they can enter the actions they also carry out. But right now, at the moment, they are still not doing it.

E3. Public organization

There is a big difference between the databases of some organizations and others. Some of them continue with **more obsolete and less automated databases** that make it difficult to record data.

Well, the database was designed when the other [other types of exploitation] did not exist, when they were not typified.... It was designed when it was basically human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Then, with the modification of the Penal Code, human trafficking was introduced, with all its purposes, begging, criminal, forced marriages. And as such, the database does not have the option right now of marking an ICT as it does for sex trafficking or labor trafficking. So, in a rudimentary way, what we do is when it is a report corresponding to these other purposes, it is recorded with the purpose of labor trafficking, in the observations that the database has, we ask them to expressly detail: "it corresponds to a trafficking report, for example," "it corresponds to a labor trafficking report, for example, for forced marriages."

E3. Public organization

In addition to **not having a common basis for the different organizations**, within the same organization, internally, there may not be a common basis for all the agents located in different parts of the national territory. On many occasions, organizations have headquarters in different provinces or autonomous communities, and there is no adequate coordination between them. This, as we shall see in the following section, means that there are many victims detected by an organization in a given autonomous community who are not in the registry of the same organization in another autonomous community:

The more we try to disaggregate the data, the more (...) discrepancies we can get. If we make a basic generic query on the number of total victims, we may get a number "x". However, as soon as we start to enter indications, autonomous communities, provinces, etc., we can suddenly see that, if there were 100 victims, now there are 110.



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Because the same victim may have been identified in different places, on different occasions (...) The higher the level of disaggregation of data (...) the more complex the consultation and processing of the data.

E3. Public organization

Likewise, persons registered in several autonomous communities may appear duplicated:

But when we are talking about the preventive part, in terms of workers or inspections in places where prostitution is practiced, then there are much more duplicates, triplicates... (...) if routine control inspections are made, for example, in the same brothel, if there are always the same people who are practicing prostitution, then they are identified two, three times if routine control inspections are made, and maybe you make a monthly or quarterly or biannual inspection (...) the same person appears three, four times, as many times as inspections. Or in other places they have gone to another province, they have been identified in another place, they also appear duplicated. That is why we avoid it by making inquiries on that unique reference number.

E3. Public organization

These systems are usually not very flexible in terms of the type of data that can be collected, so that if new elements of importance for the analysis of the phenomenon emerge, the attempt to record them in a way that represents reality is a challenge. This is the case of gender identity, since some of the data collection systems used only allow the option of registering someone as a man or a woman, thus making the reality of the transgender community invisible in this case:

The problem is that it has historical data for more than 20 or 30 years. So, for example, when we want to add a third element to sex or gender identity (...) the indication given by the central office to the whole territory is that a trans woman should be registered as a woman, with the risk that we make invisible how many trans women, for example, are in the context of exploitation, which in the end are many, but you do not have this proportion (...).

E1. NGO

Therefore, the incorporation of new elements in some of the registered profiles complicates their compatibility with older registries. In this regard, the entities request greater flexibility in the design of the IT tools:

(...) now the computer scientists are throwing their hands on their heads and the bosses too, because they say, of course, if since the [NGO] database started we have been dragging, migrating the data until 2023, if now you add (...) a third element, your head explodes with everything and with the rest of the data. So, they do not know how to shape it at the IT level. I still insist that at some point they should put in another one, and say, well, we cannot disintegrate this information up until this date, but from this date on we will be able to do it. And that allows you to change.

E1. NGO

The lack of consideration of other types of exploitation beyond sexual and labor exploitation is another element that is reflected in the rigidity of some of the computer

tools used. The professionals who use them develop strategies to try to record the data of each person attended to as rigorously as possible. However, this leads to complications in large-scale data extractions:

Therefore, we keep a separate report, and when we make enquiries, we want to know data on trafficking in forced marriages, we have to make a specific inquiry about these reports. When we want to make a specific query on labor trafficking, for example, we have to take into account that we have to exclude everything that is related to these reports. And this is done in a very rudimentary way, as the database is not prepared, as it is old, as we were saying, it is not maintained, the programming language is already obsolete, there is no one who knows this code. (...) We are able to extract all the statistics, all the data are reliable, but in a way that does not involve pressing a button, as people tend to think, and all the data comes out.

E3. Public organization

Another complicating factor in large-scale data extraction is the complexity of the records. For example, in some of the systems, there are data relating to a victim's situation that are not recorded in his or her individual registry.

The following are the most important aspects of the dual nature of these events, because they also concern other people, and are therefore recorded as generic elements:

There may be more than one victim in a report. One may have been recruited in one country, another in another, and so on. So, when it comes to making inquiries about the persons, this can lead to conflict because the inquiries from the countries along the trafficking route are associated with an attestation, not with the persons in that attestation, because that person could in turn be in another attestation from a year ago, for example. So this is one of the difficulties, the interconnection of data that do not depend purely and simply linearly on a single indicator.

E3. Public organization





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In addition, the fact that computer systems are obsolete implies the need to enter a lot of data manually, increasing the likelihood of errors in the records:

(...) 80% of the information they record at a site has to be recorded in their police database, etcetera. So we recognize that it is a tedious job for the recording unit. And when you have a report with 30 victims, to say a random number, it is a bit tedious to record for each of the victims the circumstances, the indicators, the means... And errors can occur, as all we are all human.

E3. Public organization

2.3. PROCESSES TO DETECT OR IDENTIFY VICTIMS

The role played in the fight against human trafficking by the various actors involved differs, among other things, at the point of detection or identification of victims. Anyone, including organizations, can detect a victim by observing the relevant indicators. The State Security Forces and Corps can identify victims on the basis of these and other criteria, also related to the prosecution of the crime. Judicial authorities also identify victims when they are linked to a conclusive legal procedure that determines their status as such. At each level of detection or identification, victims have access to certain resources or rights, depending on the level of recognition of their status as victims and the geographical area where this occurs. The difference in the requirements applied at each level for the registration of victims of trafficking explains, in part, the “hidden number.”

In all cases, trafficking indicators are used, more or less explicitly, within the strategies implemented by the actors for identification and detection. Although there is no homogenization in the applicable criteria, there are basic common notions related to the different spheres of the crime: action, means and ends.

The **detection by the entities**, in this sense, can be carried out by NGOs specialized in the care of victims of trafficking, or by others who, in their corresponding resources, detect the presence of indicators in the people they serve. The processes through which these indicators are sought and detected, however, they are interchangeable depending on the entities, the work teams, the scope of action and the circumstances in which the victim or potential victim of trafficking finds him/herself:

The detection may have been the first day she comes to the door or it may be a year later. The date of detection is when the team or the person who is intervening with that woman has enough indicators to think that she is in a situation where she is in a situation where she is in a trafficking situation or at high risk of trafficking.

E1. NGO

One of the key scenarios in which the presence of trafficking indicators can be detected is in the **context of the arrival of migratory flows**, both by land and sea, as well as at airports. Through the life histories and the information collected by the entities on the migratory path and the vital circumstances of the newly arrived persons, indicators of possible victims of human trafficking can be observed:

What we were detecting was that, above all, West African countries, Ivory Coast and Guinea were repeating themselves, that they came in threes: an older one, a middle-



6. RESULTS

sized one and a younger one, and always accompanied by a person who either said she was their mother or said she was their aunt. So, what we did see was that in the end some of them were sisters, but for others, it was not that they were blood sisters, but that the transit had made them form a family, and then they were always under the guardianship of an adult woman.

E7. NGO

Observation of the person's situation, taking into account the context of the country of origin and the migratory route taken, as well as elements related to the person's appearance and behavior, can result in the detection of potential indicators of a trafficking situation. This includes indicators that the person is at risk of being trafficked, even if he or she has not been exposed to an exploitative situation because he or she is at an earlier stage of the process. This approach, whereby persons are registered as victims or potential victims of trafficking on the basis of indicators that form suspicions, is at odds with the approach used by the authorities for identification, linked to the prosecution of the crime. This is one of the reasons why the numbers of victims in the two registers do not correspond to each other:

If you have knowledge of the context, when they arrive here, you can observe certain indicators of vulnerability and abuse by others. Then, if that person also shows you indicators that they are not managing the decisions that affect their lives, they are a potential victim of trafficking. And we register this at the border. In our database, as I was saying, what we mark is the detection. And we mark the detection, because by intervening in the process, I don't care if it does not end up being human trafficking.

E1. NGO

The development of strategies and the implementation of protocols for detection according to these indicators is determined internally as part of the work of the entities and depending on the context. Although it is done with the aim of comprehensively addressing the person's situation, deepening the detection process and providing the person with support as a possible victim of trafficking, it demonstrates the lack of homogenization in the processes of detection and identification of the different actors, contributing to a greater difficulty in calculating the total number of victims, is evident:

(...) we also have different indicators depending on context, and in the training that we do with the teams, we work with them depending on where the team is. (...) If we are talking about a border context, see coasts, airports, even the CIES, internment centers for foreigners, which, although not a border context, is a turning point for the person, because they can be returned to their country of origin, and then the indicators are different. What are the indicators we use on arrival? It may also depend on the context. A person who enters on a dinghy is not the same as a person who enters through the airport (...)

E1. NGO

These contexts have the distinctive feature that they can host humanitarian emergency situations in periods of high numbers of arrivals, implying an overflow of the services offered by reception and intervention entities, and thus limiting their capacity to detect victims of trafficking. This lack of detection is reflected in the data records of the entities



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involved, so that victims who have not been detected due to emergency situations, such as this one, constitute part of the hidden figure:

Thinking about the hidden figure (...), the result (...) is not going to be at all realistic, because the identification of victims during all those years on our part was null, because I believe that only the cases that had a bright and very obvious sign were identified. Because it is true that it was a mixture of... to begin with, the emergency situation (...) of those years (...) the hiring that took place during the crisis was absolutely crazy, wasn't it? And then, of course, the staff was not trained in trafficking, right? So, of course, only what was ridiculously obvious was identified.

F24. Focus group

Another of the scenarios where the detection of trafficking victims can occur is **on the street**, especially in relation to victims or possible victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation or victims of sexual exploitation or coercive prostitution. The numbers reached through these detection methods are increasingly smaller due to the digitalization of prostitution and the transfer of many of the victims to private apartments. In addition, according to social entities, in public is an inappropriate context for adequate social intervention and implies that there are cases of victims of trafficking registered in the lists of entities for which little data is known, making it difficult to follow up and properly register the victims:

(...) So all of them were registered in that database, by default, because we knew they were at that point where [FCSE] had confirmed to us that there were victims of trafficking (...) at some point I came across (...) two women, I think they were Nigerian, who did not speak the language, with whom I tried to interact, and they hid. Of course, these are also warning signs. Those two women were also registered in the database. I was never able to intervene with them. A week later when I returned the next day, they were gone.

E2. NGO

The detection of more subtle indicators is combined, especially when the victims are already in the context of exploitation, with other more explicit signs of their situation. These signs are indicators such as the person not knowing the language despite having been in the host country for a significant period of time, being subjected to forced transfers within the national territory, etc.:

If you are in that context, for example, of sexual exploitation, women are in a vulnerable situation, they are in an irregular situation, they do not know the language even though they have been there for some time, they are in a situation of isolation, they seem to be frightened, they seem to be unable to make decisions about their own lives, or about the issues that affect them. (...) if she is already in this context of exploitation, it would not be necessary for us to have indicators, for example, of recruitment, because I don't care how she got here, the fact is that she is moving from club to club, from apartment to apartment, between vacation areas, between sporting events... (...) I have enough elements, I don't need to build the whole story.

E1. NGO

Another of the strategies carried out by social entities to detect victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation has been affected by the regulation **of prostitution advertising**. This is the process in which entities contact women in prostitution through advertising



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channels in order to potentially detect their situation as victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and be able to intervene with them. In addition to the risk that this type of contact may pose for entities, the limitation of the new legislative framework to this type of publicity makes it more difficult for entities to approach potential victims in an attempt to offer them an alternative:

Well, when they opened that office, they sent WhatsApp messages to those women who have ads, to the women's own phones, saying: "we are an association that is dedicated to this." And there has been a certain group of people who answered or sent messages to that phone, threatening: "you have contacted one of my girls and you have not gone, we are going to kill you," (...) "I am from such-and-such, you have contacted my girls, it can't be... The same."

F23. Focus group

The importance of awareness of the phenomenon of trafficking and its indicators among the general population is particularly evident in relation to another of the organizations' detection strategies. Both specialized organizations and authorities offer **telephone hotlines** through which any person can contact experts to report the presence of trafficking indicators in a given situation. This tool is especially relevant for staff in other public services, such as health or education services, who are exposed to the observation of trafficking situations:

(...) any person, any administration, any service that sees that there is something, that suspects that there is something, calls us, right? So, we receive a wide variety of calls, from many people. So there are times when we don't see indications. But we do have some information, we do take some data, and we make an assessment, and we leave it as something of interest. But there are not always signs of trafficking.

E9. NGO

For example, teachers have the capacity to detect victims or potential victims of trafficking if they are trained in the indicators to be used to do so. The involvement of **educational centers**, as privileged places for observing the lives of child victims, is a key scenario in the fight against trafficking in children for various types of exploitation:

(...) one of the things that has been detected is that, in some dioceses, in the training given in institutes and schools, it has been possible to reach some girls who were trying to be recruited, and some teachers, after they hear the training, become aware of things (...) yes, we go to many schools, we raise awareness quite a lot. And some colleagues have shared that in these talks they have reached teachers who have been alarmed and have said, "well, this student told me...", and there have already been concrete cases.

X21. Expert

Another scenario where the detection of trafficking victims can occur is in **child protection centers**, given that this is a population with certain characteristics of special vulnerability. To this end, it is necessary that professionals in the centers have the tools to identify indicators of at-risk situations, such as changes in the purchasing power of boys and girls, suspicions of criminal behavior or other types of signs related to possible situations of sexual exploitation:



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(...) There are two keys that I would highlight, right? One has to be observation over time, (...) how their behavior changes, which is very important, otherwise it is very difficult, isn't it? And the other variable would be indicators of all kinds, because we often focus, for example, sometimes on physical indicators that are easier to see, but psychological indicators, having good protocols for psychological detection, is also vital, I believe.

X20. Expert

In general, social entities carry out the detection of possible victims of trafficking as part of their intervention activities, through which they analyze the situation and the life story of the person they serve and are able to detect elements that may constitute a trafficking situation:

(...) we are building what exactly the crime of trafficking is, right? What is her situation in her country of origin, her situation of vulnerability, (...) with whom she lived, what was her economic situation, her studies, job opportunities, family responsibilities, (...) And how is this recruitment, right? If it is proactive on the part of the presumed trafficker, if she is the one who makes a search to try to leave the country and look for a job opportunity? (...) if she has a debt or not, (...) if these people had weapons, (...), if there was deprivation of liberty, withdrawal of passport. What are the means of coercion, rights? Also if there were threats at the origin, if they know where her family is located? In other words, all this is what allows us to understand what case we are dealing with and what security measures we have to take. (...) the indicators (...) are general, and well, those of us who work in this field have it very integrated. (...) as you go through the history, you are doing the questions.

E9. NGO

In conclusion, the indicators that social entities take into account in detection processes are similar. However, each one, depending on the context in which they work, develops tools to address these indicators with the victims. The professionals adapt their intervention strategies to improve detection in order to carry out an intervention that can lead to a formal identification of the victim, with the resulting protection of rights. These strategies are usually related to elements such as the bond of the professionals with the victims or potential victims, and to central aspects such as trust, which are necessary for the approach, intervention and subsequent identification of the victim as such.

Sometimes this **building of trust** is related to the development of an intervention over time. During this time, the person in question may be registered as a victim of trafficking for the entities, but may not have been formally identified by the authorities. This explains, once again, the lack of concordance between the registration numbers of the various actors:

We also have to know (...), through other types of demands, (...) how to generate a link that in two and a half years' time may lead to an identification. But of course, we have to be very, very patient and have a very long-term vision, don't we? And sometimes the woman's own recovery comes before the identification, right? In other words, sometimes the identification can occur when the woman finds herself in a situation where she is in another situation.

F27. Focus group

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On occasions, trust-building strategies materialize in the form of offering victims services that respond to their needs, either by offering health or psychological assistance or by addressing a situation that concerns the victim. In this way, the professionals are able to establish an approach from which to develop other types of strategies for the detection of trafficking indicators.

(...) We work closely with the health system and there are times when (...) they tell us: “she has been to the emergency room four times in this period of time.” I remember, for example, a case that told us that the first time was because she fell in the shower (...) but she went to the emergency room four times in this period of time full of bruises. The second time was for an IVE (a voluntary termination of pregnancy). The fourth time was with an anxiety attack. It was all very frequent. That kind of thing we also record (...) And sometimes this is very useful for us. “So today you had a break? Well, come here, we are going to do a quick test and so on”. And in this space, it often gives us the opportunity to go deeper into the history of the patient’s life. Then she can tell you about it (...).

