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Modern slavery in Australia 2022–23

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AFP	Australian Federal Police
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
BVF	Bridging visa F
CDPP	Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions
DSS	Department of Social Services
HTMS NMDS	Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery National Minimum Dataset
HTVF	Human Trafficking Visa Framework
STPP	Support for Trafficked People Program

Abstract

The Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery National Minimum Dataset is a national data collection on modern slavery events that come to the attention of the Australian Government agencies responsible for responding to these incidents. This study describes modern slavery reports received between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, the characteristics of victim-survivors and perpetrators identified in these reports, the nature of government-funded support provided to victim-survivors and the outcomes of modern slavery prosecutions.

Introduction

The Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery National Minimum Dataset (HTMS NMDS) is an administrative dataset on the nature and outcomes of reports of modern slavery in Australia, and the characteristics of suspected victim-survivors and perpetrators. The HTMS NMDS was originally established at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) to support the evaluation of the *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–2025.*

The development of the HTMS NMDS was informed by the following resources:

- the findings from the AIC's 2015 feasibility study for establishing a national human trafficking and slavery monitoring program (Bricknell & Renshaw 2015);

- the International Classification Standard for Administrative Data on Trafficking in Persons, developed by the International Organization for Migration in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (IOM & UNODC 2023); and

- the AIC's research exploring the attrition of modern slavery cases through the criminal justice system (Lyneham 2021).

Data items and specifications for the HTMS NMDS were developed in consultation with data providers, the Attorney-General's Department and the Evaluation Governance Committee for the National Action Plan.

The HTMS NMDS was piloted in 2023 and the findings from this pilot study were published in *Findings from the Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery National Minimum Dataset pilot, July to December 2022* (Gannoni & Bricknell 2024).

Data collection and reference period

The HTMS NMDS collects data on:

- reports to and subsequent investigations of alleged modern slavery by the Australian Federal Police (AFP);
- suspected victim-survivors and perpetrators of modern slavery identified by the AFP;
- victim-survivors referred to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) and the supports they received;
- victim-survivors granted a visa under the Human Trafficking Visa Framework (HTVF); and
- modern slavery matters referred to or continued by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP).

Data are provided using a codebook developed for the HTMS NMDS in collaboration with the four Australian Government agencies responsible for responding to modern slavery in Australia:

- the AFP;
- the Department of Social Services (DSS), which administers the STPP;
- the Department of Home Affairs, which administers the HTVF; and
- the CDPP (see Box 1).

STPP data are collated by the Australian Red Cross, the provider of the program. STPP data are available to the HTMS NMDS only with the informed consent of the clients.

The reference period for data collection was 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. The original collection period was 1 January to 31 December 2023 but one data provider was unable to supply a complete dataset for this period. This report brings together and updates pilot collection data from 1 July to 31 December 2022 with new data from the period 1 January to 30 June 2023.

Box 1: Roles of agencies with respect to human trafficking and modern slavery

AFP

The AFP is the lead agency for modern slavery investigations under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth). The AFP is focused on the prevention, disruption and investigation of modern slavery, as well as the protection and support of victims (AFP nd). When addressing modern slavery, the AFP takes a victim-centred approach and collaborates, both domestically and internationally, with partners, government agencies and non-government organisations (AFP nd).

AFP Human Trafficking Teams are responsible for investigating allegations of modern slavery (AFP 2023). These teams are in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, with additional members in other state and territory offices trained in investigating modern slavery (AFP 2023).

Representing the first point in the criminal justice system for investigating Commonwealth crimes, the AFP is considered the main source of information on the frequency and nature of modern slavery reported to, and detected by, authorities.

DSS

The STPP is administered by DSS and delivered nationally by the Australian Red Cross. The STPP was established by the Australian Government in 2004 to support victim-survivors of modern slavery. Case managers are responsible for supporting clients to access services to meet their individual needs, including access to health care, social support, secure accommodation, and legal services (DSS 2025).

During the reporting period, the AFP was the only agency that could refer suspected victim-survivors of modern slavery to the STPP (DSS 2025). Eligibility was determined by the AFP, on the basis that a person was reasonably suspected to be a victim-survivor of a modern slavery offence, including an attempted offence. Referred individuals must be an Australian citizen or hold a valid visa. If an individual does not hold a valid visa, they can obtain a visa under the Australian Government's HTVF (DSS 2025).

Department of Home Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs administers the HTVF. The HTVF enables foreign nationals who do not hold a valid visa and are suspected victim-survivors of modern slavery to stay in Australia lawfully. Victim-survivors may be granted short-term visas to allow them a period of rest and recovery, or long-term visas to allow them to establish a new life in Australia. Like Australian citizens and valid visa holders who are suspected victim-survivors of modern slavery, they can then access support through the STPP.

CDPP

The Office of the CDPP is an independent prosecution service responsible for prosecuting alleged offences against Commonwealth law, including modern slavery (CDPP nd).

Definitions and counting rules

Exploitation type

In this report, the term *modern slavery* refers to all human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like offences prescribed in Divisions 270 and 271 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth). These offences are categorised as exploitation types in alignment with recording practices used by data providers:

- slavery;
- servitude—domestic;
- servitude—sexual;
- servitude—other;
- forced labour;
- deceptive recruiting;
- forced marriage;
- debt bondage;
- trafficking in persons—entering Australia;
- trafficking in persons—exit trafficking;
- trafficking in children;
- domestic trafficking;
- domestic trafficking in children;
- organ trafficking;
- domestic organ trafficking; and
- harbouring a victim.

Servitude, as shown in the list above, is disaggregated to the subcategories domestic, sexual and other; and trafficking in persons to the subcategories trafficking in persons—entering Australia and trafficking in persons—exit trafficking. Exit trafficking is trafficking of persons out of Australia.

