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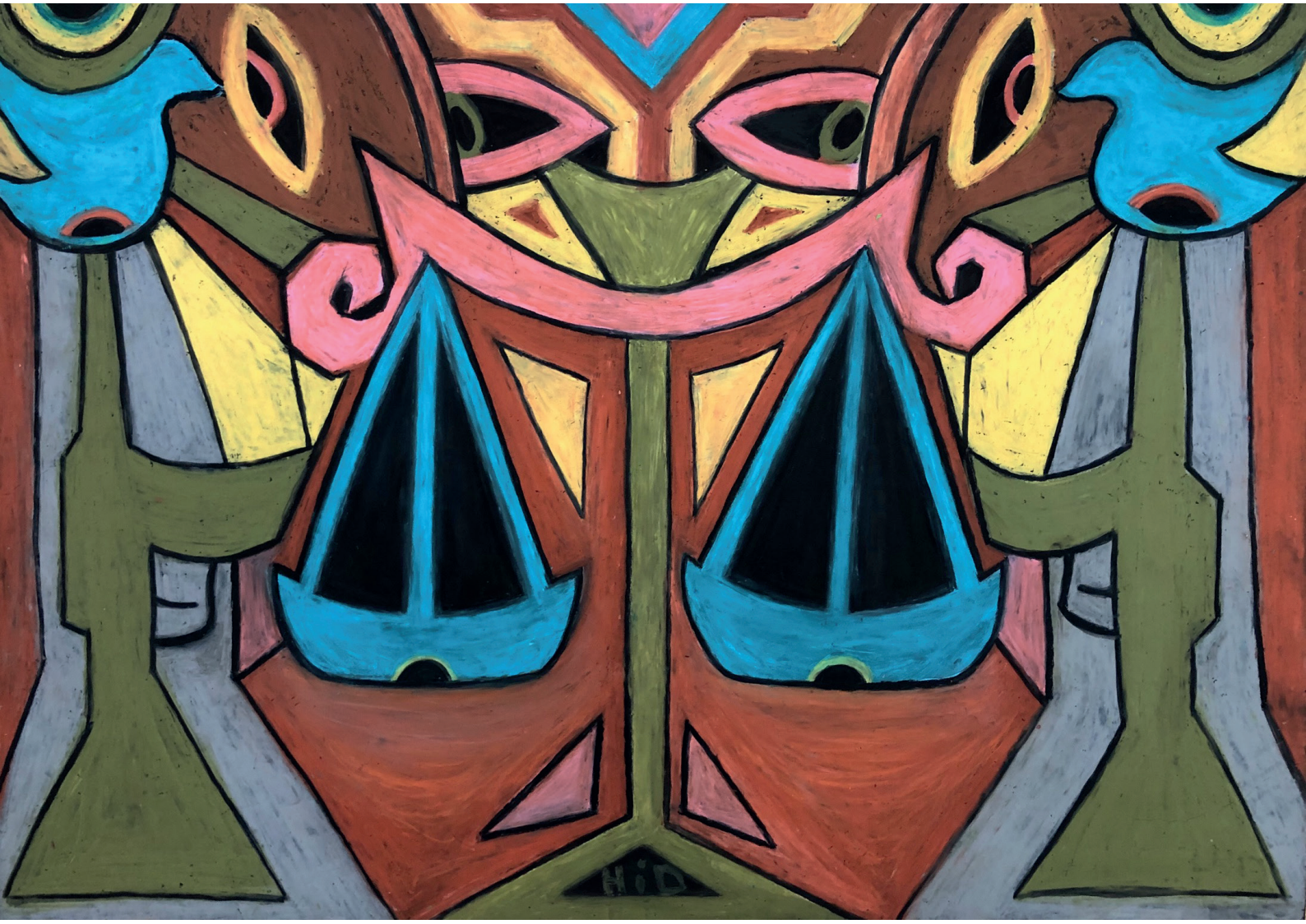
UNODC Research