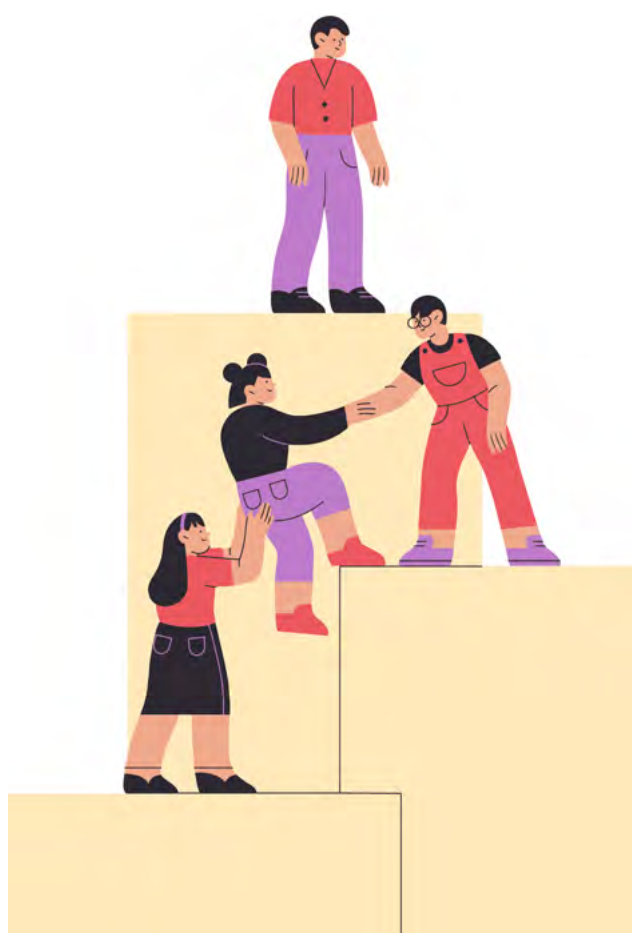
XF39. Expert

There are cases in which it is precisely the **nature of the demands** transmitted that constitutes an indicator, especially those that have to do with support for administrative procedures that victims or potential victims request, which indicates to the entities that it is possible that it is the trafficking or exploitation networks that need the management of such procedures:

Well, it is alarming when they come (...) of a specific nationality, normally (...) incipient (...), telling a new story, which you can tell is learned, all the same, they come asking you something specific. (...). That is to say: “I want you to look for this for me,” “I want you to look for this documentation for me,” “I want you to apply for asylum for me,” “I want you to apply for certification for me”.... (...) In other words, things that, in principle, when they have just arrived, even if they do not speak the language, (...) they hardly know (...). Well, it tells you that there is someone behind them that is saying, “go apply for that,” right?

X19. Expert

Because honestly, it is very good for the traffickers that the women have a red card as asylum seekers, because if they





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go to a work station, to the place of exploitation, they are legalized and can work, and they are not fined, which you know that after a certain amount and a certain number of people, it is no longer an administrative or labor infraction and becomes a criminal offense of 318 and following of the Penal Code, isn't it? Crimes against workers' rights.

So, that is the first handicap that we have.

XF36. Expert

On other occasions, trust-building strategies are determined by the intervention approach and are related to the way in which professionals' approach certain questions to obtain information about the possible trafficking situation of the person being assisted. This may mean that the detection processes take longer, or that not all the data that could be of interest are collected, which has a negative impact on the concordance between the records of persons detected as victims and those identified:

It is very violent. That is, if you want to establish trust with that person, if you start asking, asking, asking, asking, asking, asking, that connection is broken, because that woman is already distrustful, because she thinks: "Why are you asking me so much?" or "How much do you want to know? So, of course, with those who report there is no problem, and we know all their information, but those who do not report, well, it is more delicate because you cannot demand information, information, because in the end they do not understand why you want that information, and then, distrust.

E11. NGO

Similarly, intervention tools are developed for the **indirect detection** of indicators, although it is common that detections do not lead to formal identification by the authorities due to the absence of self-identification as victims, especially in contexts where the situation of exploitation has not yet arisen. In this sense, the detection work of the entities is focused on prevention, but not on the formal identification process, which explains, on the other hand, the difference in the detection and identification records:

(...) we have ended up designing a very reductionist dynamic, technically speaking. But we put an image, a pictogram of (...) all the reasons for international protection there, to identify them. And we also put exploitation. "None of you were never in a house in Morocco where you were told you were going to work for five hours, but you had to work for this?". And we put it all out with pictograms. "None of you were in your country and somebody said to you, 'You want to get to Morocco? I'll pay for your ticket, and when you get there, I'll pay you back.'" "None of you...?" And all of them say: "no, no, I have, I have." And they generate a little bit of debate (...) This works very well. We have quite a lot of identification after that, which does not usually come to an end, but at least they are people who ask for an individual intervention, after that dynamic, to say, "I want to talk about this."

F24. Focus group

The consulted NGOs affirmed that, in the process of referral by the entities for the formal identification of the victims, the component of their willingness and consent is essential. The main objective of these organizations is to care for the victims, to avoid re-victimization due to exposure to traumatic event, is usually one of the main lines of

intervention. For this reason, many of the victims detected by the organizations do not go through formal identification, since, if the victim does not want to do so, the organization limits itself to accompanying her without reporting her. In this sense, priority is given to preserving the bond of trust between the professionals and the victim, since this is the basis for the possibility of success of the entire intervention plan carried out with the victim:

Here we have all the detection dates and these columns are empty. What does that mean? That the woman has not wanted to be referred to law enforcement agencies for identification. So, if you do not want to and I do not have your express consent (...) because you are at risk, because your family is threatened, for whatever reason (...), I am not going to communicate your case to anyone. (...) If you want, we refer, and then the result can be positive or negative, you can be identified or not you are not identified.

E1. NGO

One of the interviewees explains one of the main challenges of the trafficking phenomenon in Spain, that is, the difference in objectives among the agents involved in the detection, identification, care and protection of victims.

At the social level, entities can informally detect the victim if he or she meets a series of indicators that point to the fact that he or she may be a potential victim of trafficking. However, at the legal level, sufficient evidence based on the provisions of article 177 bis of the Penal Code is required for the person to be considered a victim. Additionally, in these cases the law requires the victim to testify and file a complaint in order to initiate criminal proceedings, and for the proceedings to continue, there must be sufficient procedural evidence to prove the perpetration of the criminal acts:

(...) sometimes there may be a police investigation, a police report, but the crime cannot be linked to specific persons. Therefore, the accusatory principle cannot be exercised, a criminal proceeding cannot be initiated. At other times it is possible to investigate, but (...) it is not possible to determine who the perpetrators are, because they disappear. And other times the women cannot even facilitate the initiation of an investigation.

XF36. Expert

The legal professionals interviewed noted the difficulty of initiating criminal prosecution or criminal proceedings when there is no known perpetrator of the crime or when the victim does not file a complaint. This is due to the way the legal system is structured in Spain and its role as prosecutor of crime. The Criminal Procedure Law is based on the principle of culpability, which seeks to prosecute the perpetrator of the crime, and also requires that the affected person initiate the procedure through a complaint.

This implies a differentiation between the objectives and protection of professionals in the social and legal sectors, since social entities offer care to the victim when they observe indicators with or without a statement from the victim, and with knowledge or lack of knowledge of the perpetrator of the acts.

One of the advances that has attempted with the detection and identification of victims of trafficking, in terms of their access to rights, is the system of **administrative certification** that was implemented through the Resolution of July 7, 2022, of the Secretary of State for Equality and Gender Violence, which publishes the Agreement of the Sectorial Conference on Equality of May 27, 2022, regarding the administrative



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certification of the status of victims of human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation and its Annexes I and II. This system is based on the fact that some entities providing care to victims of trafficking, determined by the Ministry of Equality and the competent autonomous authorities, can draw up a report on the detection of indicators through which the competent authorities issue an administrative certification stating the victim status of the person in question. The purpose of the certification is to facilitate the victim's access to specialized support resources without the need for the authorities to formally identify the victim:

This year, promoted by the Ministry of Equality, the certification for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, developed under Organic Law 10/2022 for Integral Guarantee of Sexual Freedom, has been put into practice. Because the previous regulatory framework at the national level, which was Organic Law 1/2004, did not include trafficking and sexual exploitation as a form of gender-based violence, since under that law only gender-based violence arising from a partner or ex-partner is considered gender-based violence. Therefore, with the new regulatory framework established by Organic Law 10/2022, at the national level, this system of administrative certification (...) has been implemented, which basically consists of two phases: a previous detection report (...) and (...) the phase of administrative certification (...) by the corresponding public administration, which basically will be in the area of the autonomous community of Galicia, the information centers for women, but also, any other basic social services, especially at the municipal level, but also health services, etc. And with this certification, these women will be able to have access to the entire system of resources provided at the regional and national level. In the case of the Autonomous Region, for all resources related to gender violence, and in the case of the nation, those recognized by Organic Law 10/2022.

F25. Focus group

At the time of the fieldwork that supports the qualitative dimension of this report, the approval of the administrative certification system for victims was relatively recent, and its level of implementation depended on the interviews and the autonomous community in question. As a result, it is not possible to draw conclusions from the experts' testimony regarding the effectiveness of the system. It is relevant to mention, however, that the entities consulted that had already had contact with the certification process reported some difficulties in relation to the poor efficiency of the system, the heterogeneity in its application depending on the autonomous community, the lack of training of the staff in charge of issuing the certification, the type of rights to which this certification facilitates access and the profile of the victim served by the measure. This is exemplified by one of the key informants:

(...) we find communities where (...) the official does not have specific knowledge of trafficking, does not have specific training (...) in a single interview, you cannot determine that a woman you do not know is a victim of trafficking. So, this is done precisely to avoid this, an entity that is the one that has accompaniment and monitoring makes a report because they know and know her history and there are sufficient indications to know that this person, this woman, has been a victim of trafficking. Well, there are (...) public administrations that, in addition to the report, require a specific interview with the woman. Therefore, this measure is not achieving what it is intended to achieve.

X19. Expert

Formal identification by the **State Security Forces and Corps** is usually initiated through the detection of a victim of trafficking by the entities or through the framework of a police investigation and usually requires the testimony of the victim, who is given a 90-day reflection period in which she is accompanied by specialized entities to decide whether or not she wishes to proceed with a complaint:

(...) in almost all cases it is prompted because a possible victim of human trafficking has been detected. And either she wants to report or at least she wants to tell what has happened to her, right? Well, in the article they have a reflection period of at least 90 days, in which they can decide whether to report or not. Regardless of that, we put on the record what has been said and initiate an investigation into it. Or an investigation may be initiated because of information that particularly relevant, from the point of view of police interest, and even if we do not have an identified victim of trafficking, we will investigate that as human trafficking, with the means we have. And from there, we can derive that victim are identified.

E5. Public organization

These initial identifications can take place in key areas such as **airports**. In these cases, it is important to have protocols for the identification of trafficking victims that allow for the observation of indicators. At Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas airport, this identification protocol is applied in collaboration with an NGO, as a social entity present in the vicinity for issues related to applications for International Protection. At other airports, such as Josep Tarradellas Barcelona-El Prat, there is no specific protocol in place for the identification of victims of trafficking, but officials working at the border are trained to detect possible victims and initiate procedures, in collaboration with the specialized State Security Forces and Corps, to proceed with identification:

Barajas is where you are going to get more information because it does have a protocol with [NGOs], which has been in place for some time now (...) At El Prat (...) there is detection by the officials who are the filters, (...) who are in charge of people entering, leaving, checking whether they meet the requirements to enter the country or not. Many times, they call us with certain suspicions that some people are coming, that they believe they may be victims of human trafficking. Especially in the case of sexual exploitation (...) of women from South America.

XF32. Expert

Another key scenario where identification as a victim of trafficking can begin is at the **place where the situation of exploitation occurs**, for example, in clubs where prostitution is practiced. The organizations interviewed approach prostitution areas with mobile units in order to detect possible trafficking situations. The mobile units go to street areas, industrial estates, clubs or apartments where prostitution takes place and offer comprehensive information and guidance, psychological and gynecological care, among other actions, helping to break the isolation in which women in prostitution are immersed. These identifications can be carried out in collaboration with organizations such as the Labor and Social Security Inspectorate or specialized entities:

We carry out controls in places where prostitution is practiced. We have a census of all the clubs, who is the owner, who is in charge of that club, the girls who identify themselves as prostitutes, “the ones who identify themselves the next time, we are going to do it”. We are updating it, so we can also see if the girls are moving from one

club to another. And we are working in that sense. And we also carry out controls, sometimes in collaboration with the labor inspectorate, in places where labor exploitation can happen.

XF35. Expert

At the local level (...) there are human trafficking teams (...) that do proactive work, (...) periodically visiting the premises where prostitution is practiced, premises, etcetera. So, when one of these places is detected, it is called (...) a place where prostitution is practiced. (...) they make contact with sex workers, sex workers, and all of this always with their consent. Information is provided, etc. And we do a little bit of an inspection of whether they are persons that may be at risk.

E5. Public organization

The identification procedure by the State Security Forces and Corps, as has already been explained, is based on the prosecution of the crime, and therefore requires information provided by the victim to be completed. It is in this process of **collaboration on the part of the victim** when the FCSE proceed to register the victim as a victim of trafficking, regardless of whether or not the victim is subsequently identified by a sentence handed down by the Justice Administration:

Then, judicially, this may not be the case; the judge may later reject that she is a victim of trafficking and classify her in a different way. But for us she is already a victim of trafficking, we already count her as such. It may not be so, it may not be a victim of trafficking, it may be a victim of something else, so we would transfer it to another level of investigation. We only have jurisdiction when it is human trafficking.

E5. Public organization



2.4. COORDINATION

The fight against human trafficking in Spain requires close coordination between various institutions involved in the identification and care of victims. This section explores how the different actors studied: social entities, State Security Forces and Corps and the Public Prosecutor's Office, work together to confront this complex problem. Through in-depth qualitative interviews, we identify the main types of coordination that exist, the associated challenges and the effective practices that allow for a rapid and adequate response. Analytically, according to the results, we categorized the different types of coordination into the following: (1) bidirectional coordination, (2) multilevel coordination, (3) operational coordination, (4) informal coordination, (5) strategic coordination, (6) inter-institutional coordination. In addition, we pointed out the need to improve data unification and personnel training to ensure continuous and consistent care for victims.

2.4.1. COORDINATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS

Firstly, from the work described above, the observation corresponds with the interviews that reveal that coordination between the institutions involved in the identification and care of victims of human trafficking is fundamental, but often presents significant challenges. This coordination involves collaboration between social entities, State Security Forces and Corps and the Public Prosecutor's Office, with the common goal of identifying and assisting victims effectively and quickly.





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Regional actions each have a particular performance. In Galicia, for example, an annual meeting is held to evaluate the victim identification protocol, with the participation of social entities, State Security Forces and Corps and the Public Prosecutor's Office. These meetings are essential to ensure that all the acts involved are aligned in their objectives and methods. During these meetings, current procedures are reviewed, areas for improvement are identified and cases and protocols are discussed, allowing for closer and more effective collaboration:

In Galicia, in theory, we should have an annual meeting to evaluate the protocol for the identification of victims of trafficking in which we are the social entities, the State Security Forces and Corps and the Public Prosecutor's Office. These meetings are very noticeable, the movement is very noticeable there because that is where all the NGOs go, so to speak, almost all the State Security Forces and Corps go.

E8. NGO

This protocol establishes efficient two-way communication between NGOs and the police. When an NGO detects a possible victim, it immediately communicates with the police through a formal report or by telephone, which allows for rapid activation of the necessary resources. Similarly, when the police identify a victim, they notify the Equality Secretariat, which in turn contacts NGOs to provide the necessary support, such as psychological or shelter resources. This two-way flow of information ensures that victims receive appropriate attention quickly and efficiently.

Effective coordination is also reflected in the daily practices of the entities involved. For example, NGOs and the police have mechanisms in place to communicate quickly when a potential victim is identified. This level of coordination is fundamental, as it allows for an immediate and adequate response to the needs of the victims. Smooth communication between the Secretariat for Equality, law enforcement agencies and NGOs ensure that all necessary resources are mobilized in an efficient and timely manner.

Another important aspect of coordination is the ability of institutions to share relevant information in a secure and effective manner. The interviews reveal that, although there is a willingness and effort to coordinate, there are still challenges in data unification and protection. Differences in registration systems and the lack of a unified system make it difficult to continuously monitor victims and evaluate the interventions carried out. The creation of shared and accessible databases could significantly improve coordination and case management.

The interviews also revealed that effective coordination depends not only on formal meetings and established protocols, but also on personal relationships and trust among the actors involved. Informal connections and personal knowledge among workers from different institutions can facilitate a quicker and more effective response in emergencies. But this reliance on personal relationships can also be a limitation, as it is not always possible to guarantee that the actors have the same level of commitment and cooperation:

We have a relationship of trust and a very direct relationship with the institutions and this also leads to advances that, if this were not the case, there would be no possibility of making progress. The work of trust and personal relationships is very important, but it is also a limitation because, in the end, people have different degrees of involvement and commitment.

E13. NGO



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Several critical aspects of inter-institutional coordination in the fight against human trafficking are highlighted. A recurring challenge is the lack of homogenization of data among institutions. Each organization manages its own registration systems and criteria for data collection, which can lead to inconsistencies and duplication. For example, a victim identified by an NGO may be registered differently by the Civil Guard, which complicates follow-up and continuity of care.

Another key aspect is the mobility of victims, which often complicates their identification and follow-up. Victims may move between different regions or countries, which makes close coordination between the parties involved essential to prevent them from getting lost in the system or their situation not being effectively addressed. International collaboration and fluid communication between institutions are essential to ensure that victims receive the protection and support they need.

In 90% of the cases, interviews reveal that coordination between institutions is also affected by variability in the training and specialization of personnel. Some members of law enforcement and social entities may not be sufficiently trained to adequately identify and deal with trafficking cases, which may lead to an inadequate or insufficient response. Continuous training and sensitization of personnel in all institutions involved are crucial to improve the effectiveness of coordination.

2.4.2. TYPES OF COORDINATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS

The interviews reveal various types of coordination that are implemented to address human trafficking, each with particular characteristics and approaches. These types of coordination are described below, supported by quotes from the interviews.

2.4.2.1. BIDIRECTIONAL COORDINATION

Bidirectional coordination is that in which communication flows in both directions between social entities and security forces. In Galicia, for example, the Protocol for the Identification of Victims of Trafficking allows direct and agile communication between NGOs and the State Security Forces and Corps. When an NGO detects a possible victim, it immediately communicates with the FCSE, and vice versa, facilitating a rapid and coordinated response:

And then with the police we do it through the (...) Protocol for the Identification of Victims of Trafficking. And that is directly talking to the Secretariat of Equality. It is bidirectional. I mean, if we identify a woman, what we do is that directly with a report, or even by telephone, because in that sense it is very, very agile, it is activated, the police are notified and the previous protocols are made to initiate. When it is the other way around, when it is the police that identifies a situation, the police notify the General Secretariat and the Secretariat immediately notifies us to say that on a certain day at a certain time there is going to be an operation, that we need to activate the psychology resource or the shelter resource, the resource of....It is quite agile.

