

Attitudes of law enforcers towards trafficking in human beings in Hungary¹

Abstract: Human trafficking tries to cover sexual, labour and other forms of exploitation as an umbrella term. The process of exploitation for different purposes involves the user, the victim, and the exploiters. In this study, we focus on the actors outside this process, who are nevertheless important in tackling the phenomenon: police officers, prosecutors and judges involved in trafficking. Hungarian law enforcers are not used to learning about their attitudes and formulating their own opinions about a particular phenomenon. However, being able to provide them with even more effective and appropriate training would be extremely important for the organisation and for the phenomenon itself. We have asked permission from the leaders of the different legal practitioners to conduct an attitude test among their staff. In this article we present a picture about the Hungarian situation of combating human trafficking and we summarise the results of the attitude tests.

Keywords: trafficking in human beings, police, prosecutor, judge, attitudes, Hungary

Introduction

Hungary is a small country in the heart of Europe, the total population is less than ten million. Trafficking in human beings is a widespread phenomenon in Hungary, but its research still faces difficulties, despite the fact that the number of crimes known to the authorities has increased significantly since 2019.

Trafficking in human beings is a complex phenomenon, the range of behaviours covered by this concept is manifold and so are the actors involved. The concept of trafficking in human beings covers sexual, labour and other forms of exploitation. The process of exploitation for different purposes involves the user, the victim and the exploiters. In the following, we focus on the actors outside this process, who are nevertheless important in tackling the phenomenon: those who can do a great deal to break this chain, to break the cycle, to “cleanse” the victims, to punish the perpetrators.

One of the common views on human trafficking in Hungary is that it is not a common phenomenon, not part of everyday Hungarian reality. This crime, although clearly originating

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in our country, the respondents believed it is only committed abroad (Sharapov 2019). The opposite is true in international public opinion: there are many Hungarian victims (mainly sex workers), and Hungarian criminal circles play a significant role in this crime. According to the estimates in the Global Slavery Index 2018, 36 thousand people lived in a slavery situation and this number nearly doubled in 2023, meaning 63 thousand enslaved people in Hungary (Global Slavery Index 2018; Global Slavery Index 2023). One of the main objectives of the awareness-raising training was to make it clear to domestic law enforcers that this phenomenon is also present within our borders, and that international “emergence” is typically preceded by domestic attempts (Human trafficking training 2020; Huszár, Windt 2020).

Within the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, which refers to the “human market” (and has since become difficult to separate from its original meaning), a distinction is made between exploitation for labour and so-called other purposes, in addition to sexual exploitation. Given the complexity, characteristics and constant changes in the phenomenon, it is of the utmost importance to carry out as much research as possible on trafficking in human beings in order to prevent, detect and combat it. Research on the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings is not easy, and its characteristics are often based on stereotypes rather than on reliable empirical research. However, the formulation of opinions based on research data is not only a Hungarian shortcoming (Goździak 2014; Weitzer 2014).

Two preconceptions should be mentioned in relation to “low” prosecution figures. One is the theory of a “culture of impunity” in relation to this phenomenon. Despite the commitments, impunity for perpetrators remains widespread, with only a small number of victims of trafficking ever receiving justice (OSCE 2020). Another explanation for the low number of cases is often given as the “attitude of the law enforcers”, the presence of victim-blaming attitudes.

Different research has been conducted related to human trafficking in Hungary since 2019. One of them was a totally new initiative: to know more about the perceptions and attitudes of law enforcers, in addition to measuring their knowledge on this phenomenon. We had opportunities to ask police officers, prosecutors and judges three different times between 2020 and 2022. Below is a brief summary of the results of the various studies conducted in 2020 and 2022. These have already been published separately, but comparing them is not a waste of time. Between 2020 and 2022, Hungary was not spared by the COVID-19 pandemic, which also affected the research methodology, so the questionnaires were typically completed online.

1. Trafficking in Human Beings in Hungary

1.1. Statistics on Human Trafficking

The GRETA expert group of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United States Office for the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings, among others, prepare reports on trafficking in human beings, for which the Hungarian authorities are required to provide data. These bodies formulate their opinions and recommendations on the practices in each country. The European Commission's October 2020 report includes data for 2017–2018: the number of victims in the 27 EU Member States was 14,145. Compared to the high number of victims, the Commission considers that the number of prosecutions and convictions of offenders was low. The top five EU Member States in terms of nationality of victims of trafficking in 2017–2018 in absolute terms were Romania, Hungary, France, the Netherlands and Bulgaria (Third Report 2020: 3).

