



**modern
slavery
helpline**

MODERN SLAVERY IN CAR WASHES

A VIEW FROM UNSEEN'S MODERN SLAVERY HELPLINE

The following report is based on calls and online reports to Unseen's UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline, relating to labour exploitation in car washes between October 2016 and June 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unseen's Modern Slavery Helpline received 326 calls and 147 webforms regarding modern slavery in car washes in the 21 months between launching in October 2016 and June 2018. 360 cases of modern slavery in car washes were recorded, indicating 2,170 potential victims. On these cases, the helpline made 401 referrals to outside agencies, such as police, local authorities or the GLAA.



326

Calls



147

Webforms



360

Cases of Modern Slavery at Car Washes



2,170

Potential Victims



401

Referrals



Unseen's Modern Slavery Helpline received reports of **360 cases** of modern slavery in car washes across the UK in the 21 months between its launch in October 2016 and June 2018. These 360 cases of exploitation in car washes comprise **15% of the Helpline's total modern slavery cases** opened during these 21 months.

The Helpline received **326 calls and 147 webforms** describing modern slavery at car washes, indicating 2,170 potential victims (PVs). Potential victims reported to be exploited in car washes make up **23% of the total number of potential modern slavery victims indicated** on modern slavery cases opened by the Helpline between October 2016 and June 2018.

Of these 360 cases, 88.3% (318 cases) were classified as **forced labour**, with no movement reported, and 11.6% (42 cases) were classified as **human trafficking**, where movement of the workers was reported.

52% of cases (187) involved contacts who had **observed suspicious activity** at a car wash. 34% (123 cases) involved callers who were in **direct contact with a PV**, predominantly from members of the public who may have used the car wash themselves. 9% (31 cases) were from people in **indirect contact with a PV**, while 1% (5 cases) involved a call from a **PV self-reporting**. Accordingly, this report demonstrates the importance of efforts to inform the public of common indicators or signs of labour exploitation in car washes so that reports can be made to the Helpline, which could lead to a potential victim's safety and facilitate key prevention efforts.

Regarding **location**, the highest number, 48 cases (13.3%), were within the Greater London area, policed by the Metropolitan Police Service. Accordingly, this region also held the highest number of PVs indicated, totalling 266.

Of the 2,170 PVs indicated by the Helpline, 72% were **men** (1,568 PVs), 6% were **women** (140 PVs), while gender was recorded as unknown for the remaining 21% (462 PVs), as the Helpline Adviser was not provided with this information.

76% of PVs were indicated to be **adults** aged 18 or above (1,655). Only 2% (46 PVs) were indicated to be **minors** below the age of 18, and for 22% (469 PVs) the age was recorded as unknown.

The most common known age bracket for PVs was **18-24 years old**, with 9% (200 PVs) indicated, followed by 25-34 years old, with 7% (159 PVs). This reflects a general trend that younger male adults tend to be reported to be the victims of modern slavery in cases of labour exploitation.

17% (371 PVs) were indicated to be **Romanian**, making this the highest reported nationality. Albanian (53 PVs, 2.44%), Polish (45 PVs, 2.07%), and Vietnamese (36 PVs, 1.66%) were the next most common nationalities recorded. Six PVs were reported to be from the UK (0.2%).

This report also highlights the importance of collaboration across sectors – between NGOs, police, wider enforcement bodies, and members of the public. When people know the signs, spot them and call the Helpline, appropriate questions, risk assessments and referrals can lead to better identification and protection of victims and improved prevention activity.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide data on exploitation reported to be occurring in car washes across the UK, as communicated to Unseen's Modern Slavery Helpline from its launch in October 2016 to the end of June 2018.

This report aims to: raise awareness of the prevalence of modern slavery in car washes among members of the public, statutory agencies and frontline professionals; to share key aggregate data with government policy-makers; to demonstrate the impact of reports and resulting actions taken by the Helpline through successful case outcomes; and to highlight reports within this industry for various sectors addressing modern slavery in the UK, such as police, the GLAA, government agencies, and other NGOs in order to better inform efforts geared towards prevention and protection of victims.

This is the second report published by the Modern Slavery Helpline focussed on car washes, with the first being released in November 2017.

There are 10,000-20,000 hand car washes reported to be in the UK, many of which are located on petrol station forecourts or busy car parks. While many of these are legitimate, the fact that car washes are common sites of exploitation is increasingly in the public discourse. In media and awareness campaigns, car washes are commonly cited as one of the most prevalent locations of labour exploitation in the UK.