E8. NGO

2.4.2.2. Multilevel coordination

Another type of coordination is multilevel coordination, which involves collaboration between different levels of government and FCSE. For example, in Malaga, coordination includes both local police and police forces from Madrid and Peru. This multinational collaboration was essential to the successful closure of three brothels in Fuengirola, demonstrating the importance of coordination that transcends national borders¹.

For a whole year we closed three brothels in Fuengirola, they were brothels that connected with Madrid, with police in Peru and with police in Madrid. We made a and so on.

F31. Focus group

2.4.2.3. Operational coordination

Operational coordination refers to the daily practices and procedures established to facilitate cooperation between institutions. An example of this is the practice of notification and activation of resources by the Secretariat for Equality when a victim is identified. This operational coordination ensures that all necessary resources are mobilized in an efficient and timely manner to attend to victims. Beyond the procedure on this identification, it is necessary to keep a record. And it is precisely in this part where some details are recorded; at the moment of that detection which in many cases comes from different types of trafficking:

The same person (...) may have been a victim of sex trafficking and labor trafficking or for other purposes. I always go a little bit to the basic example, but this can be extrapolated to any purpose. In fact, last year, if I remember correctly, and this is in the statistics, there was the same person, the same victim who was identified as a victim of sex trafficking and as a victim of labor trafficking, being the same person. So, if you add up the totals, it seems that we do not know how to add, that we have made a mistake, or that we have made a mistake, which we also try not to do, but we are also human and it can happen. And that is why, it is because the same person has been a victim of various types of crime.

E3. Public organization

2.4.2.4. Informal coordination

In addition to formal coordination, the interviews highlight the importance of informal coordination based on personal relationships and trust among the actors involved. Informal connections and personal knowledge among the workers of the different institutions facilitate a faster and more effective emergency response, although this dependence may be a limitation in terms of consistency and long-term sustainability.

1 Released 7 victims of sexual exploitation drugged in a brothel Fuengirola. Available at: <https://www.diario-sur.es/sucesos/liberadas-victimas-explotacion-20221207152739-nt.html>



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2.4.2.5. Strategic coordination



Strategic coordination involves the joint planning and execution of long-term strategies to combat human trafficking. In Galicia, annual meetings to evaluate the victim identification protocol are an example of this coordination. During these meetings, current procedures are reviewed, areas for improvement are identified and future strategies are discussed to improve the effectiveness of interventions.



2.4.2.6. Inter-institutional coordination



Finally, inter-agency coordination refers to collaboration between various organizations and agencies, including NGOs, CSFs and government entities. In many cases, this coordination is essential to overcome the challenges presented by the mobility of victims and differences in registration and data protection systems. The creation of shared and accessible databases, along with greater standardization of registration procedures, is a frequent recommendation to improve this coordination:



We have been saying that data should be collected in a coordinated, unified manner and with common parameters for many years, because it is impossible to know what the reality is, not only in terms of victims of trafficking but also in terms of victims of gender-based violence in general in the country. We are unable to say what is the situation of inequality experienced by women because we have thousands of different databases with different criteria, which means that the problem is diluted and above all that it is not seen, that it is not made visible, because things that are not statistically proven do not appear, what is not reported (...) does not exist.

E4. Public organization

2.4.3. CONTINUITY IN THE TREATMENT OF CASES BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS

Continuity in the treatment of human trafficking cases between different institutions is a crucial aspect to ensure comprehensive and sustained care for victims. The following is a description of the findings related to continuity in the treatment of cases, supported by quotations from the interviews.

2.4.3.1. Case tracking

A major concern is the ongoing follow-up of cases when the victim is identified. In many instances, the lack of a unified data system makes it difficult to track victims when they move between different regions or when they change identities. This can result in duplicate records or loss of critical information, negatively affecting the continuum of care:

What happens to us is that there is so much mobility that we lose data and data is crossed and data is duplicated (...) in terms of places of prostitution, women who go from an apartment to a club, (...) because in Madrid they work in one way and in Burgos they work in another (...) because in Madrid they work in one way and in Burgos they work in another (...) called differently, isn't it?

E2. NGO

2.4.3.2. Mobility challenges

Victim mobility presents a significant challenge to treatment continuity. Victims of trafficking move between regions or countries, which can make it difficult to continuously follow up on their cases. The interviews underscore the need for close collaboration and fluid communication between all parties involved to avoid victims getting lost in the system or their situation not being effectively addressed:

So, when we enter the premises on the first two or three visits, we pay close attention to the type of security they have, how many people are there, whether there are security guards, whether there are men, whether there are no men, whether there are prostitutes, whether there are security cameras. We look a little bit at the security methods that the premises have, because that gives us clues to know the type of establishment there is. An apartment where there is a woman prostituting herself is not the same as an apartment where there is a woman with a friend, or where there are situations of overcrowding where we can find up to 20 people, not counting clubs, right? Right now, I am talking about apartments, or well, villas that have several floors. Women live in that, in a situation of overcrowding and then, well, they attend to the people when they arrive in another series of rooms. And maybe when you come back, they are no longer the same.

E2 NGOS

2.4.3.4. Shared databases

The creation of shared databases accessible to all institutions involved is a recommended solution to improve continuity in the treatment of cases. Differences in the current registration systems make it difficult to evaluate interventions and the continuous follow-up of victims. A unified system would allow for better coordination and more consistent treatment of cases, ensuring that victims receive the necessary attention in a sustained manner:

So, what also happens to us is that (...) when there is that geographical mobility we lose a lot of information.

E13. NGO

2.4.3.5. Training and sensitization

Finally, continuous training and sensitization of personnel in all the institutions involved are crucial to improve continuity in the treatment of cases. Variability in staff training and specialization can lead to inadequate or insufficient response, affecting continuity of care. Training staff on unified procedures and protocols can help ensure consistent and continuous care for victims of trafficking:

They are part of our training and awareness-raising project for schools, which is called Human Rights classroom. So, we have eight thematic classrooms, which are free of charge for schools, and which we provide throughout the entire map, well, nationally, through the hiring of experts, who travel to schools or online. They give training/sensitization on a specific topic.

E14. Professional Association

2.5. NATIONAL DYNAMICS

The phenomenon of human trafficking manifests itself differently in different parts of the country, taking into consideration the different dynamics and characteristics within Spain.

Spain plays a relevant role in the phenomenon of human trafficking at the European level, given that, on the one hand, it is the place where the exploitation phase takes place, especially trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and labor exploitation in the field of agriculture. On the other hand, it is a place of transit, sometimes as a point of entry to Europe, within the routes used by the networks. In both cases, organizations and experts detect different dynamics and trends related to the different phases of the trafficking phenomenon: recruitment, transfer and exploitation.

2.5.1. DYNAMICS DETECTED ON THE UPTAKE PHASE

This research has detected several trends related to the recruitment of human trafficking victims who are transferred to Spain or who transit the national territory. On the one hand, it has been mentioned that the use of recruitment techniques by trafficking networks can be linked to spiritual beliefs and traditions, such as, in the case of victims of Nigerian origin, extortion can be linked to the voodoo religion. Experiences are also reported, especially in the case of victims from Eastern European countries such as Romania, which uses the *lover boy* technique, whereby the victim is subjected to deception by the trafficker, who pretends to have a romantic relationship with her.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning some more recent recruitment dynamics of victims or potential victims of trafficking. One of these, for example, is the recruitment of women from Latin American countries for the purpose of sexual exploitation (including Venezuela, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Brazil and Paraguay) who are already residents of Spain and for whom the networks do not carry out a transfer that involves crossing borders. In these cases, the networks take advantage of the financial vulnerability in which potential victims may find themselves as a result of employment irregularity, with the economic needs that this implies, to make offers of loans. These loans generate a debt for the women that they will be forced to repay to the network under abusive conditions and through the forced exercise of prostitution. Also, in the





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case of Latin American victims, recruitment dynamics have been detected through family ties, for example, women who were victims of trafficking later play the role of traffickers with other women members of their own family and arrange the transfer from their country of origin to Spain.

Another most recently detected recruitment strategy is related to women from Sub-Saharan African countries who resort to trafficking networks as the only way to migrate to Europe. Given the absence of regular migration channels, fleeing situations of gender-based violence and vulnerability result to fleeing the country of origin, which makes them eligible for International Protection. In this context of vulnerability, trafficking networks recruit through deception and false promises offering an alternative way to reach Europe:

(...) what we have seen when working on the asylum stories, because we go a lot into the causes that have motivated the person to leave the country, (...) is that they see going through the trafficking network as the only way out, as if it were a toll. They have no other way to leave their countries, so they see it as something they have to go through.

F27. Focus group

2.5.2 DYNAMICS DETECTED DURING THE RELOCATION PHASE

A widely detected trend is that Spain functions especially as a transit point for the networks, which operate in different regions of the national territory during the movement phase. Border territories with the presence of migratory flows from Sub-Saharan Africa highlight this reality. The recruitment of possible victims is transferred through the Atlantic route, through the Canary Islands, or Ceuta and Melilla. This presents a great challenge for the intervention entities, who work in a place of transit where the victims tend to be in the initial stages of the trafficking process, without having reached the exploitation phase. These profiles also show tendencies of recruitment at origin or in transit:

(...) And then we identify, above all, if there are very unlikely things or if there are plans that are already very direct. Sometimes they are more open (...) “A guy who wrote me on Facebook last week is the one who is waiting for me in France. I don’t know him at all, but he says I can marry him when I get there”. So, we open up the possible trafficking victim *check*, right?

F24. Focus group

As previously explained, the reality that portrays victims or possible victims of trafficking in Spain as a transit territory presents difficulties for intervention by social entities and, therefore, for detection, since it is common that the victims have not yet been subjected to the exploitation phase. Some organizations also point out that this lack of knowledge of the reality faced by victims and the lack of real information on their situation for experts affects the ability of organizations to carry out their prevention and protection activities:

“I make all this effort and I know (...) what I’m going for. Why am I going to stay here? What are you offering me, that maybe in 7 months you will give me a work permit? You are not giving me any help”, (...) and nobody wants Spain () because people want to go



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to other countries, they want to go to Finland, they want to go to Norway, they want to go to Canada? So, I think there is a mixture of pressures that we don't know about, we are not aware of threatening situations, and we are not really offering real what they need ().

F28. Focus group

In line with this story, it is worth highlighting the reality detected by the entities of many women who, during the migratory route to Spain, are victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual and/or labor exploitation, highlighting the profile of women from sub-Saharan Africa who are exploited as domestic servants in Morocco. It is this same profile that presents indicators of being in Spain in transit to third countries, where, foreseeably, they will be subjected to exploitation. More recently, however, indicators of exploitation have also been detected in Spain:

The ones we identified the easiest are those who were already in a situation of exploitation in Morocco and the family they were working for is the one that facilitates their transfer, because they have been recommended by another family here in Spain. (...) Mostly, we have talked a lot about prostitution. The figures in Ivory Coast, which has been the largest number of women we have had, is of labor exploitation in domestic service. And the figures here, in the last month, () show there is no woman that I have received right now who is not working in domestic service. And that's super unusual.

F24. Focus group

2.5.3. DYNAMICS DETECTED ON THE EXPLOITATION PHASE

In Spain, however, networks also operate in the operational phase. In other entry routes, such as airports, the actors involved detect different dynamics that operate according to the levels of detection and identification or other circumstances. In general, one of the trends noted is that the majority of trafficking victims entering the country through airports are of Latin American origin, as opposed to other profiles from Asia, Africa or Eastern Europe. One of the trends detected in the behavior of the networks is the transfer of victims to Spain through large airports, such as Barajas or El Prat, despite the fact that the place of exploitation is closer to other airports:

(...) now most of the entries we are not registering them directly by Vigo, but by Barajas.

XF38. Expert

However, the use of secondary airports within the Schengen area, which has a lower level of police control, has also been detected for this purpose, such as Orly airport in France, from where the victims are subsequently transported by land to Spain for exploitation.

Despite the trends detected in the different territories throughout the country (for example, the high presence of labor exploitation in the agricultural sector in some regions of Andalusia or others developed in section 2.6. Local or regional dynamics), there are also certain dynamics that operate in a more or less generalized manner throughout the country. It is worth highlighting the consequences of the SARS-CoV-2



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pandemic as an event that affected many aspects of the phenomenon of human trafficking in Spain. In addition to the impact, it had on some regions, it is necessary to mention the effects it had at the national level on the reality of sexual exploitation linked to trafficking. In general, the number of inspections carried out by the State Security Forces and Corps decreased in places where prostitution is practiced. Consequently, the number of identifications of trafficking victims was reduced. In addition, as also pointed out by entities that intervene with victims and survivors of trafficking, the phenomenon began to become more invisible, with victims moving from working in places such as nightclubs or on public streets to private homes or through social networks:

During the pandemic (...) there was no activity in the streets, the number of inspections and people inspected decreased, the number of victims decreased, everything decreased. Now, in the data that we are already considering for 2022, which is still provisional, we have already detected that we have returned to pre-pandemic values. With the exception that we have observed (...) the decreasing trend in inspections (...) from traditional places where prostitution is practiced, such as brothels, etc., to more invisible places, such as private homes or tourist rentals, or to more invisible places, such as private homes or tourist rentals through communication technologies, ICTs.

E3. Public organization

In some cases, these trends that emerged in the aftermath of the pandemic remained after the most critical moments of the health crisis, up to the present day.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the effects of the Spanish legislative framework on the phenomenon of trafficking. One example of this is the Organic Law 10/2022, which discusses the comprehensive guarantee of sexual freedom, also popularly known as the Law of the Only Yes is Yes. This law includes in its wording, in Article 11 on Prevention and awareness in the advertising field, the consideration as illicit advertising that which promotes prostitution, modifying in the third final Provision the General Law 34/1988 on Advertising. In this context, adaptation dynamics have recently been detected on the part of the exploitation networks who, in order to adjust to this new regulatory framework, simply change the location of the web pages where they advertise the prostitution “services” offered and transfer them to third countries, or modify the content of the advertisements so that the advertising is less explicit, thus circumventing the legal limitations:

(...) the law is made, the trap is made, that's how it is. So, either the headquarters of the website is in Portugal, for example, and it is the same website, the same ad and the same apartment (...); or ads of “hey, I'm a naughty girl and we can meet to play whatever you want” (...); or ads of “hey, I'm a naughty girl and we can meet to play whatever you want” (...) you want. There they say nothing, but they are saying everything.

F23. Focus group

From the point of view of Spain as a territory where sexual exploitation takes place, it is necessary to look at the role played by prostitution consumers. The trends detected in relation to who constitutes this group of people are male, both nationals and tourists (especially relevant in areas with high rates of tourism), of all ages. This profile, according to the experts, tends to change only in terms of the age range of consumers, depending



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on whether the operating environment is a male or female one. is in large cities or more rural areas:

Because, surprisingly, even though it may not seem so (there are many people who do not think so), there are many young people who go to the clubs, who are consumers of prostitution. And maybe in rural areas they are older. But we are talking about the age of the clients, not about anything else. In other words, the exercise is the same.

E11. NGO

Spain's geographical position next to a country that, like France, has opted for the abolition of prostitution, means that Spain has traces of a sex tourism destination:

Of course, right now the French are crossing the border (...) we have the companies working in the Basque Country, and Irun is a hive of activity right now.

F25. Focus group

This is how non-governmental organizations express the current movement in the search for services.

2.5.4. DESCRIPTION OF THE VICTIM

The different ways in which trafficking networks operate and the complexity of the phenomenon are evident in the diversity of profiles of victims and survivors. From the interviews conducted with organizations and experts, it is clear that they usually work with young cisgender women, with the presence of some key nationalities varying according to the geographic area and time. Most of the organizations providing care to survivors of human trafficking are specialized in the phenomenon of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation:

We have worked, above all, with women, with partners in gender violence (...) we do look at the data and sometimes it seems that the phenomenon changes a little, (...) but the truth is that sex trafficking continues to be so important that I have never really looked at other possibilities.

X20. Expert

The assumptions that can be made and the roles that Spain plays in the lives of the victims are multiple:

It can be a woman (...) who has been a victim of trafficking in her country of origin, and who arrives in Spain as a destination country, perpetuating this situation of trafficking in the migration route, Algeria-Morocco, if she comes from Africa. Or a woman who leaves her country of origin, (...) not having been exploited. She may have left because of an asylum situation (...) out of well-founded fear and may have been recruited along





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the migration route. Or she may have been captured in her country of origin, which is what made her come, right? And the exploitation may have materialized in the country of origin, migratory path, in Spain, or it may not have materialized yet, and Spain may be the country of destination, which is what we find in Barajas, or Spain may even be a transit country, with destination to another country of the European Union, outside.

XF36. Expert

In general, the experts agree that the victims have a profile of special vulnerability that derives from different intersections: their migratory status, their socioeconomic condition or being a victim of discrimination in their country of origin, belonging to the LGTBIQ+ group, their age, gender, ethnicity, language barriers, etc. One of the risk factors detected, which in turn is intertwined with many other realities mentioned above, is the administrative irregularity associated with a migration process. This administrative irregularity can occur in the case of people who have been transferred by networks to Spain through irregular channels and have not been able to find a job.

In the case of persons who, for various reasons, are in an irregular administrative situation in Spain which has laid the groundwork for the networks to carry out the recruitment in Spain, the cross-border transfer not always part of the trafficking process:

Certain women who are brought to the country, or not brought to the country, such as sub-Saharan women, have elements of refuge because they are fleeing mutilation, conflict, multiple forms of violence, forced migration, and more. Additionally, many of these victims have no access to resources, which forces them to leave with one hand in front and the other behind, in countries crossing borders, alone or alone with their daughter. Due to this, many times the networks no longer finance the trips, instead they wait for you to arrive and if you arrive alive, they take you to the center, because you are still a poor, black woman, without papers, with responsibilities and with many difficulties to find a dignified life in Europe. Then they will take advantage of this vulnerability if you have survived.

