

Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2018

24 May 2019

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1. Key Points

In 2018, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,764 cases. These figures include contact that has been made to the FMU in relation to a new case through the public helpline or by email and include general enquires.

Since 2012, the FMU has provided support to between approximately 1,200 and approximately 1,400 cases per year. The number of cases in 2018 represents a 47% increase compared with 2017 and is the highest number since these statistics were first in the current format in 2011. This does not necessarily represent an increase in the prevalence of forced marriage in the UK.

There are other potential reasons for the increase in cases:

- A greater awareness of forced marriage being a crime and the support available, caused by:
 - Two court cases which received significant amounts of media attention and resulted in prosecutions
 - Wider media attention possibly raising awareness of forced marriage
 - Launch of the Home Office communication campaign about forced marriage.
- An improved data recording process.

Of the cases that FMU provided support to:

- 574 cases (33%) involved victims below 18 years of age; and a further:
- 542 cases (31%) involved victims aged 18-25.
- 165 cases (9%) involved victims aged 26-30.
- 146 cases (8%) involved victims aged 31-40.
- 45 cases (3%) involved victims aged 41 and over.
- In 17% of cases the age of the victims was unknown.

In 2018, the majority of cases - 1,322 (75%) - involved women, with 297 cases (17%) involving men (gender in the remaining cases was unknown). These proportions are 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 over 110 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

In 2018, the FMU handled cases relating to 74 ‘focus¹’ countries. The six countries with the highest number of cases in 2018 were:

- Pakistan - 769 cases (44%).
- Bangladesh - 157 cases (9%).
- India - 110 cases (6%).
- Somalia² - 46 cases (3%).
- Afghanistan - 44 cases (3%).
- Romania - 43 cases (2%).

The proportion of cases relating to Pakistan has increased by around 7%³ compared with the previous year. However, the proportion of cases relating to Pakistan in 2018 is stable compared to 2011-2016. After a large increase in 2017, the number of cases linked to Somalia has decreased. There has been a noticeable increase in cases linked to Romania. In 2018, the FMU provided support to 43 such cases compared with 29 across the whole period 2011-2017.

In 2018, 119 cases (7%) had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. This is a decrease compared with previous years, but continues to highlight that forced marriages can take place in the UK.

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, or the country that the spouse is currently residing in (or both)

² Including Somaliland

³ Unless stated the proportional changes are percentage point changes.

2 Overview

Forced marriage is a criminal offence⁴. 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 it, 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 2018 to 31 December 2018. A record of all calls and emails is registered on the FMU's case logging tool to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the 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. 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.

⁴ Forced marriage legislation is devolved, the FMU provides support and advice regardless of where in the UK the victim/potential victim is based.

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:

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Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Consular Directorate
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London
SW1A 2AH
+44 (0)20 7008 0151

3 Forced Marriage Unit Statistics

In 2018, the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,764 cases via its public helpline and email inbox. This represents an increase of 47% (568 cases) compared with the previous year.

Table 1: Number of cases in which the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support, 2011 to 2018

Year	Number
2011	1,468
2012	1,485
2013	1,302
2014	1,267
2015	1,220
2016	1,428
2017	1,196
2018	1,764

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 may not reflect the full scale of the abuse.⁵

The FMU received approximately 340 telephone calls per month in 2018. These included repeat calls about cases and calls not about forced marriage (for example queries about divorces, annulments, sham marriages, domestic abuse etc).

Victims are the largest category of caller to the FMU, accounting for 20% of cases. 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.

However, the majority of referrals (around 60%) come from professionals as well as other third parties e.g. non-governmental organisations. The other 20% of calls come largely from colleagues, friends or family members of the victim.

The fact that victims self-reporting represents only a fifth of cases may reflect the hidden nature of forced marriage and the fact that victims may fear reprisals from their family if they come forward.

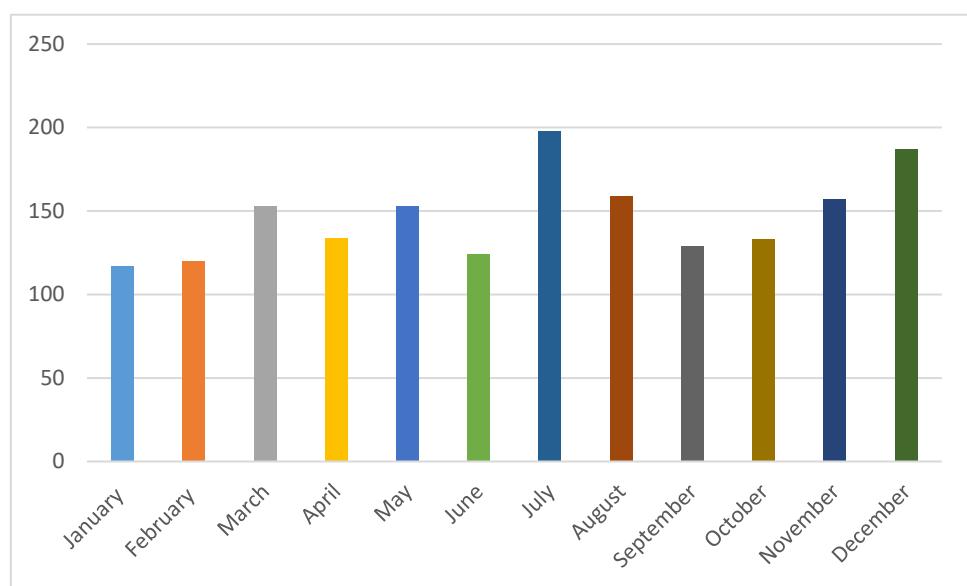
⁵ A study conducted by NatCen in 2009 found that there were between 5,000 and 8,000 reported cases of forced marriage in England (not including 'hidden' victims who have not come forward). <http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/forced-marriage/>