Victim-survivors and perpetrators

The term *victim-survivor* refers to an individual who is a victim of a modern slavery offence (including an attempted offence). It is acknowledged that such individuals may not identify as either a victim or survivor and may not consider their experience to be related to modern slavery.

A *suspected victim-survivor* is an individual who has been identified by or referred to an agency that provided data to the HTMS NMDS on the basis that this individual may be a victim of a modern slavery offence.

A *perpetrator* refers to an individual who has perpetrated a modern slavery offence. A *suspected perpetrator* refers to an individual who has been identified by or referred to an agency that provided data to the HTMS NMDS on the basis that this individual may be a perpetrator of a modern slavery offence.

The AFP may use the terms *suspected victim-survivor* and *suspected perpetrator* to refer to individuals who are at risk of experiencing or perpetrating a modern slavery offence.

Reports versus investigations

This paper includes the total number of reports of alleged modern slavery received by the AFP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023. It also includes the subtotal of those reports that were subsequently accepted for investigation.

A *report* refers to a notification to the AFP which alleges that a crime has been, is being, or may be committed. In this study, a report comprises one or more alleged exploitation types in relation to the same modern slavery event. A report may include one or more exploitation types, one or more suspected victims, and one or more suspected perpetrators.

An *investigation* is any process of inquiry conducted by, or with the support of, the AFP seeking information relevant to an alleged, apparent or potential breach of the law, or involving possible judicial proceedings.

Reports of modern slavery in Australia

The AFP received 281 reports of alleged modern slavery between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, or an average of 23 reports each month during this 12-month period. A report is a notification to the AFP alleging a crime has been, is being, or may be committed. Almost three-quarters (73%, *n*=204) of reports were about alleged offences that had occurred, three percent (*n*=9) about attempted offences and a quarter (24%, *n*=68) about offences that were at risk of occurring.

Reports to the AFP about alleged modern slavery came from a wide range of law enforcement, government, non-government and community sources in 2022–23 (see Table 1). Just under a fifth of reports (19%, *n*=52) received by the AFP in 2022–23 were submitted by the Australian Border Force and another 15 percent (*n*=41) came from other law enforcement agencies— either state and territory police (9%, *n*=24) or the AFP itself (6%, *n*=17). Non-government organisations were the source of 14 percent (*n*=39) of reports.

One in 10 reports came from individuals—eight percent (*n*=22) were made by members of the public and three percent (*n*=8) by the suspected victim-survivor. One-fifth (21%, *n*=58) of reports were made by unspecified sources, which includes instances where an individual reported anonymously via webform, letter or phone call to the AFP.

Table 1: Reports of modern slavery by referral source, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023		
	n	%
Australian Border Force	52	18.5
Non-government organisation	39	13.9
State/territory police	24	8.5
Member of the public	22	7.8
Australian Federal Police[a]	17	6.1
School/education facility	16	5.7
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	6	2.1
State/territory child protection	13	4.6
Hospital/health facility	8	2.8
Victim-survivors (self-referral)	8	2.8
Fair Work Ombudsman	4	1.4
Department of Home Affairs	1	0.4
Other	13	4.6
Unspecified[b]	58	20.6
Total reports	**281**	**100.0**

a: Alleged offences detected by the AFP, such as through proactive policing
b: Unspecified reports to the AFP, such as where a report is made anonymously via webform, letter or phone call
Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Two-thirds of reports received by the AFP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 related to allegations of modern slavery occurring in the two largest jurisdictions: New South Wales (31%, *n*=87) and Victoria (36%, *n*=102; see Table 2). Nine percent of reports each referred to alleged modern slavery offences in Queensland (*n*=25) and Western Australia (*n*=26). Most reports were about alleged offences occurring in metropolitan centres—85 percent of reports (*n*=216) from the five largest jurisdictions, or 77 percent of all reports. A small number of reports (7%, *n*=20) referred to alleged modern slavery offences that had been committed or were at risk of being committed offshore.

Table 2: Reports of modern slavery by jurisdiction in which the alleged offence occurred, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023		
	n	*%*
NSW	87	31.0
Metro	*74*	*26.3*
Regional/remote	*13*	*4.6*
Vic	102	36.2
Metro	*93*	*33.1*
Regional/remote	*9*	*3.2*
Qld	25	8.9
Metro	*17*	*6.1*
Regional/remote	*8*	*2.9*
WA	26	9.2
Metro	*23*	*8.2*
Regional/remote	*3*	*1.1*
SA	14	5.0
Metro	*9*	*3.2*
Regional/remote	*5*	*1.8*
Tas	2	0.7
ACT	5	1.8
NT	0	0.0
Offshore	20	7.1
Total reports	**281**	**100.0**

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Exploitation type and industry

A report may refer to one or more alleged exploitation types. Of the 281 reports of alleged modern slavery received by the AFP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, 242 (86%) referred to one type of exploitation and 39 (14%) referred to two or three types of exploitation.

One in three reports (31%, *n*=87) referred to alleged forced marriage (see Table 3). Another quarter (26%, *n*=72) related to alleged sexual servitude and around a fifth each to alleged forced labour (22%, *n*=61) and alleged exit trafficking (ie individuals being trafficked out of Australia; 21%, *n*=58).

Of the 39 reports where multiple modern slavery offences were alleged, most referred to human trafficking (either into or out of Australia) and another type of exploitation (87%, *n*=34). Eighty-seven percent (*n*=20) of reports where an exit trafficking offence was alleged also referred to a forced marriage offence.