E1. NGO

In this line, in which the trafficking situation is linked to a migratory process, different dynamics are detected according to nationalities. On the one hand, there is talk of women from various sub-Saharan African countries; traditionally, the profile of sub-Saharan women detected as victims of trafficking was from Nigeria. However, in territories of irregular boat arrivals, such as the southern border, other potential victims with trafficking indicators of nationalities other than Nigerian are detected, especially Ivory Coast:

There is a flow of women from the Ivory Coast that must be explained in terms of trafficking, because the number of women from the Ivory Coast passing through here with very unspecific plans, with a very specific objective in France, but at the same time unspecific, with a great deal of implausibility in the route's trajectory, has been absurd. They do verbalize that they have been taken in a network from their country of origin to Morocco but then released in Morocco.

F24. Focus group

In line with this **majority profile of young cisgender women** identified as victims of trafficking **for sexual exploitation**, it is worth noting that a dynamic recently detected by experts is the upward trend of nationalities from Latin American countries among the victims, and a decrease in others. The nationalities detected that stand out are



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Paraguyan, Colombian, Venezuelan, Nicaraguan, Dominican, Brazilian and Argentinean women:

In two years, we have attended 1231 women and the truth is that most of them were from Latin American countries. The profile of sub-Saharan women has reached a point. The nationality most attended by the team has been Colombia, followed by Paraguay (...) most of them are between Venezuela, Paraguay, Colombia. That triangle.

F31. Focus group

Administrative irregularity, in addition to implying a higher level of vulnerability that favors the recruitment process by the networks, can be a means through which people remain in a situation of exploitation, insofar as access to the regularized labor market is not an option for them people in an irregular situation, thus perpetuating their permanence in the networks due to the absence of alternatives:

Almost all of them are women who do not have regular documentation. So, of course, they are the ones who have the hardest time finding another job.

F25. Focus group

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the reality of migration and socio-economic needs constitute a situation of need that pushes women into human trafficking and exploitation networks. The staff of the entities emphasizes that, with regard to this profile of women victims of sexual exploitation, it is important to keep a broad view of the reality that affects their lives as migrant women, which is very different, in most cases, from what they had in their countries of origin:

Most of the women (...) that my team attends to, have not practiced prostitution in their countries of origin (...). It is also a graph that is increasing, women who are more prepared in their country of origin: women with high school graduates, women with university degrees, with jobs, with companies, that things... Well, a country, for example, that has been destroyed, Venezuela, Venezuelan women, educated, women, who arrive here and have to face the prostitution system.

F25. Focus group

Within this majority profile, however, it is relevant to note the need for entities to address personal particularities, as well as other mobility dynamics in terms of origin, migratory routes and future plans in order to improve the detection of trafficking victims and work on the prevention of the phenomenon:

(...) there they had the image or stereotype that the victims of trafficking were the Latin American women arriving from Colombia and Venezuela, and that the sub-Saharan women arriving on patera boats were not victims of trafficking. And this is what the interlocutor told you just like that. So, you say, if we assume that the person who is the point of reference within [FCSE] is not even open....

X18. Expert

() in trafficking there is a clear foreign bias. That is to say, people only identify trafficking when it is a person who has come from abroad. In other words, internal trafficking costs us a lot. And then, in the end, as the raids that are carried out to free the victims and catch the perpetrators are always in prostitution contexts, all the rest that are not

in the context of brothels or apartments are lost. In other words, there are other places or other situations, but (.) we cannot see what goes beyond that. But it is logical, nobody has told us, hey, this boy who lives in your center, who is 16 years old and his parents are from the Dominican Republic, but he has the nationality, he may also be being exploited, but it does not enter our heads, right?

E12. NGO

One of the problems faced in addressing the phenomenon of trafficking in relation to who the victims are has to do with the **invisibility of people excluded from the majority profile**. For this reason, it is important to incorporate into the fight against human trafficking the consideration of victims beyond female victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, despite the fact that this profile constitutes the majority. The recognition of other realities (underage victims of trafficking, transgender, cisgender adult men...) is the first step towards improved detection and identification and, therefore, towards combating the phenomenon of trafficking in all its forms. An example of this is the trafficking of adult males:

(...) we have a kind of image formed, so (...) maybe we are leaving aside other situations that are not so normal in the area of trafficking and are going unnoticed, right? (...) male trafficking (...) is a very difficult context to identify, or to detect signs, because in many cases the exploitation has not occurred, right? So, what is valued is the person's situation of vulnerability, the story. Well, if a group of 10 women arrive and all of them have the same story, the routes they follow. And in the end, men, if there is no history or we do not have the context of what routes they are taking, what is happening, well, of course, we do not have that context we are awakened by these alerts.

X18. Expert

Another reality that may go unnoticed is that of child and adolescent victims of trafficking, especially when this category does not correspond to girl victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, a case in which there is some visibility. However, it is common for this victim profile to be associated exclusively with girls of migrant origin who are unaccompanied in Spanish territory, although it is a reality that also affects **national girls**. As for the **sons and daughters of women victims of trafficking**, their right to be cared for and protected as victims is also recognized:

With respect to this reality of minors (...) last year there were 3 Spanish girls (), girls who were institutionalized in juvenile centers, who were already starting their prostitution there, and who (...) at the age of 18 leave the juvenile center, are captured by a trafficking network. (...) The rest of the minors we serve are the sons and daughters of women [victims of trafficking].

X19. Expert

The situation of **unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents** is extremely vulnerable, especially in the case of those who are exposed to trafficking or exploitation networks after leaving the shelters. The lack of recognition of boys as victims of trafficking means that there are fewer resources aimed at attending to this profile, since the specific resources managed by the associations that attend to child victims of human trafficking are aimed at taking in girls:



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(...) gender bias means that there are also boys, that you will have to look at different indicators than girls, but there are also boys. That is another thing, maybe it would also be interesting to be able to see the difference in treatment and scope of regulations with boys and girls. Girls are more protected. That is very evident. For boys there are no specialized resources for trafficking issues. That is to say, they are not seen as victims of exploitation, because also a little bit because of what I am saying, because maybe they are boys who are on the street, many times, and it is understood that they prostitute themselves because they want to, so there is not as much protective look as there is for girls.

E12. NGO

The presence of transgender people, especially women, among the victims of human trafficking is detected with relative frequency in the context of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Although organizations and experts mostly deal with cisgender women, the existence of transgender trafficking victims is a recognized reality. This reality is characterized by situations of special vulnerability due to different factors: it is common for transgender women, migrants and victims of trafficking to have suffered gender discrimination in their countries of origin, thus increasing the vulnerability that the networks use to recruit them. This discrimination may also have occurred in very close contexts such as the family, favoring flight to Spain through trafficking networks as a way out of their situation:

(...) in their country they have received a lot of rejection, they are a very vulnerable group (...) the mafias use this vulnerability to offer them: “come to Spain, you will work as a waitress, you will work as a beautician, you will work as a hairdresser”, and they, of course, see the sky open, and say “well look, this is the opportunity of my life, to leave my country, where I am suffering rejection”, where some of them have even seen how have killed a partner or been assaulted.

E11. NGO

According to the organizations that assist these victims, the situations they experience in the context of prostitution within trafficking networks are also determined by their gender identity and expression, which also become causes of discrimination in Spain. As a result, they are exposed to particularly violent situations. In addition, trends have been detected in the practice of prostitution by this profile of victims, with their exploitation usually taking place in homes rather than in clubs, making it difficult for experts and authorities to gain access to them and, therefore, to identify them:

(...) in the exercise of prostitution as well, that is to say, they are the ones who receive the most verbal and psychological violence, as well as physical violence, because of the contempt and stigma that exists in around transgender women.

X19. Expert

(...) you are not going to find a trans woman in a club, you always find them in apartments. So, as I said, apartments are more invisible, women are invisible, and anything can happen there. So that is one of the handicaps, if she is a trans woman and does not work, for example, in a public place, such as a club, then for them it is an aggravated problem that you know is more difficult to detect.

E11. NGO



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Similarly, organizations are detecting an increase in the number of boys and girls who openly identify themselves as transgender. They point out that some of them enter Spanish territory with the aim of living their gender freely and, potentially, transitioning, and do so through human trafficking networks for the purpose of sexual exploitation:

(...) we have just encountered, for example, children coming from Morocco to transit here. There we can activate international protection for the whole family. Or the kids coming from Pakistan. The kids are coming from Pakistan, transit, same thing. Indian girls it's the same thing, right? Girls to transit to boys. These cases, of course, are not victims of trafficking, but in order to get here they have been, they had to be in a network, to get them here (...), they justify all the suffering of the prostitution network in which they have had to derive during this process, because "what they have had to go through" I wanted to get here.

F26. Focus group

It should be noted that there are also cisgender adult males among the victims of human trafficking, especially with regard to labor exploitation (the case of migrants in a situation of exploitation in the agricultural sector in many areas of Spanish territory is illustrative of this reality) or exploitation for the commission of crimes. In these cases, male victims of trafficking are also deprived of assistance and protection resources even when they are identified as such:

(...) they brought them from Pakistan to Spain, and as they could not finish paying the debt, they started in the Raval (...) as lateros (...). They sell cans of beer (...) and hashish (...). And in the end, they ended up in the narco-flats there in the Raval (...) to finish paying off the debt they had (...). Tomorrow I go into a prostitution apartment and take out six girls, and I do like this, and I have ten beds for them. And tomorrow I go into an apartment and take out two men who are exploited for labor, and I'm going to take them to my house, because there are no resources for men.

XF32. Expert

2.5.5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRAFFICKING, TRAFFICKING VICTIM, PURPOSE OF TRAFFICKING, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The complexity of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, as well as its approach within the regulatory framework, means that entities find it difficult to determine whether the situation that a potential victim is experiencing or the indicators that he or she presents are constituent elements of a situation of trafficking in human beings, exploitation or neither.

In six of the interviews conducted during the research with expert staff and employees of the entities, concern arose about the difficulties in detection due to the complexity of the phenomenon of trafficking and its state of permanent change. This evolution implies that professionals in contact with potential victims should be aware of the trends occurring at any given moment, so that they can be sensitive to the indicators of vulnerability that may occur and adapt their work strategies according to the reality of each victim:

The problem that we are also seeing now, which is also much more complex, of the reality of trafficking, now we see that many women are being trafficked, but then the



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trafficking is later, so it is more difficult, as if that part of the recruitment and the part of the transfer is more diluted. Because many times it is the plan, in fact, we are now with a study, well we are thinking of doing a study with the Colombian women and we are seeing it, women who are being trafficked, we do not see that link when they are trafficked and then they are trafficked, so it is more difficult sexually exploited here in Spain.

E8. NGO

This is especially relevant in that traffickers may be aware of the regulatory frameworks and the punitive burden corresponding to each crime, and therefore adapt their recruitment and exploitation strategies to avoid the implementation of certain elements, thus forcing entities and authorities to adapt their ways of working:

It is also clear that the mafias are evolving, (...) they know perfectly well how to evade a crime so that they are not punished as traffickers (...) What they do is, therefore, to evade a certain typicity of the crime. That is to say, for example, I do not take your passport, I tell you what you are coming for, that is to say, there is a transfer from your country of origin to Spain, but there is consent (...) because I am telling you that you are coming to work as a prostitute and that (...) you are going to incur a debt, because obviously you have no money (...). What happens? That on many occasions this consent is vitiated because they are not told the reality. That is to say, you come to exercise prostitution, but then the conditions in which they come are different from those they are told.

E11. NGO

In addition, this has implications for the official recognition of victims as such. In this exercise of analyzing a situation to determine whether it is a situation of exploitation or trafficking, it is evident that the indicators that mark this difference are difficult to prove in the victim identification process, reflecting the need for homogenization of criteria among the different actors fighting against the phenomenon:

There is a line that is very easily diluted (...). According to the Palermo protocol (...) everything is very specific, but it does not cover all the cases that exist, does it not? Because a woman who is being abused by her ex-partner in her country of origin and decides to come here and believes what someone tells her, even if it is not through coercion and deceit, as typified and structured as the Palermo protocol presents us, we understand that yes, there is a woman who is being a victim, at least of her own precariousness, and that there is someone who is profiting from this need for an alternative life, either because she is escaping from her own precariousness or because she is being forced to leave her country of origin situation, either because he needs to provide for his family.

F25. Focus group

The entities refer that when the situation also involves elements related to the exercise of prostitution, it implies that there are differences between human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual exploitation per se and coerced prostitution. Having the ability to differentiate between these circumstances has implications in terms of access to rights for victims, which derives from their recognition as such:

The difference between trafficking and coercive exploitation and sexual exploitation is clear to us. The other, between coercive and sexual exploitation (...) often overlaps



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us (...). We have difficulties more than anything else with the issue of how to accompany the process of reporting (...) because at the judicial level (...) they give us a lot of obstacles. The police themselves, in the sense that, when we go to report: “puff, but this is not going to go forward because this is not so important, I don’t know what...”. So, although theoretically it is easy to differentiate, in practice it is difficult for us at least, it is very difficult for us.

E8. NGO

In this sense, the circumstances of the victims and the manner in which they relate their circumstances in an identification process determine, in part, the framework of protection that can be applied to them:

(...) she does not see herself as a victim because she has given her consent, because her friend has brought her to help her. In the end she ends up in a club in [a city in the south of Spain], totally exploited, locked up. When she manages to get out, through an entity, she gets out, and they take her to us. She tells us this story and (...) we inform her of all her rights, of the crime of trafficking and everything. And we go with her to the police to report it. What happens? Because she does not identify her friend as part of this network (...) she does not denounce her friend, and so the police dismiss the complaint. Because without the friend, as the key person, who is the one who puts her in contact with all the other networks that end up exploiting her, without the friend, there is no crime of trafficking.

F29. NGO

Other difficulties associated with the description of the crime and the complexity of the phenomenon affecting the reality of individuals are related to situations in which victims present both risk factors and trafficking indicators related to phases prior to those of exploitation. Despite the fact that victims can be considered as such even when exploitation has not occurred, in these cases the work of the agents combating the phenomenon is hindered because self-identification by the victims becomes particularly difficult and, consequently, carrying out prevention work to avoid the consummation of exploitation becomes complicated:

The crime of trafficking in human beings is being treated as a concurrent crime along with the crime of exploitation. It is very difficult to be convicted of trafficking without having consummated the exploitation, but it could be in the event that there were indications that exploitation would occur. Therefore, it is not necessary for the exploitation to be consummated for trafficking to exist.

E15. Public organization

According to the interviews, the organizations and experts speak mainly of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, they also recognize the existence of less visible realities of trafficking, corresponding to **other types of exploitation**: in this sense, the entities interviewed spoke of mixed trafficking, stating that there is a combination of trafficking for sexual and labor exploitation, especially in the area of domestic work. According to the professionals interviewed, these types of trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation imply greater difficulties in the recognition of victims due to greater concealment of the phenomenon, for example, in cases of labor exploitation in the domestic sphere or forced marriages of children and adolescents. Similarly, at least four of the key informants point out the lack of recognition of the



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victims by the authorities in the formal identification processes because this profile does not match the one that is generally recognized:

Because what also happens to us, of course, in terms of the difficulties of identification, is that we are only talking about the purpose of sexual exploitation. In other words, forget about the rest of the reasons for trafficking. I mean, it is impossible to identify someone for begging, for, I don't know, forced marriage, I mean... Well, my experience (...). They say no, directly, police. "But why?" "Oh no, no, no, not this"....

F27. Focus group

There are numerous testimonies from experts on cases of **trafficking for mixed purposes** in which there are elements of sexual exploitation and labor exploitation, especially when the place of exploitation is geographically isolated in the case of agricultural areas, or situations of domestic kidnapping linked to servitude and sexual exploitation. In addition to victims who are exposed to situations of exploitation in Spain, there are also cases of people who have been trafficked on their migratory journey to Spain. Other cases of trafficking for mixed purposes have elements of sexual exploitation and the commission of criminal activities:

I have dealt with cases in which there is a deception in the country of origin, there is an economic transfer with the money of the person residing here. And then there is a kidnapping at the domiciliary level with labor sexual exploitation. In other words, I remember a boy (...). He was very sick inside a domicile (...) with an elderly person who had brought him, and he was in charge of cleaning the house, cooking, having sex, tending the garden. He could not even go out to get his medication (...) This is the most remarkable situation in men, but of this type of home abductions, with various types of exploitation, I have heard quite a few.

F28. Focus group

It should be noted that in cases involving several types of exploitation, priority tends to be given to recognition as a victim of sexual exploitation, and not to other types, because compliance with the requirements for recognition as a victim is more easily attainable than in other types of exploitation. In addition, in these cases, victims may be covered by a gender component that facilitates access to certain protection resources:

(...) the attention that a victim of sexual exploitation may require in terms of recovery may have some specificities that are not those of a victim of labor exploitation. The choice of the qualification (...) that may have the greatest impact on the design of its action plan and program with respect to that victim may seem appropriate, obviously, because resources are limited (...). The specific protocol for the protection and care of victims of sexual violence would be applied to victims of sexual exploitation (...), which is a little more extensive, at least because it is more studied and more developed than that of a victim of labor exploitation or begging, to give an example. Moreover, it is true that victims of sexual exploitation have more resources or the level of care they can receive is being developed.

XF34. Expert

It is pertinent to mention the debate raised by one of the experts interviewed regarding this consideration, because in the case of victims of trafficking for the purpose of

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domestic service labor exploitation, it could also be argued that it has a gender component, since most of the victims of this type of exploitation are women:

Is it that the woman who is recruited to work in the home has no gender component? When probably not only does she work in the home, but she will also? be sexually assaulted. But it is true that less work is done.