As presented in the Modern Slavery Helpline's 2017 Annual Assessment, car washes were the most common location or industry for modern slavery cases of forced labour or labour exploitation reported to the Helpline. In 2017, 194 modern slavery cases were reported relating to potential exploitation of workers in car washes. This is 27% of all labour exploitation cases recorded by the Helpline last year.

The Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre was launched in October 2016. It is a 24/7 helpline, open every day of the year. The Helpline is free to call, independent and confidential; callers need not provide their name or details if they prefer not to do so. On calls, Helpline Advisors - who have received extensive specialist training - ask strategic questions to gather crucial information to make a risk assessment and form a case response, which may include signposting, safety planning, or sending a referral to police, local authorities, or other NGOs.

The Helpline is operated by Unseen, an award-winning UK-wide national charity working towards a world without slavery. Unseen also runs safe houses for men, women and children who are survivors of trafficking, and works with the police, health workers, government, businesses, and others to help prevent and protect against exploitation.

As demonstrated by more than 400 referrals on Helpline car wash cases to third parties such as local police, local authorities and the GLAA, the Helpline works in close collaboration with investigative agencies, sharing key information that, in many cases, leads directly to successful interventions and recovery of victims.

The statistics presented in this report demonstrate the growing public awareness of modern slavery occurring in car washes, the increasing understanding of the role of the Modern Slavery Helpline, and the benefit of technology such as smartphone apps to remind individuals of the signs of exploitation and to facilitate reporting suspicions to the Helpline.

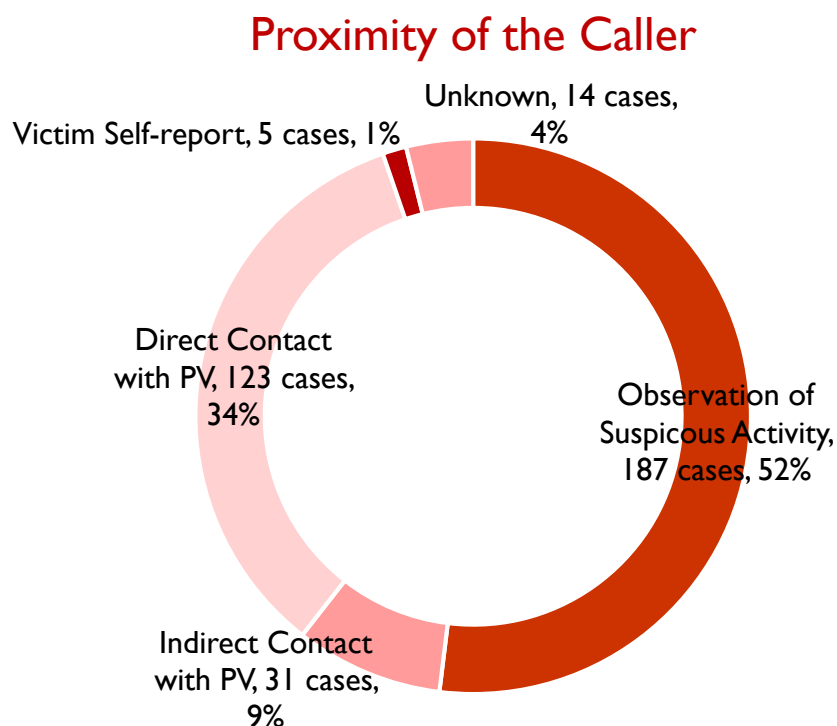
CALLER PROXIMITY TO THE POTENTIAL VICTIM

The Modern Slavery Helpline receives reports about modern slavery in car washes from a range of sources. This can sometimes be from the PVs themselves, more often from people in contact with PVs, and most frequently from individuals who may have spotted signs of labour abuse or exploitation when using a car wash. Signs such as workers not having protective clothing or proper equipment, or the cost of the car wash being extremely cheap, or the workers being unable to handle payments for services are often cited.

Cases originating from individuals who had observed suspicious activity, without speaking to a PV, made up 52% of cases (187 cases). 36% (123 cases) involved a call or webform from someone who had been in direct contact with the PV; this was frequently the case when customers personally visited a car wash, interacted with the workers and then reported indicators of modern slavery to the Helpline.

9% (31 cases) involved contacts to the Helpline from people in indirect contact with a PV, for example if a friend, colleague or manager called the Helpline to report what they been told by someone who had been or was in direct contact with a PV.

