



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice

# Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland

## Annual Report 2024



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## INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Justice is pleased to present the sixteenth annual report on Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland (2024), which covers the period between 1 January and 31 December 2024. The report fulfils Ireland's reporting obligations Article 19 Directive (2011/36/EU)<sup>1</sup> on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 outlines the definition and key characteristics of human trafficking.
- Chapter 2 presents statistics on victims of human trafficking identified in Ireland.
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of trafficking trends across Europe.
- Chapter 4 describes Ireland's State and NGO-led response, including supports for victims.
- Chapter 5 summarises international assessments of Ireland's efforts and international cooperation mechanisms.
- Chapter 6 highlights key developments and progress during 2024.
- Chapter 7 provides an overview of information and outreach.
- Chapter 8 is the conclusion.

In 2024, 67 victims of human trafficking were identified by An Garda Síochána (AGS), including 10 minors. As in previous years, the majority of incidents of human trafficking reported in Ireland related to sexual exploitation accounting for 48 victims. A further 15 victims were identified as experiencing labour exploitation, while 4 cases related to unspecified forms of trafficking.

This represents an increase of 14 identified victims compared to 2023, when 53 victims were reported. It is recognised that official figures under-represent the true scale of trafficking, as many victims remain unidentified. At EU level, [Eurostat](#) recorded 10,793 registered victims of trafficking in 2023, based on official national reporting.

The Department of Justice continues to ensure that funding is available to NGOs playing a crucial role in assisting victims of human trafficking to access supports to aid their recovery from their ordeal. For 2024, the Department of Justice allocated funding of €7.7 million to more than 65 organisations supporting victims of crime, including victims of trafficking. The €7.7 million is an increase of over 26.5% on the previous total fund of €5.8m made available in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

On 6 November 2023 the [Third National Action Plan \(NAP\) to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023–2027](#) was published. The Action Plan builds on previous work and reflects an increased understanding of the complexity of trafficking, with a focus on prevention, identification, protection, and partnership. Key measures include the development of a national training framework, enhanced awareness-raising, and actions to strengthen supports for victims.

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<sup>1</sup>Article 19: 'Member States shall take the necessary measures to establish national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms. The tasks of such mechanisms shall include the carrying out of assessments of trends in trafficking in human beings, the measuring of results of anti-trafficking actions, including the gathering of statistics in close cooperation with relevant civil society organisations active in this field, and report.'

<sup>2</sup> [Minister McEntee announces €7.7 million in funding for organisations supporting victims of crime](#)

Human trafficking for sexual exploitation continues to be recognised in Ireland as a form of gender-based violence. Measures to support victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are therefore reflected, where appropriate, within [Zero Tolerance : Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2022 - 2026](#), which sets out a five-year programme of reform aimed at achieving a society that does not tolerate domestic, sexual, or gender-based violence.

A priority action under the Zero Tolerance strategy was the establishment of Rosa's Place, a dedicated, female-only accommodation centre for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Operated by the International Protection Accommodation Service, the centre was piloted during 2024 and provides accommodation for up to eight victims, alongside tailored supports. Learning from the pilot will inform the future development of specialised accommodation provision.

On 1 January 2024, Cuan, the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence Agency, was formally established with responsibility for the coordination, monitoring, and implementation of the Zero Tolerance strategy. While human trafficking and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence are distinct policy areas, there is overlap in cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

## EU DIRECTIVE 2024/1712

In 2011, the EU adopted a Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting the victims of this crime. This is a key instrument in the fight against human trafficking as it sets minimum rules concerning the definition at national level of criminal offences and sanctions. It also includes EU-wide rules to strengthen prevention and protection of victims. Although the objectives of Directive 2011/36/EU remain relevant, several challenges have since arisen or gained importance, which are addressed through the targeted revision of this Directive.

In April 2023 Ireland opted-in to the European's Commission's Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2011/ 36/EU on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.

The recast Directive, [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1712](#), will add forced marriage, illegal adoption, and the exploitation of surrogacy as recognised types of exploitation covered by the EU's anti-trafficking law. This will take into account the prevalence and the relevance of these forms of exploitation.

This update also requires EU countries to make sure that people who knowingly use services provided by victims of trafficking can face sanctions. Ireland's Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 created a specific offence of paying for sexual activity with a trafficked person.

As is the case in the current Directive, the new types of exploitation (forced marriage, illegal adoption, and surrogacy) will be punishable by a maximum penalty of at least five years of imprisonment, or of at least ten years of imprisonment in case of aggravated offences.

## 1. HUMAN TRAFFICKING EXPLAINED

### WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human Trafficking is a crime and a human rights violation. For a situation to be one of trafficking, three distinct elements (act, means, and purpose) must be fulfilled:

- The ACT of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons must be done by...
- The MEANS, such as the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments, and it must be for...
- The PURPOSE OF EXPLOITATION i.e. sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced begging, forced criminality or organ removal.

#### **Child trafficking - an important note:**

A child cannot consent to being trafficked; therefore, the MEANS element does not apply to children. In the case of a child, the mere ACT of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, or receiving a child for the PURPOSE of exploitation constitutes trafficking.

Similarly, exploitation of a child in and of itself, without the 'Act' element, while constituting another criminal offence, will rarely amount to human trafficking.



*Victims of trafficking are often invisible to the public eye.*

The presence of the three distinct elements is observed in the definition of human trafficking as set out in both the **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings** and the **UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime**:

*“Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

*Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”<sup>3</sup>*

In Ireland, these definitions have been incorporated into the **Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008** and the **Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013**.