XF37. Expert

Among the different types of exploitation used for the purpose of human trafficking is **labor exploitation**. In Spain, labor exploitation is noteworthy, on the one hand, in the agricultural sector and, in the case of women, it usually also has elements of sexual exploitation. On the other hand, there is also labor exploitation in domestic service. It is important to mention that, according to key informants, one of the tools used to detect these cases are labor inspections, when the exploitation occurs in non-domestic work environments. In cases of sexual exploitation or coerced prostitution in clubs, sexual and labor exploitation converge:

And when we talk about trafficking, it is not only sexual exploitation, but also labor exploitation (...), from houses where they work from Monday to Sunday without breaks, and then, in addition, when they get sick (...) they are thrown out on the street, (...) we have been finding this on a regular basis. And, in addition, with salaries of (...) 200, 300 euros per month, in the best of cases. Therefore, the labor exploitation that there is is also brutal in the city.

F30. Focus group





6. RESULTS

The **commission of criminal activities** is another type of exploitation present in the reality of human trafficking in Spain. In this case, it is worth noting that many of the victims are minors who, due to a situation of special vulnerability resulting, for example, from abandonment of shelter resources, are recruited by trafficking networks to engage in small-scale drug trafficking or to engage in the illegal trade. The “retailing”, or for theft or robbery. Some of the means of coercion mentioned as being present in this reality have to do with drug addiction infused by the networks as a method of control. Due to the prejudices associated with unaccompanied foreign children and adolescents in a large part of Spanish public opinion, organizations and experts find it difficult to protect children in these cases, since it is possible that the exercise of these illegal activities is not considered to be the result of having been captured by trafficking and exploitation networks, and they are therefore considered to be criminals rather than victims in this type of situation:

(...) they were two boys, one 16 and the other 12. They ended up committing a crime, a robbery in a shoe store, and they were caught and, of course, the little boy, as he was unimputable due to his age, was sent to a center on the peninsula, but not to a specialized center for victims of trafficking, but rather he was a boy who had a high consumption of substances. So, they took him to a specialized center for behavioral and consumption issues. And on the other hand, the other one stayed (...) in a center for juvenile offenders (...) it was like... And what weighs more? The part that they have committed a crime or the part that...? That is to say, these kids were involved in something that was not... (...) they were being exploited in some way.

E7. NGO

2.5.6. IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTI-TRAFFICKING STAKEHOLDERS

The complexity of the situation of victims and potential victims of trafficking implies the need for training for the detection of vulnerability indicators by the agents involved, even though they are not necessarily experts in human trafficking but in other disciplines. Scenarios such as inter- national airports stand out as key places for detection, which is why entities and experts are working towards improvements through training and protocols. The staff of the Asylum and Refuge Office (OAR), under the Ministry of the Interior, as professionals of International Protection, are also key agents in this aspect:

Barajas, well, that has been changing, slowly, (...) at least there is already a spirit of seeing that both possibilities exist, of not ruling out. The Asylum and Refuge Office is very aware that when a person is reporting a case, because he/she is an applicant for protection, in which he/she identifies that he/she may be a victim of trafficking, to activate the protocol (...) Well, then the practice is different, isn't it? But it is true that now the Protocol is activated, or at least there is a protocol that is activated more, the OAR has a different attitude, the [FCSE] still does not activate the Protocol much, things as they are. But, well, that did not exist 10 years ago, none of these things, right? Because there were no victims, because the problem did not exist. So, well, in we have also made progress in this area.

E4. Public organization

These training and coordination efforts bear fruit in the fight against trafficking, as do various partnerships at the international level. A cross-border approach is essential to



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address a phenomenon such as human trafficking, which so often involves several countries:

(...) it is very important (...) to understand mobility in all of its dimensions and that the transnationality is within these routes.

E7. NGO

Providing victims or potential victims with resources available in other countries and generating information exchange with agents that also fight trafficking outside Spain are some of the strategies with a transnational approach employed by entities and experts:

(...) the idea is to provide them with information not only from Spain, but also from France and Italy, so that in some way they are better protected during transit. Because one of the things that, for example, our Italian colleagues have told us, is that people are no longer staying in Italy. And the same is happening in Spain, right? I mean, it's like they're all coming to France.

E7. NGO

2.6. LOCAL OR REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Within the Spanish territory, human trafficking, as well as the way it is addressed by the actors involved, has different manifestations. These differences are determined by different factors. Border regions, including international airports, are important because of their link to international migratory dynamics; geographical areas with other characteristics that favor the presence of trafficking networks, such as places linked to tourism or agricultural production with certain characteristics; or regions where other criminal activities linked to organized crime take place. On the other hand, there are certain differences associated with demographic factors such as population mobility, the size of the cities or whether they are rural or urban environments.

From the fieldwork carried out, it is clear that each of these territories has certain dynamics of mobility of victims or potential victims of human trafficking that are determined by these and other characteristics. Knowledge of these dynamics is essential for coordination among the actors involved in the fight against human trafficking.

2.6.1. FRONTIER ZONES

Ceuta and Melilla are key territories due to their nature as areas of transit and entry into Spanish territory and the European Union from Africa. Migrants who live in or transit through both autonomous cities face a situation of special vulnerability due to the conditions of the migratory process, which facilitates the actions of human trafficking networks. Situations of trafficking have also been detected both for purposes of sexual exploitation and labor exploitation, a reality linked to people in a situation of exploitation in domestic service.

The presence of unaccompanied foreign children and adolescents in both autonomous cities are an important issue in the fieldwork with experts and organizations. The research in Ceuta shows that these children, mostly boys, are in a situation of extreme vulnerability when they are not in the autonomous guardianship centers after leaving the shelters due to the living and care conditions, facilitating their entry into networks.



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In the case of Melilla, special attention is also paid to the situation of women, mostly of Moroccan nationality, in prostitution. The changes in the requirements for crossing the border from Nador, a Moroccan city bordering Melilla, are mentioned as a determining event in the situation of these women. Before the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, proof of residence in the city of Nador was sufficient for free crossing at the border crossing. The specialized entities report that, taking into account these circumstances, there were many women (mostly adults, but cases of adolescents have also been detected) who crossed the border to work as prostitutes in Spain because they perceived a situation of greater coverage of rights (with the presence of social entities that supported them in matters of sexual and reproductive health, provided them with contraceptive methods and advised them on some issues). Due to the fact that a visa is now required to access the territory of the autonomous city, the entities have seen a drastic decrease in the number of women who cross the border for this purpose, suspecting that they continue in a situation of prostitution in Moroccan territory, with the implications of greater vulnerability that this entails:

Before, many of these women came to Melilla to prostitute themselves, where, besides, they were paid more and everything was a little safer. Right? Because in Morocco it is more permanent and because women have practically no rights there. However, now, when they work there, the situation must be much more deplorable. Because here there are NGOs that have always (...), they have always worked with prostitution. And they have helped them a lot, to give them contraceptives, to orient them, because there are people who don't have the culture and don't understand, don't know, don't know. And now they no longer have that (...) And we can't help them because it's another country, right now.

F30. Focus group

Also, as a result of this free crossing of the border, a considerable number of cases were detected of women victims of human trafficking who entered Spanish territory under false promises of either domestic or care work, or for prostitution under certain conditions that later did not correspond to reality. However, the closing of the border also led to the case of Moroccan women who had never been involved in prostitution but who remained in Spanish territory and who, seeing their situation of vulnerability increased, were captured by sexual exploitation networks.

On the other hand, in Melilla, entities and experts also mention well-founded suspicions of possible sub-Saharan women victims of human trafficking housed in the CETI (Center for Temporary Stay of Immigrants). In this case, reference is made to the fact that there are many detection indicators associated, for example, with the mode of entry into Spanish territory in a pre-2020 context:

But not with people who are in the CETI, in shelters, etc. We don't get to see them. What do we suspect? We have more than well-founded suspicions that these women, in order for them to have arrived in this city, above all, because of the way they cross? I mean, women don't jump the fence. The women arrive in another way. They arrive by boat, hidden in a vehicle. They arrive in a different way. You even say to some of them, "Did you pay for something? You can believe it or not, can't you? But some NGOs say no, no has paid nothing. Because they pay for it later.

F30. Focus group

Precisely because of its location as a place of transit, in Melilla the entities detect possible victims of trafficking who, having been captured by the networks, have not yet



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been exposed to exploitation, which is an essential difficulty for intervention with these people, who present high levels of hermeticism towards the entities. This situation is a major complication for the work of the entities, which in these cases cannot carry out the protocols for initiating legal proceedings based on suspicions.

Because it is a geographically limited territory, certain coexistence dynamics are generated, such as the high degree of stigmatization of prostitution and the social surveillance that derives from a small and highly connected social network, which leads women in this situation to considerable levels of marginalization and isolation:

Apart from the fact that here, culturally, the stigma is brutal. Much more than in the peninsula or in other places. So, we have encountered women who come to us with the full burqa, dedicated to prostitution, and go with the full burqa (...) because it is a very small city. So, the way to pass unnoticed is to wear the full burqa. Then all of a sudden you change all the parameters of why a woman wears a burqa.

F30. Focus group

According to fieldwork findings, territories of arrival such as Ceuta and Melilla or the Canary Islands, due to their insular nature, are conceived as places of transit, since the intention of new arrivals is usually to continue their migratory journey to the mainland and, potentially, to other parts of Europe. However, after arriving by irregular routes and being housed in reception centers, migrants face formalities and waiting times before social entities can organize their transfer to the peninsula. These difficulties are linked to the need to present certain documentation in order to gain access to regularized means of transport, such as commercial flights or ferries.

In the **Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands**, the entities report that it is highly unlikely that a victim of human trafficking will take action regarding their situation due to the fear and difficulties associated with transfers to the peninsula. In addition, they report that the bureaucratic management associated with transfers has led to the proliferation of smuggling and potentially human trafficking networks that facilitate the organization and management of transfers of migrants to the peninsula before the entities can do so:

(...) a woman who was here for a while, who created some trafficking networks here, we do not know, (...) our knowledge only goes as far as knowing that all the women who passed through our centers had her telephone number and she was the one they contacted when they were here, and she was the one who arranged their transfer to France. And they appeared in the WhatsApp conversation with her, with all the tickets already (...) that was reported and that person is detained, for example. (...) that I do not know if it was for trafficking or smuggling, because I only know that there were tickets, I do not know if there was exploitation at the destination, or it was just this, right?

F24. Focus group

The high number of unaccompanied children under guardianship in the Canary Islands has also led to the emergence of networks that take advantage of their vulnerable situation to exploit them both inside and outside the islands.

The reality of children under 18 years of age being trafficked for exploitation is detected in areas in the **south of the peninsula**, such as Algeciras or Almería, where experts mention cases of children from Ceuta and Melilla trafficked for labor exploitation:



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You know that there are many cases, especially of labor trafficking in minors, almost all of whom come from Ceuta and Melilla. But it is not so easy to detect, because of the situation in which they are in transit. Because we work with them. It is usually Malaga where we work the most permanently. In the rest, such as Algeciras, transit is complete mind, Almeria, transit...

F31. Focus group

Similarly, there are cases of women arriving in coastal areas such as Malaga who quickly leave the shelters showing signs of being possible victims of trafficking, such as the verbalization of speeches about unspecific plans where apparently unstable support networks are mentioned and, after some follow-up, it is found that they have been exploited for agricultural work such as strawberry picking.

Catalonia is another key region in terms of trafficking in Spanish territory, especially the border area of Gerona due to its proximity to France. One of the key elements in the region is the high number of women in prostitution, due to the degree of control over prostitution in France. The entities state that it is common to cross the border to go to clubs in Gerona:

Gerona is a hotbed of prostitution. And on the border, we have Europe. Paradise is the biggest prostitution club in Europe. Why is it there? Because of France, mainly. Because of France. In France prostitution is much more persecuted and you put on Google Maps one day, live, on a Saturday at one o'clock in the morning, and you see a focus of lights coming from France to the border of Spain, coming to pass through the border a while in Paradise.

F23. Focus group

Catalonia is also characterized by the presence of unaccompanied foreign children in a situation of extreme vulnerability who are captured by the networks. The cases of these minors or very young migrant population who remain in street situations in different areas of Barcelona and Gerona after reaching the age of majority are presented as one of the groups that end up in networks for sexual exploitation or in the exercise of prostitution as a means of survival. The experts affirm the existence of human trafficking networks for the purpose of sexual exploitation whose victims are both unaccompanied foreign children and adolescents and nationals, the case of girls being common; as well as the relative frequency of girls who are victims of forced marriages, especially in areas closer to the border with France:

(...) the women themselves tell us "I entered Barcelona, I was in Barcelona, when I was 16 years old. And I managed, or they managed to get me out, when I was 21. But I was 16, and like me, a lot more", right? (...) We have an area in Catalonia where forced marriages are the order of the day. The whole area of Osona, Vic, everything that goes towards the border with France, right? (...) One of the cases We now have at the center, a 12-year-old girl, (...) who was already living a school life, all day long, but when she got home, she was exposed to a 45 year old man.

F26. Focus group

2.6.2. OTHER KEY AREAS

Another factor to highlight in terms of geographical dynamics within the Spanish territory has to do with those cities where **tourism** abounds. Areas such as the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, Barcelona (particularly in areas such as the Olympic Port) or Malaga are regions with a high presence of prostitution networks and, potentially, of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The influx of tourists at certain times of the year also determines the operability of these networks:

[In the low season] many of them move around the peninsula or even France (...) That is, some of them verbalize that they are going to France, to Italy and, above all, there are many inquiries about whether they can travel to France without having their residence permit. It is not that they always verbalize, “I am going to fill a position” or “I am going to work there”, but it is curious that it is always the destination they ask about, also because of proximity. And I used to see a lot of movement in the low season to the Canary Islands, because it is a place where the climate is more or less a little warmer. It is supposed to receive tourism throughout the year and not as concentrated as in the Balearic Islands, (...) It is not that prostitution disappears in the months of the summer low season (...)

F28. Focus group

It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a change in some of these dynamics, and that after the health crisis, the group of women in prostitution on public streets has decreased and, presumably, has moved to private homes.

In some areas of Andalusia, such as Almeria, Huelva and Granada, the existence of trafficking networks for the purpose of labor exploitation, whose victims are Moroccan women, is particularly noticeable. Entities and experts state that it is common for these women to enter national territory by regular routes with the aim of carrying out agricultural work in farmhouses and informal settlements where they are exploited for labor exploitation and even, on occasions, sexually:

We have identified the issue of the settlements in Almeria, the exploitation of Moroccan women who have come with the season, as they said, but (...) between fruit picking seasons they remain working as prostitutes in the same settlements. And they go from Almeria to Huelva. They go back and forth.

F31. Focus group

The Moroccan women basically come via Huelva. They come with work visas (...) buses full of women, the boat full of women, and they are all waiting for them in Tarifa, they take the buses and they take them to Huelva (...) And we noticed that they said “I’m going to Granada”. (...) Suddenly we discovered that it was in Ventas de Zafarraya (...), a town near Malaga, there in the mountains, and that there is a lot, a lot, of collection tomato, bell pepper...

F31. Focus group

It is important to point out the role played by the **geographic and demographic characteristics** of the territories. The reality of trafficking in small cities or municipalities is particularly hidden, partly because there is less social awareness of its existence:



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It is very common when you go to a diocese (...) more of a rural environment, (...) a small diocese that tells you, “No, but there is no such thing here. No, this is not...” I always ask, “there is no club in this province?”².

F29. NGO

Rural areas and/or areas with a high degree of population dispersion are environments that favor the operation of trafficking networks. The case of Jaén serves as an example of a province where prostitution and trafficking networks operate in a much more hidden manner than in highly populated areas, which also affects the degree of action taken by the authorities with respect to the networks:

The [FCSE] in Jaén has nothing to do with it. But the movement in Jaén (...) is much more hidden, it does not oblige them to do so much.

F31. Focus group

Another case is that of the rural areas of Galicia, regions also characterized by the dispersion of the population and which are home to rural nuclei that are difficult to access. These conditions facilitate the control of the victims by the networks and make it difficult for the State Security Forces and Corps to control and protect them. Environments that are difficult to access by public transport and without nearby neighbor's favor, for example, the formation of roadside clubs or the use of isolated dwellings as places of sexual exploitation:

Another characteristic that we can have here is the enormous population dispersion and the fact that there are still many rural areas where it is difficult to access, where the control that can be exercised over women is almost given by the environment. That is to say, we have identified different areas, and they are almost part of the steppe where the club is and nothing else, where there are not even neighbors nearby and well, and public transportation leaves much to be desired (...) They have no alternative but to stay there (...) although there is a Police and Civil Guard station assigned to that area, it is really far from their headquarters. So, I imagine that this will also lead to fewer visits to these areas, right? In other words, they are more difficult to control by law enforcement agencies. State but for networks much easier.

XF38. Expert

The situation of extreme vulnerability to which the victims are subjected in these radical conditions of isolation translates into cases of trafficking for various purposes of exploitation, which is relatively common in rural areas of Galicia.

In some cases, women who are recruited through an offer of domestic employment or as village caretakers also end up doing, for example, agricultural work and being sexually exploited by their employers:

Above all, we do identify situations of labor exploitation (...) They are women who come to take care of an elderly person, they receive an offer, they meet a person or

2 In one of the interviews, reference is made to this question, reflecting on ecclesiastical terms and their structuring in dioceses. These do not always coincide in limits with the territorial limits of provinces, but for the purposes of our study it is useful to equate territorial spaces that are managed by provincial councils or by diocesan structures as far as the ecclesial aspect is concerned.



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they post on Facebook platforms (...) they make an offer to come and take care of a person, I don't know, their father or mother. Then that woman comes to that village, to that place that is out of the way, and the woman, apart from the fact that she has to be with an elderly person, is forced to do housework, but not only cleaning, or shopping, but also putting potatoes, picking potatoes, cutting grass and, in addition, having sex with the man who is exploiting her and with neighbors.