The European Commission published the Forth Progress Report in connection with the 2011/36 EU Directive at the end of 2022 (Report 2022). The majority of victims were registered in 2019–2020 in France (2,709), in the Netherlands (2,318), in Italy (2,114), in Romania (1,294) and in Germany (1,271) (European Commission 2022: 1). In 2019–2020, 53% (7,330) of the registered victims with known citizenship were EU citizens. According to the number of victims proportionate to the population size: the most represented EU citizenships were Romania (1 out of 16,781), Bulgaria (1 out of 25,316), and Hungary (1 out of 59,242) (European Commission 2022: 8).

According to these data the Hungarian victims were fewer than ever before. Hungarian human trafficking involves mainly Hungarian nationals: on both the victims' and offenders' sides. The main purpose is sexual exploitation, but we have to mention that labour exploitation and forced crime has increased since 2020. Although across the EU, approximately 37% of all registered victims were citizens of the country in which they are registered, Hungary has the second highest rates of registering their own citizens (99%) (European Commission 2022: 9, 13). Sexual exploitation was the most frequent form of exploitation recorded for prosecuted individuals in Hungary (100%) (European Commission 2022: 14).

Despite the overall increase, the absolute number of prosecutions and convictions remains low, especially as compared to the number of registered victims and of suspects. In 2019–2020, 6,539 prosecutions and 3,019 convictions were recorded within the EU, while in

2021 the estimated number of prosecutions was 4,452 and the estimated number of convictions was 2,507 (Report 2022: 11).

In addition to the European Commission, the US Office on Trafficking in Persons produces an annual report on the phenomenon of trafficking in persons for each country, known as the TIP report. Despite the fact that there may be some critical comments on it (regarding its independence, careful and thorough analysis, Nelken 2010; Wooditch 2011; Hyatt 2022), it is necessary to quote it. Although Hungary is in Tier 2² because of its achievements in recent years, according to the US observers, the Hungarian government is not fully meeting the minimum standards for the eradication of trafficking in persons, despite significant efforts (TIP Report 2023: 83). They also state that there is a need to increase law enforcement and judicial efforts to detect, prosecute and convict perpetrators of some form of trafficking and to impose significant prison sentences. They stress the importance of the need to train law enforcement officials (including prosecutors and judges) on the seriousness of the crime and the irrelevance of the initial consent of the victims in proving the crime (TIP Report 2022: 273–274).

The role of victims is particularly important in trafficking cases. Criminal proceedings involving sexual and labour exploitation are “evidence poor”, with only personal evidence, including in many cases victim statements being available. The victim is (also) a particularly important actor in these cases: he or she can provide a lot of information that can help the investigating authority and the prosecution to establish criminal responsibility, including the gathering of further evidence. A cooperative and reliable victim witness can help the authorities in their work. However, it is also clear from the analysis of the cases (Windt 2021c) – both in cases of trafficking in human beings and in cases of exploitation of child prostitution – that some of the victims have an extremely low level of intellect (determined by an expert), and are therefore simply unable to give a coherent testimony, not only because of their attitudes. The physical and mental condition of the victim, as a result of the acts they have suffered, makes it even more difficult for them to give a comprehensive testimony.

1.2. Changes since 2019

In Hungary, the Ministry of Interior is responsible for coordinating the fight against trafficking in human beings. The Ministry's Deputy State Secretary for European Union and International Affairs is the national anti-trafficking coordinator, assisted by the Anti-Trafficking and

² Tier ranks are important for the different countries: there are four different placements according to the different countries' governments' efforts to meet the (American) Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000's (TVPA) minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking, which are generally consistent with the Palermo Protocol (See more: TIP 2022: 51–52).

Horizontal Affairs Unit.³ The Ministry of Interior has taken further steps to combat trafficking in human beings, reinforcing previous measures in 2019.

As we mentioned, a new countdown began in combating human trafficking in 2019 in Hungary, followed by the new anti-trafficking strategy and Act V of 2020 in 2020. This period coincided with the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is undisputed that the number of prosecutions was indeed low between the middle of 2013 and the beginning of 2019. The interpretation of the “vulnerable situation” in Article 192 of the Criminal Code (based on the 2011/36 EU Directive), the exploitation purpose and the assessment of the victim's voluntariness were indeed “misinterpreted” in the absence of uniform practice. However, in recognition of this, in October 2018, the Prosecutor General's Office issued a very important Guideline – No. KSB 3771/2018/5-I-NF. 3889/2014/11 – which provides the right interpretation of exploitation and vulnerable situations in the case of trafficking in human beings, the distinction from the crime of fencing, and the examination of the commission of the crime in a criminal organisation. This is a very important step towards ending precisely the above mentioned “culture of impunity.” This guideline has contributed significantly to the visible increase in the number of offences under the Criminal Code since 2019. 192 of the Criminal Code (Balogh, Huszár, Windt 2020; Huszár 2022, Report 2022: 9).