## WHY DOES IT HAPPEN AND WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

Trafficking in human beings is a high-profit, low-risk crime driven by supply and demand. Criminal networks or individuals exploit a range of ‘push and pull’ factors, including poverty, inequality, lack of economic opportunity, and the demand for cheap labour and sexual services. These factors increase vulnerability to exploitation and can result in individuals becoming victims of trafficking.

Trafficking can occur across borders or within a single country, and victims may be exploited in one jurisdiction and identified in another. A person who has been subjected to trafficking is a victim of trafficking regardless of where the exploitation occurred. Ireland may be a destination country for persons who have been trafficked or exploited in other jurisdictions, and such persons may be identified as victims of trafficking in Ireland.

Victims of trafficking may be exploited across a range of sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, hospitality, domestic work, and the service and entertainment industries. Forms of exploitation include sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced begging, and forced criminality, including involvement in illegal drug cultivation or distribution.

## PEOPLE SMUGGLING VS. HUMAN TRAFFICKING

It is important to distinguish between trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, which are legally and conceptually distinct phenomena.

Trafficking in human beings involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation. It is characterised by the use of force, coercion, deception, abuse of power, or the exploitation of a position of vulnerability. For adult victims, consent is irrelevant where any of these means have been used.

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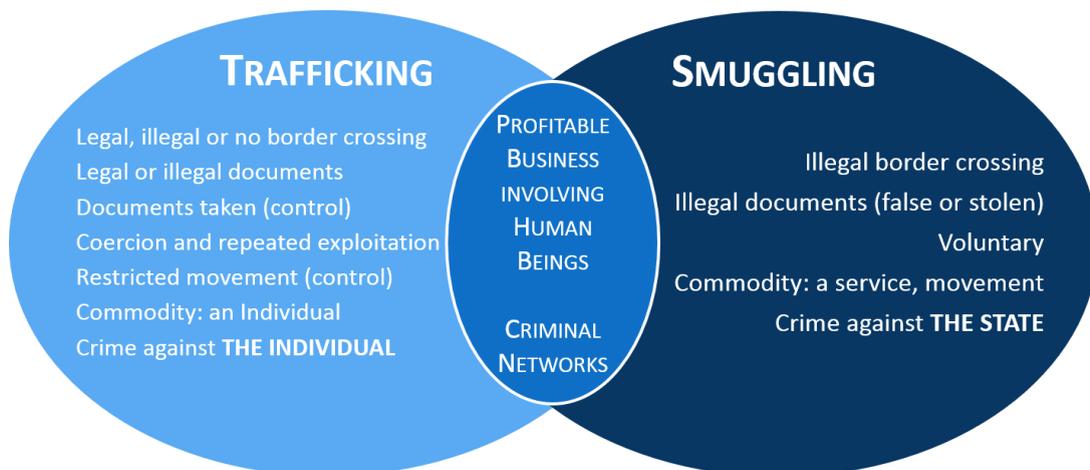
<sup>3</sup> Article 3, [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#) | OHCHR

Migrant smuggling, by contrast, involves the facilitation of a person's irregular entry into a State for financial or material gain. While smuggling may involve dangerous or degrading conditions, it is generally characterised by the consent of the individual being smuggled to the act of facilitation.

What begins as a smuggling situation may evolve into trafficking where a person who has been smuggled is subsequently subjected to exploitation through force, coercion, deception, or abuse during or after the smuggling process.

The key distinctions include:

- Migrant smuggling involves the facilitation of irregular entry into a State, whereas trafficking involves exploitation and does not require illegal entry.
- Victims of trafficking may enter a State legally or illegally, while smuggling necessarily involves irregular border crossing.
- Migrant smuggling must involve the crossing of an international border; trafficking can occur both across borders and within a single country.
- Smuggling typically ends once the migrant reaches their destination, whereas trafficking involves ongoing exploitation.
- In cases of trafficking, any initial consent given by an adult victim is rendered irrelevant where coercive, deceptive, or abusive means are used.



## 2. EXTENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN IRELAND

### A note on statistics:

Estimating the prevalence of trafficking in human beings is inherently challenging. Identified victim numbers are relatively low each year, and trafficking is a clandestine crime that often overlaps with other forms of criminal activity. In addition, where overall numbers are small, isolated incidents involving larger numbers of victims can have a disproportionate effect on annual figures. For these reasons, the statistical information presented in this section reflects the data available to the relevant authorities and provides an analytical overview, rather than a definitive measure of the scale of trafficking in Ireland. It should also be noted that an identified victim of trafficking may not be linked to a trafficking offence that occurred within the State, as victims may be identified in Ireland where the exploitation took place wholly or partly in another jurisdiction.

The 2024 Annual Report applies the same classification approach as in previous years. In line with international best practice, victims of offences prosecuted under section 3(2) of the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, as amended, are not included in trafficking statistics where the offence does not meet the legal definition of trafficking in human beings. This approach ensures consistency in reporting and alignment with internationally recognised standards.

### 2024 OVERVIEW

There were 67 victims of human trafficking identified by An Garda Síochána in 2024. 48 of these were victims of sexual exploitation and 15 were victims of forced labour. There were 4 victims identified as victims of unspecified trafficking. 10 of the 67 victims identified were minors.

