

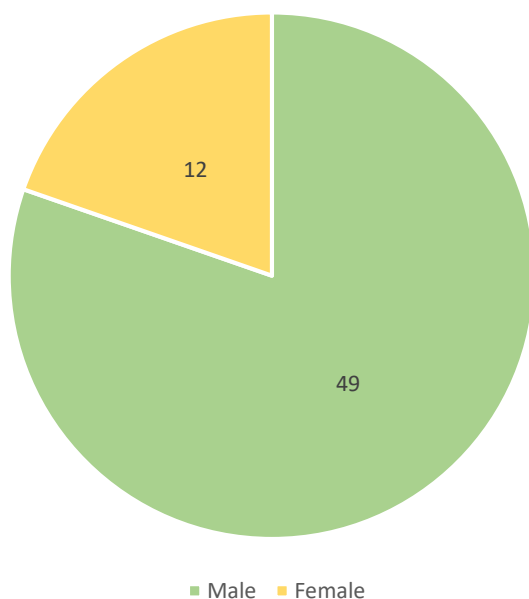
OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN LATVIA 2021

Identified victims

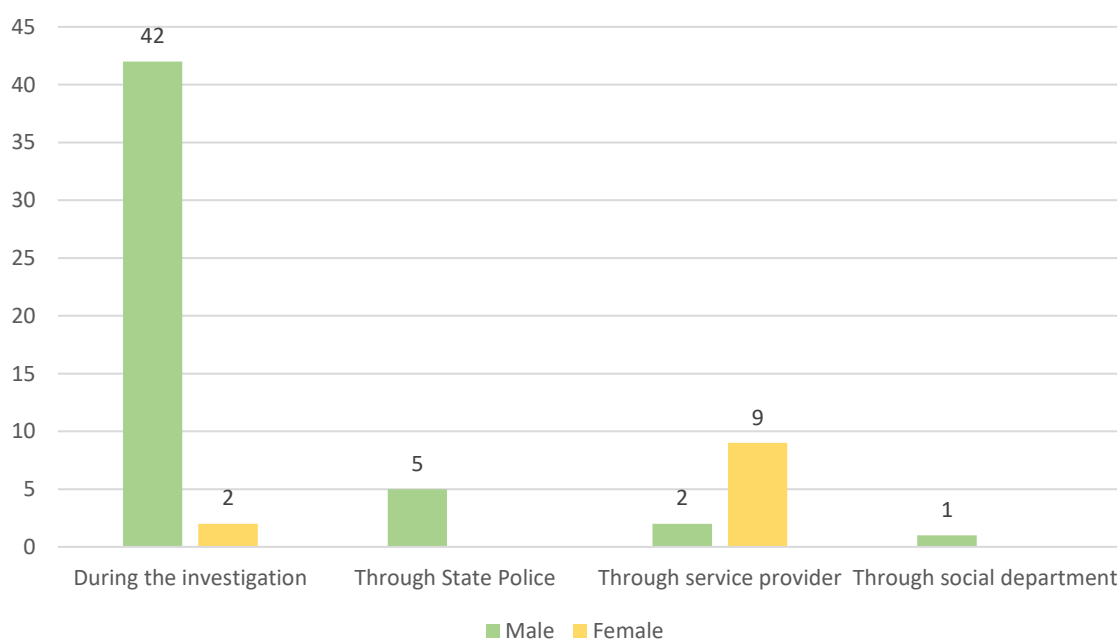
In total, in 2021, the State Police, NGO “Centrs MARTA” and NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” **identified 61 victims** of trafficking in human beings, which is slightly more than in 2020, when 48 victims were identified.

The increase in the number of victims is mostly related to the activities carried out by the State Police, revealing possible human trafficking in one Christian organization, which under three branches formally provided support to persons with substance use disorders or process addictions.