E8. NGO

In the fieldwork it was mentioned, in relation to the Autonomous Community of Galicia, that the influence of its geographic positioning on the role it plays in the national trafficking panorama should be highlighted. The fact that it is a territory with an established presence of criminal networks that carry out other types of crimes probably facilitates the actions of human trafficking networks:

I think it is impossible (...) to deal with the trafficking situation in Galicia without taking into account that (...) it is a gateway for many other crimes (...) the connection with Latin America (...) for tobacco, for cocaine.... So, those routes and those networks of criminal networks already existed, didn't they, so probably, and especially in the beginning, they probably went hand in hand, didn't they? So, it is impossible, isn't it, to disassociate one phenomenon from the other, although at some point later on, later on, they may have been unlinked and continued (...) In fact, we continue to identify the hottest areas (...). Cocaine trafficking with nuclei where there are many potential victims of trafficking.

XF38. Expert

2.6.3. MOBILITY OF VICTIMS

It should be noted that trafficking in human beings is not a geographically static phenomenon. Entities and experts from various territories report detecting **dynamics of mobility** within Spain, from variations in the place of exploitation of the same victim to territorial changes associated with the different phases of the trafficking phenomenon.

In territories such as Andalusia or the north of the peninsula, between the Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia, for example, emphasis is placed on the tendency of prostitution networks to make a given victim stay for approximately 21 days in one city before being transferred to another to continue the exploitation:

We know that the women who were in Granada, we saw them once or twice and little more. They were itinerant, (...) There was a system of plazas. The women were staying in one place for approximately 21 days, which, it is curious, but it coincides with the menstrual cycle. And that is very striking (...) Normally it is just that, three weeks that in some way they rent the place. And they leave, and they leave. They can go to Cordoba, Algeciras or Barcelona.

E2. NGO

These dynamics are sometimes related to the different properties available to pimps as places of sexual exploitation. Itinerancy makes it difficult for social organizations to access victims and create links with them, and they are making efforts to elucidate the patterns that determine these movements in order to improve intervention and data collection on the phenomenon of trafficking. This high mobility also occurs particularly



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in areas with high rates of tourism, such as Granada, especially in the case of women who work in apartments, or between cities such as Malaga and Mallorca, although in this case it is particularly applicable to the profile of women of Colombian nationality. In the case of the Canary Islands, moreover, the difficulties associated with this itinerancy are exacerbated by their insularity:

Monitoring is also complicated because they move around a lot. Imagine, in the Canary Islands, that being in an archipelago, women move from one island to another, and from one country to another on an island.

XF39. Expert

The role of the State Security Forces and Corps in addressing this reality is of particular importance, as well as other inter-territorial coordination mechanisms, developed in depth in the section on Coordination between institutions, is of special importance:

Due to the high mobility of these women, (...) they give us information (...) about things that have been happening (...) in other provinces of Spain. Then, this collaboration, of course, is immediate, (...) we inform the Guardia Civil and the National Police, through the channels we have established, so that they are aware that X in Benidorm, in Torremolinos, are having a case, right? Well, the same as things that can come from Europe through of Europol's national unit.

E5. Public organization

2.6.4. OTHER TRENDS

The changing nature of the phenomenon of human trafficking is intrinsic to its nature, and this is one of the greatest challenges facing entities, authorities and other institutions committed to its eradication. One of the aspects in which this changing character is manifested is in the **transformations in the profile of the victims**. For example, in the Balearic Islands, the entities report a substantial change in the profile of the women assisted, with the most common nationality among the victims previously being Nigerian and later, when the fieldwork was carried out, Colombian.

In Melilla, the profile of women in prostitution or sexual exploitation was usually of Moroccan nationality; more recently, a large influx of women of Latin American origin has been detected who stay temporarily in Melilla as prostitutes in private homes and are subsequently transferred to other Spanish cities, such as Madrid or Malaga. In areas in the south of the peninsula, another trend has been identified in terms of the nationality profile of women in prostitution: in some areas, prostitution consumers are of the same nationality as the victims:

Let's see, they are supposed to be dating, but it's prostitution. And then another one is that they are for their own people. We have seen that a lot. I mean, there are a lot of Nigerian girls for Nigerians (...) it's no longer the street, it's like a specific area for them to go to Nigerians or people from Africa.

F31. Focus group

The **SARS-CoV-2 pandemic** was a turning point in several territories in terms of the dynamics detected by experts and organizations. It led to the hardening of border crossings, with all the implications (described in section 3.1.1. Border areas) that this



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had for the reality of the migratory phenomenon and human trafficking in regions such as Ceuta and Melilla. The measures taken at that time contributed to a greater concealment of the phenomenon of trafficking due also to the fact that women in prostitution who were working on the streets were now working in homes, making access to them more difficult for the agencies.

This invisibilization of victims has remained a characteristic of the trafficking phenomenon even years after the health crisis. Experts explain this in relation to prostitution:

(...) before the pandemic it was very visible, it was in the streets, it was in certain areas, there were premises, apartments, where everybody knew about it (...). And with the post-pandemic all that has disappeared, it has been diluted, it is very difficult to reach it, it is much more hidden. And that has made them even more unprotected than they already were (...) So, it is very difficult to reach them, and it is also very difficult for them to reach them (...) to us.

F30. Focus group

However, there are entities in certain territories that make a positive reading of the transformations that the pandemic brought about in their work with women in prostitution. This is due to the fact that, according to some NGOs, as a result of the extreme vulnerability to which they were exposed due to a reduction in their income, the women began to bring to the entities demands related to the coverage of their basic needs, which allowed them a closer approach to intervention with respect to their situation as victims or possible victims of trafficking:

For us, the pandemic was a blessing, in quotation marks, because the girls called: "Mommy, we have nothing to eat. We started taking food to their homes. This allowed us to have their addresses, their telephone numbers. And we are still giving them food (...) That is to say, we have been following up with them, because when we take them food, we ask them how they are working, we ask them how they are working, we ask them how they are doing, we ask them how they are doing. "How are you doing?"

F31. Focus group

The situation of the current **war in Ukraine** has marked, on the other hand, another approach for the entities in terms of the profile of the victims and the places of detection:

We were also a bit overwhelmed when the war in Ukraine started, because there were many detections of alleged victims of trafficking, or trafficking, in this case. There were, in this case, in the station of [city in the northwest], for example. (...) Just as we detected prostitution networks before in the airports, in this case, when they come, when the internal migrations from Europe, we detect it, or in the bus stations or in the Renfe, right? At train stations.

F26. Focus group

The different trends are also related, beyond the profiles of the victims and the dynamics of mobility, to the **actions of the different actors** involved in the fight against trafficking. For example, fieldwork shows that in the northern regions of the peninsula, work with child and adolescent victims of trafficking is determined by a particularly well-established rights-based approach, which is explained, among other things, by a higher level of resources devoted to it. These territorial differences are manifested even within



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the entities themselves, partly depending on the support they receive from public institutions, with the result that some protocols are more developed in some delegations than in others:

(...) in Galicia we are still having meetings to see how we can make the identification report so that we can refer, so that women can be identified, and we see that, (...) our colleagues (...) in Palma de Mallorca have been making reports for a year and a bit, identifying women (...) in the Balearic Islands many more victims are going to appear (...) And this is because (...) the political framework is slowing down the development of these tools.

E8. Focus group

These differences point to the need for greater territorial coordination in the protocols and work strategies of the entities and authorities, and a unification of the criteria to be applied by each actor.

3. EXPERIENCES

3.1. EVOLUTION OF DYNAMICS

Currently, an increase in different purposes of human trafficking has been detected, the purposes of trafficking are several and take place in a combined form. In mixed forms of trafficking, the victims are also almost always women, some of them belonging to the LGBTIQ+ group.

Thus, through the testimonies of the interviewees, we see cases of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation who are, at the same time, forced to commit criminal activities such as theft or selling drugs.

What the interviewees emphasize the most is that the networks seek to obtain the maximum benefit and the double or triple exploitation of the person ensures the maximum profitability of the trafficking situation. Because of this, cases have been found in which the victim is exploited at the sexual and labor level. This situation occurs in the agricultural sector where women are exploited for labor and sexually abused:

We recently detected a woman, a woman who was being forced to work as a prostitute in a club, because in order to get her papers her partner had her registered in the club. So, it was a labor issue mixed with a prostitution issue, because, obviously, yes, it usually goes hand in hand. In fact, the police always accompany the labor inspectors during inspections in the clubs. And there have also been recent rulings, where they say that a woman who works as a hostess has to be registered in the club, because in the end what she does is to attract clients who are going to go to that club and for that reason they have to be registered. So, yes, the issue of labor trafficking and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is linked (...)

E11. NGO

On the other hand, as a result of the interviews, it was concluded that the way in which trafficking is made more or less visible is changing. The Law of Yes is only Yes considering illegal advertising that uses gender stereotypes that promote or normalize sexual

violence against women, children and adolescents, as well as those that promote prostitution. This has led to a change in the way prostitutes advertise, making it more clandestine and difficult for everyone to access:

They used very well-known websites where they advertise themselves, didn't they? When the boom of the law came out in October, many of them called me, (...) there was a lack of knowledge and an impressive alarm (...) we could no longer contact them because we, of course, would enter those pages, we would collect the work name, the telephone number and we would call them: "hey, look, we are so and so, we do this, do you need help, do you need help?" And they would say "yes, come, come and visit my apartment", so we would enter the apartments that way. When they didn't advertise, where do you look for them? Invisible. So that is greater unprotection.

E11. NGO

In the crime of human trafficking, criminals are adjusting their business models to the "new normal" created by the pandemic, especially through the misuse of new technologies. There are fears that COVID-19 will make victim identification even more difficult. Identifying victims of human trafficking is difficult, even under normal circumstances. The main reasons include the fact that victims are often exploited in illegal, informal or unregulated environments (e.g., petty crime, the sex industry, domestic settings, drug cultivation and trafficking, agriculture and construction). Because of the restrictions brought about by the pandemic, human trafficking worldwide went underground and affected the ability of authorities to combat this crime.





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With the rise of new technologies, traffickers have taken advantage of digital platforms and technology to advertise, recruit and exploit potential victims. Today, internet recruitment is becoming increasingly varied, ranging from simple online advertising set-ups, to traffickers' use of communication platforms to spread exploitation beyond the borders of their own country, to interaction with potential victims, to the transfer of money between members of the trafficking group:

Above all, what we are finding are advertisements where they are offered a job here in Spain. And the recruitment comes through these networks.

E6. Public organization

The population has access to the Internet, new technologies have been increasingly used by traffickers, making this method an emerging threat, especially for young people. The average age of Internet users is decreasing; more and more children are starting to use the Internet from an early age. Children and adolescents are often contacted by traffickers on social media platforms and networks and are therefore more susceptible to being deceived because of their lack of awareness of the dangers and their search for acceptance, attention or friendship:

The recruitment, the recruitment of trafficking through social networks, of women and even minors, through these social networks. And on the other hand, online exploitation, through different channels, and also closely related, within the sex industry, to the issue of pornography. So there we have a rather complex niche.

F29. NGO

In the fieldwork carried out in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, and in relation to inquiries about the profile of the trafficking victim assisted by the entities, the key informants mentioned people arriving irregularly to the coasts in boats. In this sense, they speak of the changes in recent years in the trends in arrivals, emphasizing the increased use of the Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands and a decrease in arrivals to Andalusia, where they also refer to a greater presence of people of Maghrebi origin on the Spanish Mediterranean route:

What is true is that the profile of Andalusia has changed a lot in terms of arrival, right? Because it is true that with agreements and so on, there are not so many people coming to the coast. There are no longer so many sub-Saharan people. There are usually people arriving, (...) from the Maghreb. And they are arriving more through the Canary Islands. So there it is not like before, then Andalusia, we had a little bit of that pressure from the coast.

F31. Focus group

These observations made by key informants confirm what is recorded by the Ministry of the Interior, which places the number of people arriving in Spain by sea in 2023 at 55618, of whom 39910 arrived in the Canary Islands (Ministry of the Interior, 2024). In this changing scenario of migratory routes, the entities working in each territory with people who have recently arrived in Spain are subject to the circumstances of the arrivals in order to carry out their work of detecting victims or possible victims of human trafficking.

3.2. ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The work carried out by non-governmental organizations in their role in the fight against human trafficking is widely recognized by international organizations and government authorities. As a result, entities specializing in the care of victims of trafficking are mentioned as key players in the Framework Protocol for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking, adopted by agreement of October 28, 2011 by the Ministries of Justice, the Interior, Employment and Social Security and Health, Social Services and Equality, the Attorney General's Office and the Council of the Judiciary.

The development of their work is, however, subject to the funding of their activity, an issue mentioned by key informants in this research during fieldwork. The allocation of public and private resources to these entities is one of the foundations on which the smooth functioning of the complex system of different actors involved in the fight against trafficking is based. Public funds for NGOs providing services to victims come from the government and from calls for proposals from the European Union, the autonomous communities and municipalities, and other public administrations. Private funds come from citizen solidarity, from agreements with private institutions or companies:

The entities that have subsidies at the state level and subsidies at the autonomous level, then we have to distribute the services or rights holders. So, I also think that this makes data recording very complex because you record data, but then you have to allocate it to one entity, that is, to one financial institution or another. I believe that, I do not know if the rest of the entities will comment on this, but I understand, for example, that some entities that have a state level do not, but when they have state and autonomous entities, the autonomous ones, you have to identify them as well, that is, so that there is no danger duplication at that level.

E13. NGO

One of the difficulties reported by the social organizations interviewed is the **lack of adequate resources** for those cases in which the purpose of the trafficking is not sexual exploitation. Most organizations state that there is usually no problem in finding funding for resources dedicated to the protection of women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence or victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Therefore, there are difficulties in referring victims of human trafficking to resources dedicated to the protection of women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence or victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The use of human beings for the purpose of labor exploitation, or forced marriages, or criminal activity to resources because they are sometimes non-existent due to lack of funding:

Yes, well, it's difficult because normally the lines of financing are very targeted to women, gender violence and so on.

E2. NGO

In this sense, some of the organizations whose resources are focused on assisting **less visible victims of trafficking**, such as men, boys or transgender people, for purposes other than sexual exploitation, find **it difficult to obtain financial resources** and provide adequate attention to the needs of these groups. One of the organizations interviewed did not obtain public funding until five years ago for the first time, which



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leads us to deduce that although there has been progress in recent years, there are still barriers when it comes to offering services to other victim profiles that do not fit into the category of women or girls trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation:

So, [NGO] for many years has financed with its own resources shelters for male victims of trafficking. And I believe it was not until 2019 that it received the first public funding to subsidize this type of resource. And I am talking about funding of perhaps €13,000, and you tell me what you do with that, right? But well, it does seem that some progress is being made in that direction. I believe that the will to try, well, to make this approach in an integral way, because sometimes it is like... “no, you want to talk about male victims of trafficking and they are a minority”.

X18. Expert

Most non-governmental organizations are financed by **public and private funds. Thus, the organizations ensure that the services offered do not depend solely on the will of a funder.** However, at the time of justification, each funder requires compliance with different indicators and measures different results. As the interviewees explain, this difference in criteria among funders accentuates the difficulty of harmonizing data:

As we have joint funding, at the level of social work of [NGOs], we have the Ministry of Equality, issues of the Ministry of Inclusion for asylum issues, and so on. Each funder wants its data and wants its indicators, and wants its list. So, more and more, we have to make joint justifications with lists of more than one of a province.

F27. Focus group

It is important to mention that some entities that carry out this work of detection and care for victims of trafficking do not do it exclusively, but cover other areas of action, so they also operate with resources aimed at other profiles of vulnerable people. This is the case, for example, of the entities that work within the framework of the programs for the humanitarian reception of immigrants and refugees and applicants for International Protection, financed by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration. The reception resources financed by these programs are not exclusively dedicated to victims of human trafficking, but victims may be detected (and subsequently referred to specialized resources) among the persons attended to.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that when public administration funding is specifically earmarked for the care of trafficking victims, it tends to focus primarily on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. There is a tendency to hierarchize the purposes of exploitation, giving economic prevalence to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation:

It is also true that the administrations, what they finance the most or where there is most coverage is sexual exploitation. That is, then we have our own places, etcetera, Other exploitation purposes, which, in the end, are more difficult to make sense in the logic of financing it in public squares, because the whole political discourse is very focused in trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

E9. NGO

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of labor exploitation is a phenomenon that is still hidden in Spain. This is not only due to the clandestine nature of the phenomenon, but



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also because of the confusing legal framework, which makes it difficult to observe and analyze, or for the Administration and civil society to intervene appropriately. Both the authorities and civil society are less aware of the purpose of this phenomenon, and therefore less funding is available for the design of public policies:

Victims of sexual exploitation would be covered by the specific protocol for the protection and care of victims of sexual violence, which is a little broader, at least because it is more studied and more developed, than that of a victim of labor exploitation or begging, to give an example. Moreover, it is true that victims of sexual exploitation in this sense have more resources or the level of care they can receive is being developed.

XF34. Expert

4. CHALLENGES TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES OF THE DATA CULTURE PROJECT

The main difficulties and challenges that were detected after the fieldwork were related to several factors that end up having an impact on the erroneous recording of data, which does not correspond to the reality of the phenomenon of trafficking. This means that the measurement of this phenomenon is limited in its rigorousness and, therefore, complicates the objective of designing and implementing public policies that effectively address it in terms of prevention, victim protection and prosecution of the crime.

The difficulties identified are related to aspects of the system that should be tempered in order to improve the approach to the phenomenon. The challenges identified have to do with broader elements that should be incorporated into the fight against trafficking.

4.1. GREATER DIFFICULTIES

4.1.1. DIFFICULTIES IN THE DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS

Among the difficulties detected, it is worth highlighting those related to the detection and identification of victims at various levels. On the one hand, those related to problems linked to the place of exploitation are detected. These may be the difficulties in concealing the phenomenon of exploitation due to the fact that it takes place in private environments or through digitalization, due to the unsuitability of these environments for intervention or due to the high mobility of the victims. On the other hand, the difficulties of self-identification of the victims, both in that they do not recognize themselves and do not verbalize this recognition. Finally, those related to the nature of the judicial procedure leading to formal identification by judgment.

