

# REFLECTING ON THE 2024 EUROSTAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING DATA

The **2024 Eurostat human trafficking statistics** - published in January 2026 - provide an important insight into the scale, patterns and trends of human trafficking across the EU and allow for comparison across EU Member States, as well as for comparison with La Strada International (LSI)'s **Data Report 2024**, based on the information reported by our members.

When compared with our members' statistical data for the same year, both similarities and differences emerge. According to Eurostat, **9,678 victims of trafficking** were registered across the EU in 2024, marking an **8% decrease** compared to the previous year. Interestingly, data received from our members show instead an increase in the number of registered victims. LSI members registered a **total of 6,372<sup>1</sup>(presumed) victims, with 5,785 persons being recorded within the EU<sup>2</sup>**. This represents a **4,5% increase** compared to the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

Looking at Eurostat country-level data, Bulgaria and Austria reported in 2024 a decrease in the number of registered victims, while LSI members in the same countries reported an increase in assisted persons. One reason for this could be the distinct data collection approaches. Eurostat data is based on information provided by national authorities, and the reporting depends on national definitions, procedures and recording practices. For example, some countries partially include presumed victims while others only include formally assisted victims when reporting the cases to Eurostat. LSI data, by contrast, draws on the figures provided by organisations based on the people that have been referred and assisted by them with indications of human trafficking, but who are not necessarily already formally identified.

<sup>1</sup> This total is higher than the figure presented in the latest LSI data report, as it includes additional country-wide statistics provided by one of our member organisations. Excluding this additional data, the total would amount to 5,451 persons (as previously reported).

<sup>2</sup> The number is based on 16 organisations, covering 14 EU countries. Two of these organisations record country-level data and the number of assisted persons excludes these figures.

<sup>3</sup> The percentage is calculated comparing the figures reported by the same organisations (16 EU-based members) in 2023 and in 2024.

A further observation from the country-level Eurostat data is that in some Member States, reported decreases between 2023 and 2024 show only very small numerical differences. In four countries, the change amounted to a difference of just one to four cases. For example, in Austria, 434 victims were registered in 2024 compared to 436 in 2023. While such variations are statistically recorded as decreases or increases, they represent minimal changes in absolute terms and should therefore be interpreted with caution when assessing broader trends.

## Forms of Exploitation

Both Eurostat and LSI data confirm that **sexual exploitation remains the most prevalent form** of human trafficking cases registered, followed by labour exploitation. According to Eurostat, in 2024 sexual exploitation accounted for 46% of cases, labour exploitation for 37%, and other forms for 16%. Compared to 2023 (43.8% sexual exploitation, 36% labour exploitation and 20.2% other forms), this reflects in fact a slight increase in both sexual and labour exploitation and a decrease in other forms.

In 2024, the number of countries where labour exploitation is the dominant form increased while the number of countries where this was sexual exploitation decreased. Country-level data reported by Eurostat further explains that in 2024, sexual exploitation was the dominant form in 12 Member States, labour exploitation in 9, and other forms in 2. In comparison in 2023, sexual exploitation was predominant in 16 countries, labour exploitation in 6, and other forms in 3.