In order to analyse the judicial practice on the interpretation of human trafficking, the next important milestone was a supplementary guideline (KSB 3771/2018/45-II. - NF. 3889/2014/17-II.) issued in May 2019, which, in relation to the identification of victims , draws the attention of prosecutors to the fact that the treatment of these victims as persons in need of special treatment is most likely justified in most cases. The prosecutorial guidelines on the status, situation and protection of victims of exploitation, based on the indicators of Government Decree 354/2012 (XII. 13.), were incomplete. It was a decisive step towards the much-vaunted change of approach and the development of a victim-centred approach.

In the beginning of 2020, three major amendments were also made to Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code. The legal definitions of trafficking in human beings (Section 192) and forced labour (Section 193) were merged – a reasonable simplification of their regulation, since they are conceptually parts of the phenomenon (Windt 2021b).

The Prosecutor General's Office collected the experiences and different examples in the country after the changes in Criminal Code after 2020, and published the third guideline No.

³ For more information see: <https://thb.kormany.hu/>.

KSB.3771-2018-246-NF. 3889/2014/18 regarding the correct and common interpretation of the new parts of the Article 192 in order to unify jurisprudence in 2023.

By 2023, also partly due to the awareness-raising trainings, the perception of the crime and the phenomenon of human trafficking by law enforcement has changed significantly. Among many other things, this can be observed in the rise of criminal statistics: while in 2018 there were four registered trafficking offences in the Unified Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authority and the Prosecutor's Office (ENYÜBS), in 2020 there were 57, and in 2021 even more, almost tripling the number.

In addition to the changes in legislation and the number of training courses, another important event from 2020 onwards: the COVID-19 pandemic, was that the epidemic peaked in different waves and different efforts were made to contain its spread (Fisayo, Tsukagoshi 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the fight against trafficking in human beings in Hungary, but the processes that had barely begun have continued. The Hungarian characteristics of trafficking in human beings were slightly overshadowed by the first wave: the closure of brothels in Germany, Austria and Switzerland led to the return of Hungarian victims. In each wave, the protective measures mainly affected sexual exploitation: curfews and border closures.

2. Attitudes

Attitude is an important but not precisely defined term in social psychology. At the beginning of the 20th century, many researchers were concerned with attitude. In 1935, Gordon Allport put it this way: (Allport 1972: 179–198, 188) “Attitude is a mental and nervous state of readiness, organised through experience, which exerts a controlling or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations in relation to him” (Allport 1972: 188).

Social attitude is measured by the rejection or acceptance of evaluative statements, using a sequence of statements and responses to form a picture of the quality or intensity of evaluative attitudes (Halász, Hunyady, Marton 1979: 20). Attitude measurement is a way for empirical social research to gain access to the individual and social values inherent in evaluative attitudes. It is a fundamental factor in the understanding of social reality and in the shaping of knowledge (Halász, Hunyady, Marton 1979: 23–24). Attitudes are a product of individual life history, a function of previous experiences (Halász, Hunyady, Marton 1979: 27).

It should be stressed that the social environment has a decisive influence on the development of attitudes (Halász, Hunyady, Marton 1979: 122). Attitudes determine our behaviour towards an object, summarise our value judgments about it, and thus guide our behaviour and organise our way of knowing the world (Bencze, Vinnai 2012: 130).

2.1. Legal practitioners and their attitude

The professional attitude, attitude, professionalism and desire to improve of law enforcement officers (police, prosecutors and judges), as well as their personal attitude, influence their daily work. This impact is evident in their communication with the victim, during the investigation, in the prosecutor's instructions to the members of the investigating authority in each case, in their manner of supervising the proceedings, representing the prosecution, handling the aforementioned discretionary process, in the delivery of the judgement, despite the fact that they have acquired the principles of professionalism through regular professional training (see Gibson 1978).

Many US researchers have had the opportunity to examine the attitudes of law enforcement officers, particularly in relation to domestic violence, but their Hungarian colleagues did little to do so. Little is said about the attitudes of Hungarian law enforcers, the public's perception of their work is better known (for example: Garner 2005; Sun 2007; Gover, Pudrzynska, Dodge 2011; Gracia, García, Lila 2014).

Attitudes of law enforcers are rarely studied, although they are of paramount importance for both the internal and external perception of the organisation (Dianiska et al. 2022).

With regard to trafficking in human beings, it should be noted that, following the amendment of 1 July 2013, its application, in particular the assessment of the vulnerable situation and the development and/or maintenance of a uniform practice on its creation and/or maintenance, took a long time. It is not possible to list them in a taxonomy, each victim is different, and the law enforcers had to make a “judgement” (i.e. whether the act committed falls within the scope of the offence of fencing or trafficking in human beings) as No. IV. 37.088/2008/6 Supreme Court judgement says: “Discretion is the process whereby the legislator selects the most appropriate solution in a given case from among the provisions.”

