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The changing profile of Modern Slavery crime: Tracking outcomes in Investigations by the Metropolitan Police 2016-2021.

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Research Contract

1.Thesis Title: The changing profile of Modern Slavery crime: Tracking outcomes in Investigations by the Metropolitan Police 2016-2021.

2. Key Research Question and sub-questions: How can the last 5 years of modern slavery investigations best be understood, between 2016-2021?

2.a. What has happened with reporting patterns of modern slavery crime reports?

- Detection rate
- Crime type
- Gender of victim
- Ethnicity of victim by identity code
- Reporting methods
- Outcome code

2.b What are the key characteristics associated with unsolved modern slavery crime reports?

- Crime classification
- Reporting method (Police initiated / non police initiated)
- Victim gender
- Outcome code

2.c What are the key characteristics associated with solved modern slavery crime reports?

- Crime classification
- Reporting method (police initiated / non police initiated)
- Victim gender
- Accused nationality
- Typology
- Investigation Command

2.d. Overall, based on this analysis of available data, what recommendations can be offered for both:

- Tracking slavery cases and attempts to detect and prosecute them.
- Distinguishing outcomes between police initiated and non-police-initiated crime.

3. Unit of analysis, data set size and time period:

Unit of analysis: MPS modern slavery crime reports

Data set size: 7669 individual crime reports

Time period: 2016-2021

4. **Key measures of independent, dependent, or descriptive variables:**
   Solved or unsolved cases.

5. **Research design:** Descriptive analysis

6. **Summary of Analytic Methods:** A strategic review of what is and is not being accomplished under current systems for policing modern slavery.

7. **Implications Statement**

This is the first study of its type analysing Modern Slavery crime data reported to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) between 2016 and 2021 - an audit of crime reports which are not publicly accessible. The scale of reporting in London represents a dominant percentage of all reports made nationally. This sample data is not readily available to the academic community offering the opportunity to impact on existing practice within the MPS. Including specific considerations concerning how crime is recorded, timeliness of reports and the approach to victim care. The aim is to use evidence from the findings to improve the policing response both within the MPS and nationally. There is an opportunity for the Home Office to ensure greater compatibility between the National Referral Mechanism and crime reporting systems. These reporting processes are currently disconnected and there is a need for policing and the Single Competent Authority to work together towards a shared vision to protect the vulnerable through better investigative outcomes. There is an existing model used for child safeguarding, in the form of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, that demonstrates a joint agency approach to information sharing can work. This study is also of interest to non- law enforcement agencies to reflect on the integral role they have in improved perpetrator focus. At the heart of this study is the intention to increase prosecutions which is central to the strategic plan of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. As an understanding of this crime type evolves, ongoing training is essential to support investigators to overcome complexity issues.

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Introduction

This thesis is a descriptive study of modern slavery crime reports between 01.01.2016 and 01.10.2021. It aims to address a gap in quantitative research in the UK. The motivation for this undertaking is the lack of modern slavery crime solved with the aim of offering recommendations for improvement. Increased crime reporting represents improved victim identification indicating greater confidence to report. However, whilst attention was drawn to the exceptionally low detection rate which are not the only, or even the key measure of police performance. It became clear that low detection rates were partly a symptom of unique business processes and political expectations influencing policy that were not best serving victim interests. It is imperative that victims should be at the heart of police strategy to tackle Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT). This research aims to put victims first by using Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) crime data to offer an insight into an issue that remains widely misunderstood. It is complex (Cockbain and Bowers, 2019) and may even be considered unique requiring a bespoke response.

This paper follows a flexible design, as a descriptive study of a sample of modern slavery crime data. The population of crimes recorded over this period, equates to 7669 offences. The structure of this paper starts with research of relevant literature including key concepts and relevant criminological theories: *Reporting*, *Solvability*, and *Victims*. Research revealed a lack of modern slavery evidence based on larger volumes of data. Whilst the use of crime data (Cockbain, Bowers and Vernon, 2019) has some inherent challenges, the benefit of quantitative research, based on secondary crime data, can advance the MSHT field offering a 'goldmine for trafficking research'. The problem of unsolved crime was abundantly clear, but this was not just a problem for England and Wales, (Mantouvalou,2018; Matos, Goncalves and Maia, 2019). This added impetus to this study to consider issues such as reporting difficulties and victim engagement. The *Discussion* offered an

unparalleled opportunity to consider *Findings* derived from the sample to positively influence existing processes and policy.

The MPS is the largest of 43 police service in the UK and its profile and levels of reporting are significant. 26% of all modern slavery crime reported nationally in 2020 was investigated by the MPS (HM Government UK, 2021e), thereby elevating the significance of this dataset. This thesis could be considered an audit on reported crime at a critical juncture post-Covid 19, to better understand the evolution in reporting behaviour. The overall number of offences has generally increased since the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA 2015) (National Archives, 2015) was enacted, reports have slowed more recently but solved crime has not kept pace. It follows that more reported crime means an increase in victim numbers, and this can be considered a positive indication of effective reporting processes. However, police performance is consistently measured by the detection rate which is the percentage of solved cases within the overall crime count. Analysis of this crime sample of both solved and unsolved cases aims to improve investigative outcomes for the future. There are many reasons why modern slavery crime investigations are complex, which impacts on solvability and this study seeks to further illuminate this issue with recommendations for improvement.

The seemingly contradictory phrase 'hidden in plain sight' associated with modern slavery simply expresses the fact it is ever present yet invisible. it is otherwise referred to as a 'hidden harm', meaning offences happen behind closed doors (HM Government UK, 2020c). Professionals try to identify it but often struggle with its many forms, referred to as typologies (Cooper et al., 2017). The public desire for 'value for money' often means the use of services with no regard for simple economics and the implication of cheap services on the labour provider. Recognition for the scale and breadth of the problem led to the creation of MSA 2015 and the role of the Independent Anti-

Slavery Commissioner (IASC). The strategic plan 2019 – 2021 (IASC, 2019) aims to deliver on the UK Modern Slavery Strategy (HM Government UK, 2014). There are four key areas outlined within this plan, but it is Priority 2 that especially resonates with this study 'Supporting law enforcement and prosecutions'.

Literature review

Modern slavery is a heinous crime that is considered by experts in the field as being only second to homicide in terms of severity of criminal offending. Given the gravity of this offence type it follows that solving investigations is paramount, thereby instilling a greater level of victim confidence by bringing offenders to justice. Much confidence is derived from the high detection rate for murder in London, but this is in stark contrast to the level of attrition with unsolved modern slavery investigations. This has provided the stimulus for this study; why is it that cases are not being solved and what areas of promise exist within the solved cases that may offer a better prospect of improving the investigative response? A review of existing literature in this field seeks to illuminate some of the key challenges that are inherently linked with modern slavery investigations. This is a complex crime type that often eludes identification even by the most dedicated of professionals (Machura et al, 2018). It exists as an isolated offence but can be conflated with other criminality where individuals are forced into activities such as drug dealing or sex work. The characteristics of investigations are diverse with crime committed against victims representing a cross section of society who are connected through their vulnerability.

Research within the modern slavery field reveals that whilst there is a breadth of international studies they focus, predominantly on limited data sets or qualitative analysis (Cockbain, Bowers., 2019; Matos, Goncalves, Maia., 2019). Therefore, this is the gap that this study aims to address by using such a significant sample. The literature review has been structured into distinct thematic

areas: *Definitions, Key Concepts (Reporting, Solvability, Victims)* and *Modern Slavery* research. Definitions are necessary to outline the legislation that relates to this crime type. Key concepts include the core criminology themes that are considered most relevant to this thesis. Reporting concerns how police are notified of a crime. Solvability considers the fundamental factors that are required to solve a crime. Victims are at the very core of the policing mission and the issue of engagement is a central issue to a successful investigation. The research concludes with studies dedicated to modern slavery.

Definitions

The Modern Slavery Act was first presented to Parliament as a Bill (HM Government UK, 2013b) outlining the nature of the threat with a strong emphasis on international trafficking apparent from the use of data and case studies. The principal offences are defined within Sections One, Two and Three of the MSA 2015 (National Archives, 2015). Section One defines Slavery, Servitude and Enforced Labour, Section Two covers Trafficking and Section Three defines Exploitation. These offences were introduced because existing legislation was spread within different acts of Parliament and there was a collective view that the protection for victims was inadequate (HM Government UK, 2018a). The MSA 2015 provides a specific legal instrument that delivers on the Palermo Protocol 2000 (United Nations Human Rights, 2000), an international undertaking to tackle slavery and trafficking. It is important to distinguish modern slavery and smuggling (National Archives, 2011) because they are often conflated but are quite separate (Farrell, McDevitt and Fahy, 2010). The key difference between the two concepts beings the matter of consent present in smuggling and absent in MSHT.

The MSA 2015 was heralded internationally as being the lead in international legislation to tackle this crime type (HM Government UK, 2018a). At the time of enactment, MSA 2015 focussed on international trafficking and did not immediately recognise the tangential issue of 'County Lines'

drug dealing. County lines involves urban gangs deploying street level dealers to different communities (Coomber and Moyle, 2017). The strategy to tackle violence (HM Government UK, 2019a) draws a retrospective connection between the increase in violence since 2014 and County Lines. In May 2019 'Operation Pibera' was the first case of County Lines leading to convictions for modern slavery (Tobin, 2019) and this was the juncture where gang related trafficking may have reframed the UK interpretation of modern slavery. It is worthy of consideration whether focus has almost entirely shifted from the original international threat to UK based victimisation.

There are 17 different typologies for modern slavery (Cooper et al,2017) which fall within four separate categories: Labour Exploitation, Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation, and Domestic Servitude. The typology is different to the offence and concerns the actual methodology. A common misapprehension regarding modern slavery is that one type of exploitation ranks over another but comparing contrasting levels of exploitation is an emotive and imprecise. This is a point Heynen and van der Meulen, (2021) develop further with the influence of 'branded activism' in this space, with the use of celebrity endorsements to add weight to specific slavery issues which influences policy in the USA. It has been proffered that emphasis on sexual and criminal exploitation has been to the detriment of some of the less politicised exploitation types (Cockbain, Bowers and Vernon, 2019).

Key Concepts

The following areas of reporting, solvability and victims have a significant bearing on investigations and as core criminology themes have been included as fundamentals of police investigations.

Crime reporting

The issue of 'hidden harm' is in effect underreporting of crime against the vulnerable and this is not unique to MSHT. It is simple fact that not all crime is reported and there is a breadth of evidence

to support this assertion. A study in America (Baumer and Lauritsen, 2010) of crime data between 1973 and 2005 found significant underreporting in both acquisitive and violent crimes. A separate study based on National Crime Victim Survey data in the United States of America between 1992 and 2010 (Bosick et al, 2012) revealed a significant problem with less than half of violent crime being reported to police. The Crime Survey for England and Wales acknowledges the evident gap between estimated crime and reported crime (Office for National Statistics ONS, 2021). The ONS produced a specific report on MSHT (Office for National Statistics, 2020) and the findings were that whilst reporting had improved 'this was only part of the story'.

Underreporting causes a deficiency in the quality of crime data as reports simply represent the crime that police are aware of. It is not a uniform concept and is aggravated within certain locations, demographics, or communities (Farrell and Pfeffer, 2014). This is a point evident from a study which looked at the 'snitching code' in the homeless community and how this affected reporting (Huey and Quirouette, 2010). It may have limited external legitimacy but the concept of a 'chivalry code' suggested an inclination to portray women as vulnerable leading to greater levels of gender-based reporting thereby disadvantaging male victims. Politics has an impact on crime reporting as can be observed with the recent focus on Violence Against Women and Girls (HM Government UK, 2021f) in response to the tragic murder of Sarah Everard. This added political and media impetus caused an increase in reported crime against females. There is a parallel with MSHT where there has been an increase in reporting of adolescent male victims involved in 'County Lines' drug dealing (National Crime Agency, 2018; (HM Government UK, 2021d)).

Victim cooperation is a central issue to the viability of a successful investigation. A study on stalking (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1988; as cited in Reyns and Englebrecht,2010) asserts the 'Theory of criminal justice decision making' is a guide. This study explores three factors that impact on reporting:

(1) Seriousness of the offence

(2) The relationship between victim and offender

(3) The prior criminal record of the offender.

The study proffered that a victim should be considered a decision maker for crimes being reported to police. However, this is not always the case and especially not for MSHT because victims may not recognise that they have been exploited. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) (HM Government UK, 2016a) is a reporting system for victims of MSHT to access support which can be used by third-party organisations. Crime reporting and the NRM are separate systems with different purposes. NRM reports are assessed and then transferred to police to report as crime. These referrals require the consent of an adult victim, but this is not necessary for a child. A statutory obligation exists with the responsibility to work together to safeguard children between the Local Authority, Police and Integrated Care System (HM Government, 2018). This legal framework influences professionals in child safeguarding to make NRM reports but not so for adults. The obligation to safeguard children seems a driver behind the efficacy of reporting in child victims.

NRM referrals are shared with police for the purposes of crime reporting but that might be one of the problems. The Home Office measure performance in terms of the number of referrals that are made (HM Government UK, 2021e). The focus is on the reporting of victims rather than the outcome of the police investigation. Use of a third-party reporting system can have a significant impact on crime reporting. Galvin and Safer-Lichtenstein (2017) examined victim surveys and posits that there is a significant contrast in motivation between victims and third parties with a conflict between civic or self-serving duties. A third party is not likely to be as invested in the outcome of the investigation and is more likely to be swayed by the seriousness of the offence. A practical challenge that arises from third party rather reporting is the degradation in direct evidence. A reporting agency outside of law enforcement may not appreciate the integral role they have as

evidence gatherers. Police work in accordance with 'Golden Hour principles' (College of Policing, 2013b), the period immediately after an offence which offers the best time to capture evidence. Exhibit retrieval and victim / witness accounts are best secured at this stage whilst recall is fresh in the mind. If non-law enforcement agencies are not working in accordance with these principles it is no wonder that investigations progress poorly with opportunities missed. Furthermore, there is potential scope for bias if organisations' or individuals' values conflict with the criminal justice system thereby subverting the reporting process (Lipsky, 1980).

Solvability

MSHT investigations are complex, and this undoubtedly impacts on solvability but there are many reasons why this is the case. It is an issue acknowledged by the United Nations (2017) report 'Dedicated to Evidential Issues in Trafficking in Persons Cases'. The accounts of victims of crime who do not fit the 'witness of truth' mould, as generally expected of a prosecution witness, are often inconsistent because of the trauma they have suffered, and they may fabricate some aspects of their account to protect themselves or others from incrimination or deep-rooted shame. This means that investigators and prosecutors do not have confidence in their account, and this is usually the cornerstone of an investigation. The spectrum of typologies (Cooper et al., 2017) means that investigators need a broad skill set. The ability required to engage with a victim of domestic servitude differs to the proactive evidence gathering involved in proving a criminal exploitation case. The attitudes and priorities of investigators that work on different types of slavery cases are generally different. The Annual Modern Slavery report 2017-2018 (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019) suggests that the average amount of time for a modern slavery investigation is three years from investigation to prosecution. This means there is less chance of the same investigator managing an investigation through from inception to conviction, causing disruption to relations with victims and inhibiting understanding of evidence. A delayed judicial process undermines the ability to maintain continuity in investigations with handovers not always producing the best

outcomes. Lengthy investigations, complex evidential sources, court delays and lack of continuity within investigations are all factors that make investigations difficult.

Modern slavery crimes are especially challenging because of investigations that transcend regional and national borders, thereby increasing the number of stakeholders with a vested interest in an investigation. Working with partners regionally, nationally, or even internationally requires clear accountability and governance. Coupe, Ariel and Mueller-Johnson, (2019) assert that crime detection depends on solvability and resource investment. Modern slavery investigations are complex, but they are also voluminous which requires both a local and specialist response. Best practice suggests specialist teams should investigate all modern slavery crime, but this is not possible because of the volume in the MPS who investigated 26% of all reported crime nationally in 2020 (HM Government, 2021e). Generally, most cases are investigated within local policing in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) where inexperience is a real challenge. The more complex proactive investigations are undertaken by a specialist Modern Slavery Child Exploitation Team. The Home Office response to a super complaint from Hestia suggests that Chief Constables (HM Government, 2021g) should consider the capability of officers involved in MSHT investigations and yet not all MSHT crime is dealt with by specialists.