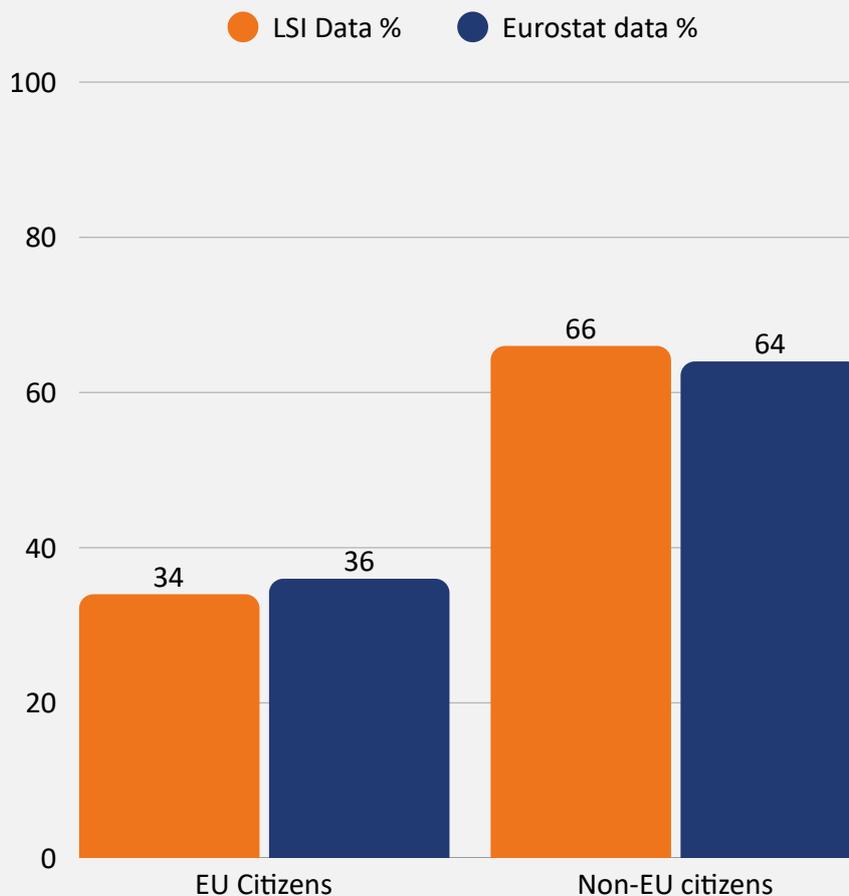
For 2024, Eurostat disaggregates trafficking data primarily into two categories: sexual exploitation (trafficking for the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation) and labour exploitation (forced labour or services etc.). All other forms falling under the EU's definition of human trafficking are grouped under a broad 'other' category, including criminal exploitation, organ removal, the exploitation of surrogacy, forced marriage and/or of illegal adoption. Reporting on the latter three forms may improve following the transposition of the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, which explicitly includes them in the amended definition and introduces a binding obligation for Member States to report on these forms from 15 July 2026.

LSI members, however, already reported a few cases of exploitation of forced marriage in three EU countries and exploitation of illegal adoption in one EU country. Two cases of the exploitation of surrogacy were reported in 2024, but this was in a non-EU country.

LSI data further provides insight into **sectors affected by labour exploitation**, with the highest numbers of exploitation being noted in domestic work and care, agriculture, construction, hospitality, transport, and (to a lesser extent) car washing, factory work and forestry. In their 2024 report, Eurostat does not provide this breakdown.

## Victim Demographics

Eurostat, as well as LSI, show that **the majority of registered victims are third-country nationals (TCNs)**. The former reports that 64% of registered victims were non-EU citizens, a figure closely mirrored in LSI data, where 66% of victims were TCNs. The most frequently reported non-EU nationalities by LSI members were Nigerian (with 353 assisted persons) and Colombian (with 258 assisted persons).



Looking at EU citizenship, Eurostat data<sup>4</sup> indicates that the highest number of registered victims were citizens of France (986) and Romania (586), while according to LSI figures, the most frequently assisted nationalities by our members were Dutch (289) and Romanian (201).

Gender patterns are also consistent across both datasets. Eurostat indicates that **63% of registered victims were women and girls**, while LSI reports 67%. At the same time, Eurostat data shows that in several Member States, including Portugal, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Cyprus and Croatia, more men than women were identified, while other countries reported similar numbers.

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat differentiates between EU and non-EU citizenship, although certain Member States report figures according to nationality. LSI data is collected on the basis of nationality.

LSI data further looks at **age distribution** and our members report to having assisted persons of all ages. However, the highest numbers of assisted persons fall under the age range 18-35 years old. Children and persons over 55 were also identified. This information is not provided by Eurostat in their 2024 overview.

## **Conclusions**

Together, Eurostat and LSI data confirm that **human trafficking practices remain widespread across the EU and beyond, with labour exploitation on the rise and women and migrants being disproportionately affected.** Both recognise that official figures likely underestimate the true scale, underscoring the need to strengthen identification systems combine institutional and civil society data in shaping effective responses.