Table 1 Total number of victims identified in Ireland in 2024		
	No.	% Total
Total Victims Identified	67	100%
Adult	57	85%
Minor	10	15%

Table 2 Trafficking by exploitation type		
	No.	% Total
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	48	72%
Trafficking for forced labour	15	22%
Trafficking for forced criminality	4	6%
Total	67	100%

Table 3 Source countries		
	No.	% Total
Nigeria	38	56.5 %
Brazil	4	6 %
South Africa	2	3 %
Latvia	2	3 %
Vietnam	2	3 %
Indonesia	2	3 %
Romania	2	3 %
Zimbabwe	2	3 %
India	2	3 %
Albania	2	3 %
Cameroon	1	1.5 %
Uganda	1	1.5 %
Botswana	1	1.5 %
Bulgaria	1	1.5 %
China	1	1.5 %
Morocco	1	1.5 %
Slovakia	1	1.5 %
Mauritius	1	1.5 %
Zambia	1	1.5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100 %</b>

## 2020-2024 DATA

The tables that follow outline the number of victims that have been identified in Ireland over the last 5 years, the nature of the exploitation they have been subject to and their region of origin.

### VICTIMS BY YEAR, AGE AND GENDER

Table 4 shows the number of victims of human trafficking identified by An Garda Síochána by year of detection, age and gender. There have been 244 victims detected over the last 5 years with 67 victims identified in 2024.

Table 4 Identified victims by year, age and gender				
Year	Age	Female	Male	Total
2020	Adult	33	5	38
	Minor	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>38</b>
2021	Adult	28	16	44
	Minor	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>44</b>
2022	Adult	23	14	37
	Minor	4	1	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>42</b>
2023	Adult	38	10	48
	Minor	4	1	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>53</b>
2024	Adults	42	15	57
	Minor	8	2	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>67</b>
Total	Adult	164	60	224
	Minor	16	4	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>244</b>

## VICTIMS BY REGION AND EXPLOITATION TYPE

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the 244 victims of human trafficking by region of origin. In the last 5 years, 19% of identified victims came from the EEA region, with 61% from the Africa region and 9% from the Asia region.

<b>Table 5 Identified victims by year and region of origin</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Region of Origin</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2020</b>	Africa	23
	EEA	9
	Non-EEA Europe	2
	South America	2
	North America	1
	Middle East	1
<b>2021</b>	Africa	29
	EEA	9
	Non-EEA Europe	1
	South America	1
	Asia	3
	Ireland	1
<b>2022</b>	Africa	21
	EEA	11
	Non-EEA Europe	1
	South America	0
	Asia	6
	Middle East	1
	Ireland	2
<b>2023</b>	Africa	27
	EEA	12
	Non-EEA Europe	4
	South America	2
	Asia	7
	Middle East	1
<b>2024</b>	Africa	48
	EEA	6
	Non-EEA Europe	2
	South America	4
	Asia	7
<b>Total</b>	Africa	148
	EEA	47
	Non-EEA Europe	10
	South America	9
	North America	1
	Asia	23
	Middle East	3
	Ireland	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>

## VICTIMS BY YEAR, EXPLOITATION AND GENDER

The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013 came into effect in August 2013 and expanded the definition of human trafficking to include exploitation of a person for the purpose of forced begging and for forced participation in criminal activities for financial gain. These specific categories of alleged exploitation were previously recorded as ‘uncategorised exploitation’ or ‘labour exploitation’.

Table 6 below illustrates the trend in exploitation type of those victims identified in Ireland.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Exploitation</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2020</b>	Sexual	24	2	26
	Labour	8	2	10
	Forced Criminality	1	1	2
<b>2021</b>	Sexual	24	1	25
	Labour	4	15	19
<b>2022</b>	Sexual	23	1	24
	Labour	3	12	15
	Forced Criminality	-	2	2
	Other	1	-	1
<b>2023</b>	Sexual	28	-	28
	Labour	8	8	16
	Forced Criminality	4	3	7
	Other	2	-	2
<b>2024</b>	Sexual	45	3	48
	Labour	4	11	15
	Forced Criminality	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	Sexual	144	7	151
	Labour	27	48	75
	Forced Criminality	6	9	15
	Other	3	-	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>244</b>

\*Other denotes a mixture of Forced Criminality and Labour and Sexual Exploitation.

### 3. EXTENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN EUROPE

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, reported that in 2023, the latest year for which figures are currently available, there were 10,793 registered victims of trafficking in human beings in the EU and 2,309 convicted traffickers.<sup>4</sup> However, the number of convicted persons remained much lower than the number of those suspected of trafficking in human beings. Overall, this equates to an EU average of 24 registered victims of trafficking per one million inhabitants.

In 2023, almost two thirds (63%) of registered victims of trafficking were female while 24.2% of suspected traffickers were female. In 2023, 28 % of registered victims of trafficking came from the reporting country. Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland reported mostly victims from their own countries while more than 80% of registered victims in Austria, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Finland, Luxembourg, Italy and Estonia were from non- EU countries.

In 2023, the highest rates per one million inhabitants in the EU were observed in Luxembourg (157), Greece (51), the Netherlands (49), Austria (47) and Sweden (45) while the lowest rates were observed in Croatia and Lithuania (5) and Czech Republic (2). Higher rates could be linked to a greater capacity of the national system to identify victims, rather than a higher prevalence.