Only 1% of cases (five cases) were from a PV self-reporting to the Helpline. The low proportion of PV self-reports may be for a number of reasons including inability to call the Helpline, fear of reporting their situation or that they do not perceive themselves to be in a position of modern slavery, for example.



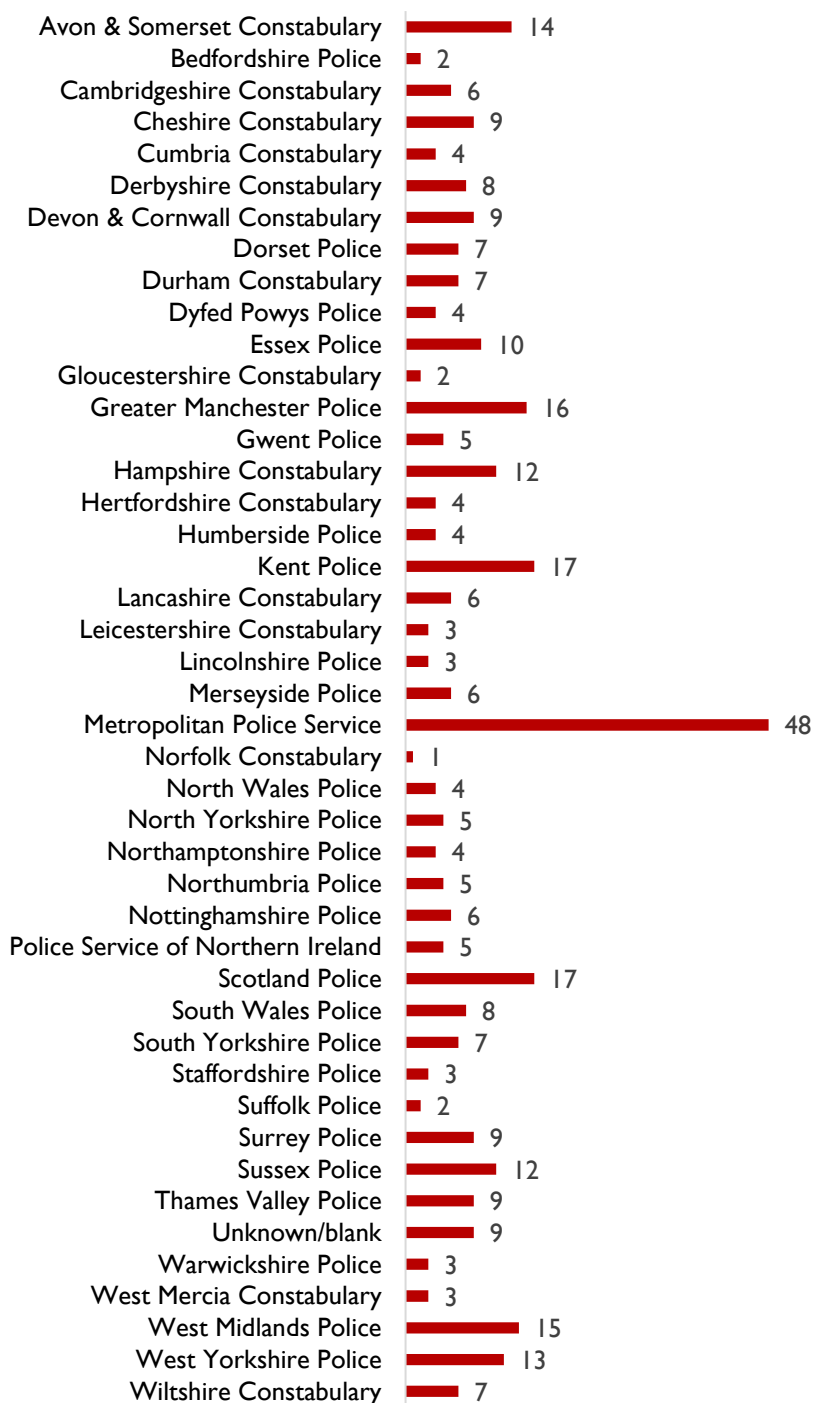
GEOGRAPHICAL BREAKDOWN

The Helpline received reports of modern slavery in car washes from every UK country - England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There were 17 cases indicating 121 PVs reported to be exploited in Scotland, 20 cases in Wales indicating 106 PVs, and five cases reported in Northern Ireland indicating 39 PVs. Exploitation was reported in 316 modern slavery car wash cases in England, indicated 1896 PVs.

