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Foreign &
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Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2019

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1. Key Points

In 2019, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support in 1,355 cases related to a possible forced marriage. This figure includes contact that has been made to the FMU through the public helpline or by email in relation to a new case. It does not include general enquires.

Between 2011 and 2018, the FMU provided advice and support in an average of 1,359 cases per year. The number of cases in 2019 represents a 10% decrease on 2018 cases but is in line with the average number of cases per year since 2011.

Of the cases that FMU provided support to in 2019:

- 363 cases (27%) involved victims below 18 years of age.
- 485 cases (36%) involved victims aged 18-25.
- 137 cases (10%) involved victims with a learning disability.
- 1,080 cases (80%) involved female victims, and 262 cases (19%) involved male victims. Gender in the remaining 13 cases was unknown. These proportions are broadly in line with previous years.

Forced marriage is not a problem specific to one country or culture. Since 2011, the FMU has handled cases relating to countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

In 2019, the FMU handled cases relating to 66 'focus countries'¹, excluding the UK. The seven 'focus countries' with the highest number of cases in 2019 were:

- Pakistan - 559 cases (41%)
- Bangladesh - 144 cases (11%)
- India - 65 cases (5%)
- Afghanistan - 54 cases (4%)
- Somalia² - 31 cases (2%)
- Iraq - 23 cases (2%)
- Romania - 22 cases (2%)

The proportion of cases relating to Pakistan has decreased a little compared with the previous year. The number of cases linked to Somalia rose notably in 2017 (91 cases) but dipped back down in 2018 (38 cases) and has stayed broadly in line with this figure in 2019. There has been a decrease in the number of cases linked to Romania, compared with 2018 (37 cases).

¹ The 'focus country' is the country to which the forced marriage risk relates. This could be the country where the forced marriage is due to take place, the country where it has taken place, or the country that the spouse is currently residing in (or all)

² Including Somaliland

In 2019, 72 cases (5%) had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. This is a decrease in the proportion of cases compared with the previous year (7%) but continues to highlight that forced marriages can take place in the UK.

These statistics represent only the cases that have been reported to the FMU. Forced marriage is a hidden crime, and these figures will not reflect the full scale of the abuse.³

³ A study conducted by NatCen in 2009 found that there were between 5,000 and 8,000 reported cases of forced marriage in England (not including 'hidden' victims who have not come forward). <http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/forced-marriage/>

2 Overview

A forced marriage is one in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities or mental incapacity, cannot) consent to the marriage, and violence, threats, or any other form of coercion is involved. Coercion may include emotional pressure, physical force or the threat of it, and financial pressure. In an arranged marriage, by contrast, both parties have consented to the union but can still refuse to marry if they choose to. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in the UK⁴.

This publication provides information on the number of cases reported to the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) via its public helpline and email inbox from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. The FMU logs all calls and emails received to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the records. The main categories of data that are captured by the FMU case log include (if volunteered, as some callers may wish to remain anonymous):

- details of the caller/source of information,
- focus country,
- UK region,
- gender and age of the person at risk,
- disability – be it physical, learning or both; and
- sexual orientation (if volunteered).

The FMU does not record data on religion; no major faith in the UK advocates forced marriage. Freely given consent is a prerequisite of Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

The FMU is a joint Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) unit. It was established in 2005 to lead on the Government's forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. The unit operates both inside the UK, where support is provided to any individual, and overseas, where consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals.

The FMU operates a helpline from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (+44 (0)20 7008 0151). Outside of these hours, consular assistance is available 24/7 by contacting the nearest overseas Embassy or High Commission, or by calling 020 7008 1500 in the UK. The FMU may receive information about a forced marriage from either the person at risk, from a friend or a relative, or from professionals within agencies charged with responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

⁴ Forced marriage legislation is devolved; the FMU provides support and advice regardless of where in the UK the victim/potential victim is based. The relevant legislation can be found at: England and Wales <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/section/121/enacted> Scotland <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/section/122/enacted> Northern Ireland <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/2>

Further information about forced marriage and the work of the FMU is available on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>, by emailing fmu@fco.gov.uk or by writing to:

Forced Marriage Unit
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Consular Directorate
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
+44 (0)20 7008 0151

3 Forced Marriage Unit Statistics

In 2019, the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,355 cases via its public helpline and email inbox. This represents a 10% decrease in cases compared with 2018 but is in line with the average over the previous eight years.