There are other factors that impact on solvability. Issacs (1967) as asserted in Coupe, Ariel and Mueller-Johnson, (2019) points to the factors that positively impact on crime being solved. These include suspects being on scene at the time of the report and the victim naming a suspect. For modern slavery offences it is incredibly rare for suspects to be on scene at the time of reporting and named suspects form a mere 7% of the sample. Cockbain and Bowers (2019) cite Cohen & Felson (1979) regarding Routine Activity Theory and how this relates to different MSHT typologies. Routine Activity Theory promulgates three elements are present for a crime to occur: likely offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of a capable guardian. Cockbain and Bowers (2019)

argue that modern slavery victims have different characteristics based on the different typologies, with tailored offending tactics associated with socio-economic factors. This would add weight to the proposition that different investigative techniques are needed for different types of investigation.

At the heart of the solvability issue is the effectiveness of the investigator. Greenwood (1977) published the 'Rand Criminal Investigation Study' which questioned the impact of investigators on solving crime where suspects were not arrested at the scene, or the victim was not able to identify a suspect. This resonates with the point made by Coupe, Ariel and Mueller-Johnson, (2019) on these very same factors. It is asserted that investigators target the 'low hanging fruit' and avoid complexity (Greenwood,1977). However, Lee (2020) suggests that investigators have a more positive impact. Lee cites several different authors on the impact of performance culture where supervisors encourage crime clear ups which motivates investigators to improve performance. In the current context modern slavery as a theme competes against other serious crime types such as youth violence and sexual offending. Everything cannot be a priority in a mixed investigation workload and so there must be a triage process. Lee (2020) uses data from a study by Horvath (2001), in which the age of the data may be considered a limitation but does give some insight into what may positively influence police investigation outcomes. The findings of this study established a link between policy and investigative outcomes in the US where it was established that 'crime control orientated policies' have a statistically significant impact on solving crime. Conversely when less aggressive policing tactics are used this leads to less solved crime. In many respects this may be at the heart of the problem for MSHT where policy conflicts with competing priority crime and the overall system is more focused on victim identification rather than solved crime.

It is a matter of consideration as to whether technology can assist with crime screening to support solvability. Given the volume of reporting in modern slavery this study seeks to find characteristics

that make an investigation inherently more or less solvable. If 93% of reports are closed with no suspect, and a suspect identification is needed to solve the crime, then most crime is incapable of being solved.   Therefore, better screening decisions could be taken to target resources into investigations that have greater potential to be solved.   An experiment conducted in Kent (Mcfadzien et al, 2019) used a screening programme called Evidenced Based Investigative Tool (EBIT). By assessing eight different characteristics within an investigation the model was able to accurately identify which cases could be solved, albeit showing that most cases would remain unsolved. EBIT achieved an accurate predicted outcome level of 97%. However, the external validity of this experiment may not be directly applicable to modern slavery investigations, as the crimes within this study were less serious violent and public order related offences. Yet the current process of establishing whether a case is solvable is a decision made by a team of investigators and supervisors. This subjective approach means investigative effort is wasted on cases that cannot be solved. Discretion is a cornerstone of the existing approach, a concept referred to as 'street level bureaucracy' (Lipsky, 1980) whereby public servants make choices as frontline practitioners on the street, essentially putting theory into practice to decide how they interpret and apply the law. Could better triage processes with NRM referrals mean greater levels of investment in cases that are capable of being solved?

Victims

To understand the extent of the MSHT threat in London it is important to understand the wider context internationally and nationally. The Global Slavery Index (GSI) report (Walkfree Foundation, 2018) suggests that as of 2016 there were 40.3 million people held in slavery worldwide. This report ranked international efforts to tackle this threat and placed the UK as third in the world at that time. The GSI estimates that there were 136,000 UK victims, a much higher estimate than that of the Home Office (HM Government UK, 2014). Gallagher, (2017) challenges the GSI methodology asserting that whilst well intentioned there is scope for bias and the tools are not currently available

to calculate figures accurately. The estimated number of victims is a matter of concern raised in the United States (Farrell and Pfeffer, 2014) with the issue of questionable methodology making estimates unreliable. The true number of victims are not known. Sherman (1998, 2013) promotes using the best available research to support police work and so in this context using the GSI data as a guide to quantify the scale of the problem seems a pragmatic approach in the absence of an accurate dataset.

A better understanding of UK victim numbers can be gained through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) (HM Government UK, 2016a). The NRM, better described in the *Data* section, is the Home Office framework designed to ensure that victims of slavery / trafficking are identified and able to access support and protection. NRM data offers a guide to victim numbers, but this is not to say that the NRM process is without criticism as limitations were made clear by the joint committee in the draft bill in 2013 (Mantouvalou,2018). The Home Office produce public reports quarterly and annually. The NRM end of year summary 2020 (HM Government UK, 2021e) indicates that there were 10,613 potential victims of modern slavery in England and Wales referred over the 2020/21 period (April 20 – April 21). It is important to note that the figure includes all referrals, even victims who have reported offences outside of the UK which are reported but not as crime. 3150 reports (29%) of all NRM referrals were passed to the MPS in 2020/21. The NRM annual report from 2020 (HM Government UK, 2020a) reported a similar total of victim numbers of 10,616. A basic calculation combining the NRM victim numbers over two years equates to over 20,000 victims reported in the UK over 2 financial years. The gap between the GSI victim estimates and the NRM referrals is significant but could give a sense of the extent to which modern slavery is underreported.

A positive outcome from an investigation is not just about convictions or solved cases, it is a much wider concept including greater levels of reporting. This is a point asserted by Bjelland (2020) who

cites Bradford et al, (2013) concerning the concepts of legitimacy and procedural justice. There are positives to be found in increased reporting with more victims being identified which may arise from greater confidence in the reporting process. However, solving crime does give victims greater confidence to report. The frame of reference for non-UK victims of MSHT presents obvious cultural challenges with the victim experience being based on their country of origin. In fact, their interpretation of procedural justice could be quite skewed by their experience of law enforcement officials and this undoubtedly undermines confidence and the willingness to report. Victim trust can be garnered through an effective investigation process, although an effective investigation without prosecution is not always enough. Unsolved cases where offenders evade justice have a serious impact on public confidence, this was established in a study related to homicide victims (Regoeczi, Kennedy and Silverman., 2000). If prosecutions are not initiated, the cycle of crime continues.

Victim engagement is a significant challenge to a successful investigation. Modern slavery victims are amongst the most exploited victims of crime. This is because MSHT can be an ongoing event, with substantial impact on trust being caused through calculated abuse. The first incarnation of the 'Hierarchy of Needs' designed by Maslow (1943) outlines a 5-tier model concerned with motivational theory. This is a factor that undermines victim engagement, especially for MSHT investigations. Victims often do not recognise themselves as such and those who seek help prioritise practical needs. This behaviour aligns with Tiers One and Two of the model relating to Physiological and Safety needs. A study concerning sex workers in Mumbai (Gezinski and Karandikar, 2013) found that exploited women had primary focus on health and monetary needs. Goede and Boshuizen-van Burken, (2019) conducted a study of refugees with the application of Maslow (1943). It may come as little surprise that victims / survivors are often reluctant to support police as their immediate needs are prioritised. It seems clear a more culturally competent, trauma informed approach would deliver better levels of victim engagement.

A victim account is a fundamental component to most successful police investigations. To get a full understanding of the nature of the allegation, a victim is generally needed to provide detail and insight. Yet, for MSHT the College of Policing (2015) promote an 'evidence led' approach which does not rely on the victim. This means capturing evidence from other sources including communications data, witnesses and financial information which can replace victim testimony. This approach is promoted because of the potential risk of traumatisation of victims through the Criminal Justice process and, whilst it is effective, it does present a challenge as evidence gathering is less direct and a broad investigative approach is required to obtain evidence which must be interpreted for relevance. This undoubtedly slows investigations, and, without victim cooperation, most investigations are likely to flounder. This approach arguably does not work effectively with the current volume of reported MSHT crime because these are complex and labour-intensive tactics. Given the undoubted significance of victim engagement a better appreciation of the number of cases that discontinue because victims do not wish to prosecute would be advantageous.

Modern Slavery research

It is apparent that victim engagement is integral to criminal investigations in general. Bjelland's (2017) finding that there was a challenge for investigators with victim engagement and that this had a substantial impact on police MSHT investigations, appears a unanimous point amongst those within this research field. Pajon and Walsh (2020) conducted 21 separate interviews with modern slavery investigators and officers with responsibility for such investigations. 'Keeping victims on board', meaning keeping the victim involved in the investigation process, was considered a key aspect of a successful investigation. The first interaction that occurs between police and victim can have a telling impact. The Locard principle 'every contact leaves a trace' (Locard, 1920) is principally concerned with the exchange of forensic material, but this can be considered in an alternative way.

Sutherland (2015) makes the point that everyone remembers meeting a police officer - 'People remember an encounter with us'. This seems an important aspect of police investigations as 'first impressions' do matter, and this can be challenging if there are language, culture and confidence issues. Breaking down barriers and gaining trust is not easy.

A study of reported MSHT crime in Norway in the period between 2003 – 2013 Bjelland (2017) found increased offending. This study uses mixed methods to evaluate national data with specifics of investigations. It revealed an inconsistent approach to victim identification in different areas of Norway, with Oslo taking a reactive stance and Bergen being more proactive. Increased reporting numbers may have been affected by the policing approach, level of training and the general investment in this threat area. The study found that there was a lack of detailed information on how reports are made to police. The overall findings suggest that some of the challenges lie with the decision making of investigators (Lipsksy, 1980). Two thirds of modern slavery reports within the sample in this study were found to be reported by others rather than police yet the results were better when the police initiated the investigation. The timing and location of offences (Bjelland,2017) does present obvious limitations as a means of comparison with this study because it was conducted pre-MSA 2015 and in Scandinavia. The connection between police reporting and investigative outcomes is of significant interest. Research in Portugal by Matos, Goncalves and Maia (2019) offers an opportunity for some comparison. The study sought to understand investigative outcomes through to conviction of 30 HT cases in Portugal as 71% were filed at the investigation phase. The sample cases were selected from a wider population of 300. A recommendation within this study was for more empirical studies on this topic with larger data sets.

Data and Method

Research design

This chapter outlines the approach that has been adopted in relation to data and method. This is a descriptive study using secondary crime data from the Metropolitan Police Service between January 2016 and September 2021. The use of secondary data is at odds with most trafficking research which uses primary data and so offers some 'untapped potential to expand, diversify and strengthen the trafficking evidence base' (Cockbain, Bowers and Vernon, 2019). The examination of all crime data within this time span also means that all types of MSHT offences are included which is a variance on existing research which focuses purely on sexual exploitation (Matos, Gonçalves and Maia, 2019). The purpose is to examine the outcome of modern slavery investigations to help establish a baseline for crime reports in London. The dependent variable of whether a crime is solved (detected) or not solved (undetected) is the focus of this quantitative analysis. This study uses a unique dataset based on all reported modern slavery crime recorded to the MPS during the defined period. The significance of this research is that out of 43 Home Office police services the MPS receive approximately a quarter of crime referrals from the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) which is the dominant reporting method for this crime type.   The aim of this study will be to present an overview, describing prevalence and risk factors associated with the variables within the sample.

Data

Source and content

The focus of this thesis is modern slavery crime data in London recorded by the MPS onto the Crime Reporting Information System (CRIS). CRIS has been the crime reporting portal for over 20 years and has evolved with additional data entry fields added over time to meet changing reporting

requirements. The rules for reported crime are defined by the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) (HM Government UK, 2021b). Generally, where a victim or complainant makes an allegation of crime and there is no credible evidence to the contrary then a crime will be recorded. To support this study, data abstraction was tasked to a Higher Analyst employed by the MPS to capture record level data related to the offence, victim and accused (terms to be explained in this section). Each CRIS report represents a singular crime record. Each report has a main classification and may have sub-classifications depending on the nature of the allegation and number of victims. The classification is based on the most serious crime type.

Modern slavery crime classification

Each offence within the MSA 2015 has a specific classification code. The classification and the sub-classification are stipulated within the HOCR. For modern slavery crime data to be extracted from CRIS the data was obtained using the related classification code 36. The sub-classifications are cross referenced with the specific offences within the MSA 2015. There are a range of sub-classification codes that are detailed in the figure below which range between 06 -14 and these relate to the offences in the MSA 2015.

CRIS classification codes for Modern Slavery crime

- **36/06 Hold person in slavery or servitude.**
- Modern Slavery Act 2015 Sec 1 (1) (a) & 5 (1) CJS:MS15001

- **36/07 Require person to perform forced or compulsory labour.**
- Modern Slavery Act 2015 Sec 1 (1) (b) & 5 (1) CJS: MS15002

- **36/08 Arrange or facilitate the travel of another person with a view to exploitation.**
- Modern Slavery Act 2015 Sec 2 (1) & (5) (1) CJS:MS15003

- **36/10 Commit Offence other than kidnapping or false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with intention of arranging travel with view to exploitation.**
- Modern Slavery Act 2015 Sec 4 & 5 (2) CJS: MS15005

- **36/11 Commit offence of kidnapping or false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with view to exploitation.**
- Modern Slavery Act 2015 Sec 4 & 5 (3) CJS:MS 15006

- **36/12 Do act prohibited by slavery and trafficking risk or prevention order.**
- Modern Slavery Act 2015 Sec 30 (1) & (3) CJS: MS 15007

- **36/13 Fail to comply with requirement to surrender passport under Modern Slavery Act 2015**
- Sec 30 (2) (a) & 30 (3) CJS: MS15008

- **36/14 Fail to comply with requirement to provide name and address under Modern Slavery Act 2015**
- Sec 30 (2) (b) &30 (3) CJS: MS15009

Figure 1 - List of modern slavery offences with Home Office crime classification codes

Solved and unsolved cases

A case is considered solved when a suspect has been charged or cautioned with that offence. Solved cases of modern slavery are incredibly low but this is not unique as a studies in Portugal (Matos, Gonçalves and Maia, 2019) and Australia have also found (Lyneham, 2021) high levels of attrition prior to charge. Police charge offenders when there is enough evidence to support a realistic prospect of a conviction (College of Policing, 2013a). The Force Crime Registrar has responsibility for reporting standards on behalf of each police service and is the service lead on matters pertaining to reported crime (HM Government UK, 2017a). Police officers fulfilling the independent role of 'Dedicated Decision Maker' decide upon whether a crime is detected or not to ensure strict compliance with Home Office Counting Rules. Modern slavery is an offence where the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) would be responsible for the charging decision. Crime detections are a difficult topic with much dependent upon whether the crime is victim or state based. A solved

case is also known as a sanctioned detection, and this is a key measure by which the effectiveness of police investigations is judged. Detection rates are highly topical; much has been said of poor detections rates in rape investigations (Guardian, 2021) where only 1.6% detection was achieved from all rape offences in England and Wales in 2020.