**In 2023, there were 10,793 registered victims of trafficking in the EU.**

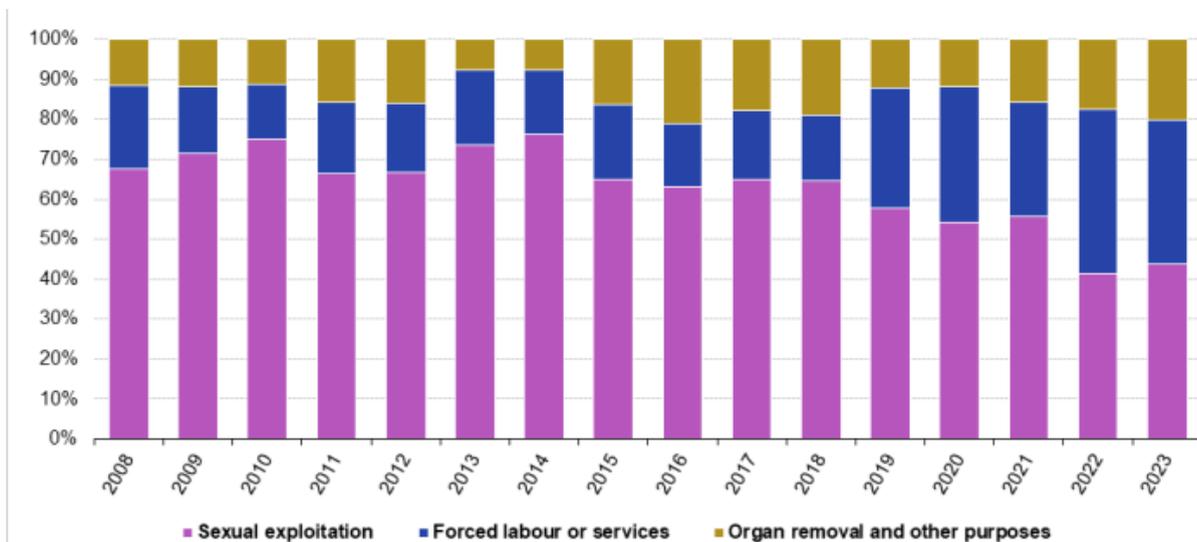


<sup>4</sup> Full report available at: [Trafficking in human beings statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

As shown in the graph below, sexual exploitation was still the predominant form of exploitation in 2023, at 43.8%, although the share of sexual exploitation has gradually decreased over the period 2008-2023. The prevalence of labour exploitation is increasing with the share of victims for forced labour and services at between 28% and 41% from 2019. Trafficking for organ removal and other exploitative purposes, including benefit fraud, criminal activities and forced begging, stood at 20.2%.<sup>5</sup>

**Forms of exploitation for registered victims of trafficking in human beings, 2008-2023 (number of persons):**

(Source: [Trafficking in human beings statistics - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#))



Notes: Calculated on responding countries and on known values. No adjustments were made. More than one form of exploitation can be recorded for a victim. Organ removal and other purposes including use for benefit fraud, criminal activities and forced begging. Source: Eurostat (crim\_thb\_vexp)



<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## 4. IRELAND'S RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### INTERNATIONAL LAW

Ireland's national legislation has its foundation in the global and European commitment to fight human trafficking. The key international instruments are:

- The UN Palermo Protocol of the year 2000: A Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- The Council of Europe Convention against Human Trafficking: A 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, ratified July 2010.
- EU Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.
- EU Directive 2024/1712 amends Directive 2011/36/EU.

### THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN IRELAND

Ireland's legislation, combined with administrative measures for victim support, fully implements these international treaties.



The key legal instruments in Ireland are:

- [The Criminal Law \(Human Trafficking\) Act 2008](#). This is the main human trafficking Act which defines the crime and its penalties, with the exception of child sex trafficking. The Act criminalises: the trafficking of adults; child trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation (dealt with by 1998 Act – see below); prostituting a trafficked person; and the payment for sex with a trafficked person.
- [Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998](#). This Act covers child trafficking, child sex abuse and child pornography. In relation to human trafficking, the legislation criminalises child trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- [The Criminal Law \(Human Trafficking\) \(Amendment\) Act 2013](#). The 2013 amending Act modified the definition of Labour Exploitation to bring it into line with ILO definitions of forced labour and gave effect to the EU Directive 2011/36/EU.
- [Criminal Law \(Sexual offences and Human Trafficking\) Act 2024](#) enacted on 17 July 2024. It provides for a range of measures relating to sexual offences and human trafficking, including a revised framework for the identification and support of victims of human trafficking.

## STATE SUPPORTS FOR VICTIMS

### IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS

A victim of trafficking may access assistance through a number of routes. Individuals may come forward directly to An Garda Síochána or to another State service. Victims may also be identified by An Garda Síochána during policing operations, or may seek support from non-governmental organisations, some of which receive State funding, such as Ruhama and Migrant Rights Centre Ireland.

Potential victims may also be encountered by a range of other bodies, including the Health Service Executive, Tusla – Child and Family Agency, the Workplace Relations Commission, embassies, and members of the public.

Public awareness plays an important role in the identification of potential victims of trafficking. Information on the indicators of human trafficking is available through the [Blue Blindfold](#) website.

### NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES FOR SUPPORT

Ireland provides a victim-centred system of State supports for victims of human trafficking who have been identified by An Garda Síochána. These supports are delivered through existing administrative arrangements commonly referred to as the National Referral Mechanism. This framework supports the State, working in partnership with civil society, in meeting its obligations to protect and promote the human rights of victims of trafficking. Available supports include accommodation, medical services, legal aid, and advice, among others.

