3.13. Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: March 2026

This profile refers to persons who have been subjected to trafficking, irrespective of whether exploitation has occurred, as well as to potential victims of trafficking.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report: Country Focus 2025, 2.2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Nigeria ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2001 and enacted domestic legislation through the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, as amended in 2015.

Despite Nigeria's legal framework prohibiting trafficking in human beings, the practice remains widespread, and law enforcement remains limited. Nigeria ranks first among the nationalities of trafficking victims identified within the European Union. It remains a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in human beings. The practice affects women, men and children for various forms of exploitation. Trafficking occurs internally as well as transnationally, with individuals taken from Nigeria to African and European countries.

For the state response to victims of trafficking and information on the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) see 5.1. The Nigerian State under 5. Actors of protection.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Trafficking in human beings amounts to persecution. Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, street vending/begging, criminal exploitation including cybercrime, abduction, kidnap, rape, forced pregnancy in the context of 'baby factories' have been reported. There are also instances of market for infants and children and illegal adoptions. Trafficked individuals have been reported to be forced to work under coercion, and subjected to physical and psychological abuse, threats and enslavement-like conditions, while minors are kept in facilities where they face unsanitary conditions, neglect, and exposure to disease. Women and girls are primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation, while men and boys

are exploited in forced labour and illicit activities.

The actors involved in trafficking in human beings include organised criminal groups, confraternities, Boko Haram, family and community members, as well as individuals in religious settings. There are also instances of involvement of corrupt officials, security officers, and aid workers.

Other acts of violence by traffickers could also amount to persecution. A victim of trafficking may face persecution either by the same trafficker(s) or by a different trafficker(s).

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts to which victims of trafficking in human beings could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be considered. More specifically, victims of trafficking often experience discrimination, rejection or exclusion within their families and communities, particularly women associated with sexual exploitation, including those who become pregnant or have children. Economic hardship, social stigma, blame and shaming that, among other things, hinder access to employment, contribute to many victims returning to trafficking.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for applicants to face persecution in relation to trafficking should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Home area:** Recruiting for trafficking in human beings seems more prevalent in certain regions of Nigeria and therefore the risk of being (re-)trafficked would also be higher in these areas. In the North-East region, extremist groups like Boko Haram forcibly recruit, abduct, and exploit children and women as labourers, soldiers, or sex slaves. In Kaduna state a sect known as ACHAD Life Mission International is allegedly linked to trafficking in human beings' activities. Plateau State (North-Central region) has been recently described as a human trafficking hotspot, particularly for cases involving the trafficking of children. In southern states such as Abia, Lagos, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, the practice of 'baby-factories' is especially prevalent. Rural areas in southern regions are also the place of origin of victims mainly recruited for sex trafficking, forced labour, and 'baby-factories'. Most of the trafficking victims for sexual exploitation identified came from the southern region, especially Lagos, Edo and Delta states. Edo state and, in particular, Benin City, has been the central hub for sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe for the last decades.

- **Age, gender and family status:** Orphans, children and single women may face a higher risk of persecution.

- **Socio-economic and educational background:** Limited education, poverty and unemployment are factors that may put the individual at a higher risk of (re-)trafficking. IDPs are targets of traffickers.

- **Support network:** Lack of family or rejection by family, including due to shame associated with having been a victim of trafficking in human beings, may place individuals at a higher risk of persecution. This risk may also arise when family members themselves arranged the trafficking, and the victims have continued to provide them with financial support. Therefore, applicants whose family is involved in the trafficking would also be at a higher risk.

- **Level of power/capability of the traffickers:** Victims of trafficking who still have to pay off the debt or who are still on the radar of the trafficker may be at higher risk of persecution. An applicant who testified against or opposed to traffickers may also be at a higher risk of persecution.

- **Perception of the local community:** Returnees, especially women who experience social isolation within their community may be forced to return to trafficking.

- **Health situation:** Some victims experience severe physical and mental health issues after being trafficked. Such applicants may be more vulnerable to re-trafficking.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an **actual victim of trafficking**, this may be for reasons of **membership of particular social group**. For example, former victims of sex trafficking may be subjected to persecution based on their common background which cannot be changed (the past experience of having been trafficked) and a distinct identity in Nigeria, because they are perceived as being different by the surrounding society, as indicated by their stigmatisation.

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for a **potential victim of trafficking** in human beings, the individual circumstances, including gender, need to be taken into account to determine whether a nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated. Short of a nexus, the case should be examined under Article 15(b) QD/QR.



Exclusion considerations could be relevant to this profile. For example, some victims of human trafficking may have taken later the role of traffickers themselves and therefore, they may have been involved in excludable acts. See 7. Exclusion.

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