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Foreign &
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Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2017

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Key Points

In 2018, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,196 cases. These figures include contact that has been made to the FMU through the public helpline or by email in relation to a new case.

Since 2012, the FMU has provided support to between 1,200 and 1,400 cases per year. Whilst the number of cases in 2017 represents a **19% decrease compared with 2016**, it does not represent a decrease in prevalence of forced marriage in the UK

Of the cases, that FMU provided support to:

- 355 cases (29.7%) involved victims below 18 years of age; and
- 353 cases (29.5%) involved victims aged 18-25.

In 2017, the majority of cases 930 (77.8%) involved women; 256 cases (21.4%) involved males. These proportions are in line with previous years.

Forced marriage is not a problem specific to one country or culture. Since it was established in 2005, the FMU has handled cases relating to over 90 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

In 2017, the FMU handled cases relating to 65 'focus' countries. The top four countries with the highest number of cases in 2017 were:

- Pakistan - 439 cases (36.7%).
- Bangladesh – 129 cases (10.8%).
- Somalia - 91 cases (7.6%).
- India - 82 cases (6.9%).

The number of cases relating to Pakistan has decreased by almost 8% in comparison to the previous year. The biggest shift has occurred in Somalia, where the number of cases has increased over 100% year-on-year.

In 2017, 120 (10%) of the cases had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Forced marriage is a criminal offence. 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 force, physical force or the threat of physical force, and, financial pressure. In an arranged marriage, both parties have consented to the union but can still refuse to marry if they choose to.

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 2017 to 31 December 2017. All calls and emails are registered on the FMU's case logging tool to ensure accuracy and reliability of records. The main categories of data that are captured by the FMU case log include:

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

This publication does not provide a breakdown of reported cases to the FMU by religion; no major faith in the UK advocates forced marriage. It is also important to note that freely given consent is a prerequisite of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

The FMU is a joint Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office 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's helpline is available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. An out of hours service is provided by the FCO's Global Response Centre, which is based in the UK. The FMU may receive information about a forced marriage from either a person at risk, a friend or relative, or from professionals within agencies charged with responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Information on forced marriage is becoming more widely available and can be accessed in a range of ways, for example, through social media or smart phone apps. There are also other help lines available through charities which can offer advice on forced marriage.

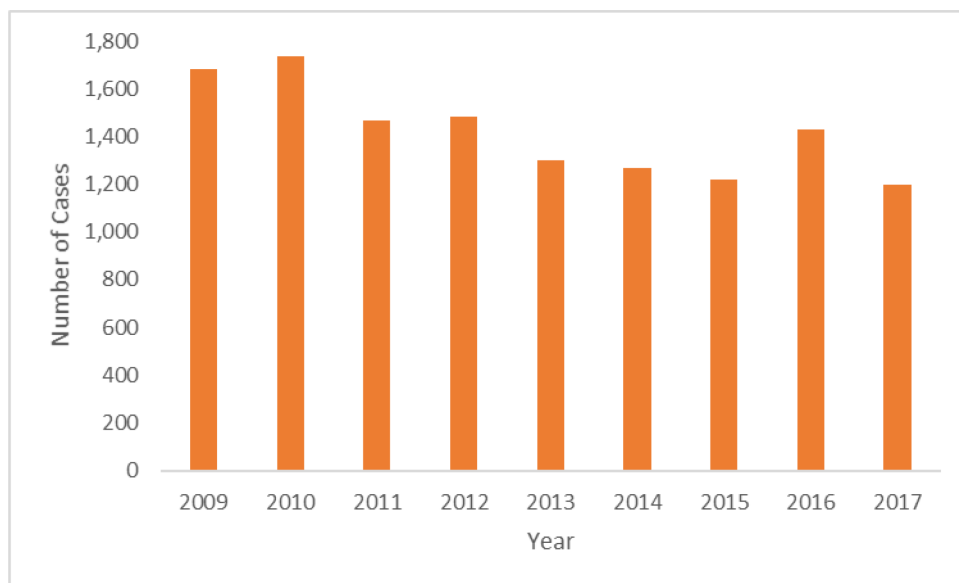
Further information about forced marriage and the work of the FMU is available on GOV.uk or by emailing fmu@fco.gov.uk or writing to:

Forced Marriage Unit
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Consular Directorate
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

2 Forced Marriage Unit Statistics

In 2017, the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,196 cases via its public helpline and email inbox. This represents a decrease of 19% (208 cases) compared with the previous year.