DATA MATTERS 2

10/2021

Monitoring SDG 16
Key figures and trends

Intentional homicide
Human trafficking
Unsentenced detention
Arms trafficking
Corruption
Wildlife trafficking



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Introduction

MONITORING SDG 16

More than five years into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the overall picture in relation to many Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 targets is mixed. Certain targets such as Target 16.1 on reducing violence have recorded some progress in recent years, with the global homicide rate declining from 6.9 homicides (per 100,000 population) in 2000 to 5.7 homicides in 2019. Other targets, however, such as Target 16.3 on promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all have seen very little improvement, with the share of prisoners that are unsentenced remaining constant at around 30% of the global prison population since the early 2000s. On several targets, the available data highlight stark inequalities and divergent trends (between rich and poor nations, between men and women). While the focus of the research brief is on the pre-pandemic period up until 2019, the available evidence suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic could exacerbate these patterns. Finally, monitoring progress on several SDG 16 targets such as those related to human trafficking or firearm trafficking remains a challenge due to limited data availability and poor data quality. ■

Monitoring SDG 16

KEY MESSAGES

The world is slowly becoming a safer place – but not everywhere.

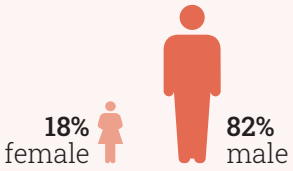
Intentional homicide

p.10

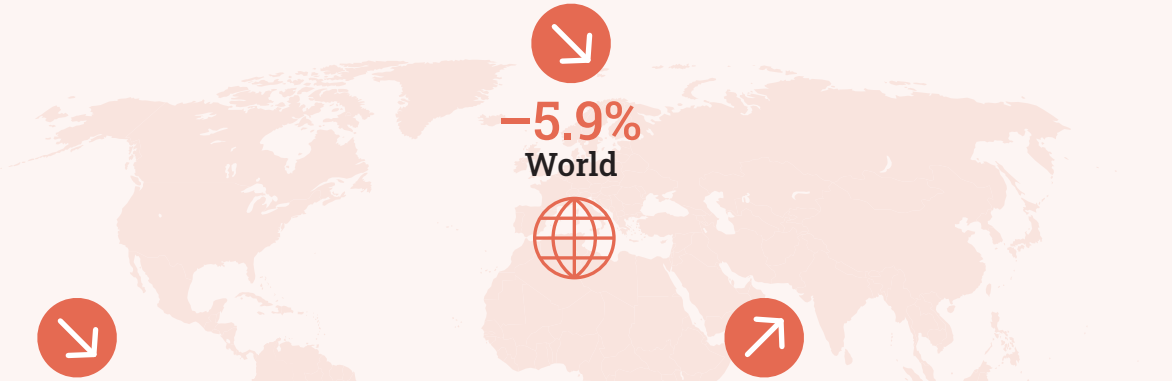
Homicide rates have been falling in most world regions over the period 2015–2019, but only two SDG regions are likely to achieve a 50% reduction in the homicide rate by 2030. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on homicide rates has been mixed.

437,000

Total intentional homicide in **2019**



Percentage change in homicide rates between 2015 and 2019



- **– 29.6%** Eastern Asia and Southeastern Asia
- **– 14.2%** Northern America and Europe
- **– 13.6%** Australia and New Zealand
- **– 12.2%** Central Asia and Southern Asia
- **– 8.3%** Latin America and the Caribbean

- **+ 1.30%** Oceania (excl. Australia and New Zealand)
- **+ 0.50%** Western Asia and Northern Africa
- **+ 0.10%** Sub-Saharan Africa