Table 1: Number of cases in which the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support, 2011 to 2019

Year	Number
2011	1,468
2012	1,485
2013	1,302
2014	1,267
2015	1,220
2016	1,428
2017	1,196
2018	1,507
2019	1,355

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

These statistics represent only the cases that have been reported to the FMU. Forced marriage is a hidden crime, and these figures will not reflect the full scale of the abuse.⁵

The majority of cases (64%) were reported by professionals such as those in the education, social services, legal and health sectors, as well as from other third parties, for example non-governmental organisations. 18% of cases were reported by victims,⁶ and the remaining 18% by friends, partners, family members and anonymous callers. See Table 6 in the figures and tables spreadsheet for a full breakdown of caller types.

The fact that fewer than a fifth of the cases were notified to the FMU by victims self-reporting may reflect the hidden nature of forced marriage and the fact that victims may fear reprisals from their family if they come forward.

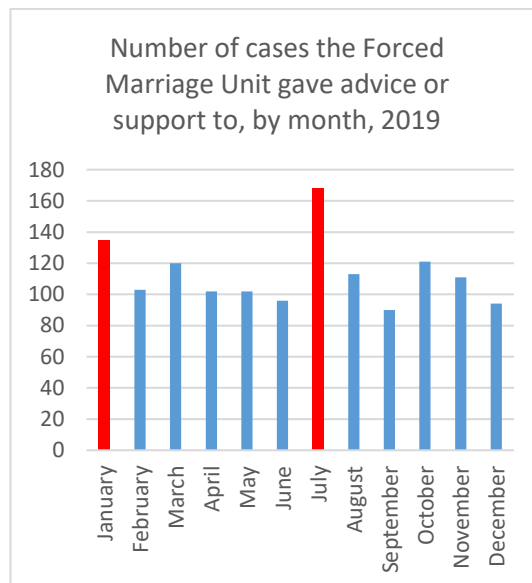
The chart below shows the monthly breakdown of cases coming into the Forced Marriage Unit. The unit often sees a spike in cases around the school

⁵ A study conducted by NatCen in 2009 found that there were between 5,000 and 8,000 reported cases of forced marriage in England (not including 'hidden' victims who have not come forward). <http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/forced-marriage/>

holidays, hence the higher figures in January and July. However, there is a continuous risk of forced marriage throughout the year.

Table 2: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by month, 2019⁷

Month	Numbers	Percentages
January	135	10%
February	103	8%
March	120	9%
April	102	8%
May	102	8%
June	96	7%
July	168	12%
August	113	8%
September	90	7%
October	121	9%
November	111	8%
December	94	7%
Total	1,355	



Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The following sections provide further information about the cases that the FMU handled in 2019.

⁷ Percentages in this table and in some others in this document do not sum to 100, owing to rounding.

3.1 Gender of Victims

In 2019, 1,080 cases (80%) involved female victims and 262 (19%) involved male victims; in the remaining cases the gender of the victim was unknown. This highlights that forced marriage is a crime which disproportionately affects women, but that men can also be victims.

3.2 Age of Victims

In 2019, 15% of the cases involved victims who were aged 15 and under, 12% were 16-17 years old and 22% were between the ages of 18 and 21. Cases concerning young children often involve the 'promise' of a future marriage (betrothal), or the younger sibling of someone at a direct risk, rather than an imminent marriage. In a small number of cases involving older victims, the forced marriage may have happened many years previously or the victim may have lacked capacity to consent.