A total of 420 offences were identified in the 281 reports received by the AFP in 2022–23 (see Table 3). Twenty-one percent (*n*=87) of these were an alleged forced marriage offence, 17 percent (*n*=72) an alleged sexual servitude offence, 15 percent (*n*=61) an alleged forced labour offence and 14 percent an alleged exit trafficking offence (*n*=58). Nearly two-thirds of the 420 alleged offences were slavery and slavery-like offences (65%, *n*=271) and over a third were trafficking in persons offences (36%, *n*=149).

Table 3: Reports of modern slavery by exploitation type, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023			
	Number of offences	% reports	% offences
Slavery	6	2.1	1.4
Servitude—domestic	17	6.0	4.0
Servitude—sexual	72	25.6	17.1
Servitude—other	1	0.4	0.2
Forced labour	61	21.7	14.5
Deceptive recruiting	27	9.6	6.4
Forced marriage	87	31.0	20.7
Slavery and slavery-like offences	*271*	*96.4*	*64.5*
Trafficking in persons—entering Australia	51	18.1	12.1
Trafficking in persons—exiting Australia	58	20.6	13.8
Trafficking in persons not further defined	1	0.4	0.2
Child trafficking	20	7.1	4.8
Debt bondage	19	6.8	4.5
Trafficking in persons offences	*149*	*53.4*	*35.6*
Total offences	**420**		**100.0**

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Reports of modern slavery received by the AFP in 2022–23 largely concerned exploitation taking place in households or other private settings (47%, *n*=133; see Table 4), reflecting the preponderance of forced marriage and to a lesser extent domestic servitude offences. The commercial sex industry was the next most frequent industry type (17%, *n*=49) and the location of the majority of alleged sexual servitude offences. Other industry types made up less than five percent of reports each, with the agriculture, manufacturing, construction and wholesale industries primarily associated with forced labour offences.

Table 4: Reports of modern slavery by industry type, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023		
	n	*%*
Agriculture, horticulture and forestry	12	4.3
Manufacturing	3	1.1
Construction	4	1.4
Wholesale and retail trade	10	3.6
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2	0.7
Commercial sex industry	49	17.4
Personal services including massages, beauty parlours etc	10	3.6
Domestic work, housekeeping, childminding/au pair services	8	2.8
Household or other private setting	133	47.3
Other[a]	10	3.6
Not stated/unknown	40	14.2
Total reports	**281**	**100.0**

a: Includes consular settings
Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Assessment and investigation

Reports received by the AFP are assessed to determine whether they progress to an investigation (see Figure 1). At this stage, a victim-survivor and/or perpetrator may not yet have been identified, with identification sometimes only becoming apparent during the investigation.

Almost three-quarters (73%, *n*=205) of the 281 reports received by the AFP in 2022–23 were accepted for investigation. The AFP was the lead agency in all but five of the reports accepted for investigation and the supporting agency in the remainder.

A quarter of reports (27%, *n*=76) were not accepted for investigation. Of these reports, similar proportions were not accepted either because the referral was determined not to be a modern slavery matter (40% of reports not accepted, *n*=30) or because there was insufficient evidence to warrant an investigation (38%, *n*=29). Most of the remaining 17 reports were referred to another agency (20%, *n*=15), usually because they concerned another type of offence (eg an immigration, family and domestic violence or sexual violence offence), while for two reports there was another outcome not further defined (3%).

Among the 205 reports accepted for investigation, 81 (40%) were subsequently withdrawn because further examination determined the matter did not involve a modern slavery offence. Of the remaining 124 reports accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn, 30 investigations (24%) were discontinued because the alleged offence had been prevented or disrupted. Half were eventually discontinued due to insufficient evidence (29%, *n*=36) or could not otherwise proceed (24%, *n*=30). These investigations were often affected by the suspected victim-survivor disengaging from the process, including requesting the investigation cease.

Twenty-two of the investigations (18%) were ongoing as of 30 June 2023 and five (4%) had been referred to the CDPP. The nature and complexity of modern slavery matters often means that investigating and identifying victim-survivors is a lengthy process. Investigations also rely on the cooperation of victim-survivors, who may be unable or unwilling to participate.

Figure 1: Reports of modern slavery through each stage of investigation, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023
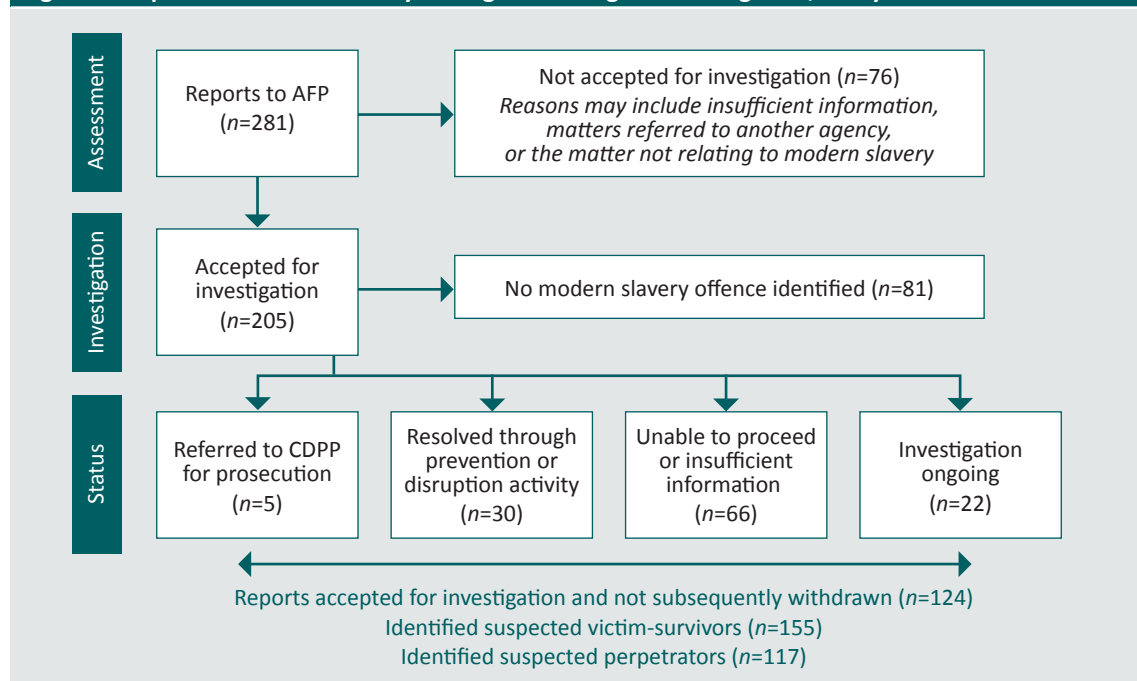
Note: Status excludes one report accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn where status was recorded as 'other'
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Exploitation type of reports investigated