The greatest number of car wash cases reported to the Helpline were from the London area under the remit of the Metropolitan Police Service, which had 48 cases of modern slavery indicating 266 PVs. The following table shows cases by police force area across the UK. One case may be counted in two counties, as one case may involve exploitation across more than one police force area. There were nine cases reported where the location of the car wash was unknown.

There was a strong correlation between the number of modern slavery cases and the number of PVs by region. The highest number of PVs indicated was 266, within the Metropolitan Police Service force area. Other areas with over 100 PVs indicated are: Avon &

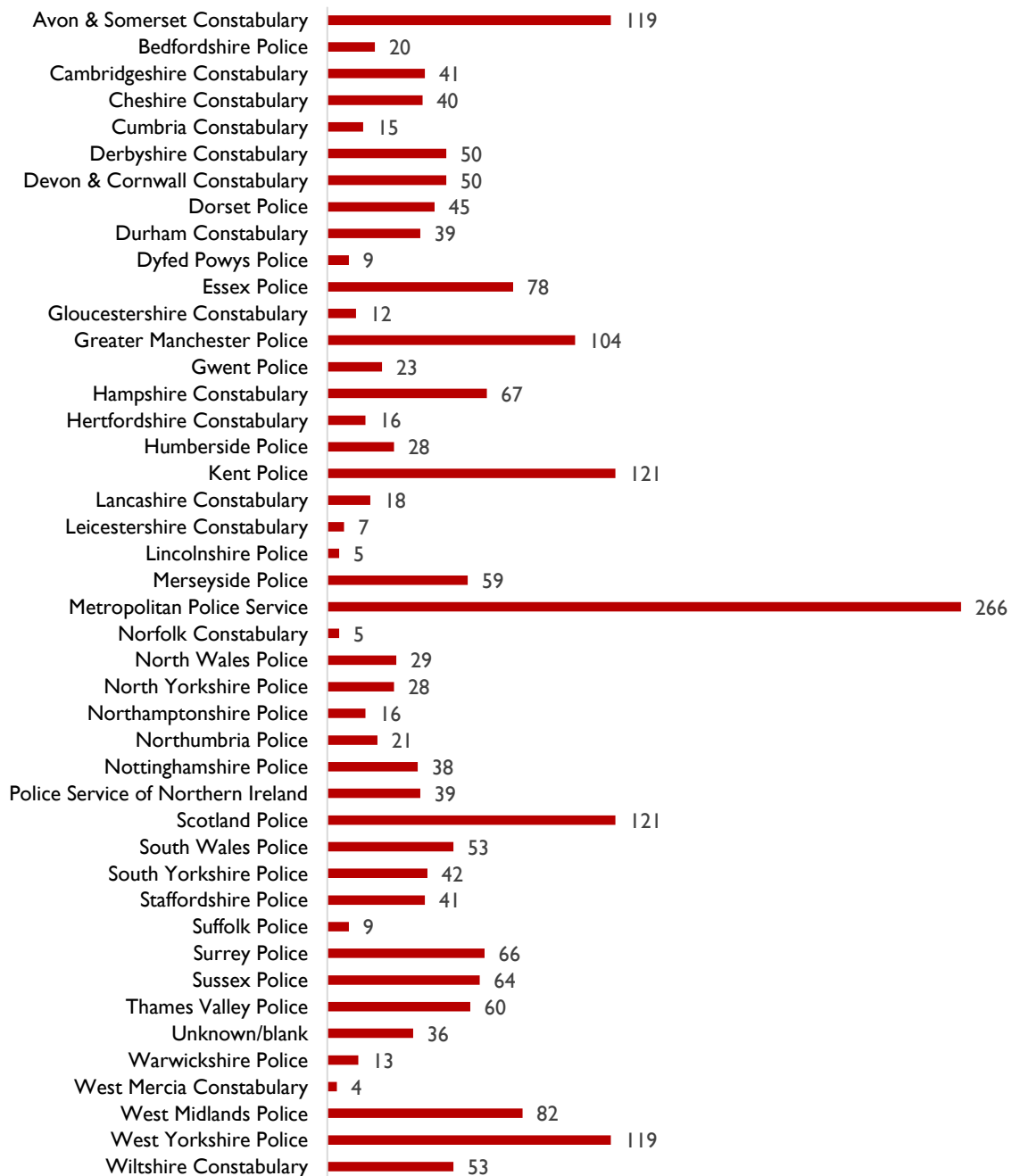
LOCATION OF MODERN SLAVERY CAR WASH CASES BY POLICE FORCE REGION



Somerset (119), Greater Manchester (104), Kent (120), Scotland (121) and West Yorkshire (119).