At any stage of the process, or where a victim does not wish or is not required to remain in the State, including for the purposes of a criminal investigation, voluntary return to their country of origin may be facilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). IOM delivers assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes, which are available to victims of trafficking of any nationality who wish to return home voluntarily but lack the means or necessary documentation to do so. IOM maintains offices in many countries and works with local partners to support reintegration, including through access to accommodation, medical assistance, and other supports.

On 5 May 2021, Government approved the development of a revised National Referral Mechanism for the identification of victims of human trafficking and the provision of supports. Work to progress this reform has continued during the reporting period. On 17 July 2024, the [Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking\) Act 2024](#) was enacted. The Act makes provision for a revised statutory framework for the identification and support of victims of human trafficking.

Under the framework provided for in the Act, responsibility for the identification of victims of human trafficking may extend beyond An Garda Síochána to a number of other State bodies designated as competent authorities. The commencement and operationalisation of provisions relating to the revised NRM are subject to further preparatory and operational work.

## PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The close co-operation between stakeholders in the fight against trafficking is recognised internationally as a key element of a successful anti-trafficking strategy.

- The **Department of Justice** coordinates policy on human trafficking in Ireland and works in collaboration with other Irish government agencies, and non-government organisations.
- The **Human Trafficking Investigation and Coordination Unit (HTICU)** is part of the **Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB)** and officers of this Unit have particular expertise in regard to trafficking in human beings.
- The **Anti-Human Trafficking Team (AHTT)** of the **Health Service Executive (HSE)** delivers an individual care plan for each victim of human trafficking.
- The **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** provides full board accommodation and ancillary services through the **International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS)** to international protection applicants who are identified or suspected victims of human trafficking, following referral by An Garda Síochána under the National Referral Mechanism.
- Solicitors of the **Legal Aid Board** provide legal aid and advice to trafficking victims.
- **Ruhama** is a Dublin-based NGO which works on a national level with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Ruhama provides a service to women who are currently involved in on-street and off-street prostitution, women who are exiting prostitution, women who are victims of sex trafficking and women who have a history of prostitution.
- **Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)** is a national organisation working to promote justice, empowerment and equality for migrant workers and their families. The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland provides information, advocacy and legal support to migrants and their families all over Ireland. The organisation works to identify and support victims of trafficking for labour exploitation and supports the growth and development of a number of action groups that enable vulnerable migrant workers to work together and improve working conditions in specific sectors.

Other organisations active in the provision of services to victims of trafficking include:

- **Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)** works to secure improvements in the rights and protections of migrants and their families in Ireland through working on policy and awareness on issues of migration, integration, and human trafficking. The Immigrant Council of Ireland has an independent law centre and operates a helpline for immigration queries.
- **Sexual Violence Centre Cork (SVCC)** is a Cork-based organisation working towards the elimination of sexual violence in society by raising awareness about the prevalence, incidence, and dynamics of interpersonal violence within society. Its services include crisis support counselling, advocacy and a telephone helpline.
- **Doras** is an organisation that works to support and promote the rights of migrants living in Limerick and the wider Mid-West region. The organisation provides specialised direct support to victims of human trafficking and to women engaged in or exiting from prostitution.
- The **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** is an international organisation whose primary responsibility lies in assisting persons in returning to their country of origin if they so wish. Assistance is provided to both EU and non-EU nationals alike.

## NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

In November 2023, the Department of Justice published the Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023–2027. The Action Plan builds on the work of the first and second National Action Plans and provides a framework for strengthening the State’s response to trafficking in human beings. The development of the Action Plan was informed by consultation with civil society organisations, as well as with relevant Government Departments and agencies.

The overarching objective of the Third National Action Plan is to strengthen a whole-of-government approach to preventing and combating human trafficking. Its objectives include reducing the demand that drives trafficking, improving the identification of and supports for victims, strengthening the enforcement of victims’ rights and the prosecution of perpetrators, and enhancing coordination across Government.

The Action Plan includes measures relating to victim identification and support, training and awareness-raising, and cross-agency cooperation. It also provides for the development of a revised framework for victim identification and referral, reflecting the intention to broaden engagement beyond law enforcement alone. Preparatory and operational work in this area is ongoing.

Key actions under the Third National Action Plan include:

- the development and delivery of training for public officials and professionals who may come into contact with victims of trafficking, including within relevant Departments and agencies;
- continued engagement with non-governmental organisations in the provision of specialist training for frontline staff in sectors where trafficking indicators may arise;
- measures to strengthen screening and awareness at points of entry to the State; and
- actions to support appropriate accommodation responses for victims of trafficking.

During the reporting period, work continued to strengthen coherence between the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking and Zero Tolerance: Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2022–2026, particularly in relation to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. While trafficking and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence are distinct policy areas, areas of overlap arise in relation to victim supports and responses to sexual exploitation.

Actions under the Zero Tolerance strategy relevant to this overlap include engagement with individuals involved in the sex trade, safeguarding checks in relation to persons and premises associated with organised prostitution, and participation in nationally and internationally coordinated days of action targeting organised prostitution, brothel-keeping, and the purchase of sex. The strategy also includes scoping and research to inform future communications on prostitution, its societal impacts, and its links to trafficking.