However, in the cases of human trafficking, the decision of the legislator is based on their own experience and personality, in addition to the words of the Criminal Code. Little is said about these, although, in addition to professional knowledge, they are extremely important. If the legislator is not precise, if they do not use known and accepted legal concepts which are clear to the legislator and which have been developed in practice, they obviously have more

discretion. However, in the case of trafficking in human beings, the legislator also used to have a difficult task and used common terms, which were not well developed in Hungarian jurisprudence – deriving from international instruments – and which gave police officers, prosecutors and judges leeway, and which they used to apply a much clearer definition of the offence (e.g., fence, facilitation of prostitution instead of trafficking in human beings). So-called awareness-raising trainings have been initiated to develop a common practice among law enforcers, to understand the complexity of the trafficking phenomenon and to meet international standards.

The TIP report, the EU reports and the GRETA country evaluations have repeatedly underlined that the number of convictions in trafficking cases is low in Hungary, with relatively few resulting in custodial sentences, and even fewer in long prison sentences. It should be stressed, however, that this is not only a criticism of Hungarian law enforcement, but is also reflected in international experience.

It should also be mentioned that in many cases proceedings are prolonged for years, and then the passage of time is seen as a mitigating circumstance when the sentence is handed down. This practice also sends a bad message to the victim and society in general, since court judgements and case decisions send out an important message and attitude towards the crimes committed.

It is precisely the attitudes of legal practitioners outside the law, outside the legal framework, that the awareness-raising and sensitisation training sessions seek to nuance, by presenting the difficulties and successes of other professions, the problems of the victim, the challenges of victim support, by talking through common problems.

Three important characteristics can lead to modernity of an organisation: professionalism, social embeddedness and the willingness to innovate (Christián 2016: 221). But these also require managers to be familiar with the attitudes of the staff (Christián 2016: 221; Dianiska et al. 2022). We could add to this regarding human trafficking: proactivity, victim-centred approach and the knowledge of the different countries' experiences are also important (see Binder 2022).

2.2. Summaries of the attitude tests

Below is a brief summary of the results of the various studies conducted out in 2020 and 2022 with the answers of 1,106 law enforcers altogether (police officers, prosecutors, judges). These have already been published separately, but there is a good reason for summarising them in order to serve as a basis for further research at the national and international level.

Between 2020 and 2022, Hungary was not spared by the COVID-19 pandemic, which also affected the research methodology, so the questionnaires were typically completed online. The demographic part of the questionnaire, as well as the questions measuring attitudes, were the same for all professions, but we also asked about the impact of the pandemic in 2021 and added some specific professional questions for police officers (Windt 2023).

One of the main difficulties in examining the attitudes of legal practitioners is that, after the request for permission, the link to the questionnaire was distributed centrally within the organization, with no influence on the identity, number or composition of the respondents. In the autumn of 2019, an attitude training course based on the idea of the Head of the Anti-Trafficking and Horizontal Unit of the Ministry of Interior was developed, where police officers, prosecutors and judges worked on trafficking cases in small groups, following frontal presentations on the phenomenon and crime of trafficking in human beings. Following the first so-called pilot session in November 2019 (and the positive feedback) (Huszár, Windt 2020), the Ministry of Interior decided to continue these trainings in 2020 and 2021. In total, six training sessions were offered: four online and two face-to-face.

Participants were asked to complete an anonymous 13-question attitudinal questionnaire to measure their attitudes „before the trainings.” (Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to return and measure the respondents’ attitudes after the training.) A total of 90 participants (Police officers, prosecutors, judges) completed this questionnaire during the training sessions in 2020–2021 (Windt 2022).

As we mentioned earlier, the Prosecution Service played an important role in combating human trafficking in Hungary in the last few years. Besides the different guidelines, the Prosecutor General Office has organized a training for their own colleagues about human trafficking regarding its complexity since 2020. „Prosecutors” have special places in the criminal proceedings in Hungary, they are „mediators” among police and judges, they can direct and instruct police officers, and suspend terminations. They represent the prosecution in court. With the permission of the Prosecutor General, prior to the internal training of prosecutors on trafficking in human beings, two surveys were conducted in 2020 and 2021 with the prosecutors who participated in these trainings (with 189 and 65 respondents) (Windt 2021a).

In February–March 2022, we also sought the opinion of „police officers,” based on a slightly modified version of the questionnaire from previous surveys, with the permission of the ORFK Director General of Police and Crime. We received a total of 702 responses from police officers (525 patrols, 177 criminal investigators) (Windt 2023).