Figure 2.1: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2009 to 2017



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

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

The FMU also received approximately 300 telephone calls per month in 2017. However, this included repeat calls about cases and calls not about forced marriage (for example queries about divorces, annulments, sham marriages, domestic violence etc).

The use of the term 'victim' includes people thought to be at potential risk of future forced marriage, those currently going through a forced marriage, and those who have already been forced to marry.

The majority of calls about cases (almost 80%) come from professionals as well as other third parties (e.g. non-governmental organisations, colleagues, friends, or family). The fact self-reports represent a smaller proportion of calls may reflect the hidden nature of forced marriage and that victims may fear reprisals from their family if they come forward.

In 2017, victims' ages ranged from babies to people post-retirement age. Cases involving young children often involve the promise of a future marriage

rather than an imminent marriage. In a small number of cases involving older victims, the forced marriage may have happened many years previously or where the victim has a learning disability.

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

2.1 Sex

In 2017, 930 cases (77.8%) involved female victims and 256 (21.4%) involved male victims. This demonstrates that men can also be forced into marriage.

2.2 Age

Where the age was known, 15.6% of cases involved victims below 16 years of age, and 29.7% involved under-18 year olds. The largest proportion of cases (17.9%) involved 18-21 year old victims (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by age, 2017

Age	Numbers	Percentages
15 and under	186	15.6%
16-17	169	14.1%
18-21	214	17.9%
22-25	139	11.6%
26-30	124	10.4%
31-40	88	7.4%
41+	49	4.1%
Unknown Adult	10	0.8%
Unknown Minor ²	208	17.4%
Unknown	9	0.8%
Total	1,196	100

2. A minor refers to any child under the age of 18.

2.3 UK region

As in previous years, in 2017 the UK region with the greatest number of cases was London (351 cases, 29.3%) – an almost 10% increase when compared to 2016.

Table 2.2: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by region, 2017

UK region	Numbers	Percentages
East of England	39	3.3%
East Midlands	71	5.9%
London	351	29.3%
North East	32	2.7%
North West	146	12.2%
Northern Ireland	<5	
Scotland	18	1.5%
South East	81	6.8%
South West	30	2.5%
West Midlands	172	14.4%
Wales	17	1.4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	152	12.7%
Unknown	84	7.0%
Total	1,196	100

2.4 Focus country

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, or the country that the spouse is currently residing in (or both). Since 2005, the FMU have dealt with cases from over 90 countries. In 2017 the FMU handled cases relating to 65 countries to which a victim was at risk of, or had already, been taken to in connection with a forced marriage (Table 2.3).

For more analysis for each of the top four focus countries please see pages 12 to 15.

Table 2.3: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by focus country, 2017

Focus country	Numbers	Percentages
Pakistan	439	36.7%
Bangladesh	129	10.8%
Somalia	91	7.6%
India	82	6.9%
Afghanistan	19	1.6%
Egypt	18	1.5%
Iraq	14	1.2%
Nigeria	12	1.0%
Romania	11	0.9%
Saudi Arabia	11	0.9%
United Kingdom	120	10.0%
Unknown	84	7.0%
Other(53 countries)	166	13.9%
Total	1,196	

2.5 Sexual orientation

In 2017, 21 cases (1.8%) involved victims who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

FMU 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.

2.6 Disability

In 2017, 125 cases (12.1%) involved victims who had a learning disability. The sex and age of victims, as well as the focus country is shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Number of callers with a learning disability the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2017

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	59	47.2%
Male	66	52.8%
Age Range		
15 and under	6	4.8%
16-17	<5	-
18-21	27	21.6%
21-25	21	16.8%
26-30	28	22.4%
31-40	15	12.0%
Over 40	11	8.8%
Unknown Adult	12	9.6%
Unknown Minor	<5	-
Focus Country		
Pakistan	54	43.2%
Bangladesh	28	22.4%
India	15	12.0%
United Kingdom	8	6.4%
Unknown	6	4.8%
Other (11 countries)	14	11.2%
Total number of callers with a learning disability	125	

2.7 Pakistan

Pakistan is routinely the top focus country for forced marriage cases. This is in relation to the large size of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK. Outreach events with the UK Pakistani community may have additionally contributed to a higher reporting rate of forced marriage.