The exploitation types documented in reports accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn reflected the pattern seen among the initial 281 reports of modern slavery received by the AFP in 2022–23. A total of 162 offences were determined from these reports. Alleged forced marriage offences were most frequently cited in these matters—43 percent (n=53) of reports accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn (see Table 5). Exit trafficking offences made up 28 percent (n=35) of these reports, again commonly associated with forced marriage offences, while 16 percent (n=20) were related to a sexual servitude offence and 14 percent (n=17) to a forced labour offence. Almost nine in 10 reports accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn referred to at least one slavery or slavery-like practice offence (87%, n=108) and four in 10 to a trafficking offence (44%, n=54).

Table 5: Reports of modern slavery accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn by exploitation type, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023			
	Number of offences	% reports accepted for investigation	% offences
Slavery	4	3.2	2.5
Servitude—domestic	9	7.2	5.5
Servitude—sexual	20	16.1	12.3
Servitude—other	0	0.0	0.0
Forced labour	17	13.7	11.0
Deceptive recruiting	5	4.0	3.1
Forced marriage	53	42.7	32.5
Slavery and slavery-like offences	*108*	*87.1*	*66.7*
Trafficking in persons—entering Australia	14	11.3	8.6
Trafficking in persons—exiting Australia	35	28.2	21.5
Child trafficking	1	0.8	0.6
Debt bondage	4	3.2	2.5
Trafficking in persons offences	*54*	*43.5*	*33.3*
Total offences	**162**		**100.0**

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Suspected victim-survivors

Suspected victim-survivors (referred to as victim-survivors hereafter) were identified from 102 of the 124 reports of modern slavery accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn. A total of 155 victim-survivors were identified from these 102 reports. Eighty-four reports identified a single victim and 18 identified multiple victims (range: 2–17).

Gender and age

Females comprised 85 percent (n=131) of identified victim-survivors and males accounted for 16 percent (n=24; see Table 6). Seventy-one percent (n=110) were adults aged 18 years or over and 29 percent (n=45) were under the age of 18 years. Most victim-survivors were minors or young adults— two-thirds of both female (67%, n=88) and male (67%, n=16) victim-survivors were under the age of 30 years.

Place of birth and residency

Country of birth was recorded for 145 identified victim-survivors (94%), spanning nine regions and 38 countries. Eight in 10 (81%, n=125) victim-survivors were born overseas and 13 percent (n=20) were born in Australia (see Table 6).

The most common region of birth was Oceania and Antarctica (28%, n=43), which included the 20 victim-survivors born in Australia and 23 victim-survivors born in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. One-fifth of victim-survivors each were born in Southern and Central Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan; 21%, n=33) and South-East Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand; 19%, n=30).

Citizenship status was available for 146 victim-survivors. Similar proportions of victim-survivors were Australian citizens (32%, n=49), foreign citizens (28%, n=44) or temporary visa holders (30%, n=47) at the time of identification. Four percent (n=6) of victim-survivors were permanent residents.

Primary language

English was spoken by the majority of victim-survivors, either as their principal language (31%, n=48) or with one or more other languages (36%, n=55; see Table 6). One-fifth of victim-survivors identified another language as their principal or only language spoken (20%, n=31). Over a quarter (27%, n=42) of victim-survivors required an interpreter to engage with police.

Relationship with suspected perpetrator

The majority of victim-survivors (80%, *n*=124) knew the suspected perpetrator (see Table 6). Forty-two percent (*n*=65) were exploited by a family member and eight percent (*n*=12) by their intimate partner. Another 30 percent (*n*=47) were exploited by someone they were acquainted with but who was not related to them. The relationship with the perpetrator was not known for 16 percent of victim-survivors (*n*=25). Male victim-survivors were almost exclusively exploited by a family member or someone they knew (46%, *n*=11 each). The largest proportion of female victim-survivors were exploited by a family member (41%, *n*=54), followed by an acquaintance (27%, *n*=36). All victim-survivors exploited by an intimate partner were female (*n*=12).

Victim-survivors exploited by a family member other than an intimate partner were mostly associated with reports of alleged forced marriage and/or exit trafficking (78%, *n*=51) whereas those exploited by an intimate partner were associated with reports of servitude (sexual and domestic) and/or trafficking into Australia (92%, *n*=11). Over half of victim-survivors exploited by someone they knew who was not a relative (57%, *n*=27) were victims of alleged forced labour.