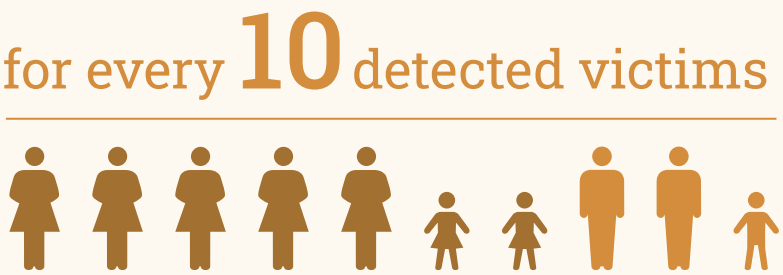
Women and girls continue to be particularly affected by trafficking in persons.

p.12

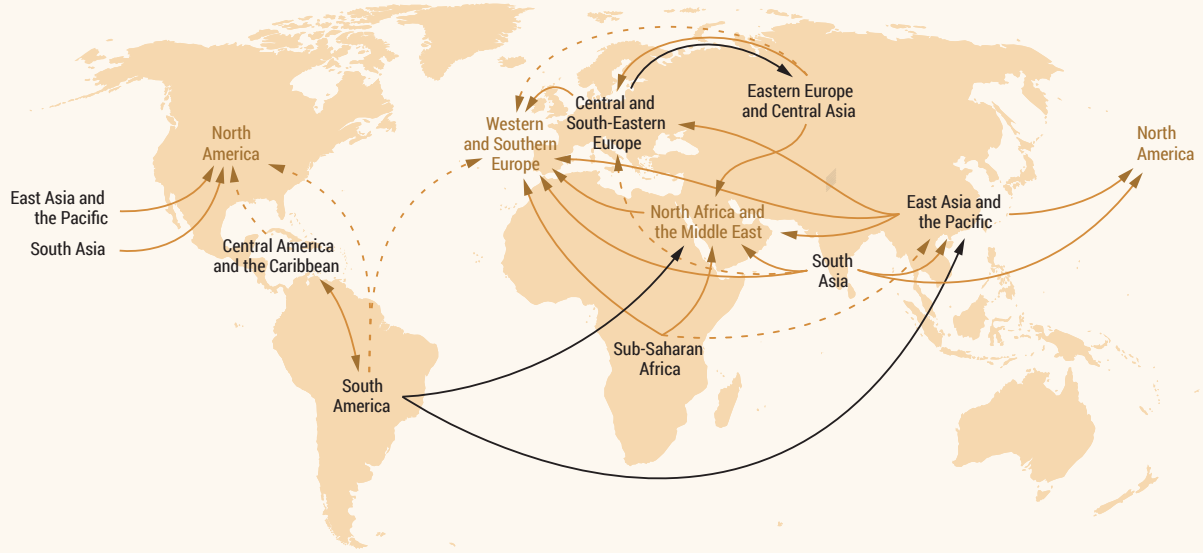
Human trafficking

For every 10 trafficking victims detected globally, approximately five were adult women and two were girls.

Gender and age status of detected trafficking victims
2018



Transregional trafficking flows
2018



Transregional flows: detected victims in destination countries
Transregional flows: less than 5% of detected victims in destination countries
Transregional flows: victims repatriated from destination countries

One in every three prisoners worldwide is held without having been sentenced by a court of justice.