Gender of victims identified in 2021



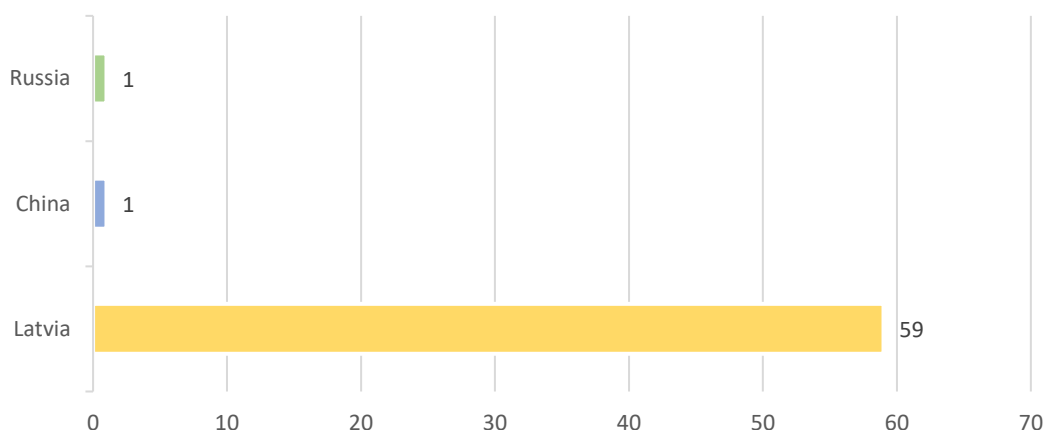
How victims were initially detected



Nationality

In general, it should be noted that in recent years, a trend was observed that citizens of third countries, for example, from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, as well as India, were increasingly found among the identified victims. However, in 2021, this trend stopped and cases of domestic exploitation of Latvian nationals dominated. This could possibly be explained by the restrictions of COVID-19 – namely, among the victims identified in 2020 were those who arrived in Latvia before the start of the pandemic, but in 2021 these kinds of cases were less. This means that as the spread of the pandemic will decrease, the proportion of third-country nationals among the identified victims could increase again.

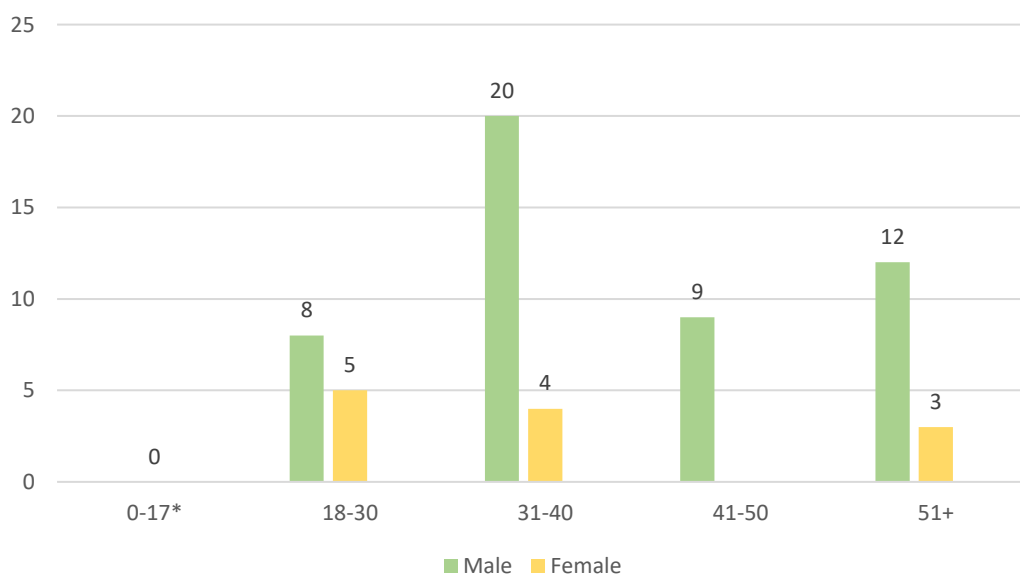
The nationality of identified victims in 2021



Age

All the identified victims were adults between the ages of 18 and 67, however, in 4 cases the offence itself took place when the person had not yet reached the age of 18, even more than 10 years ago. All cases where minors were trafficked were related to sexual exploitation.