In 2018, victims' ages varied widely. Cases involving young children often involve the promise of a future marriage 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 where the victim lacked capacity.

In 2018, there was an increase in the number of callers who wished to remain anonymous, resulting in an increase in the level of unknown data across all categories.

Whilst July was the month in which the highest number of new cases were received, the table below demonstrates the continuous risk of forced marriage throughout the year.

Table 2: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by month, 2018



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 2018.

3.1 Sex of Victims

In 2018, 1,322 cases (75%) involved female victims and 297 (17%) involved male victims; in the remaining cases the sex of the victim was unknown. This demonstrates that forced marriage is a crime which disproportionately affects women, but that it is also not an issue which only women face; men can also be forced into marriage.

3.2 Age of Victims

Where the age was known, 17.7% of cases involved victims aged 15 years old or less, and a further 14.9% involved 16 and 17 year olds.

Table 3: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by age, 2018

Age	Numbers	Percentages
15 and under	312	17.7%
16-17	262	14.9%
18-21	307	17.4%
22-25	235	13.3%
26-30	165	9.4%
31-40	147	8.3%
41+	45	2.6%
Unknown	291	16.5%
Total	1,764	100%

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

3.3 UK regions where victims live

As in previous years, in 2018 the UK region associated with the greatest number of cases was London (318 cases, 18%). Whilst this is a decrease of over 10% compared with 2017, it is in line with proportions in previous years. The proportions linked to the other regions remain at a similar level to previous years.

Table 4: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by region, 2018

UK region	Numbers	Percentages
London	318	18.0%
North West	254	14.4%
West Midlands	205	11.6%
Yorkshire & The Humber	183	10.4%
South East	149	8.4%
East	124	7.0%
East Midlands	69	3.9%
South West	49	2.8%
Wales	33	1.9%
North East	30	1.7%
Scotland	30	1.7%
Northern Ireland	2	0.1%
Unknown	318	18.0%
Total	1,764	

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 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 2011, the FMU have dealt with cases from over 110 countries. In 2018, the FMU handled cases relating to 74 countries to which a victim was at risk of being, or had already been, taken in connection with a forced marriage.

For more analysis for each of the top focus countries please see section 3.8.

Table 5: Number of cases the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, by focus country, 2018

Focus country	Numbers	Percentages
Pakistan	769	43.6%
Bangladesh	157	8.9%
United Kingdom	119	6.7%
India	110	6.2%
Somalia	46	2.6%
Afghanistan	44	2.5%
Romania	43	2.4%
Iraq	35	2.0%
Morocco	14	0.8%
Algeria	11	0.6%
Egypt	10	0.6%
Other (63 countries)	176	10.0%
Unknown	234	13.3%
Total	1,764	

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

3.5 Sexual Orientation of Victims

In 2018, 11 cases (0.6%) 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.

3.6 Victims with Disability

In 2018, 93 cases (5.3%) involved victims where there was a concern they may have a learning disability. The sex and age of victims, as well as the focus country, are shown in Table 2.4.

A higher proportion of victims in learning disability cases are male compared to other forced marriage cases. Victims are more likely to be older than in other cases - in cases where a learning disability has been reported, 34% of victims were between 26-40 years old compared to an overall figure of 18% in all cases.

Table 6: Number of callers with a learning disability the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2018

	Numbers	Percentages
Gender		
Female	54	58.1%
Male	35	37.6%
Unknown	4	4.3%
Age Range		
1-15	5	5.4%
16-17	7	7.5%
18-21	12	12.9%
22-25	23	24.7%
26-30	17	18.3%
31-40	15	16.1%
Over 40	8	8.6%
Unknown	6	6.5%
Focus Country		
Pakistan	44	47.3%
Bangladesh	18	19.4%
India	8	8.6%
United Kingdom	6	6.5%
Other (9 countries)	11	11.8%
Unknown	6	6.5%
UK Region		
London	20	22%
North West	15	16%
West Midlands	10	11%
East	9	10%
South West	8	9%
Yorkshire & The Humber	7	8%
South East	6	6%
East Midlands	6	6%
North East	<5	-
Wales	<5	-
Scotland	<5	-
Unknown	6	6%
Total number of callers with a reported disability	93	

3.7 Case Status

The status of cases is classified under four main categories. This is to enable the caseworkers to judge the risk 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)⁶
- 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 and potential consequence for the victim are different at each point. When a victim is overseas, the risk is often elevated because it can mean the wedding is imminent. The security situation in certain countries or regions within countries also affects the risk and the level of support the FMU are able to provide.