Crime reporting

```
                    ┌────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Modern Slavery Crime      │
                    │        Reports              │
                    └────────────────────────────┘
                         │                    │
        ┌────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
        │  Police initiated:  │      │   Non Police initiated:   │
        │ Discovered by police│      │      Victim reports       │
        │ Proactive operations│      │   Third party report      │
        │                     │      │   (includes the NRM)      │
        └────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────────┘
```
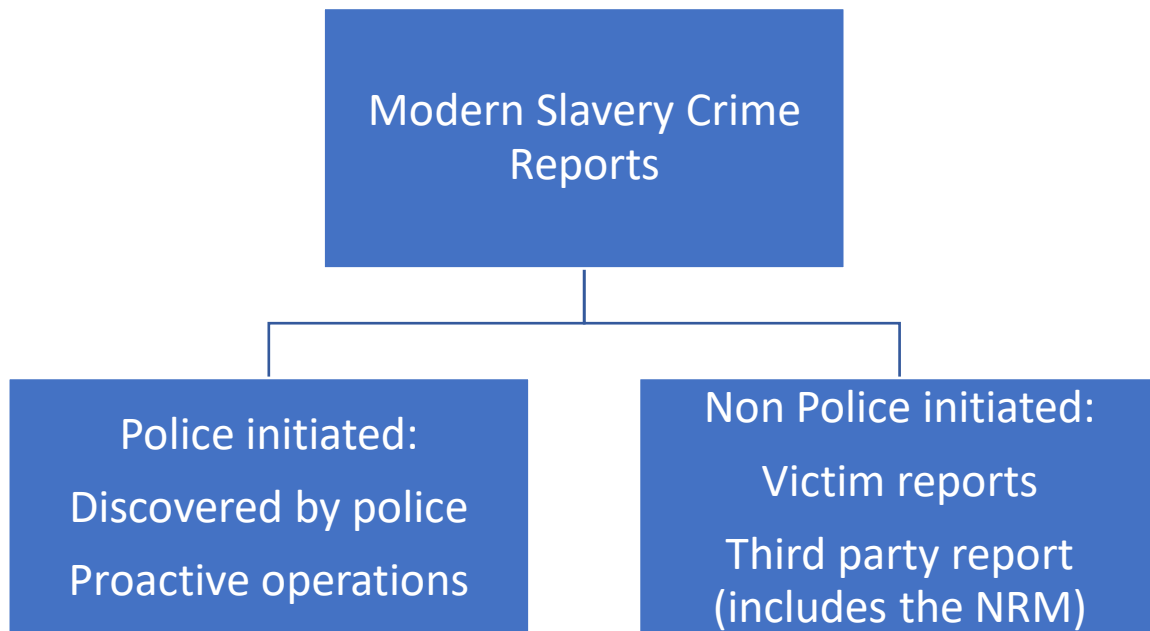
Figure 2 - Diagram to demonstrate modern slavery crime reporting

Modern slavery crime is reported in two distinct ways Figure 2 - police initiated or non-police initiated. Police initiated cases are where the police respond to an incident and identify the crime in the course of their duties. It also includes proactive operations where there may have been intelligence related to modern slavery which was substantiated using investigative techniques such as surveillance, financial enquiries, and use of communications data. Most MSHT crimes are non-

police-initiated reports made by the victim or a third party. This is by no means a unique picture having been observed in another study in Norway (Bjelland, 2017).

Each CRIS report has separate sections which are relevant to the reporting / investigation process. There are some specific sections within the crime report where data has been sourced for the benefit of this study. It is therefore prudent to explain relevant sections within the crime report. The 'Victim' section contains personal data relating to the victim. The victim is the person affected by the crime, but they are not always the complainant, as is especially the case with modern slavery because of the prevalence of third-party reporting through the NRM. The 'Accused' section is only recorded when a matter is charged / cautioned. Using 'Accused' data provides a better understanding of investigative outcomes. The 'Classification' section holds information in relation to the primary and any sub-classifications. It also shows the 'Outcome code' that is relevant to each offence which will be explained later in this section.

The NRM

The bulk of modern slavery crime is referred to the police from the Home Office via the NRM whereas only 7% of reported crime within this study was discovered by police. Referrals to the NRM are made by a list of proscribed agencies including local authorities and immigration services. The NRM is a unique reporting mechanism (HM Government UK, 2016a) designed to assist with identification of modern slavery victims so that they can access support from other agencies within set timescales.   The Single Competent Authority (SCA) within the Home Office is the department responsible for the management of the NRM. They are the ultimate decision makers on whether someone is considered a victim of modern slavery. In terms of crime reporting this creates an interface between the Police and the Home Office, a buffer which is absent in other crime types. The SCA share reports with the police service responsible for the area where the offence occurred or if, this is not clear, based on the victim's home address. This makes locations of offending

imprecise because the victim rarely lives at the location of the offence. NRM guidance indicates that reports must be referred to police as a crime and whilst the victim is made aware that the report will be referred to police, they are informed that there is no requirement for them to cooperate with the investigation. Where the victim is an adult, it is only when they consent that full details can be passed to the police otherwise the report is shared with limited detail incapable of being developed as an investigation. No consent is required for child victims.

There are inherent challenges with reports that arise from an NRM referral because of the additional layer between police investigators and the victim. The purpose of reporting to the NRM is to get a decision on whether someone is considered a Potential Victim of Trafficking (PVoT) (HM Government UK, 2016a). A crime is reported when a criminal act is apparent and there is no credible evidence to the contrary. The NRM and CRIS are two entirely separate systems which serve different purposes managed by two different organisations. The SCA share NRM crime referrals which are manually transferred to CRIS as a reported crime. There is data that is lost in this transfer process because not all variables contained within an NRM report are present within the CRIS - an important example of which is the modern slavery typology (Cooper et al., 2017). The fundamental differences between the two reporting systems means that basic information that would be necessary to develop an investigation is often absent, either because victims fail to share this information or because reporting agencies do not appreciate the significance of the level of detail that is needed, immediately undermining how solvable these reports are.

Identity code (IC Code)

Identity codes are the codes police have used since the 1970s based on the officer assessment of victim ethnicity. There are seven different codes within Figure 3. The use of identity codes is a limitation and another example of an antiquated reporting system. This is imprecise and unhelpful and based on perception.   There are fundamental flaws in this approach especially when reports

are made online which would lead to certain assumptions being made regarding ethnicity based on country of origin and other information gleaned of self-defined ethnicity. Using the identity code to understand ethnicity is inherently unreliable but given that this variable is available it should not be disregarded but treated with caution.

Code	Ethnicity
IC1	White - North European
IC2	White - South European
IC3	Black
IC4	Asian *(in the UK, "Asian" usually refers to South Asians)*
IC5	Chinese, Japanese, or other Southeast Asian
IC6	Arab or North African
IC9	Unknown

Figure 3 - List of identity codes

Population

Data related to 7669 modern slavery crime reports, the totality between 01.01.2016 and 01.10.2021 were downloaded into Excel. This included all offences within the MSA 2015 both where modern slavery is the primary or sub-classification. The primary classification is the most

serious offence on a crime report and sub-classifications would be any lesser offence relating to the incident. For modern slavery crimes, there is one crime recorded per victim (Home Office, 2021c). By way of an example if there were 50 victims related to one investigation there would be one crime report, but each victim would be treated as a separate crime count, but 50 victims of separate allegations would be 50 crimes reports. Variables were selected that were considered most relevant to answering the primary research question of 'what are the characteristics of the solved and unsolved cases?'.

Data quality and limitations

Data quality significantly undermines CRIS data. This owes much to data entry and this is an issue that transcends modern slavery crime reports and impacts more widely on crime in general. Therefore, there must be an acceptance that the data has flaws with either missing variables or information entered incorrectly. This impacts some fields more than others but a particular field which is poorly populated is country of origin which obviously undermines the understanding of victim / offender nationality. Data quality must be recognised as an obvious and significant limitation of this study. The age of CRIS causes specific issues in relation to modern slavery. The modern slavery typology is not recorded as a variable which limits tracking of specific exploitation types. A further limitation is that the data relies on the analytical skills of the author. This flaw has been observed in previous research into modern slavery based on secondary crime datasets (Cockbain, Bowers and Vernon, 2019).

One obvious limitation on CRIS is the failure to reconcile which reports have been submitted via the NRM. This is significant because it makes tracking outcomes for NRM based reports more challenging. The only way of making an estimate of NRM submissions is by using the 'how notified' CRIS field which relates to the reporting method. The nature of the electronic exchange of NRM data to police means that there are several reporting methods selected from a drop down of

options. These are likely to be the crimes most reported via email or reported by fax, yet another demonstration of the age of CRIS. So, an inference can be drawn that a report arises from the NRM because of how police were notified but this is imprecise.

Exclusion criteria

Figure 4 - application of exclusion criteria of exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria (Figure 4) were necessary to ensure an equal measurement of the reports contained within the sample group. This study seeks to understand the characteristics of the solved and unsolved cases, so it was therefore important to ensure that the exclusion criteria helped refine the data. The population presented some challenges in its original format. The first decision was to use the crime reference as the unique reference on each row of data rather than the victim, but this had an impact on the victim count. If there are multiple victims and/or suspects linked to the same report the CRIS reference is repeated. It was recognised that this meant excluding victim or offender data but this was a better solution to ensure consistent measurement. A decision was therefore made to focus on the first victim and first accused on the report as this would prevent skewed results. This meant that duplicate CRIS references were removed, which reduced the overall crime count and removed multiple victims that related to the same crime. For example,

one investigation within the population had 50 victims so 49 reports with the same CRIS reference were removed. In total 252 reports had more than one victim and 43 reports had more than once accused. The overall number of victims / accused relating to that crime has been retained but specific data for those beyond the first victim and accused have been removed.

Using the Home Office outcome codes for closure of crime proved to be a helpful way of examining the sample. All closed crimes are given an outcome code. The outcome code denotes the way in which the case has been closed (HM Government UK, 2016b). 'Outcome code 1' indicates that the crime was closed with the report being detected whilst 'Outcome code 18' indicates the crime is closed without any leads. Generally, outcome codes 1-8 suggest that the crime has been closed with a positive outcome. 9-21 are crimes that are closed but not solved. Outcome code 0 suggests that the crime does not have an outcome code and is therefore a live crime. To ensure that the sample (n) crimes are in a consistent phase of investigation, live crimes were removed. Outcome code 99 means a 'no crime'. This would mean that there is evidence that undermines the credibility of the allegation. For reports referred by the NRM this would be that a negative 'reasonable grounds' or 'conclusive grounds' decision had been given. This is the two-phase decision-making process which confirms the status of a PVoT. Outcome Code 66 is crimes that whilst reported within the data parameters relate to offences that occurred prior to MSA 2016 so they were removed also.

Analysis

The sample offences n=6875 were analysed by conducting a repeated cross-sectional study of the data. This was undertaken in three stages: the sample, the unsolved cases, and the solved cases. A descriptive statistics approach has been used in the *Findings* section that follows. The first stage of analysis was to understand the frequency by which the variables were present within the sample.

This revealed some obvious challenges that existed with the quality of the data, especially in relation to victim / offender related variables. This is evident from the frequency table below:

Variable	Frequency (n)
Unique identifier	6875
Sub Classification – modern slavery offence	6875
Sub classification sequence number	6875
Outcome Code – means by which case is closed	6875
Number of victims	6875
Current status	6875
Year of report	6875
Month of report	6875
How reported	6875
Victim sex	6456
Victim age	6456
Victim – Adult or Child	6456
Victim ethnicity	3837
Victim nationality	1380
Number of accused	71
Accused date of arrest	12
Accused – URN (casefile submission ref)	68
Accused ethnicity	71
Accused nationality	71
Accused age	71
Accused birthplace	37
Accused sex	37

Table 1 - Frequency table of variables within the sample

Separating the sample between the dependent variable, solved or unsolved was achieved by using the outcome code. Outcome 1 (solved cases) were separated from the other outcome codes (outcome codes 2-8 did not apply). There were 53 cases that have been solved and 6822 that were not solved.

The solved cases were a manageable volume which allowed detailed data cleansing. These 53 reports were read individually to categorise them based on typology. According to the Home Office (Cooper et al., 2017) there are 17 different typologies that can be grouped into four distinct categories: Labour Exploitation, Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation and Domestic Servitude. CRIS does not record the typology which is why it was necessary to make this assessment based on facts within the free text part of the report which is called the 'Dets'. Whilst this is a subjective process the distinction between typologies is well defined which meant typology identification was straightforward. Given the way this task was undertaken this was not possible for the unsolved cases.

During this phase some additional variables were obtained which are not present in the secondary data. This allowed for a deeper level of description of the solved cases.

Variable	Sub data set
Venue	41 / 53
Major typology	53
Specific Home Office typology	53
Typology number	53
Investigation Team	53
Investigation command	53
Offence start	52
Offence end	40
Reported date	53
Number of victim	53
Victim Sex	53
Victim age	53
Adult or child	53
Victim ethnicity	53
Victim nationality	53
Number of accused	53
Accused 1 ethnicity	53
Accused 1 nationality	53
Accused 1 age	53
Accused 1 sex	53

Table 2 - Frequency table of variables within solved cases only

Findings

Characteristics of the Modern Slavery sample data

This study seeks to expand on existing research in the field of MSHT by using MPS crime data not readily available outside of policing. Analysis of the data will focus on the research question *'How can the last 5 years of modern slavery investigations best be understood, between 2016-2021.'*. The analysis has been structured in three phases. The first phase involved examination of the entire sample to get a descriptive overview of the data. The next phase focussed on the unsolved cases, a comparatively, larger group than the solved cases. The lack of solved cases prevented meaningful comparisons between solved and unsolved cases. In effect there is little numerical difference between the unsolved cases and the sample (6875) because there are so few solved cases (53).

Therefore, unsolved cases (6822) have been examined lightly in contrast with the sample and the solved cases. The final stage focussed on the solved cases There was also an examination of police initiated and non-police-initiated investigations. This is an important aspect as discernible differences were noted in a relevant study in Norway with better results being achieved when police initiated the investigation (Bjelland, 2017).
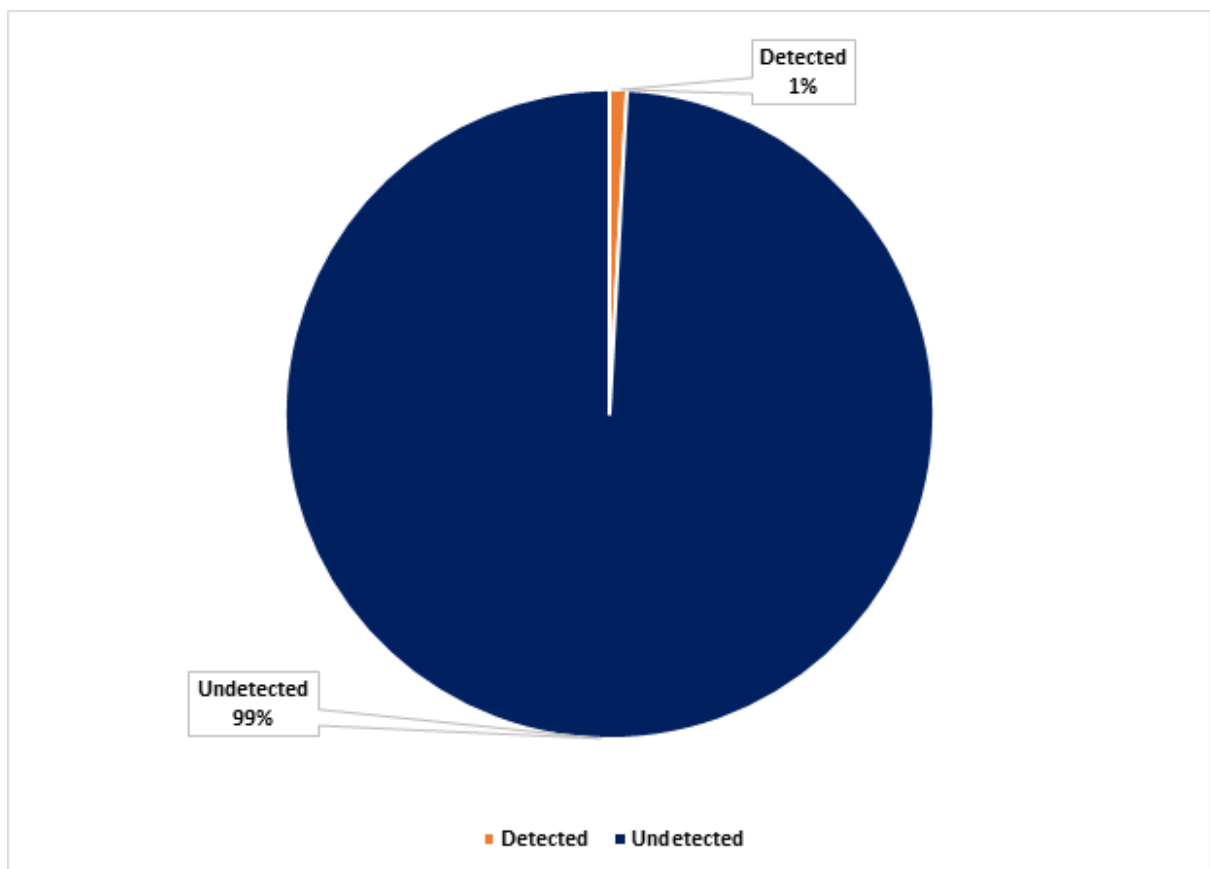
Detection rate

Figure 5 - Pie chart showing solved and unsolved investigations

Figure 5 above arguably highlights the context for this thesis. 6875 crimes in the population with 53 detections. This is an overall detection rate of less than 1%.   Further exploration of the solved cases will be undertaken later in this section. The detected cases occur where a modern slavery offence has been recorded and a suspect(s) is/are charged with a modern slavery offence.