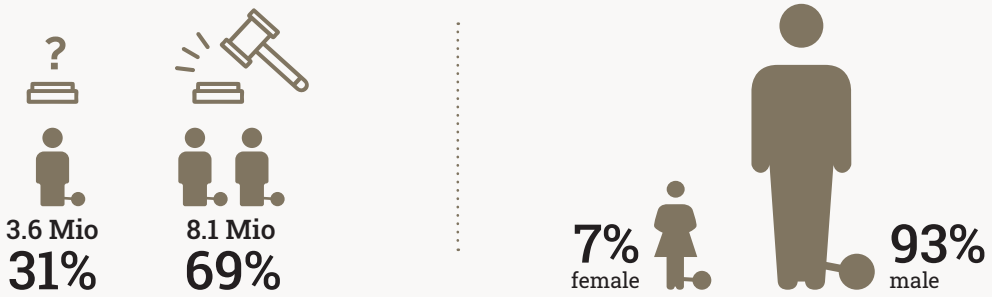
p.14

Unsentenced detention

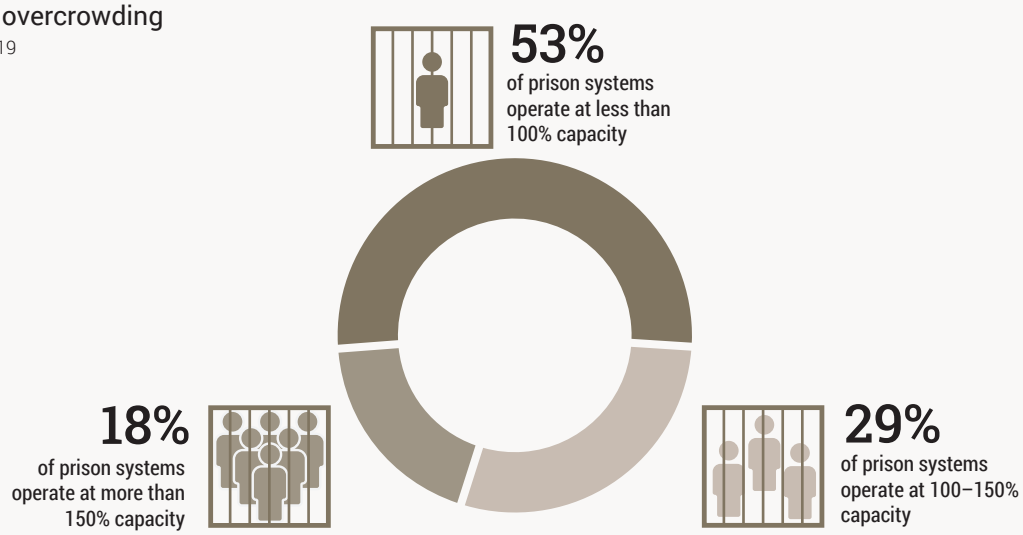
Little progress has been made in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.3 on access to justice, as the global share of unsentenced detainees in the prison population has remained at around 30% over the last 20 years.

Persons held in detention globally
2019

11.7 Mio



Prison overcrowding
2014–2019



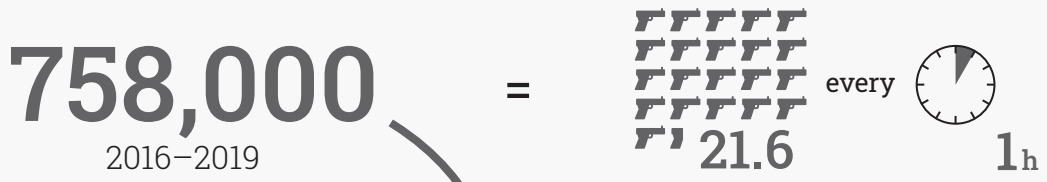
Tracing the origins of illicit firearms is a crucial step to reduce their trafficking, but it remains a challenge for many countries.