Age of victims at the moment of the identification in 2021



**The statistics include data on the age when a person sought help. In four cases, it was established that the persons were minors at the time of the criminal offence, including the oldest case when the offence took place over a long period of time, starting in 1995.*

Form of exploitation

Victims identified in recent years were mostly exposed to labour exploitation, but trafficking for sexual exploitation or sham marriages were found less frequently. Also in 2021, most victims were involved in labour exploitation – a total of 53 victims out of 61 identified. 7 persons were trafficked into sexual exploitation and 1 person was trafficked into a sham marriage.

In addition, there is a pronounced gender dimension in trafficking in human beings, i.e. men are mostly subjected to labour exploitation, while girls and women are mostly subjected to sexual exploitation and sham marriages. The same trend was observed in 2021, as 49 men and 4 women were subjected to labour exploitation, 7 women were subjected to sexual exploitation and 1 woman was subjected to sham marriage.

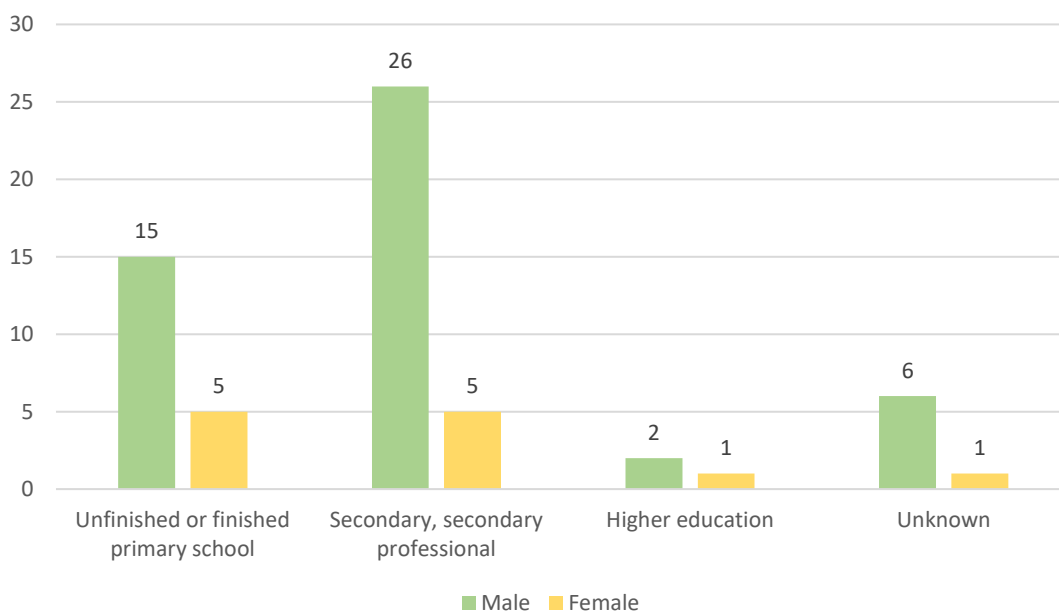
Types of exploitation of identified victims in 2021

| | Male | Female |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| | 49 | 4 |
| Forced labour | <i>Agricultural, logging works, food production – 21; Agricultural and logging works – 11; Agriculture – 10; Construction, repair works – 5; Production – 1.</i> | <i>Industry – 2; Agriculture, logging – 1; Service industry – 1.</i> |
| | 0 | 7 |
| Sexual exploitation | | <i>Distribution of materials on the internet – 7; Pornography – 3; Prostitution – 3.</i> |
| Sham marriage | 0 | 1 |

Education

Looking at the data on the education of victims of human trafficking, it can be seen that most of the victims have secondary or secondary special education (31 victims) or primary school or lower level education (20 victims). A lower level of education may also be associated with greater social exclusion or a worse socioeconomic situation, which creates greater risks for a person to be subjected to trafficking in human beings. At the same time, it is very important to remember that persons with higher education also become victims of human trafficking.