Modern slavery reports by offence classification

Modern slavery cris classification codes	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Fail to comply surrender passport	1						1
Commit an offence other than kidnapping or false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with a view to exploitation		1	1	1			3
Do act prohibited by a Slavery Trafficking Risk or Prevention order	3	7	3	1			14
Offence of kidnapping or false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with a view to exploitation		4	10	19	13	10	56
Arrange travel with a view to exploitation	25	120	227	364	115	52	903
Hold person in slavery/servitude	29	285	418	634	326	174	1866
Require to perform forced/comp labour	5	147	393	1083	1585	819	4032
Grand Total	63	564	1052	2102	2039	1055	6875

Table 3 - Reported crime by classification

Table 1 shows that the number of recorded offences has increased since 2016 and provides detail on how the sample is recorded on CRIS by offence classification. Between 2016 and 2017 the total number of offences increased by 795% which could be attributed to the investment in training and publicity to support the implementation of the new legislation. At the other end of the range, the lower number of offences in 2021 can be explained because of the date parameters between 1st Jan – 1st September thereby cutting off a quarter of the year's offences. Offending in 2020 was less than had been anticipated and this was the first year when overall offences were less than the previous year. It is widely considered that reduced offending between 2020 and 2021 is because of the Covid 19 pandemic as has been acknowledged more broadly (HM Government, 2021d). The offence of arranging travel with a view to exploitation (trafficking) has seen a decline over the past two years, following a similar trend to holding a person in slavery or servitude. Perhaps this comes

as no surprise with restricted movement at various intervals between 2020 and 2021. In contrast, requiring a person to perform forced /compulsory labour increased between 2019 – 2020.
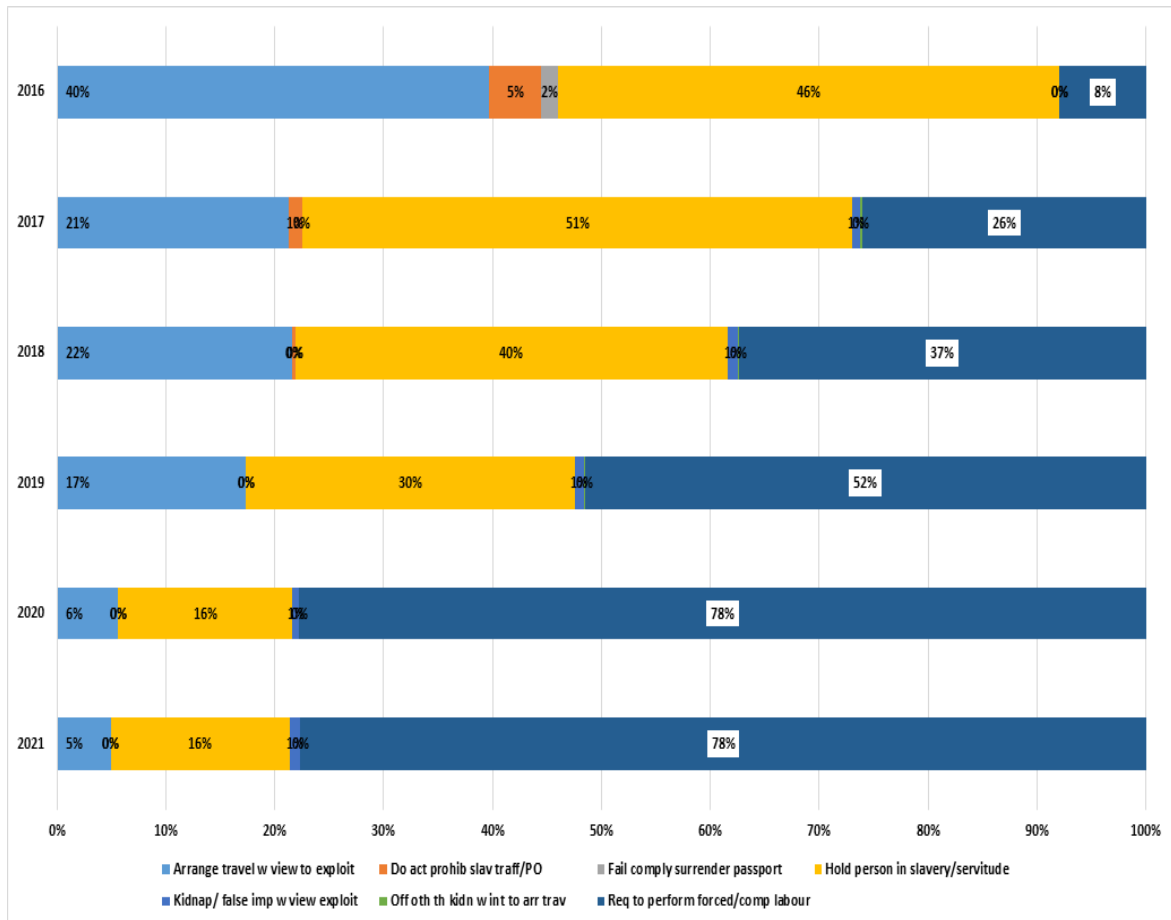

Figure 6 - Profile of modern slavery classifications

This representation of the reported crime data (Figure 6) can be better displayed in a bar graph *(Figure 8)* to demonstrate the change in offences over time. Offending for each year has been separated into the proportion of offences committed by crime type. A comparison between 2016 and 2021 reveals that the proportion of trafficking offences has reduced by 16% and slavery / servitude by 30% but the proportion of enforced labour has increased by 70%. There have been no offences relating to prevention order since 2019. Overall, there is a clear shift and simplification in the use of crime classifications which suggests the full scope of the legislation is not being applied in operational practice.
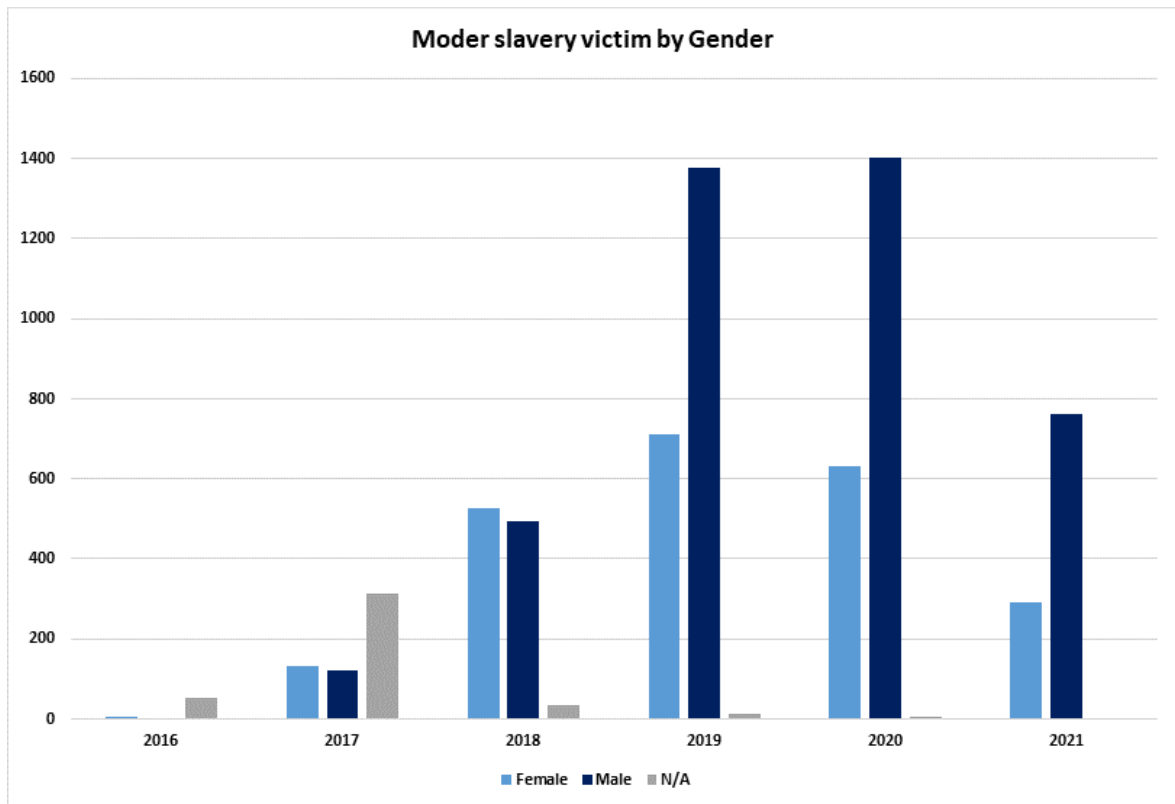
Gender of victims

Figure 7- Graph showing victim gender by year

The proportion of male and female victims has changed over time. N/A (6% n) indicates that for some reason the data is not available which may be an issue related to data cleansing or the original data source. This data quality issue regarding gender not being recorded correctly appears an issue with the data in 2017. Presenting the data in the graph above does make it difficult to interpret in the years 2016 /2017 which is because of the relatively low number of offences. Thereafter, 2018 was the last year when female victims were higher in total numbers than male victims and then in 2019 the gender of victims has dramatically changed. In 2019 when females accounted for 34% of all victims, this decreased to 31% in 2020 and 30% in 2021. This thereby demonstrates that since 2018 the overall proportion of female victims has been in decline, a matter worthy of greater exploration in the next chapter.

Modern slavery crime				
Offence type	Female	Male	N/A	Grand Total
Arrange travel w view to exploit	537	277	89	903
Do act prohibited by prevention order			14	14
Fail comply surrender passport			1	1
Hold person in slavery/servitude	892	774	200	1866
Kidnap/ false imp w view exploit	17	36	3	56
Offence of kidnapping or false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with a view to exploitation.	1	1	1	3
Required to perform forced/comp labour	854	3067	111	4032
Grand Total	2301	4155	419	6875

Table 4 - Offences by gender of victim

Table 4 shows the individual offence types broken down by the number of offences against victim gender. 60% of victims in the total sample are male, 33% female and 6% have no gender properly defined, creating a concern regarding accurate gender reporting. Recording gender as male / female is not reflective of broader gender classifications.   The dominant offence types are Section 1 Slavery, Servitude and Enforced labour which fall under Section 1(a) and Section 1 (b) as opposed to Section 2 where 59% of trafficking victims are female. The total number of victims in the sample split by gender are heavily weighted by the volume of male victims of forced labour accounting for 44.6% of all victims. There is a much greater proportion of male victims of kidnap with a view to exploitation, albeit the reported numbers are low (56). All 14 recorded crimes for offences relating to prevention orders have no gender recorded which may owe much to data quality in early reporting.
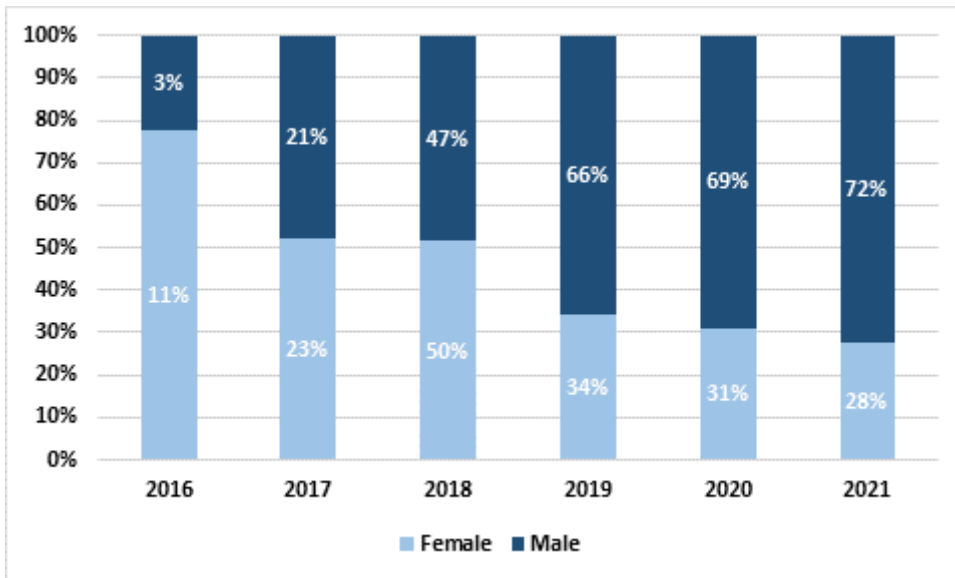
Figure 8 - Percentage of victims by gender each year

The changing proportion of victim gender can be clearly observed (Figure 8) with a general downward trajectory in the proportion of female modern slavery victims since 2018. Poor data quality in the first two years have hampered analysis. Once again 2021 data limitations must be a consideration. The reduced proportion of trafficking and slavery/ servitude offences, where female victims are greater in numbers, may offer some explanation of the overall decline. The increase in male victims is linked to the increase in enforced labour as the dominant exploitation type. This appears reflected in the way crime changed with the emergence of County Lines. It is concerning that overall female victims have reduced, and this is at a time when Violence Against Women and Girls is such a priority.