Table 6: Suspected victim-survivor characteristics, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (n=155)		
	n	%
Gender		
Male	24	15.5
Female	131	84.5
Age group		
Less than 18	45	29.0
18–24	36	23.2
25–29	23	14.8
30–34	23	14.8
35–39	16	10.3
40–44	8	5.2
45 and over	4	2.6
Country of birth		
Australia	20	12.9
Overseas	125	80.6
Not stated/unknown	10	6.5

Table 6: Suspected victim-survivor characteristics, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=155) (cont.)		
	n	%
Region of birth		
Oceania and Antarctica	43	27.7
South-East Asia	30	19.4
North-East Asia	6	3.9
Southern and Central Asia	33	21.3
North Africa and the Middle East	16	10.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	11	7.1
Other[a]	6	3.9
Not stated/unknown	10	6.5
Citizenship status		
Australian citizen	49	31.6
Temporary visa	47	30.3
Foreign citizen	44	28.4
Permanent resident	6	3.9
Not stated/unknown	9	5.8
Language spoken		
English	48	31.0
Other language	31	20.0
English and other language	55	35.5
Not stated/unknown	21	13.5
Required an interpreter		
Yes	42	27.1
No	103	66.5
Not stated/unknown	10	6.5
Relationship with suspected perpetrator		
Intimate partner	12	7.7
Other family member	65	41.9
Known—not related	47	30.3
Stranger	4	2.6
Perpetrator not identified	2	1.3
Not stated/unknown	25	16.1

a: Other includes North-West Europe, Southern and Eastern Europe and the Americas

Note: Regions based on Standard Australian Classification of Countries (ABS 2016). Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Means of entry into and leaving exploitation

The means by which a victim-survivor entered into exploitation was recorded for 121 of the 155 identified victim-survivors. The majority of these 121 victim-survivors experienced one means of exploitation (88%, n=107) and the remainder between two and four means. Relevant information, however, was not available for another 34 victim-survivors and the data presented below may only reflect the methods used by perpetrators in Australia to traffic or enslave victim-survivors.

Deception was the most common means of causing entry into exploitation, used against almost half of the victim-survivors for whom means of exploitation was recorded (45%, n=54; see Table 7). Coercion that exploited the victim-survivor's vulnerability was used against 28 victim-survivors (23%) and coercion in the form of physical force, duress or detention or psychological/emotional pressure was used against 24 (20%) and 16 (13%) victim-survivors respectively. Threats were less commonly recorded, with no more than 10 percent of victim-survivors being threatened directly or threatened with deportation. When combining all forms of coercion and all forms of threat, coercion accounted for 57 percent of the means by which suspected victim-survivors entered exploitation (n=69), and threats accounted for 19 percent (n=23).

Table 7: Means of exploitation, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023		
	n	%
Coercion—physical force, duress or detention	24	19.8
Coercion—psychological/emotional	16	13.2
Coercion—taking advantage of a person's vulnerability	28	23.1
Coercion—other	1	0.8
Threats to victim	12	9.9
Threats to others	5	4.1
Threat of deportation	6	5.0
Deception	54	44.6
Other	2	1.7
Total victim-survivors	**121**	

Note: Excludes 34 victim-survivors where means of exploitation was not stated or unknown. More than one means may be recorded for each victim-survivor

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Referral to the Support for Trafficked People Program

Eighty-four (54%) of the 155 victim-survivors identified from reports accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn were referred to the STPP. Victim-survivors who were not referred include those who did not agree to be referred (the majority), those who were no longer in Australia, those referred to a different support program, as well as those where a decision had not yet been made about referral status.

Suspected perpetrators

A total of 117 suspected perpetrators (hereafter referred to as perpetrators) were identified from 89 of the 124 reports of modern slavery accepted for investigation and not subsequently withdrawn. Perpetrators were not identified from the remaining 35 reports.

Gender and age

Males comprised 68 percent (n=79) and females 33 percent (n=38) of identified perpetrators (see Table 8). All 117 perpetrators were adults aged 18 years and over. The age cohort of perpetrators was the inverse of victim-survivors identified in 2022–23. Four in five alleged perpetrators (79%, n=92) were 35 years and over, with the most common age group being 35–44 years (41%, n=48).

Place of birth

Place of birth was recorded for 68 percent (n=79) of identified perpetrators, spanning 28 countries and seven regions (see Table 8). Five percent (n=6) of all identified perpetrators were born in Australia and 62 percent (n=73) were born overseas. In terms of region, a fifth were born in Southern and Central Asia (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; 21%, n=24), 15 percent in North Africa and the Middle East (Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, South Sudan and Sudan; n=18) and 11 percent (n=13) in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand).

Citizenship status was recorded for 74 identified perpetrators. Forty-four percent of all identified perpetrators were Australian citizens (n=51) and 13 percent were foreign citizens (n=15). Smaller proportions of perpetrators were on a temporary visa (4%, n=5) or did not hold a valid visa at the time of identification (3%, n=3).

Table 8: Characteristics of suspected perpetrators, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=117)		
	n	*%*
Gender		
Male	79	67.5
Female	38	32.5
Age group		
18–24	7	6.0
25–34	17	14.5
35–44	48	41.0
45–54	27	23.1
55 and over	17	14.5
Not stated/unknown	1	0.9
Country of birth		
Australia	6	5.1
Overseas	73	62.4
Not stated/unknown	38	32.5
Region of birth		
Oceania and Antarctica	11	9.4
South-East Asia	13	11.1
North-East Asia	6	5.1
Southern and Central Asia	24	20.5
North Africa and the Middle East	18	15.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	6	5.1
Other	1	0.9
Not stated/unknown	38	32.5
Citizenship		
Australian citizen/permanent resident	51	43.6
Temporary visa	5	4.3
Foreign citizen	15	12.8
No visa	3	2.6
Not stated/unknown	43	36.8

Note: Regions based on Standard Australian Classification of Countries (ABS 2016). Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Alleged exploitation type

A total of 167 alleged offences were recorded against the 117 perpetrators. Forty-three percent (*n*=50) of perpetrators had an alleged forced marriage offence, 36 percent (*n*=42) an exit trafficking offence, 16 percent a forced labour offence (*n*=19) and just over one in 10 each a domestic servitude (13%, *n*=15) or sexual servitude offence (12%, *n*=14; see Table 9). Two-thirds (67%, *n*=78) of perpetrators were alleged to have committed one exploitation offence and a third (33%, *n*=39) multiple exploitation offences (range: 2–4).