Table 7: Proportion of cases by marriage status which the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to, 2011-2018

Marriage Status	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Pre	42.4%	37.1%	42.1%	45.5%	46.5%	44.6%	49.2%	56.5%
Overseas Pre	7.7%	8.0%	11.2%	10.4%	9.4%	12.8%	12.8%	9.2%
Overseas Post	2.1%	3.2%	4.7%	6.2%	3.0%	3.4%	2.5%	3.5%
UK Post	40.4%	32.6%	32.0%	28.2%	30.2%	27.6%	28.2%	22.4%
UK Unknown	0.5%	0.8%	1.1%	1.3%	1.5%	3.9%	2.3%	1.4%
Overseas Unknown	3.5%	3.4%	3.3%	3.2%	5.2%	5.1%	3.1%	2.7%
Unknown	3.4%	14.8%	5.6%	5.0%	4.3%	2.6%	1.8%	4.3%

Since 2012, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of cases being reported whilst the victim is in the UK and before the marriage has taken place. FMU has greater capability in these types of cases to prevent the marriage from taking place, mitigating the risk to the victim.

⁶ These cases are often victims who are being forced to sponsor the visa of their spouses. They are referred to as reluctant sponsors.

3.8 Repatriations

In 2018⁷, the FMU supported the repatriation⁸ of 23 individuals. This is a slight decrease compared with 2017 (29 cases), however, 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 Order⁹ was used to facilitate direct repatriation;
- 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;
- Victims wanted only advice and support, not repatriation;
- The victim was confirmed as not being eligible for consular assistance e.g. not a British National (safeguarding advice by the FMU still provided).

3.9 Focus Countries Breakdown¹⁰

Pakistan

Pakistan is routinely the focus country with the largest number of forced marriage cases reported to FMU. Cases related to Pakistan come from a wider age and regional range than other focus countries. Over 83% 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.

Almost 35% of Pakistani cases are linked to the North West (135 cases) and Yorkshire and Humber (128 cases) regions, with 54 cases linked to Manchester and 45 to Leeds.

Bangladesh

In 2018, 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 and between 22 and 25, with a lower proportion under 18.

⁷ This is the first time this data has been included in the annual statistics. In 2019, we will publish data linked to all known repatriation cases where the FMU were involved but the post overseas did not play a specific role.

⁸ To come back to the UK or their country of ordinary residence.

⁹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778583/f1701-eng.pdf

¹⁰ See figures and tables spreadsheet for further breakdown for each country.

London was the region involving the largest number of reported Bangladeshi cases, with the boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets having the most reported cases.

UK

In 2018, 119 (6.8%) of the cases had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK. This is a decrease compared with previous years, but continues to highlight that forced marriages can take place in the UK.

India

The proportion of cases linked to India in 2018 was similar to previous years. There was a higher proportion of older victims as well as male victims compared to other focus countries. This is most likely due to the fact that many of these cases involved reluctant sponsors. Almost 30% of cases were linked to London. There were cases linked to 13 of the 32 London boroughs.

Somalia¹¹ (*including cases in Somaliland*)

The number of Somali cases (46 cases) reported to the FMU in 2018 has decreased by around a half compared with 2017 (91 cases). Despite this, the number of cases is still higher than in the years before 2017. There is a heightened risk in these cases, as 50% of the victims are overseas when contact with FMU is made. Over 50% of cases are linked to London, with cases linked to 15 of the 32 London boroughs.

Afghanistan

The number of cases linked to Afghanistan (44 cases) in 2018 more than doubled compared with 2017 (19 cases). However, cases were of a similar level compared with 2011-2016. Victims linked to Afghanistan were more likely to be aged 16 -21 compared with those from other countries. Over 50% of cases were linked to London, with cases linked to 16 of the 32 London boroughs.

Romania

In 2018, the FMU supported 43 cases linked to Romania, which is more than the total number of cases across the years 2011-2017. Victims in these cases were significantly younger than for other countries, with nearly 80% aged 15 and under.

¹¹ The British Embassy in Mogadishu is unable to provide consular assistance. Assistance to forced marriage victims is provided via Nairobi.

The risk in these cases was higher than in other cases, as a higher proportion (compared to all cases) of victims were overseas when the FMU was contacted. These cases were also complex as they involved EU nationals who were resident in the UK. As the UK can only provide consular assistance to British nationals overseas, other provisions were found to support these victims. Almost 40% of Romanian cases were linked to Leeds.

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.