Age of victims

The number of victims in the sample directly relate to the individual crime reports which means there are 6875 victims in total. As outlined within the exclusion criteria this approach means the detail related to additional victims has been excluded. There are 252 reports (4% of the sample) where there is more than one victim, ranging from 2 – 50 victims. There were 419 (6% of victim group) with no age correctly recorded which have been removed thereby reducing the victim cohort to 6403 for the sake of age analysis. 313 of the victims with no age recorded are within the 2017 date range which does impact on subsequent calculations. The age range in this sample is 0 to 76 years old. The modal victim age is 17 with 702 of the victims within the sample being of this age which is 11% of the total number of victims where the age is recorded.
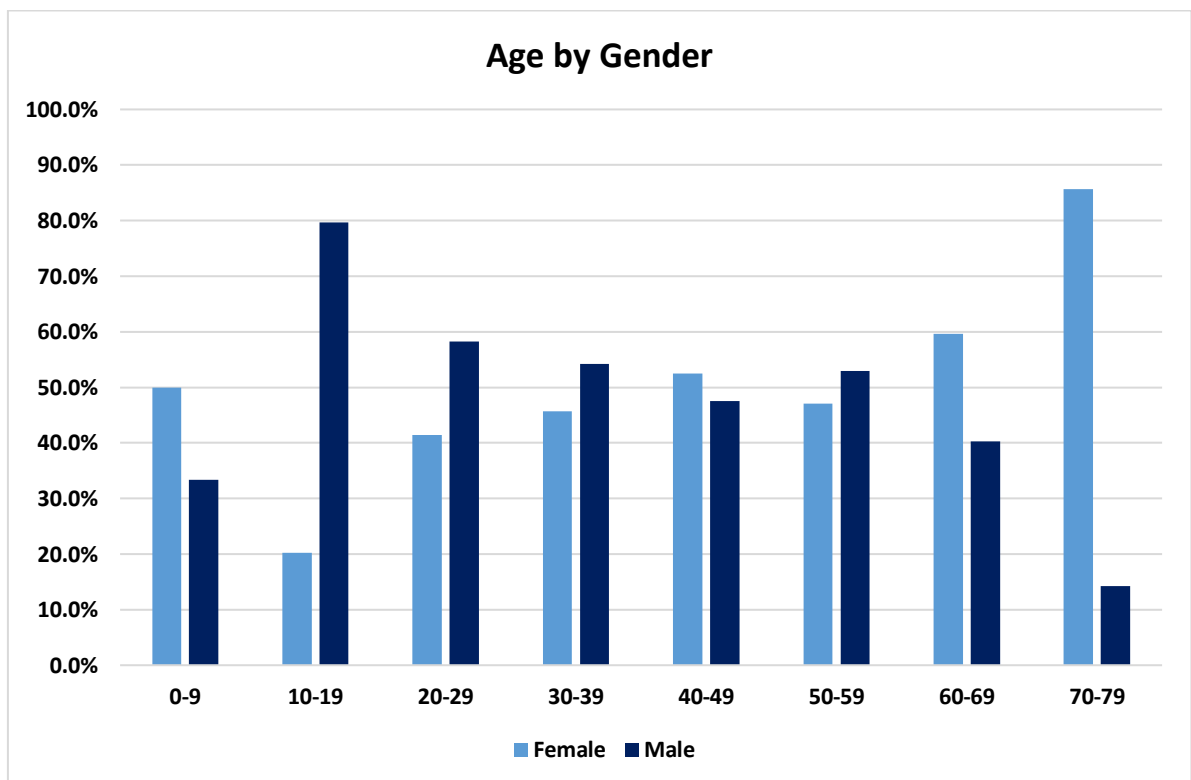

Figure 9 - Graph shows the proportion of victims gender within age ranges

Figure 9 shows the sample split into age ranges and then compared by gender. There are differences between the proportion of reported victims within each age banding. The greatest discernible difference is the 10-19 age range where 80% of victims are male. There is a higher proportions of females at the start and end of the range, but this is where the number of reported victims are generally lower.

Ethnicity by Identity Code

Figure 10 - Victims by Identity Code
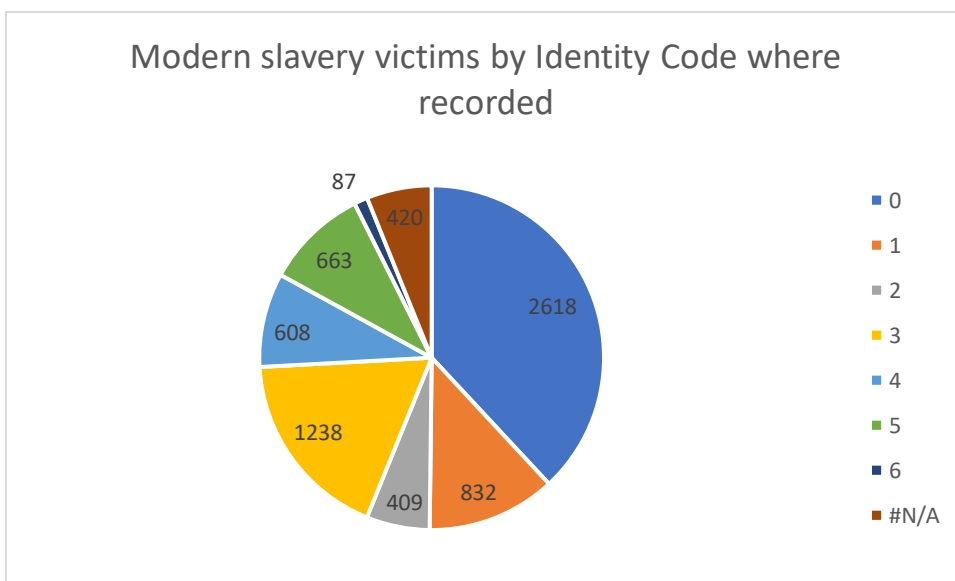
To obtain some understanding of victim ethnicity it is necessary to examine the Identity Code (IC), although this must be treated with caution as it is based on a subjective assessment carried out by the reporting officer. Unfortunately, nearly half of the reports within the sample (44%) did not have an identity code recorded which undermines the ability to glean accurate findings from this

variable. One significant reason for under-recording of ethnicity is that where reports have been made via email or fax to police (1672 cases) have not recorded an ethnicity. This is an inherent issue that arises from the NRM reporting process because of the lack of direct contact with victims. This significantly impacts on the ability to make meaningful observations of victim ethnicity, albeit with the recognition that Identity Code is a poor measure of ethnicity in any event. A better variable would have been country of origin or nationality, but data entry has been so poor that these factors have little statistical value. By far the dominant code is IC3 – Black which represents 18% of the sample whilst IC1 – White represents 12% of the sample. 43% of the sample of victims are non-white.

Victim Identity code by year							
Row Labels	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
0		87	397	878	722	534	2618
1	2	35	138	226	296	135	832
2	3	15	78	120	133	60	409
3		48	124	340	540	186	1238
4	1	21	109	264	152	61	608
5	2	43	151	247	155	65	663
6		2	22	14	36	13	87
N/A	55	313	33	13	5	1	420
Grand Total	63	564	1052	2102	2039	1055	6875

Table 5 - Record of victims by Identity Code

The table of Identity Codes of victims broken down by year shows some interesting points. The relative low numbers of Identity Code 2 (East European) are a surprise when the prevalence of victims from Eastern Europe are considered, with Albania and Romanian victims amongst the most prevalent nationality reported nationally to the NRM (HM Government UK, 2021e).

This variable would likely be better used in cases where officers identify and report the offence. A specific review of the reports discovered by police (506) affirms this view with only 8% of these

reports not having the ethnicity recorded. In cases where police discover modern slavery the dominant code is IC3 (black) with 163 reports whilst 122 are IC1 (white). The overall trend of police discovered reporting is comparable to the sample. Looking at the increased reporting within the sample of 2020 reveals that IC3 (black) victims are the dominant ethnic grouping in this last year of full reports, making up 26% of the reports in that year.

Reporting methods

How Modern Slavery crime is reported to the MPS		
Method	Number of reports	Percentage of Grand total
Reported by email	1738	25.28%
Reported by other means - letter fax	1409	20.49%
Third party report	811	11.80%
Phone call to police	800	11.64%
Reported by social services	767	11.16%
Discovered by police	506	7.36%
Transferred in from another force	386	5.61%
Reported by person at the police station	221	3.21%
Non urgent crime report via internet	146	2.12%
Reported direct to officer	68	0.99%
Reported by school education	9	0.13%
Reported by doctor	8	0.12%
Fire Brigade	3	0.04%
Automated alarm message to police	2	0.03%
Haven	1	0.01%
Grand Total	6875	100.00%

Table 6 - Reporting method of investigations

A breakdown of modern slavery crime by the reporting method is presented in **Error! Reference source not found.** By far the most prevalent reporting methods are reports that are made by email; by other means or via third parties. The top three reporting methods are most likely to be the reports that are made to police via the NRM. This cannot otherwise be gleaned because there is not a distinct field on CRIS which indicates that the report has been made by the NRM. This group of reporting methods equates to 56% of all reported modern slavery. Reporting methods are important to understand whether there is any correlation between the outcomes that are achieved

from investigations to be explored later in this section. Police initiated investigations fit into one

reporting method which is 'discovered by police'. Total offences in this category are 506, a mere

7% of the total number of reports. This means 93% are non-police initiated. 5% of reports that are

discovered by police are solved. Non-police-initiated investigations have a detection rate of 0.5%
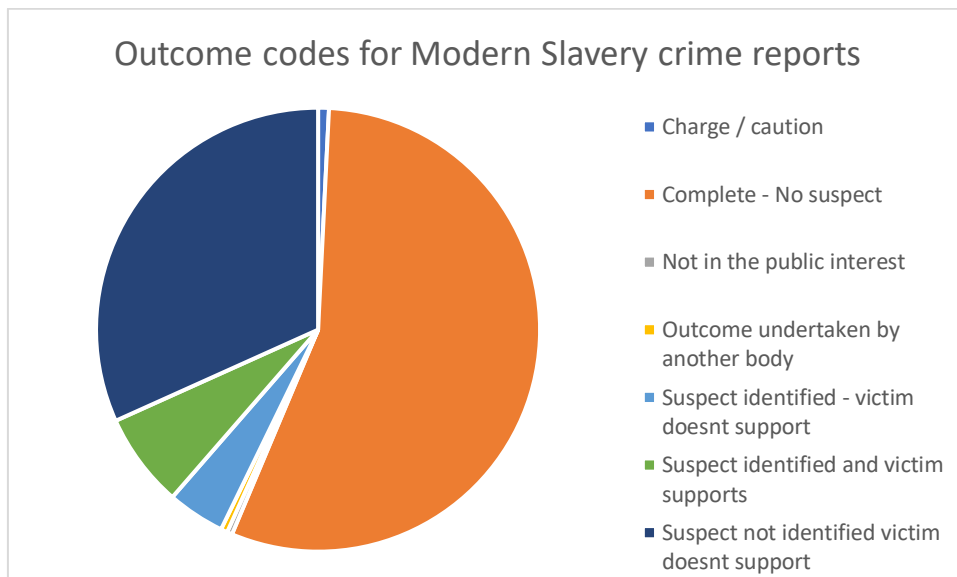
Outcome codes

Figure 11 - Pie chart showing the outcome codes

Outcome code	Description	Total
18	Complete - No suspect	3815
14	Suspect not identified victim does not support	2179
15	Suspect identified and victim supports	472
16	Suspect identified - victim does not support	288
1	Charge / caution	54
20	Outcome undertaken by another body	33
17	Not in the public interest	26
13	Prosecution prevented - victim witness ill etc	5
11	Prosecution prevented - suspect under age	2
9	CPS not in public interest	1
Grand Total		**6875**

Table 7 – Frequency table of outcome codes

All reported crime that is closed has an outcome code attributed to it as previously described in *Data and method*. The pie chart (Figure 11) shows outcome codes for crimes within the sample. To enhance the way in which this information is presented, eight crimes have been removed because they have been closed using lesser used outcome codes. Using the outcome codes presents the best approach to the separation of solved and unsolved crime. 5994 crimes have been closed without a named suspect being identified which represents 87% of (n). It is apparent that most crime reports are closed without a suspect which is split between two outcome codes 18 and 14. 11% of crimes were closed with a suspect having been identified but not charged. Within this group 7% were cases where the suspect had been identified and the victim supports the investigation. Only 1% of cases were closed by means of detection. 33 reports within the sample have been referred to another agency; this is likely to be the Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority. This seems quite low with the prevalence of male victims in the sample and the links between male victims and labour exploitation.

Unsolved cases

6822 crimes within (n) were not solved. The next phase of analysis involved looking at the unsolved cases by assessing the characteristics that were examined within the sample to understand whether there are variances based on gender, age or reporting method.

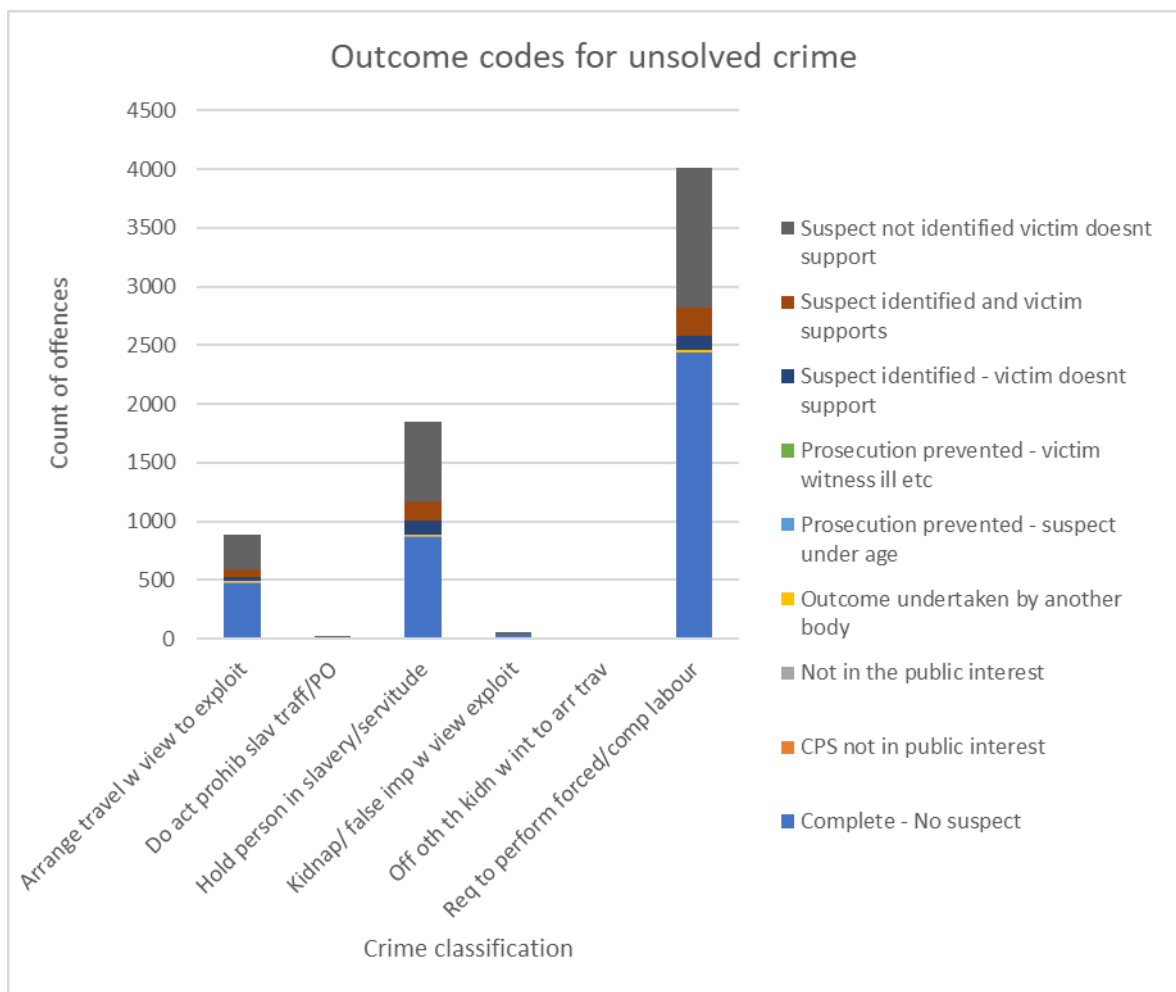## Crime classifications by outcome category

Figure 12 - Unsolved modern slavery crimes by outcome code

The most prevalent outcome code for unsolved cases relates to cases where the investigation is closed with no suspect. The proportion of such cases is especially high for enforced / compulsory labour. The second most used outcome code relates to cases where the victim does not support the investigation and there is no suspect. 87% of the total population of cases are closed with no suspect. This is a significant issue for investigations because without suspect identification there is little prospect of a successful investigation. 7% of cases are closed where the suspect is known, and the victim supports an investigation. Given that suspect identification is such a significant solvability factor along with victim cooperation it is worth exploring further in the *Discussion* section.

Victim gender

Modern slavery crime			
Offence type	Female	Male	Grand Total
Arrange travel with a view to exploitation	524	273	797
Hold person in slavery/servitude	882	766	1648
Kidnap/ false imprisonment with a view to exploitation	17	36	53
Offence other than kidnap, with intent to arrange travel	1	1	2
Required to perform forced/comp labour	845	3058	3903
Grand Total	2269	4134	6403

Table 8 - Unsolved investigations by victim gender

The table shows the gender distribution of victims by crime type (Table 8). Victims where no gender has been correctly recorded have been removed from the sample which is a reduction of 419 cases. 65% of closed cases relate to male victims. Men who are victim of enforced compulsory labour occupy 48% of this group of unsolved cases. The offending within this offence type includes labour exploitation and criminal exploitation with the various typologies within both exploitation types. It

is likely that the dominant exploitation is *County Lines;* this cannot be accurately measured because the typology is not recorded but may be inferred with an examination of victim ages.