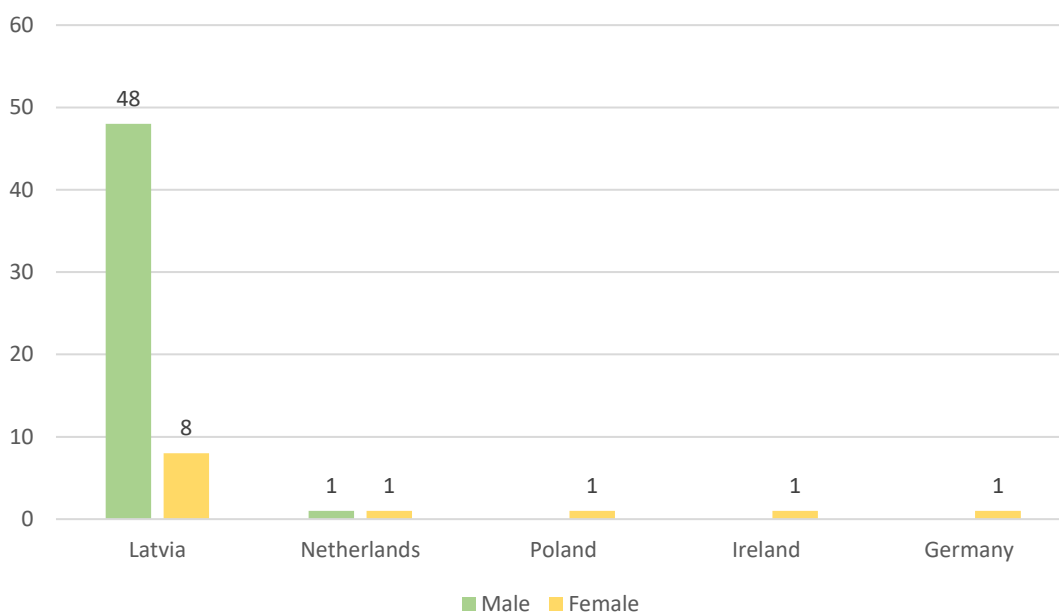
Educational level of identified victims



Countries and industries of exploitation

Most of the victims identified in Latvia in 2021 were exploited in Latvia – a total of 56 persons. Thus, it can be said that Latvia is not only the country of origin and destination of victims of trafficking in human beings, but also a country where local residents are also subjected to trafficking in human beings. Another 2 persons were subjected to trafficking in the Netherlands, 1 person in Poland, 1 person in Ireland and 1 person in Germany. At the same time, when looking at this data, it is important to remember that probably not all information is available about Latvian nationals abroad who have been subjected to trafficking in human beings.

Countries of exploitation of identified victims in 2021



Trafficking in human beings risk industries in Latvia are in construction, agriculture, logging, food production and catering. Cases of trafficking have been identified in these sectors in Latvia in recent years.

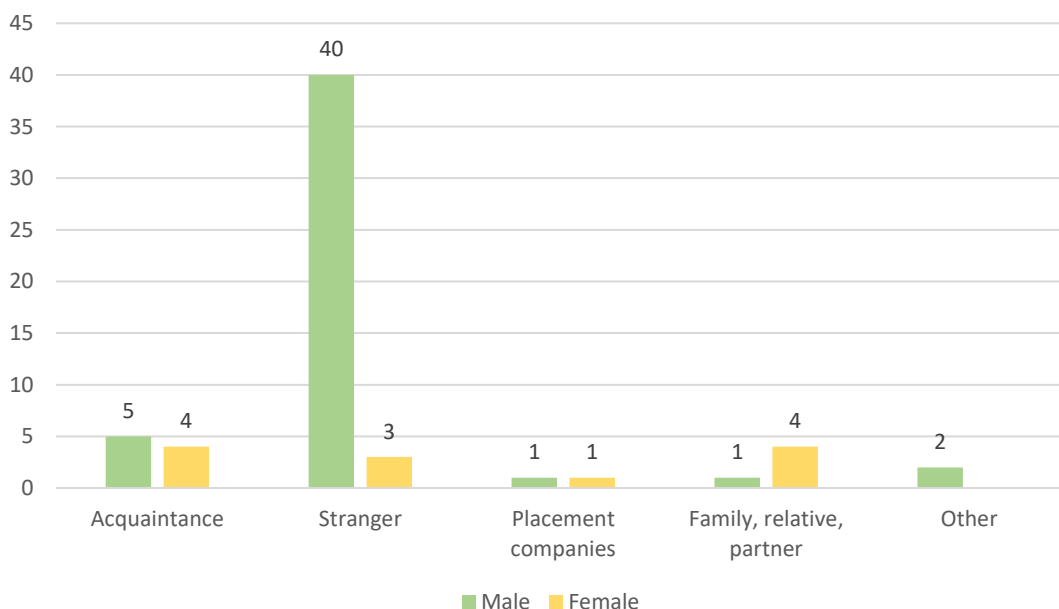
Trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation must be seen in the context of involvement in prostitution or other kinds of sexual involvement. In general, in Latvia, there is a tendency of involving third-country nationals, especially women from Ukraine, Russia and Moldova into prostitution. In addition, recruitment and organization are also carried out by third-country nationals through the internet and various social and messaging platforms.

