The Profile of Modern Slavery Victims and Suspects in Police Data

by

Carly Lightowlers  Rose Broad & David Gadd

The Study. We examined the characteristics of victims and suspects in cases classified as ‘modern slavery’ by police between April 2015 and June 2018 as ‘modern slavery’. The data analysed was collated by a metropolitan regional police force and contained details of 380 crimes involving 540 victims and 288 suspects. A statistical technique called ‘latent class analysis’ was used to identify whether certain demographic groups of victims and suspects were associated with particular types of exploitation. Data relating to nationality was incomplete in two fifths of cases, limiting what could be inferred about the respective roles played by British and foreign nationals. Analysis of the data with regards to gender, age and exploitation type did reveal some distinctive patterns.

Age. Victims were generally nine years younger than suspects. The average age for victims was 24, two fifths of who were children, i.e. under the age of 18. The age range of victims spanned from 6 to 73. The average age of suspects was 33. Their ages ranged from 11 and 75 years of age, though the vast majority (94%) were aged 18 or over.

Sex. Three quarters of suspects were male and one fifth were female. Data relating to sex was missing for one in twenty suspects. In those cases where sex was recorded for victims, 43% were female and 30% were male.

Exploitation Type. Around half of the crimes recorded in relation to both victims and suspects entailed sexual exploitation. One quarter involved labour exploitation with a further one in ten involving domestic servitude. One in eight victims had been exposed to criminal exploitation, typically involving cannabis cultivation, while 2% had travel ‘facilitated’ for the purposes of an unspecified form of exploitation.

Profiles. The latent class analysis confirmed that modern slavery is patterned by both sex and generation, but is not exclusively about male offenders exploiting women and children. It revealed two predominant groups of suspects: 1) male sex traffickers (82%); and 2) labour and domestic servitude traffickers who comprised of both men and women (18%). Four predominant groups of victims could also be discerned: 1) sexually and domestically exploited adult women (30%); 2) sexually exploited girls (35%); 3) adult men exploited in both legal labour markets and criminal enterprises (26%); criminally exploited boys (9%).

Conclusion. These findings reinforce the need for multi-agency interventions able to support and advocate for victims. Some victims are young people at risk of being deemed ‘offenders’ while being exploited by those older than them. Others are women exploited by men and women in private homes whose profiles do not look the same as those subject to exploitation primarily by men profiteering in sex markets. Others may appear to be ‘illegal foreign workers’ working in homes and in low paid employment. Age differences between suspects and victims need to be understood as contributing to the dynamics that enable the exploitation of adults and children navigating particular forms of precarious and illicit work.

For further information about the Perpetrators of Modern Slavery Offences project, please contact: rosemary.broad@manchester.ac.uk.


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