Reporting method
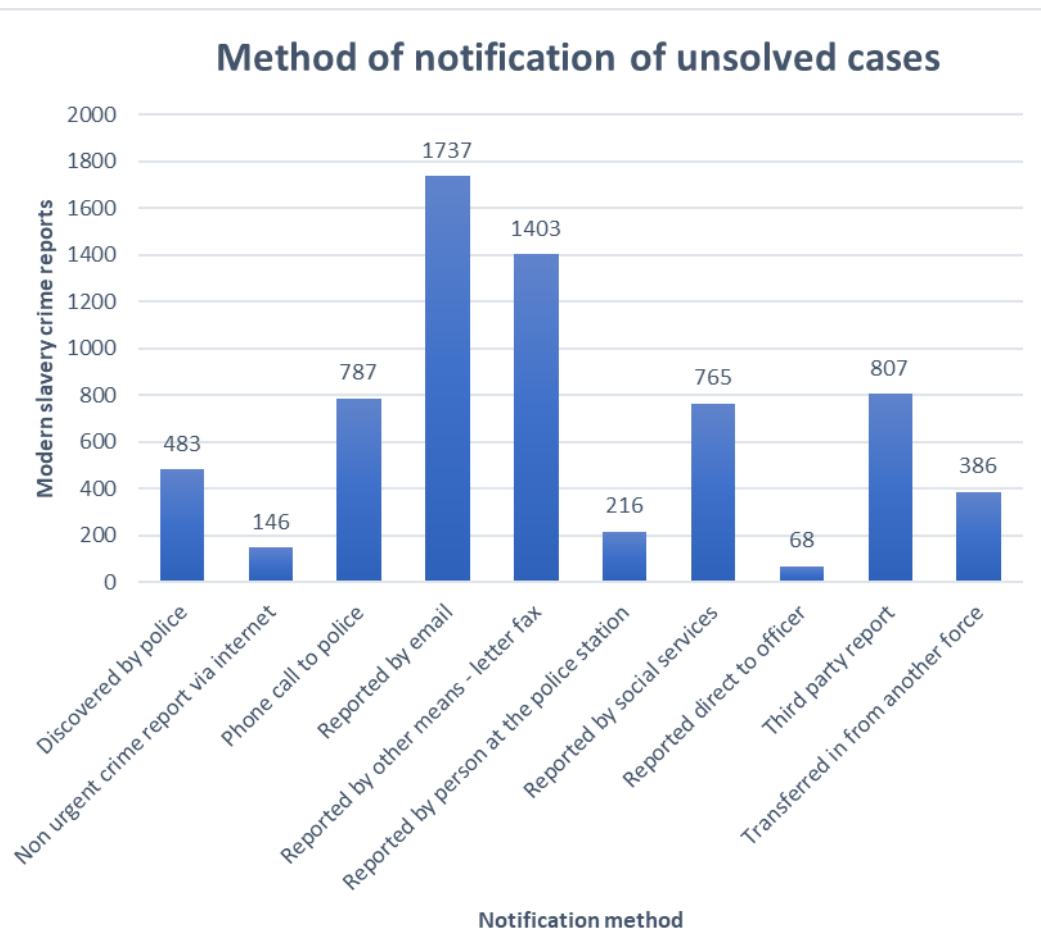

Method of notification of unsolved cases

Figure 13 - Graph showing the reporting method of unsolved investigations

The unsolved cases of modern slavery crime are shown within (Figure 13). How police are notified of a crime is a field populated by the reporting officer. Some of the options remain a legacy of the old CRIS system with seemingly redundant options including report via fax still an option. 57% of unsolved reports are reported through three different methods- reported by email, reported by

other means (including faxes or letters) or third-party reports. These are the reports that are most likely to be attributed to the NRM but the NRM referrals would also likely include those reports made by social services. However, the best way of demonstrating NRM referral volume would be to exclude crime discovered by police and phone calls to police 1477 offences in total, 21% of reported crime in the sample. The remainder is likely to have been reported through the NRM. Nevertheless, there remains a significant number of cases which are discovered by police which are not solved.

Solved cases

The sample of 6875 contains 54 detected cases. One case has been removed because it was incorrectly classified for an offence relating to failing to surrender a passport. These are cases that have been solved because someone has been charged with a MSHT offence. The number of solved cases represents less than 1% of all cases in the sample. 35 of the charged cases involve more than one offender, ranging between 2- 8 offenders.

Crime type

Modern slavery crimes detected by year							
Crime type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
Arrange travel with a view to exploit	4	4	3	3	2	1	17
Hold person in slavery/servitude	2	2	5	4	4	1	18
Required to perform forced/comp labour	-	2	-	2	13	1	18
Grand Total	6	8	8	9	19	3	53

Table 9 - Solved modern slavery crime by crime classification

The three principle modern slavery offences are represented within Table 9 of solved cases. The quantity of solved cases has remained consistent between 2016 and 2020. The number of detected cases in 2020 is a noticeable increase on previous years of 111%. The increased number of charged cases for performing compulsory / forced labour in 2020 is by far the greatest number of charged cases within the sample. The fall in 2021 cases is undoubtedly affected by the removal of live crimes and the sample only containing offences until September 2021. It is worth considering *(Figure 2)* the total list of crime classifications on CRIS as there are eight different offence types on the list of offences yet only three of these crime types have been charged. One particularly notable absence from the solved cases is 'Do an act prohibited by a slavery or trafficking risk or prevention order'.
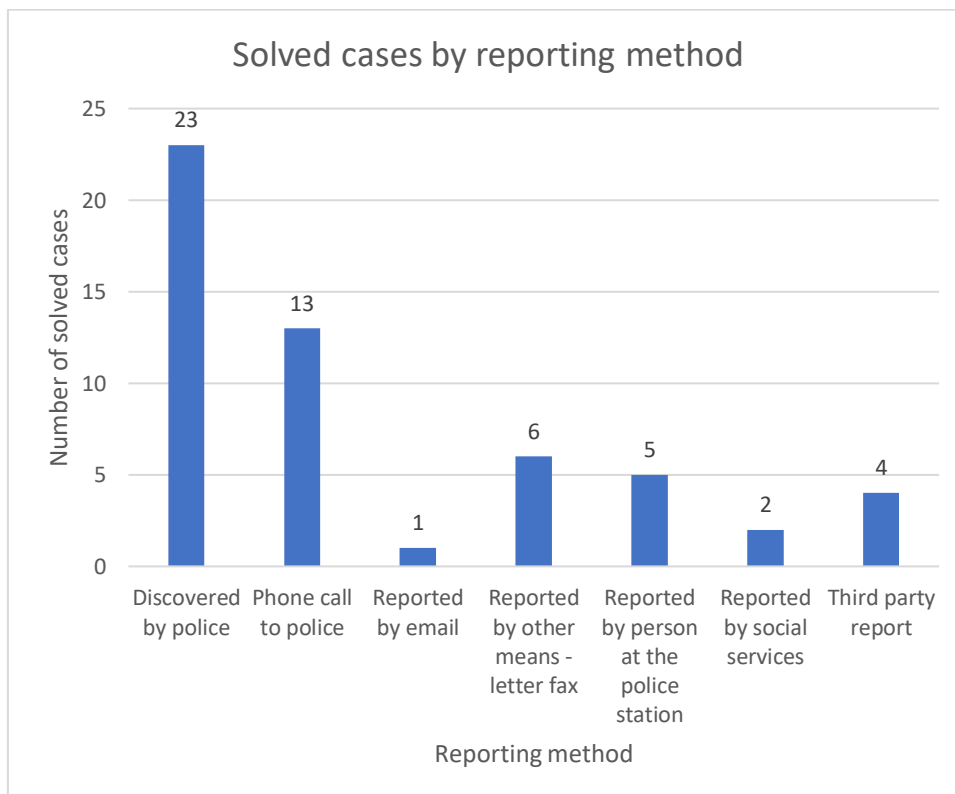
Reporting method

Figure 14 - Solved cases by reporting method

Solved cases by reporting method is an important consideration to understand what the implications are for how modern slavery is identified. The most successful approach to solving modern slavery investigations are the incidents where the offence is discovered by police. These are likely to be scenarios where officers identify the offence through the course of a proactive, covert operation or by finding slavery during their enquiries. The second most successful approach is where a call is made direct to police. This could be from the victim or a third party. In stark contrast, cases where reports are made via email or fax, all of which can exclusively be attributed to NRM referrals, account for only seven solved crimes.

Gender of victims in accused cases

Gender of victims in solved modern slavery cases

	F	M
2016	5	1
2017	5	3
2018	4	4
2019	6	3
2020	11	8
2021	1	2

Figure 15 -Graph showing the gender of the first recorded victim

A greater number of modern slavery offences against female victims have been solved than against male victims both in total across the sample set and each individual year apart for 2018. This is notable as while there are more female victims in solved cases there is a greater proportion of male victims in the sample. Furthermore, the proportion of male victims has increased since 2019 and yet the gender imbalance continues to favour solved cases with female victims.

Nationality of accused

The nationality of victims is recorded on CRIS but is a variable with low data entry accuracy. The quality of data for the accused person on CRIS is much better and so this offers some insight on the nationality of offenders. The limitation with this data is that is simply covers the nationality of the first accused person. If there is more than one offender, then the details of any additional offenders are not included. This means that little can be said for cases where there is more than one accused in terms of the nationality make up of offending groups.

Nationality	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Grand Total
AFGHANISTAN	-	-	1	-	-	1	**2**
BANGLADESH	-	-	-	-	1	-	**1**
BRAZIL	-	1	-	1	-	-	**2**
BULGARIA	-	1	-	1	-	-	**2**
CAYMAN ISLANDS	-	-	-	-	1	-	**1**
CHINA (PEOPLE'S REP. OF)	-	-	-	-	1	-	**1**
CZECH REPUBLIC	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
HUNGARY	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
IRAN	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
NIGERIA	-	-	-	-	1	-	**1**
POLAND	-	-	-	-	2	1	**3**
ROMANIA	3	3	2	3	1	-	**12**
UNITED KINGDOM	4	3	5	1	12	1	**26**
Grand Total	**7**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**19**	**3**	**54**

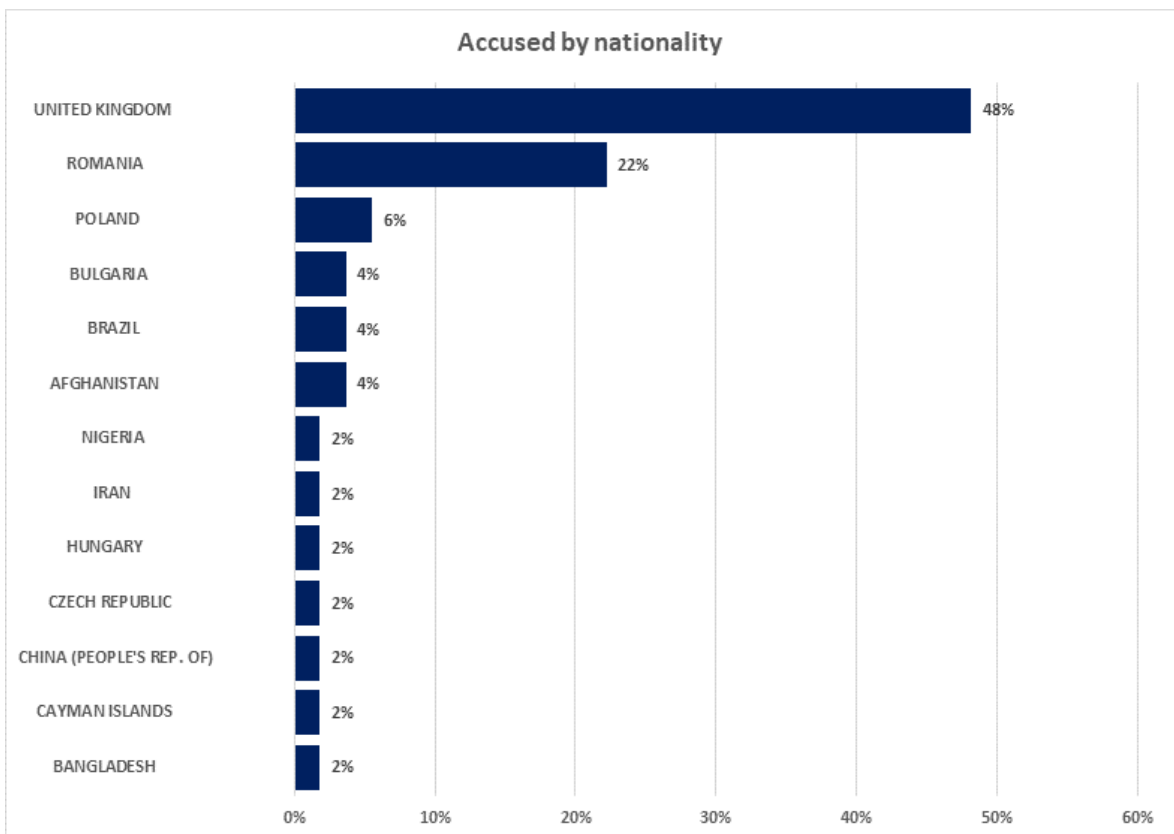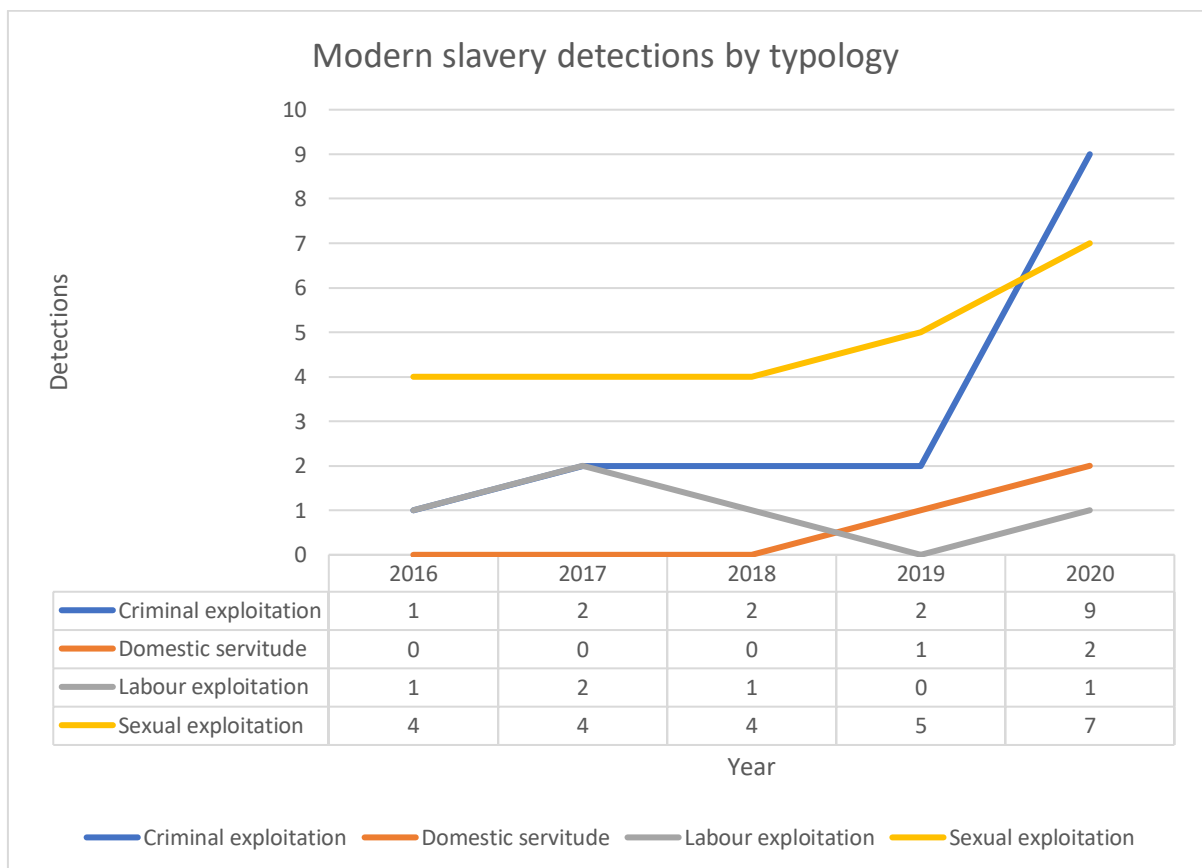*Table 10 - Accused cases by offender nationality*

Figure 16 - Graph showing Accused by Nationality

The profile of offenders within the sample reveal that 13 different nationalities are represented.