In spring 2022, the National Office of the Judiciary organised an online training for “judges” on human trafficking. The President of the National Judicial Council gave us permission to ask those who took part in an online training about human trafficking. The judges who participated in this training were also asked about human trafficking with presidential authorisation. 60 responses were sent to us.

The distribution of the four different data sets is shown in Table 1.

Table1 The distribution of the four surveys

	who (professionals)	when	numbers of respondents	how
1	attitude shaping trainings (Judges, prosecutors, police officers together)	2020-2022	90	
2	prosecutors	2020	189	online
	prosecutors	2021	65	online
3	police officers	2022	702	online
4	judges	2022	60	online

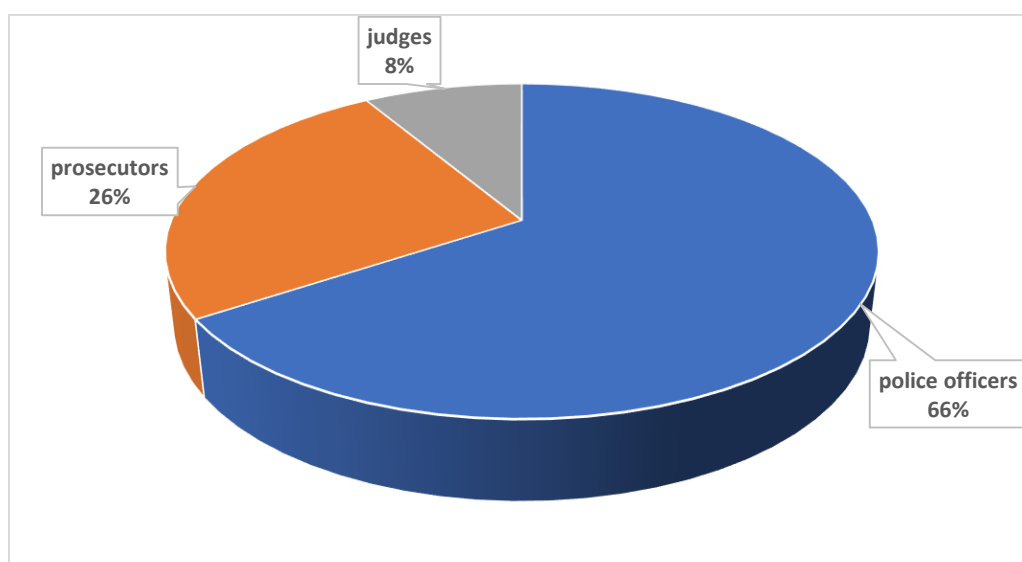
2.2.1. Characteristics of the total sample

In the different examinations, the questionnaires were based on the same questions, but we added some new ones for the various professionals (some special questions that only apply to police officers, or the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was only examined in the last year). After some questions about the respondent (gender, occupation, how long they have been working for the organization, have they ever participated in such training, have they ever had such a case), they had to respond to statements measuring their attitude.

For reasons of scope, we now only detail the attitudes regarding the statements that can be summarized after the descriptive characterization of the entire sample.

The total sample across the four surveys was 1,106 people, and I have briefly described the characteristics of each. In the total sample, 727 police officers, 284 prosecutors and 95 judges responded. (**Chart 1**)

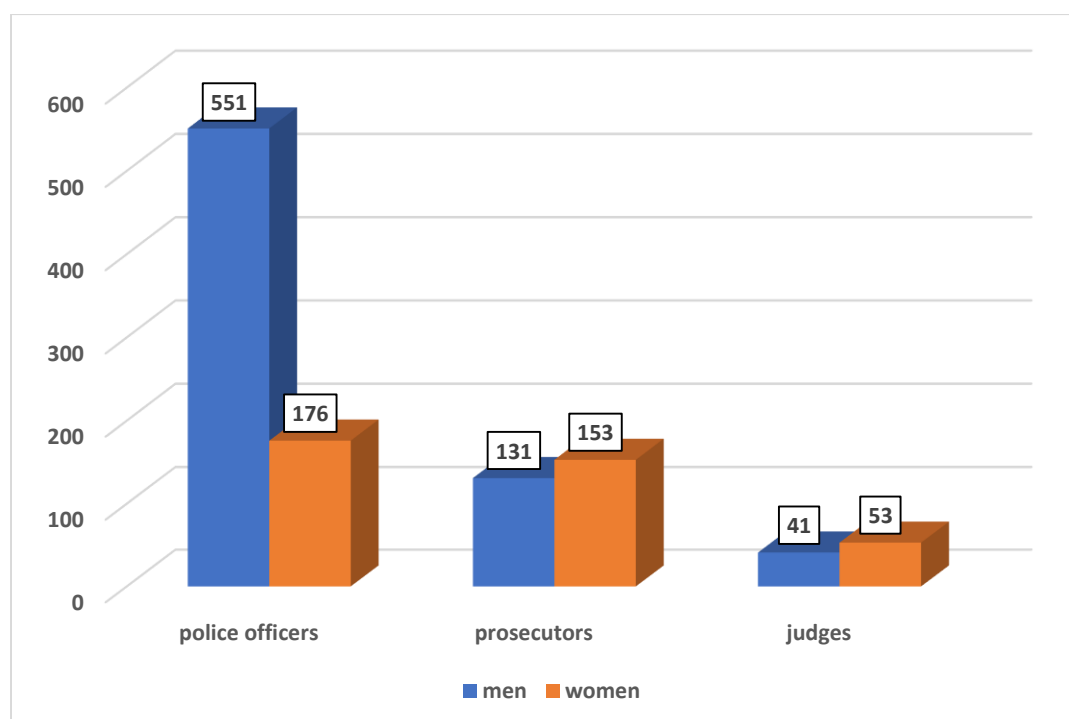
Chart 1 The distribution of professionals in the total sample