In early 2024, **Cuan**, the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence Agency, was established and assumed responsibility for the coordination, monitoring, and implementation of the Zero Tolerance strategy. Cuan also has a role in leading research to inform future policy development in the area of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

## 5. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### CROSS BORDER CO-OPERATION

Irish authorities continue to work closely with law enforcement partners in Northern Ireland to support a coordinated, all-island approach to tackling organised criminal activity, including human trafficking. This cooperation includes joint operational activity, intelligence sharing, and cross-agency engagement.

During the reporting period, An Garda Síochána engaged with the Police Service of Northern Ireland in investigations targeting organised crime groups involved in organised prostitution and the trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation, where a cross-border dimension was identified. This cooperation supports the disruption of trafficking networks operating across jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

### JOINT AGENCY TASK FORCE (JATF)

The Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) provides a formal mechanism for structured cross-jurisdictional cooperation between Irish and UK authorities in addressing organised and cross-border crime. The JATF is led by senior representatives of An Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Revenue Commissioners and HM Revenue and Customs, with participation from other agencies including the Criminal Assets Bureau and the UK National Crime Agency.

Trafficking in human beings, including child trafficking, is one of six priority threat areas identified by the JATF. The Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) is responsible for this priority area and participates in JATF-related operational activity where a cross-border element is identified. This includes structured engagement with PSNI counterparts and participation in joint operational discussions and activity during the reporting period.

### INTERPOL TASK FORCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING (ITHT)

Ireland continued to participate in the Interpol Task Force on Human Trafficking, an international forum for law enforcement cooperation focused on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings at a global level.

Through participation in the Task Force, Irish authorities engage in the exchange of intelligence, good practice, and learning on investigative approaches to trafficking. Ireland also continued to make use of Interpol's 24/7 information systems to support international cooperation and to assist other law enforcement authorities in trafficking-related investigations.

### EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats)

Ireland continued to engage with EMPACT, the European Union's operational framework for addressing serious and organised international crime. Human trafficking remains a priority crime area within the current EMPACT cycle.

The Garda National Protective Services Bureau participated in EMPACT activities related to trafficking in human beings, including attendance at relevant project meetings and engagement in operational action plans. These action plans support cooperation between Member States in addressing trafficking routes, organised criminal networks, and cross-border investigations. Ireland's participation contributes to coordinated EU-level responses to trafficking and related organised crime.

### JOINT INVESTIGATION TEAM (JIT)

Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) are a key instrument for international cooperation in complex cross-border criminal investigations. They enable participating authorities to exchange information directly, coordinate investigative activity, and conduct joint operations within agreed legal frameworks.

An Garda Síochána has participated in JITs involving international partners, including in cases with a trafficking dimension. Participation in JITs allows for real-time cooperation, efficient use of resources, and enhanced coordination between law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities across jurisdictions.

### EU NETWORK OF NATIONAL RAPORTEURS OR EQUIVALENT MECHANISMS ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Officials from the Department of Justice participated in meetings of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms (NREM). The network facilitates cooperation between Member States in monitoring trafficking trends, measuring the impact of anti-trafficking measures, and improving data collection and reporting.

Discussions during the reporting period focused on victim protection and support, law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and prevention measures, including reducing demand for trafficking. The network also provides a forum for sharing experience on the implementation of EU anti-trafficking legislation and policy.

### NATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING CO-ORDINATORS AND RAPORTEURS

The Department of Justice participated in the annual meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators and Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

These meetings support international cooperation through the exchange of experience, identification of common challenges, and discussion of effective responses to trafficking in human beings. Participation contributes to the development and strengthening of Ireland's national anti-trafficking framework in line with international standards.

## SANTA MARTA GROUP

Ireland continued its engagement with the Santa Marta Group, an international alliance of law enforcement leaders and other stakeholders focused on addressing human trafficking and modern slavery.

## EUROPEAN NETWORK ON VICTIMS' RIGHTS (ENVR)

Officials from the Department of Justice attended meetings and workshops of the European Network on Victims' Rights (ENVR). The ENVR provides a platform for cooperation between Member States on issues related to the protection and support of victims of crime, including victims of trafficking.

Participation in the network supports the exchange of expertise and contributes to the development of victim-centred policies and practices at EU level.

## OSCE WORKSHOP

Work began in 2024 to prepare for a one-day workshop, hosted by the Department of Justice and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) held on 27 January 2025. This activity was a part of the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Extra-Budgetary Project "Preventing and responding to trafficking in human beings amid the humanitarian crisis related to the war in Ukraine", running since summer 2022. To date, these workshops have been conducted in 22 OSCE participating States hosting large numbers of Ukrainian refugees.

The aim of the workshop was to identify positive practices as well as opportunities for enhancing aspects of trafficking prevention and response, in the context of the war in Ukraine and the respective flows of people. The workshop facilitated an in-country discussion on the OSCE recommendations on the ways these recommendations are implemented, and the challenges observed so far. The workshop was open to anti-human trafficking stakeholders and relevant NGOs and aimed to reduce the risk of human trafficking among Ukrainian refugees.