p.16

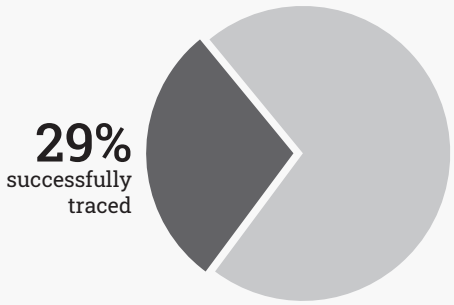
Arms trafficking

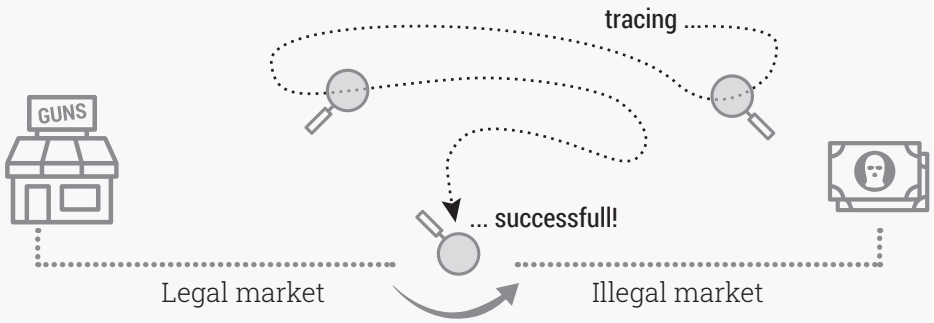
Only one third of firearms collected between 2016 and 2019 could be successfully traced to the point of diversion into the illicit market.

Collected firearms



Tracing success
2016–2019





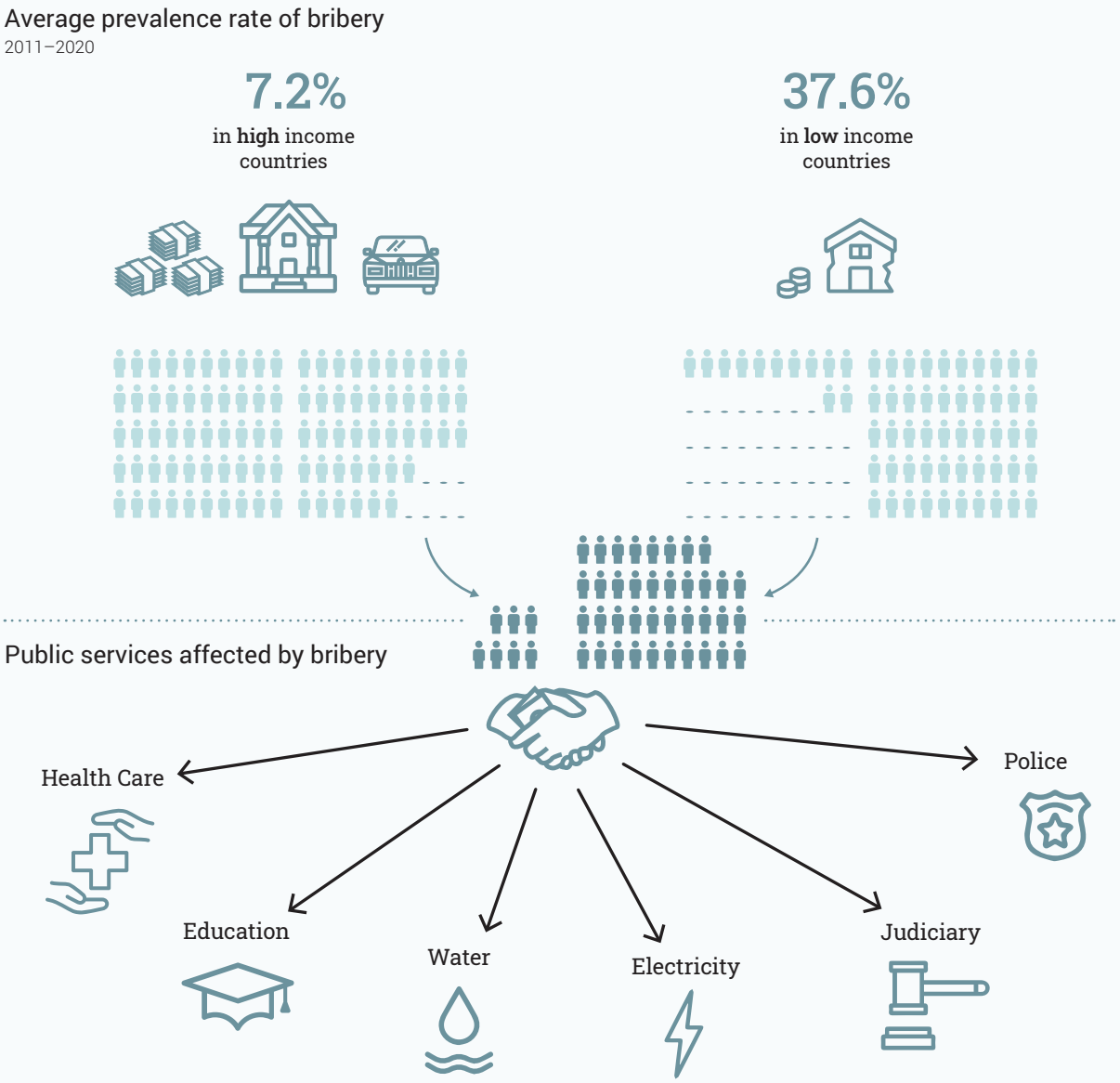
Successful tracing means that the point at which the firearm went from legitimate to illegal market could be established.