The gender and age group distribution of the respondents is noteworthy: although the study is not representative in any of the professions, a high number of those working for more than 15 years, as well as women prosecutors and judges, was typical.

Two thirds of respondents were men (723; 65,4%) and one third were women (382; 34,5%). As you can see, there were more women among the prosecutor and judge respondents.

Chart 2 The distribution of professionals by sex



The respondents could have had more experience, since 57,6% (637) of them had been working for their organisation for more than 15 years.

Table 2 How long they have been working at the time of the survey

	Frequency	Percent
less than 3 years	73	6,6
between 3-5 years	92	8,3
between 5-10 years	118	10,7
between 10-15 years	186	16,8
more than 15 years	637	57,6
Total	1106	100,0

In Hungary, 19 counties and the capital are the main territorial units, respondents came from all counties, with Budapest (the capital) being the largest (one fifth of the respondents), with a significant number of respondents who were reluctant to disclose their county in the anonymous questionnaire.

2.2.2. Attitudes of the respondents

Before developing the questionnaire, we formulated some hypotheses, distinguishing between the crime of trafficking and the phenomenon: we assumed that our respondents would have a more accurate view of the phenomenon of trafficking if they had already encountered such cases. The Article 192 of the Hungarian Criminal Code has recently come into focus due to international expectations and subsequent domestic reactions. Victim-blaming was not assumed to be common among responding law enforcers. Based on the results of previous studies on a different topic (fear of crime), every respondent considers their own county to be better, or those who have encountered such a case have a more realistic perception of the prevalence of the phenomenon in their county. Presumably, in the responses there is a significant difference among the attitudes of police officers and prosecutors and judges: in terms of their perception of the victim, their request for help and their willingness to volunteer. Attitudes are also influenced by whether the law enforcement officer has had such a case earlier.

In recent years, trafficking in human beings (section 192) has become overrated, there has been some feedback that trafficking in human beings has recently become a “hot topic”, although there was no reason for it – according to some opinions. As we see later, the judges (60) rejected this claim more than the representatives of other professions.

The aim of the attitude survey was to find out the opinions of the responding law enforcement officials (police officers, prosecutors, judges) on a total of five deliberately provocative statements related to human trafficking. They were asked to indicate their opinion

on the allegations using a six-point Likert scale: On a scale of 1 (disagree very strongly) to 6 (agree very strongly).

The five common provocative statements were:

1. Trafficking in human beings is not a widespread phenomenon in Hungary.
2. The latency rate for trafficking cases is very high.
3. Victims of human trafficking usually do not do their best to get out of their bad situation.
4. In most cases, the victims carry out their activities voluntarily.
5. How prevalent do you think the phenomenon of human trafficking is in your county?

The individual samples showed different results, the responses of the entire sample are shown in Table 5.

Table 3 Data on the Provocative Statements

		Trafficking in human beings is not a widespread phenomenon in Hungary.	The latency rate for trafficking cases is very high.	Victims of human trafficking usually do not do their best to get out of their bad situation.	In most cases, the victims carry out their activities voluntarily.	How prevalent do you think the phenomenon of human trafficking is in your county?
N	Valid	1104	1104	1099	1105	1103
	Missing	2	2	7	1	3
Mean		3,13	4,48	3,58	2,85	3,02
Median		3,00	5,00	4,00	3,00	3,00
Std. Deviation		1,377	1,312	1,350	1,288	1,325

Trafficking in human beings is not a widespread phenomenon in Hungary.

Human trafficking is a widespread phenomenon in Hungary. Those respondents shared this opinion: who knew more about the complexity of this, who had such a case or attended a connected training earlier. (Those who had not previously participated in human trafficking training, and those who belonged to the first study group, rejected this statement even more than later respondents. Mean: 2,93.)