With regard to the difficulties in detecting and identifying victims **associated with the place of exploitation** (both indoors and in public places), it is worth highlighting the problems encountered by entities and authorities in intervening in the case of possible victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation at the place where prostitution is practiced. These environments are hostile because they may harbor the presence of traffickers and the intervention with victims is limited to short periods of time in which it is not easy to develop a link with them for detection/identification. The limited amount of information that can be collected in these environments means that detection is

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particularly complicated in the sense that it is not sufficient to determine whether the situation observed is one of trafficking, sexual exploitation, coerced prostitution, or otherwise:

The place where prostitution is practiced is a reality where we easily understand that there are women who are victims of exploitation, who may be victims of trafficking, but in reality, the attention we receive prevents us from having sufficient evidence to determine that this woman is a possible victim of trafficking. In the end, the time we have to attend to her is very short, and often our own activity means that we cannot have continuity or they do not allow us a specific place to have an interview. It is not even enough in depth because with a woman in the care centers or residential resources you have a continuity of care that allows you, many times, after months of attention and to have created the link, to have her tell you, her story. A woman who goes to a club or an apartment or in the street, you don't have that, so it's impossible. (...) And the place is not conducive to have any interview that allows us to be able, not even to us ask.

X19. Expert

According to key informants, the **digitalization** of the phenomenon can take several forms: on the one hand, recruitment processes are increasingly taking place through social networks. On the other hand, exploitation can be facilitated through online environments, such as online “services” through which victims travel to engage in prostitution after being summoned by the “client”, instead of doing so in a specific environment, or the generation of pornography. This is problematic in the detection and identification processes, as well as in the offering of other types of services by the entities, which have difficulty in finding potential victims of trafficking:

(...) clubs are disappearing a lot. There are many apartments (...) and it is very difficult to reach them all. So many possible situations escape. And then (...) right now many





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women are not (...) in an apartment being exploited, but through WhatsApp they are told where to go (...). The intermediation is diluted. It is very difficult to reach these women.

E8. NGO

The fact that these means are used to recruit or control victims also makes it difficult to recognize indicators. As a result, it is particularly difficult for agencies and authorities to prove that the person is in a situation of human trafficking rather than one of exploitation, for example:

(...) these indicators, right now, we are working on them because they are not as evident as they used to be. Before, we could see very clearly how this network or these pimps contacted these women (...), we could see the means, the form of control (...) and then we could see much more clearly how they arrived and how they were being controlled and displaced to different places where they were in (...) a situation of exploitation. But right now, I think we are facing an era of exploitation of elaboration (...).

E8. NGO

This digitization of the phenomenon goes hand in hand with the transfer of the place of exploitation from public to **private** environments; both trends feed each other since the practice of exploitation in hidden places makes it difficult for entities and authorities to detect, but online activity facilitates contact with those who seek to become actively involved in exploitative practices. In addition, private environments imply greater control over victims and greater isolation for them:

(...) they are usually places where there are cameras, where there is control, control mechanisms towards women. So, it is complicated to establish a lot of dialogue and trust and so on in order to identify women as possible victims of trafficking.

F24. Focus group

It is important to mention that this concealment and isolation of victims does not only occur in trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation for prostitution, but there are also cases of labor exploitation or trafficking for mixed purposes with these characteristics, such as in agricultural work environments, as has already been explained in previous sections, or in livestock farming:

Difficulty, as well as isolated sites to detect because, for example, a case given in a cattle ranch: the cattle ranch had two sheds, in the front it had its normal daily work, and in the back shed it had the victims and where all the activity took place. So, of course, you see trucks coming in and you think (...) that it is something normal, so.... And being isolated, the neighbors do not notice anything strange either. So, you get to... gar to that is complicated, it is complicated.

E6. Public organization

Another difficulty associated with the place of exploitation is the **high mobility of the victims**, since the networks move them from one exploitation environment to another, making it difficult not only for entities and authorities to detect them, but also to generate bonds of trust and to follow up on them once they have been detected:

At the beginning of the plan, we also met, which is another situation, because we went to the first visit in January, we arrived in March, and even if it was in different apartments, we met again with the same woman, so that these teams could establish



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small bonds of trust, right? Now, mobility is so terrible that it is very difficult to find a woman (...) no longer on the same floor, (...) on the same floor, (...) in the same apartment, (...) in the same place, (...) in the same place same location.

E5. Public organization

Another issue that hinders detection is related to **victim self-identification**. This can occur for various reasons. On the one hand, because the victims do not see themselves as such due to complex psychological processes related to guilt, normalization of their situation, etc., on the other:

There are many difficulties, aren't there? First, because they do not recognize themselves as victims, for the most part. There is a lot of shame, guilt. Also, when they have been victims for a long time. There is also normalization of prostitution.

F24. Focus group

The fact that a victim or potential victim is in the early stages of the trafficking phenomenon and has not yet been exposed to a situation of exploitation also hinders the process of self-identification and, therefore, of detection by front-line agents, especially when very different cultural codes operate between the person being assisted and the person providing the assistance. This is especially true in contexts of migratory flows:

(...) self-identification, of course, seems to me to be the main challenge we have here in [southern border]. When you come from where you come from, in itineraries sometimes of years, you arrive here. You are not an ally, the ally is the person who is helping you get here and who has a purpose. So, the job is to create links, and if you're lucky you can go deeper, but it is not usually the case, I think.

F24. Focus group

I mean, is there really exploitation or simply very strange migratory dynamics, which at a cultural level escape us? (...) I am going to go to the house of someone who I do not know where he lives, or with whom, or how many people, or if he works, or his administrative situation, I know nothing about him, I do not even know what city he is in with certainty, and I am going to go there. And what is that? Is it a very strange migratory dynamic or is there going to be exploitation at the destination? I do not have the absolute answer.

F24. Focus group

On the other hand, this self-identification may not be verbalized, since their experience as victims is mediated by fears, manipulation and psychological control, threats to them or their relatives, distrust of the authorities due to their administrative situation or previous experience with police forces in other countries, lack of trust with the professionals of the entities....

Apart from the people who do not have access, who have it taken away from them, who have their messages checked, who cannot say anything about their situation, right? But even those who could at some point use someone () The physical part is one, but the psychological part is that it is an outrage () it is very complicated to psychologically get out of that vicious circle, isn't it? Then, it doesn't occur to you that you can tell the baker to send a message (.) So, your will and your capacity is very limited.

X20. Expert



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Other difficulties with respect to identification processes arise from the nature of the judicial procedure that results in the formal identification of the victim by judgment. Entities and experts report that this may occur because the process takes a long time and retaining the victim's involvement is a challenge; because the victim abandons her participation in the process due to fear, threats or pressure; because the case must be especially supported by the victim's testimony and this cannot be obtained, etc.:

(.) in many cases the victim desists from the procedure without having reached the end, either out of fear or because the procedures can be very long. The judicial process can last for years, it can go through an examining court, be appealed in a provincial court and be appealed a second time in the supreme court. As a result, the courts have been able to contradict each other, and the one who is "right" may have to be "right" is the last court that renders a final judgment.

E15. Public organization

4.1.2. DIFFICULTIES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF VICTIM DATA RECORDING

Beyond the complications encountered in the detection and identification of victims, there are difficulties related to the recording of these data. On the one hand, those related to the coordination of social entities and the competent authorities, both in the criteria they apply in considering victims and in the priorities that govern their work strategies. Those related to the registration systems as such, which have already been covered in the section on data registration in this report.

Although coordination efforts are being made among the actors involved in the fight against trafficking, it is worth mentioning a few aspects in particular in which the following should be highlighted difficulties that negatively impact on consistent and coordinated data recording.

One of these aspects is the difference in the criteria used by each actor (social entities, State Security Forces and Corps and judicial administration) in the detection and identification of victims. This does not mean that the indicators that each actor observes are different, although there is no homogeneous list of these, but rather that the priorities that each one has in the exercise of their functions make them more or less demanding in the presence of certain indicators in order to consider a person a victim of trafficking:

(...) the data are different. The data handled by civil society organizations on trafficking indicators are not the same as the data handled by the State Security Forces and Corps.

F29. NGO

Social entities are governed in their practice by principles of social intervention in which they prioritize non-revictimization, and which imply, for example, the recognition of a condition (in this case, the condition of victim) to allow the person in question access to certain resources despite the fact that, on occasions, they cannot reliably demonstrate this condition. In this sense, they work along the lines of victim protection, the do-no-harm principle and risk prevention:

Interviewer: But why don't you refer more to the police?

Interviewee: Because in terms of the welfare of the person and prevention of care for the person, police action is not always aligned with what we are observing in terms



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of detection. So, for example, if we make a referral, the police block that person on the island, that person voluntarily leaves the trafficking network much earlier and more quickly than the opportunity she has to intervene with us a little more, to be transferred to [city in the northern peninsular], and that the colleagues from [city in the northern peninsular] intervene with her a little more, and she finally leaves the network. On our part, that is the reason.

F24. Focus group

The actors in charge of formal identification are guided by the protection of the victim, by the principle of the prosecution of the crime, so they are more demanding in considering a person as a victim, since this recognition is usually linked to his or her ability to prove it:

(...) the Prosecutor's Office is not flexible in terms of human trafficking; they are governed by the law and they find it very difficult for us to develop a common list for the identification of trafficking victims because NGOs can pursue other objectives. The objective of the Prosecutor's Office is to prosecute the crime, to give protection to the victim and to prosecute the perpetrator.

E15. Public organization

This difference in approach to victim protection work by the various actors translates, on the other hand, into shortcomings in coordination between them. These are detected in the relationship between some entities and some police forces, for example, with regard to the collection of victim testimonies and their revictimization; but also, between other actors, such as ministries, police forces, etc., and between the different actors, such as the police and the police.

The lack of coordination among the entities themselves at the cross-border level does not facilitate the task of following up on the victims or potential victims of trafficking; the lack of coordination among the entities themselves at the cross-border level does not facilitate the task of following up on the victims or potential victims of trafficking. It also highlights the lack of coordination between the entities themselves at the cross-border level, which does not facilitate the task of following up on victims or potential victims of trafficking:

And here in [southern border], for example, there are trafficking centers run by [NGOs], which would be ideal for these people we detected here. But the same thing happened. We would make a detection, we would request a place on the peninsula for this person, saying, "Please take her as soon as possible because there are many indicators". And they told us "If she is in a hurry, to [NGO] in [southern border]". According to our notification of this transfer, the person was voluntarily discharged. For obvious reasons. People don't want to stay here. We are a southern border and that is not the objective, is it? So, it is a variable to be taken into account into account for why they do not have all the data.

F24. Focus group

4.2. MAJOR CHALLENGES

The fight against trafficking in human beings requires, in order to effectively address the phenomenon, the tackling of certain challenges. Some of these are related to the regulatory framework governing the situation of victims and potential victims of trafficking. Others are related to the lack of trust between some of the actors involved in the fight. Others are related to the reality of the victims, and have to do with the difficulties they face in their socio-labor reintegration processes, as well as the need to focus and allocate resources on types of trafficking beyond trafficking for sexual exploitation and on profiles beyond that of cisgender women. Finally, it concerns civil society and the need to increase its knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon in order to improve prevention, victim protection and prosecution of the crime.

The regulatory framework governing the situation of victims or potential victims of trafficking is a challenge insofar as, according to experts, it lacks robustness and clarity, since there is still no comprehensive law to combat the phenomenon and the actors must use legal tools to address it. This is problematic because some victims remain outside the framework of application of some of these legal tools, as is the case of European victims, to whom Organic Law 4/2000 or the Immigration Law does not apply. They point to the need to promote a legal project that serves as a basis for combating the phenomenon and that incorporates the diversity of victims:

And why does the data on victims of trafficking in Spain not correspond to reality? Because only those who have been identified are counted (...) And, in fact, it has been our battle horse (...) that not only identification data should be counted, but also detection data, what is called *early detection* (...) So we have a first handicap, which is the regulatory limitation. If from the directive, which is the one that marks the Spanish positive law, taking into account that we do not have an Integral Law and we move by the 59 bis, which is also framed in a Law on Foreigners, which is leaving out all potential victims of the European Union that are not within the framework of application of the law, (...) we do not have a law that is not applicable to all the victims of the European Union. We have article 177 bis, article 59 bis, and a framework protocol of 2011 to see how the entities that we detect in the whole circuit of attending to a victim intervene (...) as of today, the entities do not have a clear framework of action, as we have in the area of asylum through Law 12/2009, or as we have in the area of gender violence through Law 2004. On the one hand, it gives us a wider margin of action, which depends a lot on synergies and contacts and connections that we generate with the Prosecutor's Office, with UCO, with UCRIF, with social services, with IOM, with OAR, with asylum police, with border police, with security guards, with health, with Telecom and Internet companies. But we do not have a clear role assigned to us, simply what the 2011 Protocol establishes. That tells us that when we identify a victim, we have to be present at the moment of the victim's identification, and that we have to be present at the moment of the victim's identification NGOs, so that we can offer them our protection.

XF36. Expert

Experts consulted during the fieldwork pointed out that the Alien Law applies to many victims and potential victims with a negative impact: this legal framework generates a scenario conducive to the development of vulnerable situations that, usually linked to situations of administrative irregularity, favor the recruitment of victims and prevent access to certain protection resources:



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I think that, in Spain, in general (.) we should be a bit like in the United States. In other words, we should differentiate between what is a residence permit and what is a work permit. If you are already in Spain, let him work, let him work legally. If he cannot work legally, you are cornering him into a precarious job, an illegal job, which nobody wants. But this with everyone, not only with women, but from the moment they are already in Spain, let them work. And he will be able to contribute, and he will be able to have a residence permit, and we will all win.

F30. Focus group

This lack of clarity in the regulatory framework governing the phenomenon, together with the role played by the State Security Forces and Corps in the application of the Immigration Law, means that the objectives of the intervention of the different actors are, in some cases, not very compatible. As discussed in the section on difficulties, this has negative implications for the recording of data. It can also generate problems of trust between them, which, according to the interviews conducted, deepen the distance between their perspectives and the lack of collaboration between them. Although this problem is not always present, and there are scenarios where collaboration processes are very positive and robust, a certain tendency in this direction has been detected.

Another challenge is therefore the need to improve communication and **enhance trust among stakeholders:**

(...) we are very suspicious about () sharing data with [FCSE]. Because, moreover, in the specific case of our country, Spain, [FCSE] are also in charge, legally or not, of border migration policies. So, different interests come together in the same people, they pay you to expel as many people as you can, and to detect trafficking. So, at the moment, until there is a change of focus, above all, or of optics, or that, or of identifying on the basis of indicators, of removing the prosecution of the crime so that people can have access to rights?

E1. NGO

The NGOs come to the police entities to talk to our police officers, to explain to them what they do, what each one does, and we have a little debate for a while. And I always tell them, I always bring them up, I say, it cannot be, it is impossible that when you introduce yourselves to my police officers, you tell them here the figures of your entity, and you say “in the year 2022 we have worked with 255 victims of trafficking”. It cannot be that you tell my policemen that you have worked with 255 victims of trafficking and you have brought me to do an identification interview with two of them. I’m missing 253, it’s not that I’m missing one or two, no, no, it’s that I’m missing 253. It’s absolutely impossible. In other words, I think that the entities confuse a little bit what it means to be a victim of human trafficking. We can see it in signs, but for sure, I believe that there cannot be that number, it is impossible. For me it is impossible for those numbers to exist, okay? They can be victims of sexual exploitation; we are in total agreement. They may be victims of labor exploitation, we totally agree. But it seems impossible to me that we have that numerical difference. And I think it is because of how, what they consider to be a victim of human trafficking and what we [FCSE] and the Prosecutor’s Office and the judges consider to be a victim of human trafficking. And I think that has to be fixed somehow.

XF32. Expert

With regard to the situation of the victims, it is worth highlighting the challenges in their **labor reinsertion** processes. The experts especially point out this problem in the case of victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the exercise of prostitution, due to the stigma associated with this reality, as well as in cases in which recognition as a victim is not achieved. In addition, they mention the recurrent spiral of return to prostitution contexts that is common in these cases due to the absence of alternatives and access to training support, for example, and the economic needs of the victims, especially if they have dependents. This vicious circle is sometimes reinforced by the drug addiction to which the victims are subjected by the networks as a control mechanism, as well as by psychological problems such as learned helplessness:

(...) most of the women talk about how they are forced to use drugs so that the clients stay longer with them, they start in a circuit of addiction, and maybe if they want to leave, they are offered to leave, they are identified, they even have a work permit. And what happens to them? That they have an addiction, that not even in their country of origin, that in a job outside the prostitution environment they are not going to earn what they are used to. Therefore, in the social reintegration of women who have gone through the context of prostitution, it is almost impossible to avoid the chronicity of prostitution.

F30. Focus group

Another pending challenge, addressed in a cross-cutting manner throughout this report, is to **improve attention to other victim profiles**, in addition to that of cisgender women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, without undermining the importance of the attention that this group requires. It is essential to consider other forms of exploitation, such as forced marriage, labor exploitation, begging and criminal activities, etc.

(...) other types of exploitation, which are still very hidden, which do not seem to exist, which we insist on making visible (...) furthermore, in very specific regions where the migration delegations are very powerful, and it is suspected that there are also labor exploitation and trafficking. Well, I believe that these are the great challenges, to go to these areas, to that type of exploitation that we know less about (...).