The poorest suffer most from corruption.

p.18

Corruption

Bribery is five times higher in low-income countries than in high-income countries. It affects citizens interacting with essential public services and the COVID-19 pandemic may further exacerbate the problem.



COVID-19 has put trafficking in pangolins into the global spotlight.

p.20

Wildlife trafficking

Some progress is visible in the reduction of ivory trafficking, but traffickers are shifting away from ivory to more lucrative products like pangolin scales.

Decrease in market prices for ivory

Asian markt price, US $/kg

2,000 $
2014

700 $
2018

Increase in pangolin seizures

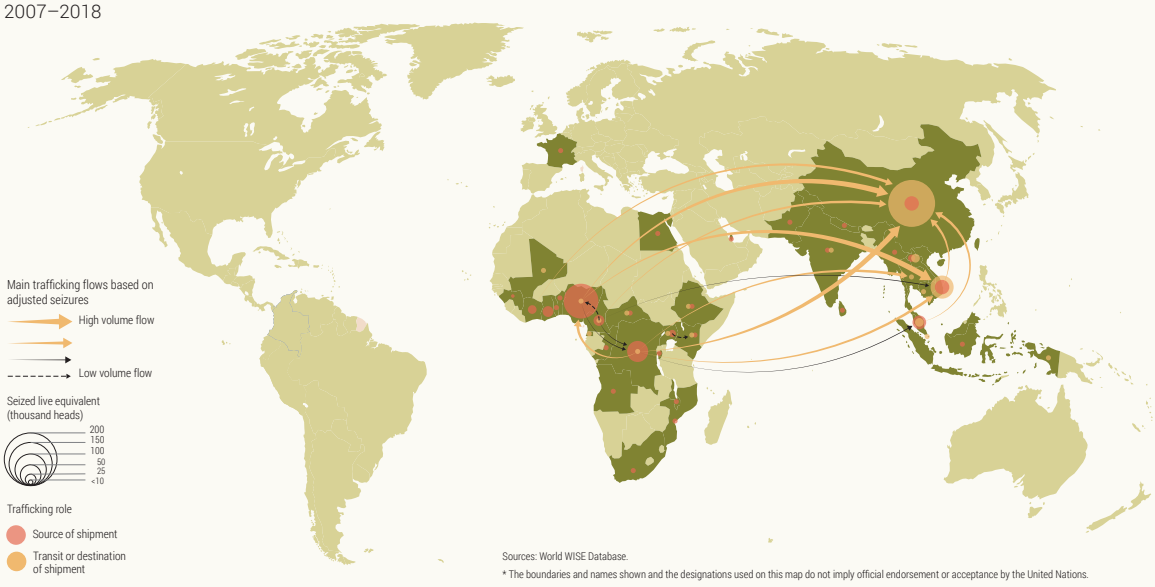
Seized whole pangolins

14,000
2014

140,000
2018

Main trafficking flows and reported origins/destinations of seized pangolin scales

2007–2018



Sources: World WISE Database.