There is often more than one PV reported to be exploited at a single car wash or within a single case. The Helpline records the most conservative number with respect to indicated PVs, so if a caller says 5-10 workers, the Helpline records 5; similarly, if a caller does not state a number of PVs observed at a work site but indicates that there is more than one PV, the number of PVs will be recorded as two.

POTENTIAL VICTIMS INDICATED BY POLICE FORCE REGION

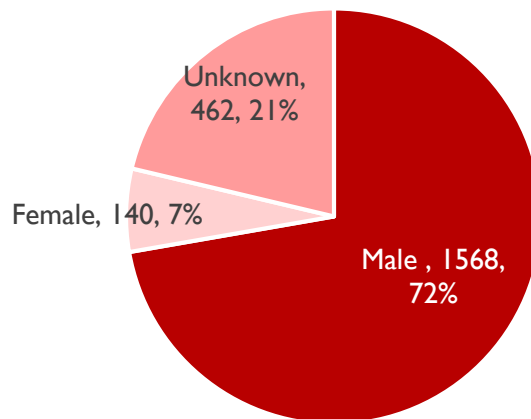


POTENTIAL VICTIM DEMOGRAPHICS

PVs of labour exploitation, including in car washes, seem to predominately be young adult men. While there are indications of women and minors working at car washes, the majority of reports of PVs were of male adults aged between 18-34.

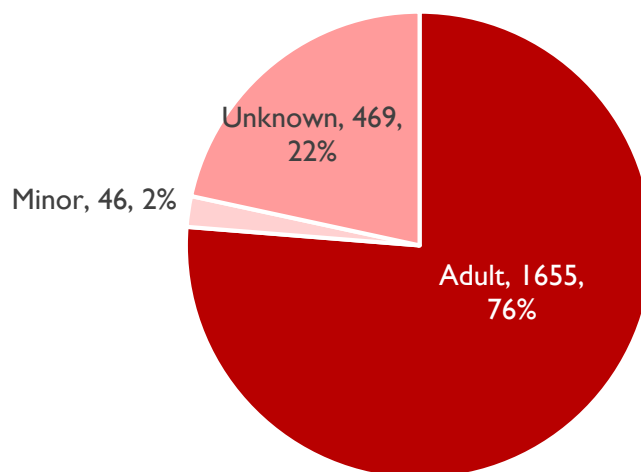
72% (1,568 PVs) were reported to be males. This is over ten times the number of women (140) reported to be PVs in car washes.

GENDER OF POTENTIAL VICTIMS



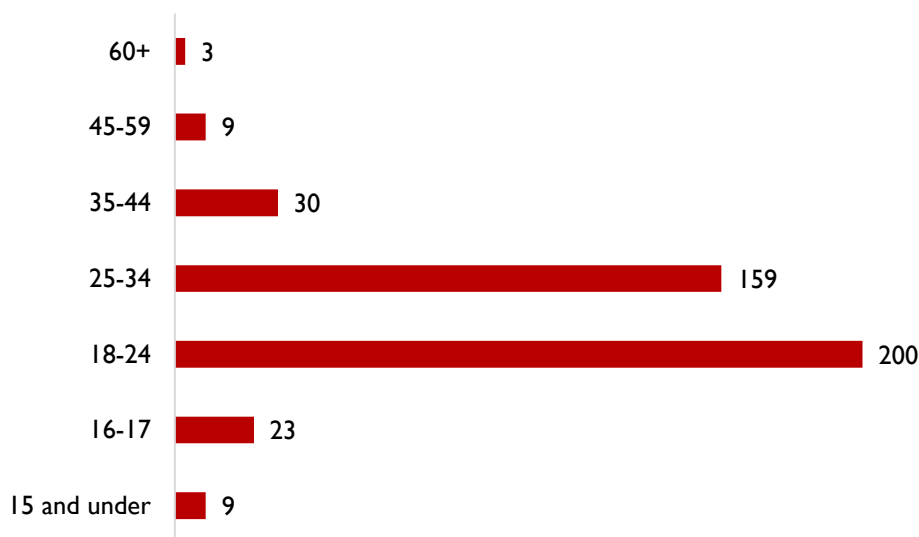
76% (1,655) of PVs were reported to be adults aged 18 and above, while only 2% (46 PVs) were reported to be minors below the age of 18. This could be due to the physicality of the work and the likelihood that adults were targeted as better suited to the work than minors. There were 469 PVs indicated where it was unknown whether they were adults or minors, which often occurs when the contact observed suspicious activity from afar or a customer was unsure of the age of the PV(s).