## 6. PROGRESS IN 2024

Throughout 2024 measures have progressed to combat trafficking, to create a more victim-centred approach to identifying and supporting victims and to raise awareness and provide training. Highlights include:

- The [Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking\) Act 2024](#) was enacted. Work to support its commencement and implementation progressed during 2024.
- The continued implementation of the Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023-2027, published on 6 November 2023. Key features of the plan include the development of a training framework for all who come into contact with potential victims of trafficking; awareness raising and information dissemination; and actions which seek to improve supports for victims.
- Ongoing training was delivered to border management and airport personnel, healthcare professionals, and social workers who may come into contact with potential victims of trafficking, supporting improved identification and referral practices.
- In October 2024, senior members of the Garda National Protective Services Bureau participated in a five-day live simulation training programme at the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) in Vicenza, Italy. This Mediterranean regional, simulation-based exercise brought together participants from Southern Europe and North Africa, including asylum authorities, criminal and financial investigation units, prosecutors, labour inspection bodies, non-governmental organisations and public social services.
- During 2024, Ireland participated in 21 operational actions under the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), including Operation Global Chain. These actions targeted trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced criminality and forced begging, with the objective of detecting and disrupting organised crime groups exploiting vulnerable persons for financial gain.
- Funding totalling €7.7 million was allocated to more than 70 organisations supporting victims of crime, including victims of trafficking.
- There was a continued increase in the overall number of trafficking-related files received by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.
- Rosa's Place, Ireland's first specialised accommodation centre for female victims of trafficking, continued to operate throughout 2024 following its opening in November 2023. The centre operated as a pilot programme, with learning from the pilot intended to inform the future development of additional specialised accommodation.
- On 26 and 27 June 2024, the Santa Marta Senior Leadership Summit on combating human trafficking was held at University College Cork. The two-day event was jointly hosted by An Garda Síochána and the Santa Marta Group.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS

In 2024, 67 cases of trafficking in human beings were identified. As in previous years, these cases include trafficking that occurred both in Ireland and outside the State, with victims identified through national procedures.

During the reporting period, the State pursued prosecutions against 16 individuals, relating to 23 victims. Of these, 10 individuals were prosecuted for trafficking offences namely 4 for sexual exploitation and 6 for labour exploitation. An additional 6 individuals were prosecuted under non-trafficking offences connected to trafficking investigations, including organised prostitution and employment-related offences.

In 2024 two trafficking convictions<sup>6</sup> were secured:

- One conviction for trafficking a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation (conviction in 2023, sentence imposed in 2024).
- One conviction for conspiracy to commit human trafficking, with conviction in 2024 and sentencing in March 2025.

Several prosecutions concluded in 2024 with convictions for related serious offences, where trafficking charges could not be sustained or were still pending, including:

- Money laundering and organised prostitution offences.
- Harassment and coercive behaviour (with trafficking conviction secured subsequently in 2025).
- Rape and other serious sexual offences linked to trafficking investigations.

These figures illustrate the complexity of trafficking prosecutions, where trafficking investigations may lead to convictions under alternative offences, while still reflecting substantive accountability for exploitation-related criminality.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ACTION PLAN

In 2024 work progressed on the implementation of Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking, 2023 – 2027. In 2024, as provided for under The Action Plan, a number of groups were established to monitor the implementation of the plan.

These are:

- The Human Trafficking Governance and Strategy Group. This group comprises senior officials from Departments and Agencies and with relevant expert participation as appropriate. The group is chaired by the Department of Justice with the overall objective of guiding the implementation of the National Action Plan, providing strategic direction on anti-trafficking responses and driving cooperation between key agencies.

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<sup>6</sup> Additional trafficking convictions were secured in 2025 following prosecutions initiated and progressed during 2024 and are not counted as 2024 convictions for the purpose of this report.

- The Human Trafficking Oversight Group. This group, with representatives drawn from key agencies, informs the work of the Governance and Strategy Group. This is a multi-agency oversight group with an operational focus and responsibility for the national co-ordination and development of initiatives to progress the objectives of the action plan. It also convenes a subgroup to discuss Labour Exploitation.
- The Human Trafficking Stakeholders' Forum. This group comprises community and voluntary sector and other expert stakeholders. A meeting of this Forum is scheduled to meet twice a year. The forum members are updated on the implementation of the plan and there is scope for discussion of broader Human Trafficking issues. The stakeholders' forum enables a wide range of civil society representatives advise on the implementation of the national action plan.

## PROVISION OF SPECIALISED ACCOMMODATION

Establishing dedicated accommodation for victims of trafficking to ensure that victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are provided with gender-specific accommodation is an action within the National Action Plan.

Throughout 2024, a specialised accommodation centre - Rosa's Place - operated as a pilot programme for referrals of female victims of trafficking supported and funded by Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). Rosa's Place is an 8-bed accommodation unit providing specialist support for women who are identified as victims of trafficking, including those trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition to the supports provided by the HSE, each service user will have an assigned case manager providing individualised assessment and support planning. The centre was opened in November 2023 and the pilot is being undertaken with a view to applying learnings to the future roll out of further specialised centres.

## NATIONAL RAPPORTEUR FOR ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Under Article 19 of the European Union (EU) Anti-Trafficking Directive, all EU Member States are legally required to have National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms to assess trends, measure results of anti-trafficking actions, gather statistics and report. In October 2020, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) became Ireland's Independent National Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Human Beings.

The Commission's task as Rapporteur is to provide effective, independent, and meaningful oversight of the State's actions to combat human trafficking and to protect victims. A National Rapporteur is instrumental in collecting comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data, as well as the research and analysis of the trafficking situation in a State and systematically analysing the effectiveness of anti-trafficking policies.<sup>7</sup> IHREC as the National Rapporteur produces annual evaluation reports. These reports underpin effective monitoring and policy developments. The main purpose of this report is to provide a resource for national policy makers, practitioners, and researchers, and to inform the public about the human trafficking situation in Ireland.