Cases related to Pakistan come from a wider spread of age of victims and geographic spread of cases across the UK. Over 85% of cases were dealt entirely in the UK, preventing the marriage before it was due to take place or after the marriage where the victim was being forced to sponsor a spousal visa.

Table 2.5: Number of cases linked to Pakistan the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2017

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	346	78.8%
Male	92	21.0%
Unknown	<5	-
Age Range		
15 and under	60	13.7%
16-17	57	13.0%
18-21	85	19.4%
21-25	66	15.0%
26-30	64	14.6%
31-40	37	8.4%
Over 40	11	2.5%
Unknown	<5	-
Unknown Adult	58	13.2%
UK region		
East	18	4.1%
East Midlands	28	6.4%
London	63	14.4%
North East	18	4.1%
North West	69	15.7%
Scotland	11	2.5%
South East	30	6.8%
South West	8	1.8%
Unknown	52	11.8%
Wales	5	1.1%
West Midlands	85	19.4%
Yorkshire and Humberside	52	11.8%
Victim Status		
Overseas	54	12.3%
In the UK	379	86.3%
Unknown	6	1.4%
Total number of callers linked to Pakistan	439	

2.8 Bangladesh

In 2017, there was a slight increase in the proportion of cases linked to Bangladesh. The age of the victim – where known – was most likely to be between 18 and 21. The proportion of male victims was higher in Bangladesh than the average.

Table 2.6: Number of cases linked to Bangladesh the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2017

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	92	71%
Male	37	29%
Age Range		
15 and under	20	16%
16-17	16	12%
18-21	28	22%
21-25	16	12%
26-30	14	11%
31-40	11	9%
Over 40	5	4%
Unknown	<5	-
Unknown Adult	16	12%
Unknown Minor	<5	-
UK Region		
East	9	7%
East Midlands	10	8%
London	48	37%
North East	7	5%
North West	12	9%
Scotland	<5	-
South East	9	7%
South West	<5	-
Unknown	15	12%
Wales	5	4%
West Midlands	6	5%
Yorkshire and Humberside	<5	-
Victim Status		
Overseas	12	9%
In the UK	117	91%
Total number of callers linked to Bangladesh	129	

2.9 Somalia¹

The number of Somali cases reported to the FMU in 2017 was over double the number received in 2016. These victims were most likely to be between the ages of 15-21; almost 75% of the victims were already overseas when they contacted the FMU.

Table 2.7: Number of cases linked to Somalia the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2017

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	65	71.4%
Male	26	28.6%
Age Range		
15 and under	23	25.3%
16-17	27	29.7%
18-21	25	27.5%
21-25	10	11.0%
26-30	<5	-
Unknown Adult	5	5.5%
UK Region		
London	64	70.3%
North West	7	7.7%
South East	<5	-
South West	<5	-
Unknown	8	8.8%
West Midlands	<5	-
Yorkshire and Humberside	<5	-
Victim Status		
Overseas	68	74.7%
In the UK	23	25.3%
Total number of callers linked to Somalia	91	

¹ The British Embassy in Mogadishu is unable to provide consular assistance. Assistance to forced marriage victims is provided via Nairobi.

2.10 India

The proportion of case linked to India in 2017 was similar to 2016. There was a higher proportion of older victims as well as male victims this is most likely due to the fact that many of these cases were reluctant sponsors.

Table 2.5: Number of cases linked to India the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2017

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	53	64.6%
Male	29	35.4%
Age range		
15 and under	6	7.3%
16-17	8	9.8%
18-21	8	9.8%
21-25	10	12.2%
26-30	8	9.8%
31-40	18	22.0%
Over 40	8	9.8%
Unknown Adult	16	19.5%
UK region		
East Midlands	12	14.6%
London	29	35.4%
North West	7	8.5%
Northern Ireland	<5	-
Scotland	<5	-
South East	<5	-
South West	<5	-
Unknown	7	8.5%
West Midlands	14	17.1%
Yorkshire and Humberside	<5	-
Victim Status		
Overseas	14	17.1%
in the UK	67	81.7%
Unknown	1	1.2%
Total number of callers linked to India	82	

Note: the FMU will continue to review the arrangements for producing this annual statistics release to ensure that it fully captures the range of cases handled by the Unit.