AGE OF POTENTIAL VICTIMS



More specifically, the most common PV age brackets reported were 18-24 and 25-34. There were 200 PVs reportedly aged between 18-24 and 159 observed to be between 25-34, indicating that young adults are the most likely demographic to be exploited in car washes. Of the minor PVs indicated, nine PVs were reported to be particularly young, aged 15 or below. Three PVs were reported to be over 60 years old. 80% (1,737 PVs) were recorded under an unknown age bracket, even if adult versus minor was reported, as callers often do not know the exact age of observed workers or have not been able to observe closely enough to provide an estimated age range.

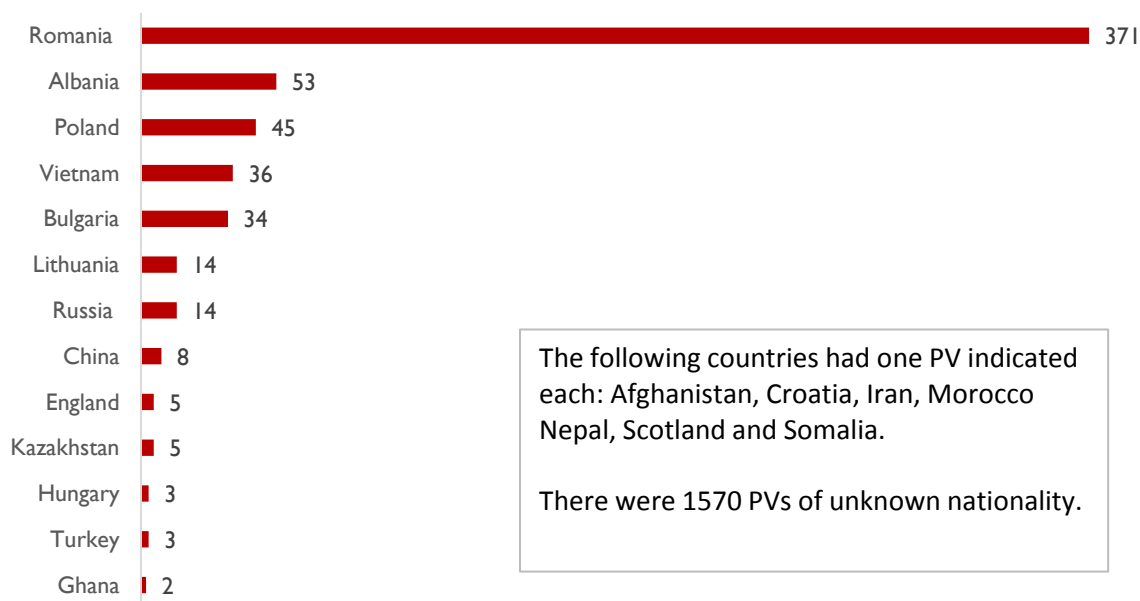
AGE BRACKETS OF POTENTIAL VICTIMS



The Helpline’s 2017 Annual Assessment showed 94 different nationalities had been reported over that year. Here with car washes, only 13 different nationalities were specifically recorded, and for 72% of PVs (1,569), the nationality is unknown. This is likely due to the caller not knowing nationalities of the workers observed. Additionally, if a caller indicates a region but is unable name a specific country of origin, such as when a caller believes the PV to be ‘Eastern European’, the nationalities of those respective PVs would be recorded as ‘unknown’.

The most prevalent known PV nationality was Romanian, with 371 (17%). The Helpline’s 2017 Annual Assessment also showed Romanian to be the most common known nationality, with 17% of PVs when looking at all types of modern slavery not only car washes reported that year. Similarly, Albanian, Polish, Vietnamese, and Bulgarian PVs were reported as more common nationalities of PVs in car washes, and, again, each of these nationalities were in the ten most common nationalities in the Helpline’s 2017 Annual Assessment. Five of the car wash PVs were indicated as English and one indicated as Scottish, demonstrating that although the figures are low, it is not only victims from overseas who are being exploited in UK car washes. The following table shows the recorded nationalities of PVs.