The dominant offender nationality is United Kingdom. This is followed by Romania and Poland.

There is a mixed distribution of nationalities represented and some noticeable nationalities not represented if the data is compared to reporting through the NRM. The increase in charged cases in 2020 has resulted in a greater proportion of UK nationals being prosecuted.

Typology

Modern slavery detections by typology					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Criminal exploitation	1	2	2	2	9
Domestic servitude	0	0	0	1	2
Labour exploitation	1	2	1	0	1
Sexual exploitation	4	4	4	5	7

Figure 17 - Solved modern slavery investigations by typology

The modern slavery typologies are categorised into four distinct groups: criminal, domestic, labour, and sexual and have been plotted on Figure 17. Data from 2021 has been removed for this purpose as it would give a false impression because it did not include a full year of data. There were four cases in the 2021 data (two criminal, one domestic and one sexual). Although there are relatively few cases in the graph, it is interesting to note the trajectory of charged cases and how this has

changed over time.   Criminal exploitation cases have significantly increased in 2020 with the ground-breaking charge for Operation Pibera (Tobin, 2019) paving the way for greater use of the legislation in this context. Whilst sexual exploitation cases have been steady since the legislation was introduced, domestic servitude cases charged in 2019, 2020 and 2021 perhaps demonstrate a greater understanding of the nature of this threat in this context. In contrast, the number of prosecutions in recent years for labour exploitation may show less recognition of this threat.

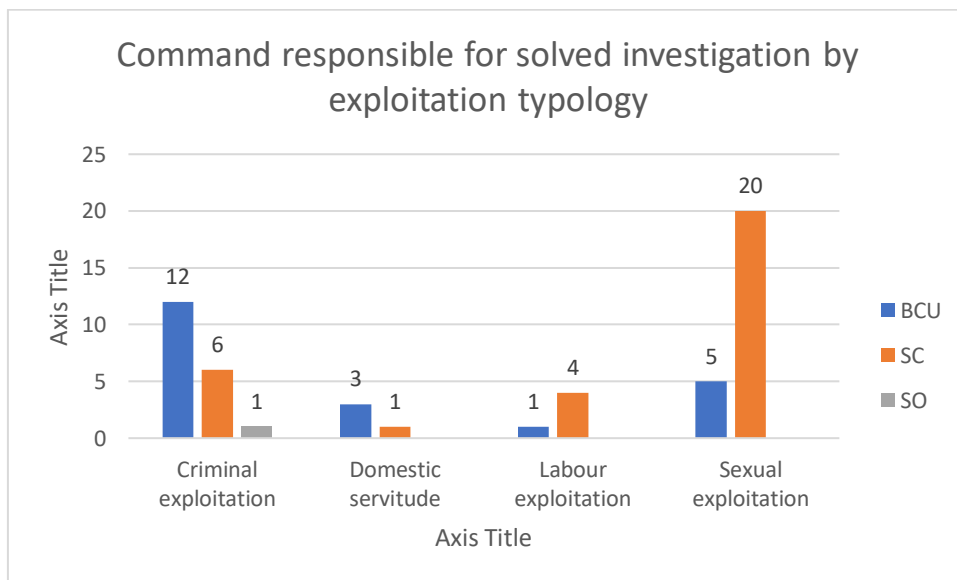Investigation Command responsible for solved cases

Figure 18 - Command responsible for solved investigation by exploitation typology

This graph gives some sense of the distribution of successful investigative effort between Specialist Crime (SC), the Basic Command Units (local policing resources) and Specialist Operations (SO). 31 cases have been solved by SC but there is no way of comparing against unsolved cases because a significant proportion of modern slavery investigation conducted by SC will not have been reported on CRIS. All four exploitation typologies have been solved within both policing Commands which is positive.   There are discernible differences between the solved cases of sexual and labour

exploitation by SC (24:6) in comparison to local investigators. The higher number of criminal exploitation cases within local policing is a surprise but this picture is likely to change in the future with specialist resource invested in this area of crime.

Overall, the findings of this study reveal that reported crime has increased between 2016 and 2021 and this is positive because greater numbers of victims are being identified. Offending in 2020 and 2021 has been heavily disrupted and it is reasonable to infer that Covid 19 has undoubtedly had an impact. Rather than considering this to be an indicator of less exploitation It would appear prudent to consider how victims may have been more marginalised. There has undoubtedly been disruption to travel and movement but there has also been an impact on professionals in this sector and how they have been able to engage with / identify potential victims. Reporting trends have changed since the legislation came in, with greater reporting of enforced labour outweighing trafficking and slavery offences. Similarly, the gender of victims has changed over time and now male victims are the dominant victim gender. Police initiated investigations do appear to lead to a better outcomes in solved crime, but the difference is marginal. The type of modern slavery crime being solved has changed over time. A more detailed exploration of all these factors will be considered in the *Discussion* section.

Discussion

This thesis has sought to obtain a better understanding of the modern slavery crime outcomes reported to the Metropolitan Police during 2016 and 2021. It was the recognition that such a small proportion of modern slavery crime is solved that has been the catalyst for this thesis. This is undoubtedly a complex crime type because it is present in many forms, transcends borders and victims suffer complicated needs. This means an extensive range of policing skills are required to

tackle investigations and therefore a 'one size fits all' approach is not the answer. This study has

analysed a sample of 6875 reported crimes in three phases, considering the sample as a whole and

subsets of unsolved and solved cases. The study reveals that reported crime has increased over the

5-year span but the proportion of offences by offence type within the MSA 2015 has narrowed

where some offences are rarely recorded. There is a dominance in the overall number of male

victims and the proportion of female victims is in decline. Nevertheless, police-initiated

investigations have better outcomes than non-police initiated, and this is important because maybe

more can be learnt from the police response. 53 solved cases exist within the sample where a crime

has been classified as modern slavery and an offender(s) has / have been charged with a modern

slavery offence.

The changing nature of reported modern slavery crime

Reported incidents have increased year on year since 2016 as expected for legislation introduced

in 2015. Publicity and training have assisted with greater recognition of this threat, thereby helping

professionals with victim identification. Increased reporting is regarded as positive performance

because this is crime that is unlikely to have been recorded prior to 2015. However, whilst offending

may have increased up until 2020 Covid 19 has undoubtedly had an impact with offences

unexpectedly levelling off. This study has not sought to establish the causal link between the two,

but this is widely accepted as a factor in reduced reporting (HM Government, 2021d). It is

suggested that victims of exploitation were dispersed into other types of crime and perhaps there

was less exploitation. However, there are some competing, rival hypotheses that may provide an

alternative explanation. Undoubtedly some victims may have chosen to leave the country, but

some may have become more isolated. Law enforcement agencies, statutory partners and other

third sector agencies have all been affected by the disruption of Covid 19. The ability to interact

with the public has been restricted and reduced interactivity with potential victims thereby impacting on reported crime.

It is evident from the findings that the reporting crime profile has changed since 2016. There are eight different offence types available to be recorded on CRIS. Between 2017 – 2019, six of the crime categories are represented within the whole sample but in 2020 and 2021 this is reduced to four. There are two specific offences which are reported sparingly within the sample which relate to kidnap with one offence only reported three times. This suggests that either this offence is not understood by reporting officers and or it is a seemingly redundant offence category. This is an example of where the legislation is too complicated, understood by experts but not practitioners.

There have only been 14 reports relating to breach of Slavery and Trafficking Risk / Prevention orders. These orders were heralded as important feature within the legislation (HM Government UK, 2013b). However, the lack of reported breaches, none of which have been detected, suggests a lack of understanding of this aspect of the legislation. It would be worth reflecting on the monitoring processes used to enforce these orders. The lack of solved cases related to orders is another example of the legislation not being used to its full extent. Some caution should be added to this assertion given that a significant proportion of offenders convicted under the MSA 2015 may still be in custody.

Conflating modern slavery typologies does not help provide a detailed understanding of the crime profile (Cockbain and Bowers, 2019), yet this is the current MPS approach to reporting with crime simply reported by crime type. Analysis of the sample based on offences alone really gives limited perspective. There is a range of offending even within one typology. For example, Criminal Exploitation includes offending such as organised begging, fraud, and drug dealing (Cooper et al., 2017). Examination of the major typology of criminal exploitation is a step forward but is still

imprecise because of the varied tactics used. Each typology attracts a different sort of victim / offender profile, requiring a different policing response. The consequence of not recording the major/minor typology information makes it difficult to track longer term exploitation trends in London.

The methodological differences between the typologies are so significant that they should be recorded separately and tracked with a response that better fits the modus operandi. There need not be a dedicated team, but Operation Orochi is an example where dedicated funding has improved the response to criminal exploitation in the form of County Lines (MOPAC, 2020). The challenge would be if each typology required a specialist response because this is unlikely to be feasible. The connection between County Lines and violence has prompted greater emphasis on criminal exploitation, demonstrating policy and investment do work but at what cost to other forms of exploitation? The statutory obligation to safeguard children has positively affected reporting of child victims but without this legislative force, adult victims may be disregarded. Whilst the total number of offences has increased the emphasis on enforced labour has masked reductions in trafficking and slavery / servitude, seemingly oversimplifying the MSHT offending profile. Trafficking is a difficult issue to resolve because the geographical boundaries between the 43 police forces makes movement of victims and offenders more difficult to manage, so perhaps it has helped the policing response to simplify reporting.

The lack of typology data for the sample limits the ability to accurately comment on the changing reporting patterns for specific types of slavery. This means assertions are made based on the offence type with the support of victim ages. The prevalence in reporting of enforced labour suggests an increase in county lines related offending and this creates a debate; mission creep, hypersensitivity to one from of exploitation or simply evolution in the interpretation of the legislation? There is an argument that there has been undue political influence to divert the

legislation away from its intended purpose to tackle violence. Violence is a priority but at what cost to all modern slavery victims. The law was clearly designed to tackle international trafficking and yet Operation Pibera, the first modern slavery prosecution for County Lines could be considered a seminal moment in the interpretation of modern slavery law. The prevalence of children involved in County Lines suddenly changed the type of agencies that were involved in this issue with greater involvement from Children's Social Care and other organisations focussed on child safeguarding. There are competing interests regarding adults and children, men, and women. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) (HM Government UK, 2019b) described the CPS and Policing response to older crime being the 'poor relation'. The focus on statutory obligations to safeguard children, (National Archives, 2017) enshrined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 has created added stimulus for reporting of child victims which trumps the needs of adults. The dominance of enforced labour reports creates a concern that County Lines has narrowed the operational interpretation of modern slavery.

There has been a decline in the proportion of victims that are female whilst the total volume of male victims has increased. The concern that arises from this is whether there are factors hampering the identification of female victims. Given the prevalence of female victims of trafficking and the reduction in trafficking offences is there a correlation between the two variables. However, trafficking is an offence and could be a characteristic of any of the typologies. Arguably the methodology that underpins County Lines would suggest a high prevalence of trafficking because the model is inherently built on movement. Classification of modern slavery crime needs to be precise to ensure an effective response. The movement that arises from trafficking is challenging because of the need to work with an extended network of stakeholders both nationally and internationally. The reduction in trafficking offences in conjunction with the reduction of females combined with the prevalence of UK victims points towards a changing profile. It appears

that resources have been subverted to tackle violence and this may have adversely impacted female victims.

Male victims of labour exploitation have been considered underreported (Hestia, 2018). However, males are now the dominant victim gender but the modal age of victims in the sample is 17 years old which is more consistent with the County Lines profile. Therefore, examination of one variable alone, such as victim gender or offence type, does not provide enough detail to have an informed view. Whilst there has been an increase in male victims and greater levels of enforced labour, data limitations make it impossible to understand the proportion of male labour exploitation victims within the sample. A concern arises from this that male victims of labour exploitation may still be an underreported problem. Examination of the solved cases reveals that of the four typologies labour exploitation is third in terms of the volume of solved cases behind criminal and sexual exploitation. It has been asserted (Cockbain, Bowers and Vernon, 2019) that the emphasis on sexual and criminal exploitation has been to the detriment of labour exploitation and domestic servitude. This is a picture reflected in the solved cases where most of the solved cases relate to sexual and criminal exploitation. This seems indicative of the investment of police resources in these issues. Given this background of shifting emphasis and priority it is hard to ground consistent investigative processes that would allow more cases to be solved.

Police initiated versus non-police-initiated investigations

Crimes discovered by police are considered police initiated which therefore means that everything else is non-police initiated. Police initiated investigations (7% of reports in n) arise when the offences are discovered in the course of their duty, or they are intelligence led.   The outcomes achieved through these differing reporting methods has been observed in a study of Norwegian

crime (Bjelland, 2017). The findings in this study are consistent with the Norwegian study. 506 cases were discovered by police within the MPS sample leading to 23 solved cases at a detection rate of 4.5%. 30 non-police initiated cases were solved with a detection rate of 0.5%. The disparity in results demonstrates the need to improve non-police reporting processes and support police-initiated investigations. If there were greater recognition of crime proactively discovered by police (Sherman et al., 2020) this may encourage improved police reporting. Non-police reports are inevitably delayed, and this is at odds with core investigative practice. 'Golden hour' (College of Policing, 2013b) principles suggest that evidence quality diminishes over time. The delay of reporting via the NRM slows the police response, to the detriment of victims and contributes to the low number of detected cases because of inadequate reporting standards. Modern slavery is not a crime where police are often called to the scene by victims or witnesses, but the data does not offer insight on this issue. When MSHT is discovered directly by police officers, it allows the opportunity to gather evidence and seek specialist support that is not otherwise possible.

Another important characteristic within the solved cases is the command of the investigative unit responsible for the investigation. This reveals that of the 53 solved cases, 32 were solved by specialist units and 21 by local policing. 11 of the solved SC cases relate to Romanian victims and the significant support that arises from strong links between MPS and Romanian police have assisted with this. The bulk of modern slavery crime is investigated by officers working within local policing. It would have been interesting to contrast the detection rates for specialist and local officers, but this is not possible because most crimes solved by specialists are based on intelligence. The threshold for crime reporting is on the balance that a crime has occurred more likely than not. This means that not all intelligence led investigations would be recorded as crime, therefore not meeting the crime reporting threshold set out in the Home Office Counting Rules (Home Office, 2021b). The impact of this is that it is not possible to identify cases investigated by specialist crime

but not solved. The number of cases solved in specialist crime relative to the size of the available workforce is higher. Reasons for this include:

1) The experience and competence of officers

2) The balance of workloads and capacity

3) These cases are often referred to Specialist Crime because they are more viable for development.