* The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Target 16.1

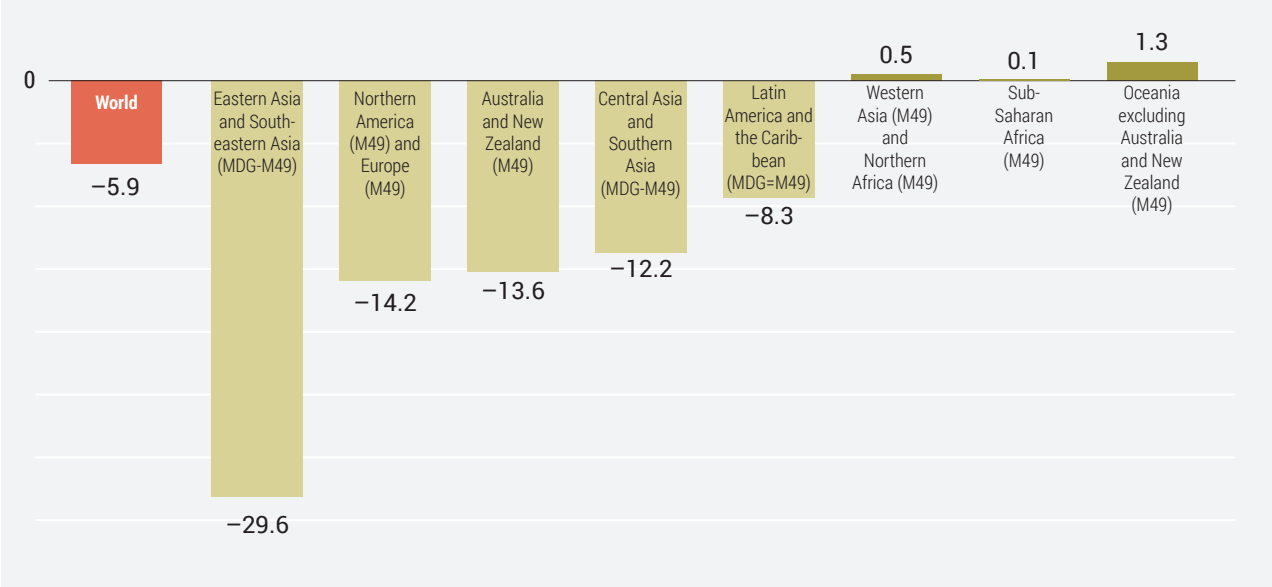
TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE VIOLENCE

There is global progress in achieving target 16.1 to significantly reduce all forms of violence in terms of criminal violence, but the gap between regions with low levels of criminal violence and regions with high levels is widening, and only two regions are likely to achieve a reduction in homicide rates of more than 50 per cent by 2030.

Indicator 16.1.1:
Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population by sex (victims per 100,000 population)

As of 2019, there were approximately 437,000 victims of intentional homicide, of which 82% were male and 18% female. The global rate of homicide has been slowly declining between 2000 and 2014 from 6.9 to 6.2 homicides per 100,000 population. Between 2015 and 2019, the global homicide rate further declined to 5.7 homicides per 100,000 population. The global trend is the result of diverging regional developments. Different trends were recorded in the two regions which account for over two thirds of homicide victims globally: in Latin America and the Caribbean, homicide rates have substantially decreased in the past four years, while no significant change was visible in Sub-Saharan Africa. In most of the other regions, the decreasing trend continued between 2015 and 2019, except for Western Asia and Northern Africa and Oceania, where the homicide rates remained relatively stable (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Percentage change in regional homicide rates between 2015 and 2019