NATIONALITIES OF POTENTIAL VICTIMS



IMPACT OF COLLABORATION

As demonstrated by the 401 referrals made to third parties such as local police, local authorities and the GLAA since launch to the end of June 2018 on modern slavery cases in car washes, the Helpline prioritises collaboration with key partners with the aim of facilitating quick, accurate identification of victims, sharing information to further investigations and effective prevention efforts, and improving access to services for victims. In making referrals, the Helpline follows a victim-centred approach, listening to the wishes of potential adult victims who communicate that intervention would not be welcomed at that time. The Helpline routinely conducts risk assessments, noting risks to the caller, victims or victims' families and loved ones, the local community, and police or enforcement bodies.

The Helpline welcomed a [post from the GLAA in late June](#), reporting action taken by the GLAA and Greater Manchester Police at a car wash in south Manchester to ensure national minimum wage was being paid to the workers after a Helpline referral indicated potential exploitation of 10 workers, a case believed to have resulted from an anonymous tip off to the Helpline.

The following case study highlights how Helpline staff work with a range of callers including members of the public and victims themselves, to gather key information and work collaboratively with referring agencies to ensure victims are able to leave situations of slavery and reach a place of safety.

Case Study

The Modern Slavery Helpline received a call from an anonymous individual asking if the Helpline had interpreters available to speak to potential victims. The Helpline Advisor informed the caller that this service was available and suggested that the caller inform any potential victims of concern that they are welcome to call and would be able to communicate in their native language.

An Embassy then called the Helpline and listed some concerning elements of potential labour abuse or exploitation in a car wash and asked if the Helpline could contact the four potential victims of modern slavery to offer support. The Helpline later received a call directly from one of the victims and with the help of an interpreter understood that the caller wanted immediate help.

The Helpline Advisor spoke at length with the caller providing emotional support and noting clear signs of human trafficking for labour exploitation in a car wash. The job had been advertised on the internet, and the employer had organised transportation of the workers into the UK. The PV reported that they were living in a bug-infested house provided by their employers that was cold, as the employer had switched off the heating.

The caller reported that the potential traffickers transported them to a car wash in a rural location seven days a week to work 10-14 hours a day. The PVs were not paid and therefore could not afford electricity or food. The victims were fearful of the traffickers and unhappy with their situation, open to working with police and wanted to leave that day, after usual business hours, which was their only window of opportunity.

The Helpline Advisor called 101 to report the incident to the police and arranged a safe meeting point for the victims to be picked up by the police. Over several hours late at night, the Helpline continued to offer support on multiple calls with the PVs and local police, liaising to ensure that they reached the location safely and were met by the police.

The local police reported back to the Helpline that all of the victims consented to enter the National Referral Mechanism, the UK's system for identifying and supporting survivors of trafficking and slavery, and they were subsequently placed into safe accommodation by The Salvation Army.

Collaboration with other NGOs is also extremely effective. In June 2018, the Church of England's Clewer Initiative for modern slavery released the 'Safe Car Wash' app, in partnership with the National Crime Agency, the Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, the National Police Chiefs' Council, and the Local Government Association. The app is designed to be used by members of the public when using a hand car wash. The app asks the user a series of questions related to the indicators of modern slavery. If there is a likelihood that modern slavery is occurring in the hand car wash based on the entered answers, the user is asked to report their concerns to the Modern Slavery Helpline.

Within the first month of the app's release, 11 modern slavery cases in car washes were opened from callers that were encouraged to make a report through their interaction with the 'Safe Car Wash' app. These 11 cases indicated 69 potential victims of labour exploitation in car washes. An additional five cases of potential labour abuse in car washes, regarding concerns around working conditions, were reported. These cases might never have been recognised or reported without the Safe Car Wash app, pointing to the effectiveness of innovations such as this and the importance of collaboration.

The Lord Bishop of Derby, the Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern, Chair of The Clewer Initiative said

'When The Clewer Initiative and our partners launched the Safe Car Wash App we were hoping to raise awareness of modern slavery amongst the general public and help law enforcement tackle it. I am pleased to see that only a month after the launch we are already seeing fruit from our efforts, with several reports to the Modern Slavery Helpline as a result. However, I know there may be many more people being exploited in this area. I encourage everyone to download the app and use it, so we can bring an end to this problem for good.'

Having a number of channels available for people to contact the Helpline is important. That is why Unseen is launching a new Unseen app which is linked directly to the Helpline and is available to everyone to report all types of modern slavery.

INDICATORS

As the majority of car wash cases reported to the Helpline are from members of the public providing a tip-off, it is important that everyone knows how to spot the signs of modern slavery in car washes.