Most of the offences allegedly committed by both male and female perpetrators were forced marriage (44%, *n*=35 vs 40%, *n*=15) and exit trafficking offences (38%, *n*=30 vs 32%, *n*=12). Female perpetrators, however, had a larger proportion of alleged sexual servitude offences (24%, *n*=9 vs 6%, *n*=5) and males had a larger proportion of alleged domestic servitude offences (15%, *n*=12 vs 8%, *n*=3). Similar proportions of forced labour offences were alleged against male (15%, *n*=12) and female perpetrators (18%, *n*=7).

Table 9: Suspected perpetrators by alleged exploitation type, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023						
	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Slavery	1	1.3	2	5.3	3	2.6
Servitude—domestic	12	15.2	3	7.9	15	12.8
Servitude—sexual	5	6.3	9	23.7	14	12.0
Servitude—other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Forced labour	12	15.2	7	18.4	19	16.2
Deceptive recruiting	1	1.3	1	2.6	2	1.7
Forced marriage	35	44.3	15	39.5	50	42.7
Trafficking in persons—entering Australia	7	8.9	5	13.2	12	10.3
Trafficking in persons—exiting Australia	30	38.0	12	31.6	42	35.9
Child trafficking	3	3.8	1	2.6	4	3.4
Debt bondage	4	5.1	2	5.3	6	5.1
Total perpetrators	**79**		**38**		**117**	

Note: Suspected perpetrators may have multiple alleged modern slavery offences recorded. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Victim-survivors receiving assistance through the Support for Trafficked People Program

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, 74 persons were referred to the STPP. A total of 73 suspected victim-survivors were included in the analysis. One victim-survivor was excluded as their consent to provide data to the HTMS NMDS could not be obtained because they had left the program before data collection.

The difference in referral numbers cited in this and the previous section is due to different population counts. The 73 victim-survivors described here are those referred to the STPP during the reference period, whereas the 84 victim-survivors described in the previous section are those identified from reports received by the AFP during the reference period and subsequently referred to the STPP. This referral may have occurred during or after the 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 reference period.

Gender and age

Victim-survivors referred to the STPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 were predominantly female, comprising 66 of the 73 referrals (90%; see Table 10). Seven males (10%) were referred to the program during the same period. Over a quarter (27%, $n=20$) of those referred were younger than 18 years (including dependants of victim-survivors) and just under three-quarters (73%, $n=53$) were adults aged 18 years and over. Similarly, three-quarters of adult referrals (77%, $n=41$) were young adults aged between 18 and 34 years.

Place of birth

The country of birth of the 73 victim-survivors referred to the STPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 was spread across 27 countries. Nineteen percent (*n*=14) of suspected victim-survivors were born in Australia and 81 percent (*n*=59) were born overseas (see Table 10).

In terms of region, a third of victim-survivors referred to the STPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 were born in Oceania and Antarctica (34%, *n*=25), including the 14 victim-survivors born in Australia and 11 victim-survivors born in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu. Another 22 percent (*n*=16) were born in Southern and Central Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), 16 percent (*n*=12) in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) and 12 percent (*n*=9) in North Africa and the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, South Sudan, Sudan and Syria).

Primary language

Over half (56%, *n*=41) of victim-survivors referred to the STPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 spoke English as their primary language (see Table 10). The remaining 32 (44%) victim-survivors spoke a language other than English as their primary language. Twenty-two percent (*n*=16) required an interpreter to engage with caseworkers and other service providers.

Table 10: STPP referrals by demographic characteristics, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=73)		
	n	%
Gender		
Male	7	9.6
Female	66	90.4
Age group		
Less than 18	20	27.4
18–24	12	16.4
25–34	29	39.7
35–44	8	11.0
45 and over	4	5.5
Country of birth		
Australia	14	19.2
Overseas	59	80.8
Region of birth		
Oceania and Antarctica	25	34.2
South-East Asia	12	16.4
Southern and Central Asia	16	21.9
North Africa and the Middle East	9	12.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	5	6.8
Other[a]	6	8.2
Primary language		
English	41	56.2
Other language	32	43.8
Required an interpreter		
Yes	16	21.9
No	57	78.1

a: Includes North-East Asia, North-West Europe, Southern and Eastern Europe and the Americas

Note: Includes new referrals to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) only. Regions based on Standard Australian Classification of Countries (ABS 2016). Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Support stream accessed

Five support streams were available to victim-survivors referred to the STPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023. Victim-survivors accessed an average of two support streams during this period (range: 1–3; see Table 11). Half (51%, *n*=37) of victim-survivors had accessed one support stream, 32 percent (*n*=23) had accessed two support streams and 18 percent (*n*=13) had accessed three support streams by 30 June 2023.

All victim-survivors who are referred to the STPP initially go on the Intensive Support Stream. This support stream provides up to 90 days of support, irrespective of whether the victim-survivor is able to assist with the investigation or prosecution of their matter. Clients on the Intensive Support Stream have access to a range of supports including financial assistance for themselves and their dependants, accommodation, health care and legal services (see *Support provided*, below).

Twenty-two percent (*n*=16) of victim-survivors accessed the Forced Marriage Support Stream (see Table 11). The Forced Marriage Support Stream provides intensive support for up to 200 days for clients who are in, or at risk of, a forced marriage, without requiring them to contribute to criminal justice processes regarding their matter. This 200-day period includes the 90 days of support already provided through the Intensive Support Stream.