The latency rate for trafficking cases is very high.

The high latency associated with human trafficking is clear according to almost all respondents. There was no significant correlation between the gender and profession of the respondents, but there was a correlation with how long they had been working for the given organization.

In the autumn 2020 survey of prosecutors only (Windt 2021a), the same result was found: trafficking in human beings is a widespread phenomenon in Hungary, and respondents believe that the latency rate is very high. This was the case even when the respondent did not

believe that trafficking is a widespread phenomenon in Hungary, the high latency is nevertheless related to it. It is a different question as to what the reasons for the high latency are, and how the respondents could do something about it through their own work.

Although the victim is obliged to participate in certain procedural steps, many cases are delayed because the victim's whereabouts are unknown and they have not notified the authorities of the change of address. This causes difficulties for all three professions, and the lack of cooperation by victims can lead to the delay and failure of the proceedings: in other words, the failure to establish criminal liability, possibly resulting in a lesser offence, with a lighter penalty (Brunovskis-Skilbrei 2016; Farrell-Kane 2020).

Victims of human trafficking usually do not do their best to get out of their bad situation and in most cases, the victims carry out their activities voluntarily.

We tried to measure the victim blaming attitudes among the respondents with these two statements. The answers given to the statements separately, as well as their relationship to each other, and the gender and profession of the respondents were all important variables. There was not so much agreement among the respondents regarding the failure of the victims to quit; several people accepted this, while the victim's voluntariness was much more strongly rejected in the entire sample.

Among the respondents, prosecutors typically rejected this claim, but among police officers and judges, more agreed. Those with previous experience of trafficking in human beings prior to the training were more likely to agree with this statement, although again no significant correlation could be found. Although the profession of the respondents did not influence their opinion on the victims' failure to ask for help, the respondents' gender did. The women disagreed with this statement more than men.

There is no significant difference in the responses and attitudes of either prosecutors or judges in terms of the gender of the respondent, although it should be noted that women were more emphatic in their rejection of victim-blaming statements.

In the total sample, these two statements were overwhelmingly rejected, so there was no clear evidence of victim blaming by the respondents. Through trainings, with strengthening a victim-centered approach, and understanding the complexity of the phenomenon, the negative attitudes of some respondents seem to be changing.

How prevalent do you think the phenomenon of human trafficking is in your county?
The prevalence of human trafficking in the respondent's county outlined a rather 'not so much a problem in our county' mentality. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents believe

that trafficking in human beings is a widespread phenomenon in Hungary, when asked to judge their own county, they did not consider it as typical.

Most respondents gave reasons for the prevalence in their own county. The most prominent were social reasons (44%; poverty, exclusion, social problems), mainly expressed by the women respondents and those who had experienced trafficking in the past. Judges tended to explain the prevalence or lack of prevalence in their own county by geographical location. Prosecutors expressed the difficulties of detection and high latency. Those who had no previous experience of such cases considered trafficking to be less significant in their county, attributing this to a better standard of living, but were unable to articulate why this might be. It should be emphasized that the assessment of how long the given respondent had been working for the organization influenced the assessment of the county characteristic.

Although the attitudes of the whole sample are highlighted in this study, some important additional data are worth mentioning.

Police officers' opinion in 2022

In February-March 2022, 702 responses were received from police staff, an extremely high number: 525 police officers and 177 police officers serving in the criminal investigation sector responded. Respondents voluntarily answered an online questionnaire, following a request from the chief, and therefore the survey is not representative, but the data is nevertheless indicative and unique, no similar survey had ever been conducted before.

The attitudinal questionnaire for police officers was modified in that, before attitudes, we also wanted to know their professional knowledge: whether staff who may encounter a (suspected) victim of trafficking in human beings in the course of their daily work would recognise them and know what action to take under what legislation.

In total, 533 (76%) men and 169 (24%) women responded, with a difference by profession: proportionally more women work in the criminal service branch.

More than half of the respondents had been in the police for more than 15 years, and two thirds for more than 10 years. The age range of respondents' years in the profession was slightly different, with mainly criminal justice professionals serving longer than 10 years.

This sample showed us the differences between the branches of service: the criminal investigation part had broader knowledge about human trafficking, while the police officers had more experience with human smuggling and less information about the complexity of this phenomenon.

In connection with the study presented here, it should be mentioned how difficult it is to research police attitudes, although getting to know the opinions of police officers

anonymously can help not only in gaining external knowledge of the organisation, but also in identifying internal problems and shortcomings. However, this requires trust on the part of respondents (and commanders). It was clear from the responses that some were taking the questions lightly, not used to having their professional opinions and insights sought by anyone, which is a sad conclusion.