There are also cases of sham marriages when persons from Bangladesh or Pakistan register marriages with Latvian citizens in order to obtain a residence permit in the European Union.

Recruitment ways

Although in previous years people were more often recruited by people they knew, in 2021 most victims were recruited by strangers. Such a trend is mostly related to the already mentioned case of trafficking in communities of people with various addictions. In this specific case, people were approached on the street, in shelters, and soup kitchens, offering a place to live and an opportunity to get rid of addictions on a community basis. In some cases, people were brought to the particular community by their relatives.

Ways of recruitment of identified victims



Investigations and convictions

In 2021, the State Police initiated a total of four criminal proceedings under Article 154.1 (Trafficking in Human Beings) of the Criminal Law. Of these, in three cases the criminal proceedings are related to exploitation for forced labour and in one case to sham marriage.

In addition, criminal proceedings have also been initiated for criminal offences related to the risks of trafficking in human beings. According to Article 165 of the Criminal Law (Living on the Avails of Prostitution), 12 criminal proceedings have been initiated, and according to Article 165.1 (Sending a Person for Sexual Exploitation) – 2 criminal proceedings.

Criminal proceedings initiated in 2021 according to (Articles 154.¹, 164., 165., 165.¹ of the Criminal Code)

| Article of the Criminal Code | Number of criminal proceedings | Suspects | Form of trafficking in human beings | Victims recognized in criminal proceedings |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Article 154. ¹ | 1 | 1 | Forced labour | 5 |
| Article 154. ¹ | 1 | 3 | Sham marriage | 0 |
| Article 154. ¹ | 1 | 1 | Forced labour | 1 |
| Article 154. ¹ | 1 | 9 | Forced labour | 12 |
| Article 164, second part (involvement in prostitution) | 4 | | - | - |
| Article 165 (Living on the Avails of Prostitution) | 12 | 21 | - | - |
| Article 165. ¹ (Sending a Person for Sexual Exploitation) | 2 | 2 | - | - |

Source: State Police

Criminal cases heard in courts in 2021 (Articles 154.¹, 164., 165., 165.¹ of the Criminal Code)

| Instance | Article and part of the Criminal Code | Case status | Accused persons | | | Fine |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|------------------------|------------|--------------------|--|
| | | | gender | age | nationality | |
| First | Article 154. ¹ (2) (sexual exploitation) | examined | male | 29 | Latvia | Real punishment – deprivation of liberty 3 years |
| First | Article 165 (2) | examined | male | 31 | Latvia | Conditional sentence – deprivation of liberty 3 years, probationary supervision 2 years |
| First | Article 165 (2) | examined | male | 34 | Latvia | Conditional sentence – deprivation of liberty 3,25 years, probationary supervision 2 years |
| Appellate | Article 165. ¹ (2) | examined | male | 38 | Latvia | Real punishment – deprivation of liberty 2 years |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|----------|--------|----|--------|---|
| Appellate | Article 165. ¹ (2) | examined | female | 23 | Latvia | Conditional sentence – deprivation of liberty 2 years |
| First | Article 165. ¹ (2) | examined | male | 24 | Latvia | TERMINATED – death of accused |
| Appellate | Article 165. ¹ (2) | examined | female | 45 | Latvia | Justified |

Source: Courts administration of Latvia