Twenty-two percent (*n*=16) of victim-survivors accessed the Justice Support Stream. The Justice Support Stream provides support to victim-survivors during the investigation and prosecution of their matter. Similar supports available during the Intensive Support Stream are available to clients on this support stream.

Almost a quarter (23%, *n*=17) of victim-survivors accessed the Transition Stream. This stream provides a 20 working day period for clients to transition from the STPP into everyday life.

Table 11: Victim-survivors by STPP support stream accessed, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=73)		
	n	%
Intensive Support Stream	73	100.0
Forced Marriage Support Stream	16	21.9
Justice Support Stream	16	21.9
Temporary Trial Support Stream	0	0.0
Transition Stream	17	23.3
Number of streams accessed		
1	37	50.7
2	23	31.5
3	13	17.8
Mean (median) number of streams accessed	*2 (1)*	

Note: More than one support stream may be accessed during the reference period. Includes new referrals to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) only

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–2023 [computer file]

Support provided

The types of support available to STPP clients are listed in Table 12. Access to these supports is often facilitated through referrals to specialist agencies. Most victim-survivors referred to the STPP had multiple support needs. Victim-survivors received an average of six types of support (range: 1–11) during the reference period, although different types of support may have been provided beyond the reference period.

All victim-survivors received social and emotional support (100%, *n*=73) and the majority received emergency assistance (69%, *n*=50) and support for housing and accommodation (74%, *n*=54), medical and healthcare (77%, *n*=56), legal (78%, *n*=57) and employment, education and training needs (67%, *n*=49; see Table 12). A small proportion (6%, *n*=4) received financial support for dependants, a new support arrangement added to the STPP in 2022–23.

Table 12: Victim-survivors referred to the STPP by types of support received, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=73)		
	n	%
Accommodation and housing support—may include crisis accommodation, short-term accommodation and longer term housing solutions	54	74.0
Assistance accessing legal advice—may include connecting victim-survivors with legal services for visa-related matters or advice relating to civil and criminal proceedings (including family court matters)	57	78.1
Assistance accessing medical and healthcare services—access to medical services includes mental and physical healthcare services. Mental health support may include referrals to counselling and help with booking appointments. Physical health support may include information about accessible health services, assistance understanding diagnoses, and advocacy when dealing with health professionals.	56	76.7
Drug and alcohol support	0	0.0
Emergency items—may include essential items such as food, clothing and toiletries	50	68.5
Employment, education and training—may include support to identify appropriate employment or education opportunities based on client interests, skills and qualifications. It may also include support to apply for jobs, and preparation for attending interviews and classes.	49	67.1
Financial support—may include short-term payments (eg basic necessities, crisis accommodation) and support with longer term financial stability	68	93.2
Financial support for dependants	4	5.5
Interpreters/translation	16	21.9
Parenting support	10	14
Social and emotional support—social support involves building someone's access to healthy social networks, sense of belonging and connection to community. This can include supporting people to engage in activities, projects, cultural community groups, peer support activities and local religious networks. It can also include helping people navigate systems such as health care and transport. Emotional support involves building a trusting relationship and building people's confidence by listening without judgement; being empathetic and compassionate; validating their experiences; offering encouragement, hope, reassurance and guidance; acknowledging strengths and achievements; being present; and asking them what they need.	73	100.0
Other	22	30.1
Mean (median) number of supports provided	*6 (6)*	

Note: Includes new referrals to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) only. Refers to supports provided during the reference period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 only. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–2023 [computer file]

Support status as at 30 June 2023

As at 30 June 2023, 49 percent (*n*=36) of victim-survivors referred to the STPP in 2022–23 remained on the Intensive Support Stream. Just four percent (*n*=3) were on the Forced Marriage Support Stream and 22 percent (*n*=16) were on the Justice Support Stream. One in 10 clients (10%, *n*=7) were transitioning from the STPP and 15 percent (*n*=11) had already exited the program.

Six of the clients who had exited the program, or 38 percent of clients who accessed the Forced Marriage Support Stream, did so because the timeframe for support under this stream had lapsed. The remaining clients left the program because they declined to proceed beyond the Intensive Support Stream or the justice process they were involved in was discontinued or finalised.

Access to the Human Trafficking Visa Framework

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, seven persons identified by the AFP as victim-survivors of modern slavery were granted a visa under the HTVF. The HTVF comprises two visa categories: a temporary visa known as Bridging visa F (BVF) and a permanent Referred Stay visa. Victim-survivors may have been granted more than one visa type during the reference period.

All victim-survivors granted a visa under the HTVF in 2022–23 were adults aged 18 years or over and the majority were female.

Those victim-survivors granted a visa under the HTVF in 2022–23 last entered Australia on a visitor visa, a working and skilled visa, a studying and training visa or another unspecified visa. At the time of victim identification, victim-survivors had transferred to another visa, were still on the visa they entered Australia on or were living in the country with no visa.

Most of the victim-survivors were granted a BVF Assistance Notice or Travel BVF and fewer than five were granted a secondary BVF. BVF Assistance Notices are granted to a suspected victim-survivor of modern slavery who is required to remain in Australia to assist authorities with an investigation or prosecution. The visa is in effect for the duration of the investigation. A Travel BVF is granted where the victim-survivor is required to travel. Two Travel BVF categories exist: the R2.20 (15) Bridging visa F (WF-060) enables victim-survivors who are onshore to travel overseas for compelling and compassionate reasons and then return to Australia if they continue to assist with the criminal justice process, while the R2.20 (14) Bridging visa F (WF-060) enables offshore victim-survivors to enter and leave Australia where required to assist with an investigation.