As published in November 2017 in the Helpline's initial report regarding forced labour in car washes, the table below sets out eleven common indicators of labour exploitation at a car wash, and what to look out for. Although a number of the above indicators may be observed in combination, one indicator is enough to justify calling or sending a web report to the Helpline, as the others may be present but not immediately evident. Trained Advisors will walk through these common indicators on calls to ensure that the relevant information is communicated and recorded

Indicator	What to Look Out For
The workers do not have the proper equipment for the job	Look out especially for workers not wearing protective gloves, waterproof boots, or goggles.
The cost of a wash seems excessively low	How many workers are washing the car? How much are they being paid for the wash? Even assuming that the money is being fairly distributed amongst the workers (and not pocketed by an exploiter), how many cars an hour/day would the workers have to wash in order to be making the minimum wage?
The car wash has recently 'popped up', and may soon close down or move to another location	A car wash suddenly appearing from nowhere, and vanishing just as quickly, could indicate that an exploiter is maximising an opportunity to make a quick profit. By frequently moving their victims, exploiters are able to keep them isolated and under control.
The workers live on, or very close to, the car wash site	Exploiters often provide their victims with low-quality accommodation, yet force them to pay rent for it. Look out for makeshift accommodation being set up on-site.
At the start of their shift, the workers get dropped off in a group at the car wash site, and at the end of their shift they get picked up in a group from the car wash site	Not all victims of labour exploitation in car washes live on-site. Look out for groups of workers being dropped off and picked up at the start and end of their shifts. The exploiter could be providing low-quality accommodation elsewhere.
The workers work excessively long hours	Is the car wash open long hours? Do the workers seem to work long hours, without sufficient breaks? Look out for workers working excessively long hours – this could well be a sign that they are being exploited. Also, look out for sites that have no break room. For example, in one case that was reported to the Helpline, the victims took their break in a makeshift shed whilst sitting on cardboard boxes.
The workers are of Eastern European origin. Many Romanians, in particular, are exploited at car washes	It is true that many Eastern Europeans come to the UK to work in car washes. But do not assume that if the workers are not Eastern European things must be fine – still, keep an eye out for all the other indicators.
The car wash only accepts cash	This could be a sign that the money is going straight into the pocket of an exploiter. Beware of cash-only car washes.
The car wash operates a 'pay the manager only' system	Again, this could be a sign that the money is going straight into the pocket of an exploiter. The workers may not be seeing a penny of customers' money. Look out for car washes where only the manager collects payments. Some Helpline cases include reports that the worker was not allowed to receive or keep tips.

<p>Presence of an intimidating 'manager'</p>	<p>Are there one or more individuals who seem to be controlling things? Do they appear to be monitoring the workers, and intimidating them? Do the workers appear to fear their manager? Are they unable to converse freely with customers? Even if no visible physical abuse is taking place, the presence of such an individual, or individuals, could be a sign that the workers at that car wash are being controlled and exploited. Keep an eye out for intimidating managers.</p>
<p>The workers display concerning body language</p>	<p>Victims of modern slavery undergo tremendous emotional turmoil, and this very often manifests on the outside. Look out for body language that suggest that the workers are fearful, withdrawn, intimidated, or subdued.</p>

CONCLUSION

Car washes continue to be one of the most commonly reported sectors of labour exploitation. As evidenced in the tables above listing cases by police force areas, modern slavery car wash cases are widespread across the UK, and reports were received from every country of the UK.

With media coverage, specific campaigns, apps and reports such as this one, the general public, frontline workers and statutory agencies seem to be becoming more aware of the potential of encountering labour exploitation in one of the 10,000-20,000 car washes in the UK. Signs that workers may be exploited include little or no pay, lack of protective clothing, long hours, physical and emotional abuse, transportation to and from work, and poor accommodation, sometimes on site.

Collaboration is key to ending modern slavery in car washes. It is important that the public, frontline workers such as police, and others who pass by or visit car washes are vigilant for any of the indicators of modern slavery, and report any suspicions to Unseen's Modern Slavery Helpline.

Disclaimer: This report represents a summary of the calls received into the UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre regarding forced labour/labour exploitation in car washes across the UK between 10 October 2016 and 30 June 2018. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of modern slavery in car washes in the UK. The number of potential modern slavery cases and potential victims indicated are based on the information provided to the Helpline at the time of contact. The Helpline does not corroborate or seek to prove the information provided.