X21. Expert

Along the same lines, it is necessary to highlight the need to pay special attention to addressing the **reality of transgender victims**. Although this group is generally recognized as having a significant presence among the victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, especially in contexts of prostitution, the problems that many of them encounter in terms of access to protection resources should be highlighted. This report has already addressed the problems encountered in terms of data registration and the consequent invisibility of the group, as well as the conditions of special vulnerability to which this profile of victims is exposed. In addition, the fact that a person's gender transition has not been recognized from the administrative point of view can lead to complications in accessing resources of a given gender, as occurs in the case of trans women whose documentation shows them as men:

(...) we are going to rely on what is in the DNI. I'm not going to go to the civil registry to check the sex of that person first either. I mean, I am not going to make a sex trace, because then we are not... I mean, we are not investigative police. That is to say, we

are not investigative police. (...) That is to say, I am going to stick to the documentation that the person presents, because I cannot do anything else. (...) Of course, if I now, as has happened to us, have a request from a person who tells me that his name is Joana, but his DNI is Javier, I have to deny him the resource he asks for, whether it is a benefit... Because in the DNI he is a man. And I, the autonomic legislation and the regulatory bases of this aid say that, as a requirement to access this aid, to be a woman. So, I cannot give the aid to a man, even if that person feels.... But because public resources are limited and have to be managed in accordance with the principle of legality. So, I have to manage the aid according to the principle of legality with official documents.

F25. Focus group

In general, the scarcity of **investment in resources** is a challenge for anti-trafficking actors in the exercise of their functions. This applies to material and human resources, as well as to shelter resources for specific profiles, such as male victims of trafficking or victims with special needs in terms of functional diversity:

(...) the issue of financing is a great difficulty. Above all, well, I don't know if you have talked to [NGOs], (...) I also have contact with them and the problem they have is, above all, (...) there is no funding or resources for male victims of trafficking, which, although, well, they are not so easily detected, but they also exist, right? I think that is a great challenge, to be able to, well, to detect these situations, to be able to respond to them. And today, neither in the church nor in society there is, except in the church [NGO], to respond to this.

X21. Expert

Increased investment in resources would mean not only an improvement in the care provided to the victims detected, but also an advance in the detection and identification of victims, as well as in the correct recording of data: (...) resources are what they are and if you are recording data, you are not attending to people. So, finding the balance between attention and systematization is not always easy.

E1.NGO

Finally, another important challenge is to raise **awareness of the phenomenon of trafficking**. On the one hand, this must take place among the professionals involved in the whole process of the fight against trafficking, in all the elements that make it up. This awareness requires an improvement in the training of these actors in order to promote, in addition to an outlook capable of detecting indicators, a certain sensitivity in the approach to the phenomenon:

(...) a change in the way the whole system or the educators look at what these children are doing and why they behave in this way, right? In other words, part of these behaviors may indeed be the result of trauma, of dissociation, of an absolutely peremptory search for affection, of Well, to see that change of look, and I understand that it is very difficult. It is very difficult to see that a rebellious girl, that a rebellious adolescent who has put on I don't know how many tattoos and who defies you, and who runs away, how not to see her as a rebellious adolescent who needs to be brought under control, right? And how to go beyond that and see that need for affection, that trauma she has, those nightmares she has at night, because she gets involved with boys who hurt her. In other words, all that, right? So, of course, it is



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very difficult because you have to be very educated and have your eyes wide open to be able to see all this that is going on.

E12. NGO

To improve detection and care, however, civil society in general and the civil service on which access to protection resources depends must also be involved in raising awareness:

Interviewee 1: I mean, the political part tells you, this is included in the law and it is applied. And then the exercise is the person at the window. And they tell you “Not you”.

Interviewee 2: The problem is that the person at the counter does not know that the program exists....

Interviewee 1: Neither the knowledge nor the authorization of the service chiefs.

F25. Focus group

7

Public policy recommendations



We must generate the use of data and processes to recognize victims of trafficking, and therefore it is important to address recommendations that the civil sector and the government can implement. We believe that it is essential to implement a series of changes in terms of systematization and the use of registries. Therefore, below we detail those issues that we believe are necessary in order to address the different dynamics in the context of registration and data on victims of human trafficking.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The **creation of a unified registry of victims shared between NGOs and police**. As the fieldwork and focus group interview collection developed, stakeholders in 95% of cases revealed the need for a unified registry or blockchain of victims to be shared with the FCSE to standardize the information entered, avoid non-registration and duplication of information, and above all, track victims in the police and judicial process. This report, aware of the challenges to standardize fragmented data and information, advocates for a unified database that meets GDPR requirements and could be used by the FCSE, civil society and judicial/administrative sectors to standardize reporting criteria and would avoid duplication. In this regard, draw attention to the creation of a list where, in collaboration, FCSEs work with NGOs to create such a base document that includes all relevant information for victim identification.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Joint training seminars for civil society, police and other actors. From the interviews, there was significant variation in terms of victim identification, prosecution, legal standards and support. Also, in terms of the use of terms. Eighty-five percent of the NGOs confirmed conducting their own internal trainings; but the scope and depth of these trainings varied greatly between communities and was evident in the interviews.

Other groups interviewed, such as public defenders, often did not have specific training in assisting victims of trafficking. Therefore, it is important to standardize training on trafficking across Spain and to conduct joint trainings for all trafficking actors to ensure common identification techniques and other standards that consider a victim-centered approach.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Ensure a **well-advised legal defense**.

To ensure well-advised and effective legal defense for victims of human trafficking, it is recommended that strategic collaborations be established between bar associations,



7. PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

legal clinics and public defenders. These collaborations can provide comprehensive and specialized support, ensuring that victims receive appropriate guidance and representation throughout the legal process.

To this end, we propose to continue promoting the creation of support networks that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources, as well as coordination in the representation of victims.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The creation of an Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council established with statutes and monthly meetings. In the interviews, the experts highlighted the lack of coordination mechanisms in many of the autonomous communities between the police, NGOs and other government institutions to identify victims and combat trafficking. Ninety percent of NGOs reported that meetings with police officers and prosecutors did not fully address ways to combat trafficking or identify potential victims. In addition, there is a need for more inter-ministerial meetings through a specific working group that brings together representatives from ministries, including the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Equality, to formulate responses that take into account the complexity of identifying and treating victims of trafficking.

This type of regular meetings, aimed at finding a solution to a common objective, could enhance collaboration among stakeholders.

To ensure collaborative and well-organized work, we recommend that, in each autonomous community, there be an established committee composed of FCSE, NGOs, prosecutors and other relevant actors who meet monthly to review it. The committee should be based on specific guidelines emanating from the Interministerial Council.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Eighty percent of police officers interviewed acknowledged that police turnover presents a major problem in ensuring continuity in trafficking investigations and work with victims. Trafficking units frequently receive new police officers, many of whom are not trained in trafficking and victim work, a crime that requires specific training. This study advocates for **continued positions in trafficking units and standardized training** throughout Spain by NGOs, among other actors, to ensure that police, in addition to knowing the laws and procedures, are also attentive to the local circumstances of trafficking in particular communities to ensure that victims are supported throughout the judicial process.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Effective policies to prevent re-trafficking, given that, in some of the interviews, the police noted that many of the women who have gone through judicial proceedings end up returning to prostitution during or after the judicial process has ended. This is often due to limited economic opportunities and insufficient state subsidies and training to meet basic needs. This recidivism is not considered in identifying victims of trafficking. Thus, it is important to ensure that victims have financial support, access to training and psychological help to prevent recidivism.



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We recommend that the State reconsider the amount of funding and support provided to identified victims of sex trafficking and provide the necessary social and other support to victims to help with the transition out of trafficking. In autonomous communities such as Galicia, women who were victims of gender-based violence received financial support from the Government of Galicia, along with housing and other support, even when the government did not identify them as victims of trafficking. Providing similar support mechanisms to women who can prove that they are victims of trafficking and ensuring that the amount is sufficient to prevent re- trafficking. In addition, this support should be offered even when they choose not to press criminal charges or participate in legal proceedings.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The different actors who participated in the project spoke of **overcoming procedural barriers and challenges** to help women victims of trafficking. Respondents from the administration of justice stated that there could be violations of due process for victims of trafficking during criminal proceedings, from the fact that all interviewers in police stations were men to the lack of translators and access to social support services throughout the judicial process.

The weaknesses and failures of the legal system result in revictimization of the victim. One of the most frequent forms of re-victimization is when public officials conduct a repetitive interview, often without a social worker or lawyer, and often in front of other male police officers. In addition, in very few cases is pre-constituted evidence applied, that is, a recording that respects the personal guarantees of the victim and avoids having to repeat her statements on several occasions in order to avoid her re- victimization. This practice is recommended by European institutions in these cases and its use is foreseen in our legal system.

Another challenge in the criminal prosecution of trafficking is the large number of dropouts of victims during the judicial process due to the length of the proceedings. Proceedings often take years to complete, and victims often drop out of the process and, in some reported cases, return to prostitution.

This study recommends that uniform protocols be developed across all government processes and actions, putting the person at the center, and that these protocols ensure that all government processes and actions are consistent in their approach give protection for them. That is, criminal proceedings that avoid the re-victimization of the person, that guarantee all procedural rights during the criminal procedure, and that comply with the deadlines established by the Criminal Procedure Law.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Following the above recommendation, we propose that a “**trafficking victim centered approach**” be developed by the government at the ministerial level to ensure that the best interests of the victim are met. This approach gives a central place to the rights, wishes, needs, safety, dignity and well-being of victims in all measures of prevention and response to human trafficking and exploitation.



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Respect the principle of do no harm¹ and avoid any action that jeopardizes the safety, security or emotional well-being of the victim. It is also necessary to assess the potential risks to victims and ensure that, when interacting or communicating with victims and providing support, their rights, needs, safety, dignity and emotional well-being are always safeguarded and protected from any possible stigmatization, discrimination, retaliation or re-traumatization.

Victims have the right to decide whether and with whom to share their story. All actions should be guided by respect for the victim's dignity, decisions, wishes, needs, rights, culture and values with the overriding priority that their decisions are made in an informed manner. Treatment of the victim should be courteous, empathetic and professional. Empathy is essential in all interactions with the victim/survivor. Victims/survivors should be treated fairly and equitably. A gender perspective should be applied and gender awareness should be promoted. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, language, religion, belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status should be avoided. It is also necessary to recognize any intersectional discrimination and to be aware of possible personal biases.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Male victims of trafficking: as highlighted by several experts during the fieldwork carried out, it is evident that in Spain there is a tendency to hierarchize the purposes of exploitation, giving prevalence to the care of female victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that all forms of exploitation and trafficking have an impact and consequences on the victims, and that factors such as age, sex, gender, and the purpose of exploitation have an impact on the victims.

how these consequences occur, but they do not detract from the relevance of the violations suffered. Therefore, it is essential to always carry out an individual assessment of each victim's experiences and needs.

Although male victims do not manifest themselves in high numbers, they do exist, and the authorities need to be trained to detect and treat them with the same procedural guarantees as female victims. It is necessary to improve the collection and disaggregation of data according to the purpose of exploitation, work environments and gender, in order to provide visibility and design comprehensive and effective public policies to combat trafficking.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Establishment of a protocol for increased surveillance at airports. With the exception of Madrid, there was no evidence of a protocol on the detection of possible trafficking processes at airports. It would be advisable to implement protocols for the detection

1 Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Definition and principles of a victim/survivor-centered approach. Available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/IASC%20Definition%20%26%20Principles%20of%20a%20Victim_Survivor%20Centered%20Approach%20%28Spanish%29.pdf.



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and identification of possible human trafficking dynamics at the national level for all airports with international arrivals outside Schengen, where a greater number of victims currently come from.

RECOMMENDATION 11

A focus on early identification. Although the majority of trafficking victims were foreigners, NGOs also identified several national victims and described the problem as a homogeneous phenomenon. The NGOs participating in the fieldwork suggested working in schools, educating from the root to eradicate human trafficking, particularly in high-risk schools where people are more likely to be recruited. In this sense, it is advisable to join efforts to invest in education, an education focused on a culture of respect and non-violence, educating educators and those responsible for care and protection, fathers, mothers, families in all their modalities, so that they can guide and accompany.

In addition, we recommend education to dismantle practices and beliefs that perpetuate risk factors linked to violence, gender-based violence and discrimination, and that make many groups highly vulnerable to human trafficking. Finally, we recommend accompanying governments at all levels so that they understand the magnitude of the crime of human trafficking and the impact it has on the lives of victims and their families, and in response, guaranteeing regulations and comprehensive public policies for prevention, response and sanction, permanent updating of operators and civil servants, and the technical and operational conditions for effective prevention, detection, identification, protection of victims and sanctioning of traffickers.

RECOMMENDATION 12

In more than 70 percent of the interviews or focus groups conducted with key informants, the need for **greater awareness of the trafficking phenomenon** on the part of actors who may come into contact with potential victims was noted.

In this sense, the capacity of the public to become involved in the detection of risk or vulnerability indicators that may be victims or potential victims of trafficking is also recognized. Along these lines, it is recommended that education in detection be promoted in different environments. In addition to the specialized training programs that can be developed for professionals directly involved in the reality of human trafficking, it is important to provide useful information for detection to other groups of workers who may be witnesses to risk situations.

RECOMMENDATION 13

In the interviews conducted with personnel specialized in the care of minors, cases were reported in which the trafficked children and adolescents came from shelters for minors and had been recruited by the center's security personnel or through social networks.

In this regard, it is recommended that **preventive mechanisms** be promoted **for the hiring of personnel**, not only those who provide direct psychosocial care to minors, but also other professional profiles that may have contact with them in shelters. These



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tools should facilitate exhaustive background checks of all workers in all services offered in the shelters and prioritize the work of preventing the phenomenon of trafficking. Similarly, these mechanisms should emphasize the need to monitor possible recruitment of children in care by human trafficking networks and to establish protocols for collaboration with the relevant authorities.

RECOMMENDATION 14

Understanding the phenomenon of trafficking, given that in more than 70 percent of the key informant interviews, the problem of the lack of homogeneity in the interpretation of the crime of human trafficking has been highlighted. These discrepancies translate, by extension, into different interpretations as to whether a particular situation constitutes a case of human trafficking or not and, therefore, is reflected in the processes of detection and identification of possible victims as such, with the implications that this entails in terms of protection and access to rights and in terms of prosecution of the crime.

In this context, we recommend to the relevant government authorities the consideration of an update of the current legal framework and/or a work plan with law enforcement and the judicial system with the objective of appreciating a broader understanding of the crime of human trafficking, in order to align the definition of human trafficking more closely with the reality faced by the victims.

RECOMMENDATION 15

After the fieldwork carried out, it is clear that, although some progress is being made, estimating and recording the real number of victims of the phenomenon continues to be a challenge. In addition to the difficulties noted in the results of data recording, discrepancies in the interpretation of the crime translate into inconsistencies in the recording of victims by different actors, depending on the definition of trafficking victim with which they operate. This difficulty in **measuring the dimensions of the crime** translates into a series of damages in the fight against trafficking.

The lack of data, which reflects a lack of consensus among the actors involved, makes it difficult to understand the characteristics and dimension of the phenomenon and to formulate effective policies at the national and local levels. This hinders the allocation of resources for the prevention of the phenomenon, the protection of victims and the prosecution of the crime. In this regard, we recommend that the competent governmental authorities explore the possibility of implementing tools to improve the collection of data on victims of human trafficking, favoring coordination and the rapprochement of positions among the various actors involved in the work.

8

Conclusions





8. CONCLUSIONS

During the last 20 months of work, we have deepened our understanding of human trafficking in Spain, addressing a problem that is much more complex and multifaceted than we had initially envisaged thanks to the initial pilot project. This experience has allowed us not only to identify shortcomings and challenges, but also to glimpse opportunities for a more effective and coordinated intervention.

From the outset, we found a significant disparity in the detection of victims among different demographic groups. Women, although represented in greater numbers in the official statistics, revealed only part of the problem. The underrepresentation of men and minors in the victim registries alerted us to the need to develop more inclusive strategies adapted to the different realities of the people affected. The data showed that for every victim identified, there are many more who remain invisible, especially in categories such as labor exploitation and other less documented forms of trafficking.

The variability in the identification of victims by type of exploitation highlighted the need to broaden our approach. While sexual exploitation remains the most visible and reported form, high estimation rates for labor exploitation and other forms of exploitation indicate that these areas are severely underserved. Interviews and data collected during the project highlighted the urgency of making these forms of trafficking visible and developing specific mechanisms for detection and support.

One of the main obstacles identified was the lack of a unified registration system. The fragmentation of data among different actors, such as NGOs and security forces, and the variability in collection methodologies, complicated the interpretation and analysis of information.

The mobility of victims adds an additional layer of complexity to the work. Trafficked persons often move between regions and countries, making it difficult to identify and track them. This phenomenon highlighted the importance of improving transnational cooperation and implementing tracking systems that can adapt to these mobility dynamics. International coordination is vital to address a problem that transcends borders.

In addition, the lack of detailed data on certain groups, such as men and the elderly, limited our ability to develop effective policies and intervention programs. Accurate and detailed data collection is essential not only to understand the real magnitude of the problem, but also to design interventions that respond appropriately to the specific



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needs of each group. The obsolescence of some computer tools and the absence of a common data collection platform were some of the issues that we observed as a “brake” on progress in detection and identification.

Throughout the project, it also became clear that surveillance at critical entry points, such as airports, is insufficient. The lack of uniform national protocols for the identification of potential victims at these crucial points allows many people to go undetected. This underscores the need to develop and implement clear and uniform protocols that can be applied consistently at all points of entry.

One of the most important lessons learned is the need for a victim-centered approach. Current practices, often focused on the prosecution of crime rather than the welfare of victims, need to be re-evaluated. It is essential that police and judicial actions focus on the best interests of victims, ensuring their overall well-being and reducing revictimization. This includes overcoming procedural challenges such as the lack of translators and social support services during the judicial process.

These 20 months of research and work have shown that the turning point for effectively addressing human trafficking in Spain is a substantial improvement in the systematization and use of data, standardized training and inter-institutional coordination. These actions will not only facilitate more accurate detection and better support for victims, but will also strengthen the capacity of institutions to fight this crime in a more efficient and humane manner.

9

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