The challenges of third-party crime reporting

The relatively low detection rate for non- police-initiated crime (0.5%) brings into focus the issue of reporting. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the dominant reporting portal for modern slavery crime. However, the purpose of the NRM is to ascertain victim status, thereby offering a gateway for benefits and support. CRIS is a crime reporting system and the start of the criminal justice process, designed to record criminal allegations based on reporting standards. There is a fundamental disconnect between the NRM and CRIS and whilst they are linked, they serve different purposes. The obvious issue that arises through the NRM is the timeliness of reporting with a delay between report and investigation. Most referrals to the NRM arise from non-police agencies which creates some challenges with a lack of shared vision and purpose. First responders are unlikely to embrace the core policing objective to prevent crime and bring offenders to justice. It is evident from the data sample that not enough of the crime reports originating through the NRM are being solved which infers a problem with the quality of NRM reports. Professionals within policing have long complained about the quality of NRM referrals which lack the requisite detail to develop an investigation. Observations about the quality of these reports are not limited to policing. A recent report raised the issue of poor quality NRM referrals and how this impacts on effective decision making by the SCA (Centre for Social Justice, 2021). The report suggests that first responders do

not have enough experience and knowledge to complete referrals effectively. Perhaps, there is too much being asked of first responders, and this is a wide scale problem. It seems that reports are not fulfilling the requirements of the SCA or policing. The challenges between the two processes have been recently acknowledged in the Final Review of the MSA 2015:

"The relationship between the NRM process and criminal justice process needs to be clarified. A common set of guidance ought to be developed to ensure that all participants in the criminal justice system – the CPS, law enforcement, judiciary, defence and prosecution lawyers – understand the NRM decision-making process and the weight it should be given in criminal proceedings." (HM Government UK, 2021c)

This apparent lack of understanding is not a one-way issue and the SCA need to have a greater acceptance of the role they have in the investigative process for this is the only way that reporting standards will improve.

Investigator and first responder capability

The collective weight of expectation on first responders is an issue for the police as much as other organisations. The finding that first responders lack knowledge and experience (Centre for Social Justice, 2021) is equally true of the MPS. Those employed in investigative roles within the local CID environment are disproportionately filled with officers who have little policing experience as opposed to those working in specialist crime. There is no apparent evidence base to link experience and competence but there seems to be some correlation. Arguably some reporting and investigating officers do not always have the skills to identify and tackle the most complex threats. Victims of MSHT are unlikely to recognise their plight and have the confidence to report. Therefore, proactive victim identification is required but this is challenging with the spectrum of typologies,

some of which are more obvious and detectable than others. Whilst there is an aspiration to increase reporting, the agencies charged with this responsibility may not have appropriately skilled staff to recognise the threat in its many forms. Learning and development must be the cornerstone of ongoing improvement in tackling MSHT.

Aside from the technical knowledge, there is also the matter of cultural competence. Victims of modern slavery are internationally diverse. Modern slavery is complex with victims suffering the impact of manipulation, psychological and physical abuse (Dando et al,.2016; cited in Machura et al, 2018). It is evident from the research that gaining the trust of a victim of modern slavery is not simple and requires patience and persistence with cultural and language barriers making victim engagement difficult. These cultural and language barriers exacerbate the difficulties in carrying out an already challenging activity. Where contact is indirect or on the phone this further magnifies the issue, inhibiting the development of a positive rapport which is needed to ensure victim trust. Third party reporters have a significant role to play as they can help bridge the trust gap but to do this, they must share the same vision and become more perpetrator focussed.

Arguably an effective investigation requires effective techniques. Research from the 1970s (Greenwood et al,. 1977 cited Lee, 2020) suggests that there is questionable value in the secondary investigation from a detective. However, this position is challenged (Lee, 2020) promoting the use of policy to galvanise the investigative response, differentiating between 'crime control' and 'due process' orientated policies. The study indicates that the former approach yields greater benefits than the latter. Perhaps this translates to the modern slavery context with due process followed since the inception of the MSA 2015. Findings within this thesis may indicate that that there are areas of improvement that can be delivered in response to modern slavery, but overall advancement must be acknowledged. The quality and quantity of investigative effort has improved by virtue of reporting numbers and solved cases being better than the period prior to the legislation

existing. Since the introduction of the MSA 2015 there has been evolution in the way this crime type is understood and during this maturation process the understanding of the threat has developed. The initial way modern slavery was recognised has broadened. The typologies have developed, and this has helped shape a better understanding of hidden harm.

The challenging hierarchy of policing priorities

Where does MSHT stand in terms of policing priorities? In 2021 there were several events that impacted significantly on the MPS. The tragic murder of Sarah Everard (BBC, 2021b) added necessary impetus to the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda. It also provoked questions related to police integrity which resonated with the long-awaited findings of the historic enquiry into the murder of Daniel Morgan published in 2021 (Daniel Morgan Independent Panel, 2021). These events rightly caused the MPS to reflect and review the existing culture. These were two 'black swan' events that have caused seismic change. Whilst these incidents may appear divergent from this study, they have had a collateral impact, whereby existing priorities have been reviewed and realigned. This is arguably the most challenging task for policing, constantly prioritising the response to different threats. Strategic decisions influence operational delivery causing officers to make decisions based on their view of what they think is a priority for the organisation, society, or themselves. This is where the impact of 'street level bureaucracy' (Lipsky, 1980) should not be understated as the role of the individual investigator making decisions based on their own priorities causes confusion. Arguably is there enough accountability for modern slavery investigations given that so few cases are solved.

The current focus on sex trafficking and enforced labour can be observed by the higher number of solved cases but at what cost to the other typologies? Is there enough understanding of labour exploitation and domestic servitude? Given the lower number of solved cases conducted by CID

officers a reliable method of triage would greatly assist inexperienced investigators. Perhaps in the long-term algorithms may offer the opportunity to effectively prioritise investigations in a more precise, value-based way, aligned with the principles of the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI) (Sherman et al, . 2016).   The difficulty with modern slavery is that simply using a tool like the CCHI does not offer sufficient variables to allow for prioritisation of offences because each offence would be scored equally based on the offence type alone. Additional variables would add value but there is a recognition (Sherman et al, 2016) that more variables would also make this more challenging to implement. Nevertheless, making a distinction between adult and child victims would help. Should the harm of offending be weighted the same for child and adult victims? If the typologies were weighted for harm this would refine the triage process. Should a victim of criminal exploitation involving begging be considered as harmful as sexual exploitation. This presents an opportunity to multiply the harm score multiplied by the typology value and then a weighted value depending on whether the victim is an adult or child.

CCHI harm score for modern slavery offences.	Typology harm value	Weighted value for child or adult victims

Table 10 - Proposed Modern slavery harm matrix

It is clearer than ever that there is a need for police resources to be more precisely focussed to achieve greater levels of efficiency and this is at the very heart of Evidence Based Policing (Sherman,.1999,2013). In a recent report on policing through the pandemic, Crest Advisory (Aitkenhead et al., 2022) recommended that there be greater levels of consultation on where to focus police resource.

Modern slavery crime outcomes codes

This study has been heavily reliant on the Home Office outcome codes to analyse the data (Table 7). The study was prompted by an interest in cases closed under Outcome code 1- solved cases by means of sanctioned detection. Yet there are at least 20 outcome codes in all, with 10 within the sample that offer much interest. It is clear most modern slavery crime is closed by means of Outcome 18 (3815 cases) which in effect means that there are no leads. A significant factor influencing the decision to close investigations is where they arise from an NRM referral. There are also the complexity issues which mean that some investigators may struggle to recognise the opportunities that may exist to gather evidence through parallel sources like communications and financial data. Such a high proportion of cases being closed in this way is a concern as these investigations are potentially not even viable and this links with the earlier point for triage with cases that have no prosect of being solved in the very first place. There is little prospect of a case being solved without a supportive victim.

Victim engagement is a vital component for a modern slavery investigation. This is not to suggest that cases should not be developed without a victim as this would be at odds with professional guidance (College of Policing, 2015) but an evidence led approach, without the victim must mean a separate and substantial evidence base to develop the investigation (Pajón and Walsh, 2018). Outcome code 14 relates to cases where the victim does not support the investigation and no suspect is identified, this differs from outcome code 16 where the victim does not engage, and the suspect is known. Outcome code 14 (2179) and Outcome code 16 (288) account for 2467 cases in total closed because of a lack of victim support. This is 35% of the sample which is a concern and requires greater exploration. Given that most reports arise from the NRM this is an area of opportunity to consider how to better engage victims in the criminal justice process. The findings suggest that victim engagement being brokered by a non-police first responder does not generally lead to solved cases. Nevertheless, victim wellbeing is paramount and whilst investigations have not been solved the NRM referrals indicate that basic welfare needs have been addressed.

A connecting issue is to understand why victims will not engage with police. This is a matter of trust and determination to support the investigative process. There are many reasons why victims will not engage but given that victims do not always self-identify and are unlikely to support the investigation there must be some basic expectations of victim care. Cultural awareness, language skills and face-to-face contact can improve victim care. Given the gravity of modern slavery there is some professional conjecture on whether specialist training for victim care would yield better results as is current practice for rape investigations. There are challenges that arise from each of these proposals but if there is an appetite to improve service delivery then this should not be constrained by volume or capability. The MPS have implemented dedicated Victim Navigators (Justice and Care, 2021) to support victims of investigations with independent professionals employed to support specialist cases. The benefit of Victim Navigators is a shared goal in supporting the victim through the criminal justice process which is a distinguishing characteristic from reporting agencies.

Outcome 15 presents the raw ingredients for a successful investigation. These are cases where the victim supports the investigation, and a suspect is identified. Both victim engagement and suspect identification are significant solvability factors (Coupe, Ariel and Mueller-Johnson, 2019). 7% (472) of all the reports in the sample are closed with this outcome code. Given that these crimes present a better prospect of being solved, greater emphasis could be made on this closure category. Knowing that these characteristics are present at the time of closure is useful, but if this information could be gleaned earlier in the investigation phase this could be transformative. The MPS do not have a definitive means of accurately tracking victims that are supporting an investigation and this seems easily resolved by monitoring whether a statement has been arranged or provided. By monitoring 'victim engagement' and 'suspect known' variables this could create an opportunity to

intervene with specialist support and tactical advice that may lead to a better outcome. Merely 10% conversion of crimes in this group would double the volume of detections already achieved.

Conclusion and recommendations

Modern slavery reporting

Reporting patterns since 2016 have changed. In a sense it seems that the legislation was created to tackle international trafficking / slavery and now this is a secondary concern to criminal exploitation and county lines.   The breadth of offending has changed so that the spread of crime types is now more limited. There are fewer offences of trafficking and more cases of enforced labour. There are fewer female victims and males now dominate the victim count. Less than 1% of all reported modern slavery crime is solved and whilst this is not the only measure of success it must be compared against rape offending where there has been a public outcry with similar detection levels (Guardian, 2021).   The overarching issue is that County Lines now seems to dominate modern slavery crime reporting. The question that arises from this is whether this is simply a reflection of the current crime profile or has the laser focus on this crime issue caused professionals to miss other forms of exploitation? The powerful influence of policing priorities potentially counters one another, with the violence agenda impacting on young men whilst trafficking impacting on women. This is exactly why conflating modern slavery offences together and looking at volume of crime reports is not an effective approach because the 'devil is in the detail'.

Data quality

Data quality has hampered this analysis and so one of the fundamental recommendations must concern data quality. This is not only data that the MPS itself record but also the data it receives from the NRM. The study comes at a fortuitous time as the MPS is investing in a new reporting system. Data entry is an issue that impacts on reported crime more broadly and needs to be addressed with a cohesive approach through training and better crime reporting processes. Reporting modern slavery as a crime without the typology leads to a conflated view of offending and hampers the collective response. There needs to be a more dynamic response to changing demand which would be achievable with better reporting processes. An important aspect of tracking should concern the issue of modern slavery typologies which are not currently recorded on CRIS. A better understanding of the changing crime profile emerges by monitoring the typology. It therefore follows that the typology must be a field recorded on the crime report.

National Referral Mechanism

The disconnect between the NRM and crime reporting is a significant concern. This could be considered a conflict between Human Rights and Criminal Justice - two systems which are connected but not truly integrated thereby creating duplication and gaps. A whole system approach would be better, whereby the reporting interface for the NRM is integrated with the crime reporting system. This could be delivered by the SCA and Police based on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub model currently used for child safeguarding information sharing. But improvement is not just about systems and process, it's about purpose. Current SCA focus concerns victim identification and referrals. At the point at which an NRM is referred to the police it seems an obligation has been fulfilled. This current approach is invested in accurate crime reporting in accordance with HOCR but does not lead to the best outcomes for investigations. It seems current processes hit the target and miss the point. Frontline practitioners who are not police-based fail to gather information that is integral to an investigation. Not least, the ability for the investigator to

engage directly with the victim in a timely way so that an account can be obtained, and an investigation can be developed. Golden hour principles are the bedrock of most successful investigations and whilst modern slavery is different there must be greater regard for what works in other crime types. There should not be a disregard for core research in the solvability field which demonstrates the importance of victim engagement.

Review and reinvigorate the Modern Slavery Act 2015

One of the most heralded features of the MSA 2015 is the offender management opportunity that arises from the Slavery Trafficking Risk or Prevention Orders (STRO / STPO). There have been only 14 breach related offences recorded since 2016 and none in recent years with no charges brought for any of these reports. The legislation is useful but the anecdotal evidence from practitioners suggests that the process for obtaining an order is currently quite cumbersome and may be another example of the inherent complexity that concerns modern slavery. Obtaining orders is one thing but they are not effective if not enforced so there needs to be a review of existing arrangements to monitor and manage STRO/ STPOs. There are also offences which concern precursor kidnap activity which appear redundant: 'Offence of false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with a view to exploitation' (56) and 'Commit an offence other than kidnapping or false imprisonment with intention of arranging travel with a view to exploitation' (3). Only 59 reports of these two offence types have been made (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The lack of r eporting indicates that either further training is required to ensure there is a better recognition of these offence types or perhaps these sections should be repealed.

Triage investigations and target cases that can be solved.

83% of reports are closed because of lack of investigative opportunity. It seems they lack characteristics which would make them solvable and so a model like EBIT (Mcadzien et al,. 2019) could offer an opportunity to make better quality screening decisions than inexperienced investigators applying their own standard. 7% of reports are closed under outcome code 15. These are cases where the victim supports the investigation, and the suspect is identified. The support of the victim is a paramount concern for a successful investigation, but suspect identification is a linked challenge. Identification of the suspect without victim cooperation is unlikely. The crimes that are closed within this outcome code have characteristics that give them greater likelihood of being solved and so there should be greater investment in these cases. Tracking the cases where victims have cooperated by providing a statement and offering a named suspect should be the gateway to additional resource investment. This could also be a new reporting feature.

Investigative resources

This study supports existing research which indicates that modern slavery investigations are complex. This makes it hard for practitioners to identify and investigate modern slavery. The existing workforce are clearly challenged with this crime type and so there must be some review of training and working practices. It is evidently the case that dedicated teams yield better results than omnicompetent teams. The results of Specialist Crime suggests that they have proven to be more effective in solving modern slavery crime and whilst there are other factors that make this so, skill and experience as an investigator must have an impact. It would therefore seem prudent to consider greater use of dedicated teams to investigate this crime type.

Further research

A lack of cultural competence from frontline practitioners is a barrier to consistent victim identification and this impacts on effective reporting. Ever changing priorities and conflating typologies does not help. It is fair to suggest that 'Police are confused by what human trafficking is' (Farrell and Pfeffer, 2014) given the nuances of different forms of exploitation. Combined analysis of NRM and MPS data would provide a more holistic picture of victim demographics. Examination of victim nationality and outcome codes would pinpoint the communities where the greatest difficulty with victim engagement exists, and this would allow for the development of stakeholder mapping and support to overcome these issues. A more detailed understanding of victim nationality may also help identify socio-economic factors that make some nationalities more predisposed to victimisation whilst conversely lack of reporting may suggest the need for increased scrutiny.

Impact of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

This descriptive study has sought to focus on areas that may help improve the response to modern slavery. Nevertheless, there must be a recognition that prior to 2015 this legislation was spread across different acts of parliament making enforcement ineffective. Increased reporting, year on year, under this Act must be considered a success. This is a relatively recent piece of law that remains open to interpretation as the collective understanding evolves. Yet this study proffers some opportunities on how investigations might be improved better still.

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