The main research question was whether the staff respondents could be indeed seen as victim-blaming, or whether they held victims responsible for putting themselves in a vulnerable position. Based on the responses of 700 police officers, this cannot be stated so categorically. The clear victim-blaming of respondents was not outlined, with a much more nuanced picture emerging from the responses.

Judges (60 people)

Altogether we received 60 answers back in February 2022. It is not too much, and it does not represent the whole judiciary staff, but it highlights some attitudes. We did not focus on the decision-making process, but what we wanted to find out was how victims were handled in front of the judge (which words the judge uses, how victims are asked, whether the judges even try to make the victim understand the legal language, etc.) and if they tried to make them understand the whole process.

Despite the fact that the attitude test was voluntary and anonymous, many people refused to answer some questions (One of them did not share their own sex with us). Many respondents had already received training related to human trafficking, despite the fact that few of them had had such cases. Compared to other law enforcement officers, they were much more likely to reject victim-blaming claims. The judges' approach to trafficking was more complex than that of the police, and they were more sensitive in their opinions. The respondents had knowledge about the complexity of this phenomenon.

Conclusions

Human trafficking is not an “invisible crime” now in Hungary, the latency is still very high, but following different trainings, awareness raising campaigns, movies and so on, we have started to speak about it (Atkinson, Hamilton-Smith 2022).

Knowledge of the law as laid down in the legislation, observance of criminal law and criminal procedure and the internal regulations, instructions and guidelines of each profession are the professional skills expected by society. At the same time, law enforcement officers are also human beings, whose professional work and decisions are influenced by their own

personalities, which also affect the perception of their organisation as a whole through their work. Here we have not examined the attitudes of law enforcers in general (and we could not touch on some important related topics (e.g. corruption) either), but we have asked questions about a social phenomenon. However, we consider it is important to carry out further similar research, even for internal use only, for the organisations of the different professions, as this could lead to a number of valuable results. These results could be useful for both the internal and external perception of the organisation: since the work of potentially burnt out, unmotivated colleagues and their victim-blaming attitudes are not good for any of the professions, their identification could provide a basis for further training that goes beyond the presentation of legislation. Moreover, in the training of lawyers, it should be mentioned that law practitioners are also human beings and that their work is often influenced by the feelings, impressions and their professional experience, in addition to the paragraphs. They must be prepared for this. However, we should not forget those already working as law enforcers, for whom such training should be organised from time to time, possibly in a joint, inter-professional way, to prevent burnout and to increase efficiency.

Neither the survey conducted in the autumn of 2020 with prosecutors only (Windt 2021a), nor the responses of attitude shaping trainings (Windt 2022), nor the separate tests with the different professionals revealed clear victim blaming by the majority of respondents (Windt 2023). All professions rated their own county better in terms of human trafficking. However, law enforcement in the highly infested counties was well aware of it.

The study presented above has partially confirmed our hypotheses. The phenomenon of trafficking in human beings is better understood by those who have encountered such cases. It has recently come into the spotlight due to international expectations and subsequent domestic reactions, which the majority of respondents see as necessary and far from overrated (this was somewhat more nuanced in the case of police officers). Victim blaming is not a common feature among the law enforcement respondents, who tended to be dismissive of provocative allegations. All those who had experienced such cases were more realistic in their perception of the prevalence of the phenomenon in their county.

However, there were some differences among the attitudes of different professionals: prosecutors and judges had knowledge about the complexity of this phenomenon and victim-blaming occurred less frequently than in the responses of police officers. The police officers had fewer opportunities to take part in trainings on human trafficking, and this should be made regular and accessible to the staff for changing the organizational culture to mainstream victim-centred approaches through the work of the concerned institution (OSCE 2020: 25).

The results of prosecutors' surveys were promising: their knowledge and perceptions about human trafficking were more qualified than those of police officers', although prosecutors had met few cases and which their number has just increased in the last two years.

Respondents obviously answered honestly but in line with "expectations", the reason for this can be found in the fact that Hungarian legal practitioners have rarely taken part in attitude surveys, their own opinion have not been asked often, and have little freedom to formulate it. It would be worthwhile to change this and encourage Hungarian researchers to carry out such surveys, not only in relation to trafficking in human beings.

Since the end of 2019, significant progress has been made at several levels by Hungarian authorities in the fight against human trafficking. This period also saw the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, with its difficulties and new challenges, has imposed additional tasks on the actors of the judiciary. Nevertheless, it can be said that there has been significant progress, together with a major change of attitude, which can be seen in international and national crime statistics. In the next period, the aim is to continue these efforts, to hold continuous training courses and training sessions. The good news is that a network of prosecutors specialising in human trafficking just started its work on 1 January 2023, which is a guarantee for this.

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