Table 3: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by age, 2019

Age	Numbers	Percentages
15 and under	205	15%
16-17	158	12%
18-21	298	22%
22-25	187	14%
26-30	138	10%
31-40	101	7%
41+	56	4%
Unknown	212	16%
Total	1,355	

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.3 UK regions where victims live

As in previous years, in 2019 the UK region associated with the greatest number of cases was London, with 292 cases (22%). This is an increase of four percentage points compared with 2018. The proportions linked to other regions are also similar to previous years, with the North West and West Midlands regions reporting higher figures than other areas of the UK.

Table 4: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by region, 2019

UK Region	Numbers	Percentages
London	292	22%
North West	186	14%
West Midlands	173	13%
Yorkshire & The Humber	142	10%
South East	114	8%
East	81	6%
East Midlands	52	4%
Wales	37	3%
South West	24	2%
Scotland	22	2%
North East	19	1%
Northern Ireland	<5	-
Unknown	211	16%
Total	1,355	

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.4 Focus Country Overview

The 'focus country' is the country to which the risk of forced marriage relates. This could be the country where the forced marriage is due to take place, the country where it has taken place, or the country in which the spouse is currently residing (or all of these). Since 2011, the FMU has dealt with cases from all over the world. In 2019, the FMU handled cases relating to the UK and 66 other countries to which a victim was at risk of being, or had already been, taken in connection with a forced marriage. In conflict countries these cases tend to be complex due to the political and security situation in the country.

3.5 Focus Countries Breakdown ⁸

Pakistan

Pakistan is routinely the focus country with the largest number of forced marriage cases reported to the FMU. Cases related to Pakistan come from a wider age and UK regional range than those from some other focus countries. 84% of cases were handled entirely in the UK, where the focus was on preventing the marriage before it was due to take place, or where the marriage had taken place and the victim was being forced to sponsor a spousal visa.

16% of cases linked to Pakistan were from the West Midlands (92 cases), 15% from the North West (85 cases), and 13% from Yorkshire and Humber (75 cases). Only 12% were from London (65 cases), compared to an average of 22% across all cases.

Bangladesh

In 2019, there were 144 cases linked to Bangladesh (11%). This is an increase on 2018 figures when the FMU handled 133 cases (9%). The age of the victim – where known – was most likely to be between 18 and 21 (25%).

London was the region involving the largest number of cases linked to Bangladesh - 41 cases (28%).

UK

In 2019, 72 cases (5%) had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. This is a 2% decrease compared with the previous year but continues to highlight that forced marriages do take place in the UK.

India

The number of cases linked to India in 2019 was 65 cases (5%). This is lower

⁸ See figures and tables spreadsheet for further breakdown for each country.

than in 2018 when 85 cases were linked to India. There was a higher proportion of older victims as well as male victims compared with other key focus countries. 23% of the cases were linked to London and 89% of the cases related to victims while they were in the UK.

Afghanistan

The number of cases linked to Afghanistan (54 cases) in 2019 is higher than in 2018 (41 cases) and has almost trebled since 2017 (19 cases). Victims linked to Afghanistan were more likely to be under 26 (91%) compared with those from other countries and 85% were females. 52% of the cases were linked to London.

Somalia⁹ (including cases in Somaliland)

The number of cases linked to Somalia (31 cases) is slightly lower than in 2018 (38 cases), 58% of the cases dealt with involved a victim who was in Somalia.

Iraq

There were 23 cases linked to Iraq in 2019, which is a decrease on the 2018 figure (33 cases). 96% of the victims were female and 30% of them were aged 15 and under. 35% of the victims were from the North West region and 26% were from London.

Romania

In 2019, the FMU supported 22 cases linked to Romania. This is lower than in 2018 (37 cases). Victims in these cases were significantly younger than for other countries, with 77% aged 15 and under. 41% of the cases came from the Yorkshire & the Humber region.

⁹ The British Embassy in Mogadishu does not provide consular services. Forced marriage victims in Somalia (excluding Somaliland) can contact the British High Commission in Nairobi. Victims in Somaliland should contact the British Embassy in Addis Ababa.