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<sup>7</sup> Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, *The role of independent National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms in enhancing States' anti-trafficking responses*, (OSCE, 2006) <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/503920.pdf>

In September 2024 The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission published the [Third Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti Trafficking Directive](#). This report focused on the period of January 2023 to December 2023 and included a detailed evaluation of the State’s implementation efforts, alongside updated recommendations and important priority areas for the States’ consideration.

## 7. VICTIMS’ RIGHTS, AWARENESS RAISING AND PREVENTION

### VICTIMS CHARTER AND VICTIMS’ FORUM

The Victims Charter continued to provide a central, accessible source of information on victims’ rights and available supports. The Charter presents information in clear, user-friendly formats and is available both online and in print, supporting victims at all stages of engagement with the criminal justice system. It is available in print, and online at [www.victimscharter.ie](http://www.victimscharter.ie)

The Victims’ Forum remained operational during the reporting period, providing a structured platform for dialogue between State bodies and civil society organisations funded under the Victims of Crime grant scheme. The Forum supports collaboration, information sharing, and the identification of good practice in victim support and service coordination. More information on the Forum can be found here [Victims Forum](#).

### AWARENESS RAISING EVENTS

Awareness raising remained a key component of Ireland’s prevention efforts under the Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023–2027. Initiatives during the reporting period focused on improving public understanding of trafficking indicators, victims’ rights, and available supports, with particular emphasis on accessibility and multilingual delivery.

Key measures included:

- A national “Know Your Rights” campaign highlighting core victims’ rights, including access to interpretation and translation services.
- Ongoing development of accessible online resources, including the Victims Charter, Blue Blindfold, and AnyoneTrafficked websites.
- Distribution of multilingual print materials in public settings such as Garda stations, hospitals, courts, and libraries.
- Production of court-based information videos to support victims attending court as witnesses.

Targeted information measures were also implemented for people arriving in Ireland having fled the war in Ukraine, including the distribution of multilingual leaflets at points of entry, developed in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

## CULTURAL MEDIATORS, PROTECT II

Throughout 2024, the Department of Justice continued to fund IOM's PROTECT II project, which supports migrants who are victims of, or at risk of, human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence. The project focuses on:

- Training cultural mediators to support engagement between service providers and migrant communities;
- Building awareness of trafficking indicators and referral pathways among frontline professionals, including law enforcement;
- Enhancing culturally sensitive service delivery for vulnerable groups.

In parallel, the 'Anyone' awareness-raising campaign, delivered by IOM, continued to challenge misconceptions about trafficking and to highlight that exploitation can occur in any community and affect people of all backgrounds. The campaign utilised social media, transport hubs, and multilingual outreach to promote recognition of trafficking indicators and reporting mechanisms.

## TARGETED PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Targeted awareness actions were undertaken during 2024 to reach specific audiences and sectors, including:

- Operation Limelight at Shannon Airport, a multi-agency awareness initiative addressing the illegality and risks of female genital mutilation, delivered in cooperation with NGOs and child protection authorities.
- Outreach at the National Ploughing Championships 2024, where An Garda Síochána and NGO partners engaged directly with members of the public to raise awareness of trafficking, including labour exploitation in rural and agricultural contexts.

## WEBSITES

The website, [www.anyonetrafficked.com](http://www.anyonetrafficked.com), was developed in conjunction with the 'Anyone' awareness raising campaign, to highlight the availability of supports and services for victims from the State as well as community and voluntary organisations active in this sector. IOM reported that there were 883 unique and organic visitors to the Anyone Trafficked website in 2023. All the telephone numbers which can be used to report information on human trafficking are listed on the trafficking websites – [anyone trafficked](#) and [Blue Blindfold](#).

These websites are easily accessible, free, and provide a user-friendly overview of how the crime of Human Trafficking manifests in Ireland, how members of the public can spot and report the signs of trafficking, and how the State supports these victims once identified. The Blue Blindfold website provides a list of the important signs that may indicate a person has been trafficked for labour exploitation, domestic servitude, child trafficking, forced criminality and begging, forced marriage, and general exploitation.

## WORKPLACE RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) continued to play a central role in preventing labour exploitation through inspection, enforcement, and information provision. From January to November 2024:

- 4,710 workplace inspections were completed, covering over 232,000 workers;
- 126 employers were convicted for employment law offences;
- Almost €1.9 million in unpaid wages was recovered for employees.

The WRC also delivered extensive information and outreach activity, including:

- Employment rights information provided to approximately 56,000 telephone callers;
- Over 1.4 million visits to the WRC website;
- Outreach sessions and presentations delivered to relevant stakeholder groups.

Employment rights information continued to be made available in a wide range of languages, including targeted materials for vulnerable worker groups such as fishers, domestic workers, and displaced persons, contributing to prevention and demand-reduction efforts.

## 8. Conclusion

This report provides an overview of Ireland's response to trafficking human beings during 2024, including victim identification trends, supports available, awareness raising activity, relevant policy and operational developments. It reflects information provided by State bodies and funded civil society partners during the reporting period. Implementation of the Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023–2027 will continue in 2025, with a continued focus on prevention, victim-centred supports, and effective law enforcement and international cooperation. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration will continue to work with all stakeholders to strengthen the national response in line with Ireland's obligations and international standards.