A small number of victim-survivors were granted a permanent Referred Stay visa. Victim-survivors who contribute to the criminal justice process can be granted this visa, allowing them to stay permanently in Australia.

Modern slavery matters referred for prosecution

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, 19 matters involving human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like offences were either referred to, or continued by, the CDPP. These matters involved 27 defendants and 54 victim-witnesses. Just over half of these matters were single defendant prosecutions (53%, *n*=10) and just under half were multiple defendant prosecutions (47%, *n*=9; range: 2–4).

Charges

Twenty-seven defendants were referred to the CDPP, 22 of whom had been charged with a total of 57 offences proscribed in Divisions 270 and 271 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) by 30 June 2023. Charges for the remaining five defendants were pending. Defendants may have been charged with other Commonwealth or state/territory offences; however, this information was not available for this report.

Of the 22 defendants charged, nine (41%) had been charged with at least one forced labour offence, eight (36%) with a trafficking in persons offence and six (27%) with servitude offences. An almost equal number of defendants had been charged with a single modern slavery offence (45%, *n*=10) or multiple modern slavery offences (55%, *n*=12). The number of charges per defendant with multiple offences ranged from two to nine.

Three-quarters (75%, *n*=43) of the 57 charges were for slavery and slavery-like offences and a quarter (25%, *n*=14) were for trafficking in persons offences. Specifically, 16 of the 57 charges were for servitude offences (28%), 14 each for slavery and trafficking in persons offences (25%), 11 for forced labour offences (19%) and two for forced marriage offences (4%; see Table 13).

Table 13: Charges by offence category, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	Defendants		Charges	
	n	%	*n*	%
Offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth)				
Slavery[a]	5	22.7	14	24.6
Servitude[b]	6	27.3	16	28.1
Forced labour[c]	9	40.9	11	19.3
Forced marriage[d]	1	4.5	2	3.5
Trafficking in persons[e]	8	36.4	14	24.6
Total	**22**		**57**	**100.0**

a: s 270.3(1) Slavery offences

b: Includes s 270.5(1) Causing a person to enter into or remain in servitude and s 270.6(2) Conducting a business that involves sexual servitude of a person

c: Includes s 270.6A(1) Causing a person to enter into or remain in forced labour and s 270.6A(2) Conducting a business involving forced labour

d: Includes s 270.7B Causing a person to enter into a forced marriage

e: Includes s 271.2(1) Organises or facilitates entry of a person using coercion, threat or deception; s 271.2(1A) Organises or facilitates exit of a person using coercion, threat or deception; s 271.2(1B) Organises or facilitates entry of a person and is reckless to whether the person is exploited; s 271.2(2) Trafficking in persons – facilitates entry/ receipt by deception; and s 271.4 Domestic trafficking of children involving exploitation or sexual services

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Defendant pleas

Of the 22 defendants charged, four pleaded guilty to five charges and 11 defendants pleaded not guilty to a total of 29 charges. Nine defendants each had at least one charge withdrawn or discontinued, for a total of 18 charges. Five of these defendants had also entered a guilty and/or not guilty plea for another charge. The plea stage had not been reached for five defendants across five charges.

Outcomes

Fifteen defendants were committed to trial or sentence for a total of 35 charges related to human trafficking, slavery or slavery-like offences. Six of these defendants were convicted for a total of nine charges. One defendant's charges (*n*=2) were not proven and 24 charges were withdrawn or discontinued for 10 defendants. Seven defendants who had been charged were awaiting trial or sentencing at 30 June 2023.

Four of the six convicted defendants had appealed their conviction or sentence for a total of seven charges, while the appeal stage had not been reached for the remaining two defendants. Two of the four appeals were dismissed and the outcome of the other two was not available.

Defendant characteristics

Most of the 27 defendants in modern slavery matters referred to or continued by the CDPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 were men (67%, *n*=18; see Table 14). Eight defendants (30%) were women and the gender of the remaining defendant was not stated. Half (48%, *n*=13) of the defendants were aged between 25 and 44 years and the other half (48%, *n*=13) were aged 45 years and over. Most defendants were born in Australia (82%, *n*=22).

Table 14: Defendant characteristics, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=27)		
	n	%
Gender		
Male	18	66.7
Female	8	29.6
Not stated/unknown	1	3.7
Age group		
18–24	0	0.0
25–44	13	48.1
45 and over	13	48.1
Not stated/unknown	1	3.7
Country of birth		
Australia	22	81.5
Overseas	5	18.5

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

Victim-witnesses

Men (46%, *n*=25) and women (50%, *n*=27) comprised around half each of the 54 victim-witnesses in modern slavery matters referred to or continued by the CDPP between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 (see Table 15). The gender of two victim-witnesses was not stated. A fifth (22%, *n*=12) of victim-witnesses were aged between 25 and 44 years and 15 percent (*n*=8) were 24 years or younger. However, the age group of half (52%) of the victim-witnesses was not available.

Birthplace was available for 52 victim-witnesses (96%). In contrast with defendants, the majority of victim-witnesses were born overseas (69%, *n*=37). Fifteen victim-witnesses (28%) were born in Australia. Nine victim-witnesses (17%) required an interpreter.

Table 15: Victim-witness characteristics, 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (*n*=54)		
	n	%
Gender		
Male	25	46.3
Female	27	50.0
Not stated/unknown	2	3.7
Age group		
Less than 24 years	8	14.8
25–44	12	22.2
45 and over	6	11.1
Not stated/unknown	28	51.9
Country of birth		
Australia	15	27.8
Overseas	37	68.5
Not stated/unknown	2	3.7
Required an interpreter		
Yes	9	16.7
No	45	83.3

Source: AIC HTMS NMDS 2022–23 [computer file]

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