Table 5: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by focus country, 2019

Focus Country	Numbers	Percentages
Pakistan	559	41%
Bangladesh	144	11%
United Kingdom	72	5%
India	65	5%
Afghanistan	54	4%
Somalia	31	2%
Iraq	23	2%
Romania	22	2%
Turkey	16	1%
Sri Lanka	13	1%
Saudi Arabia	10	1%
Yemen	10	1%
Other (55 countries)	147	11%
Unknown	189	14%
Total	1,355	

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.6 Sexual Orientation of Victims

In 2019, 29 cases (2%) involved victims who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT+). This is an increase from 12 such cases identified in 2018.

These statistics are based on the information that is volunteered to the unit at first contact; victims are not routinely asked to disclose their sexual orientation.

3.7 Victims with a Disability

In 2019, 137 cases (10%) involved victims where there was a concern that they may have a learning disability. The gender and age breakdown of those victims, as well as the focus countries and UK regions, is shown in Table 7.

A higher proportion of victims in cases which involve a learning disability are male compared to other forced marriage cases. Victims are more likely to be older than in other cases.

Table 7: Number of callers with a learning disability the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2019

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Male	68	50%
Female	67	49%
Unknown	2	1%
Age Range		
15 and under	5	4%
16-17	5	4%
18-21	22	16%
22-25	26	19%
26-30	29	21%
31-40	21	15%
41+	14	10%
Unknown	15	11%
Focus Country		
Pakistan	56	41%
Bangladesh	28	20%
India	17	12%
United Kingdom	6	4%
Other (11 countries)	18	13%
Unknown	12	9%
Total number of cases involving someone with a learning disability		
	137	

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.8 Status of the marriage

The status of the marriage is recorded under four categories to enable the FMU's caseworkers to tailor the approach taken and provide the best support based on the individual circumstances. These categories are:

- UK Pre (this means that the victim is in the UK and the marriage is yet to take place; the marriage could be in the UK or overseas)
- UK Post (the victim is in the UK and the marriage has taken place)¹⁰

¹⁰ These cases often involve victims who are being forced to sponsor the visas of their spouses. They are referred to as reluctant sponsors.

- Overseas Pre (the victim is overseas, and the marriage is yet to take place)
- Overseas Post (the victim is overseas, and the marriage has taken place)

The risks for the victims are different at each point. When a victim is overseas, the need for support is often more urgent because it can mean that the wedding is imminent. The security situation in certain countries or regions within countries also affects the level of consular support which the FMU is able to provide.

Table 8: Proportion of cases by marriage status which the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2011-2019

Marriage Status	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
UK Pre	42%	37%	42%	46%	46%	45%	49%	60%	56%
UK Post	40%	33%	32%	28%	30%	28%	28%	23%	27%
UK Unknown	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	2%	1%	2%
Overseas Pre	8%	8%	11%	10%	9%	13%	13%	9%	8%
Overseas Post	2%	3%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Overseas Unknown	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	5%	3%	2%	3%
Unknown	3%	15%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	2%	1%

Source: Forced Marriage Unit; Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Since 2011, there has been a broad increase in the proportion of cases being reported whilst the victim is in the UK and before the marriage has taken place. In general, the earlier the FMU is contacted, the greater the range of options available to help support the victim and mitigate the risk of a forced marriage taking place.

3.9 Repatriations

In 2019, the FMU supported the repatriations¹¹ of 39 individuals. This is an increase compared with 2018 (23 cases). Repatriation figures are not fully representative of the assistance provided to forced marriage victims overseas.

For example, the figures do not include cases where:

- A Forced Marriage Protection Order¹² was used to facilitate direct repatriation without involvement from the FMU.
- Victims did not require assistance from the FCO to return to the UK.
- Direct contact with the victim resulted in no further forced marriage concerns.

¹¹ To come back to the UK or to their country of ordinary residence

¹² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778583/fl701-eng.pdf

- The victim was not eligible for consular assistance i.e. not a British national (safeguarding advice by the FMU was still provided).