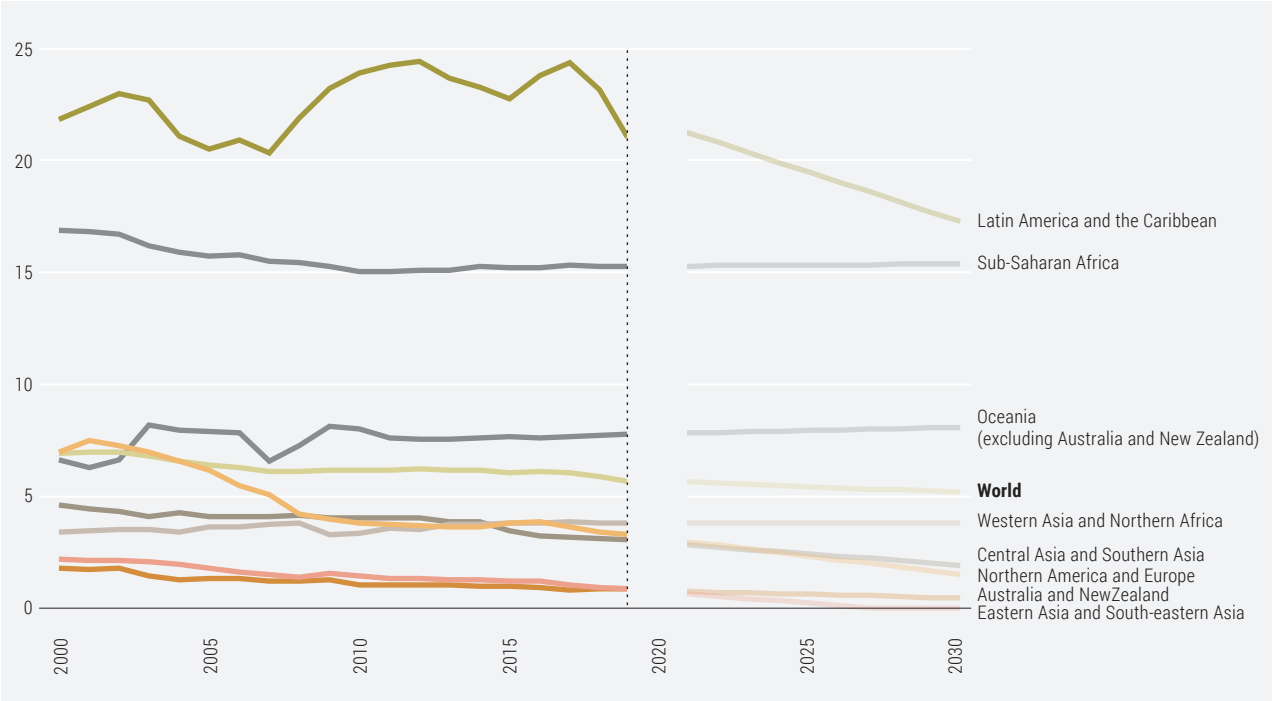


Source: UNODC estimates

Projecting the current homicide rate trend for 2015–2019 to future years up to 2030, only two regions (North America and Europe; and Eastern and South-eastern Asia) would achieve a significant decrease in the homicide rate of more than 50% by 2030. On the other hand, homicide rates in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) are projected to be higher in 2030 than in 2015. Overall, at current trends (2015–2019), the global rate of homicide per 100,000 population would stand at around 5.0 in 2030, resulting in an overall decrease limited to around 15% (see **Figure 2**).

Available data from selected countries, mostly in Europe and Latin America during the first half of 2020, indicate that the first wave of lockdown measures had heterogeneous impacts on homicide levels. When restrictive measures were in place, in some countries the decrease in the homicide trend in March/April 2020 was more than 25% larger than the average recorded in the same months over the period 2015–2019. Such homogeneous changes were visible in countries in Europe and other regions where data are available, while trends were quite heterogeneous across Latin America. This makes it difficult to draw general conclusions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the level of lethal violence. Several factors could explain this heterogeneity: differences in the level of restrictive measures imposed by Governments, pre-existing socioeconomic conditions, and the overall predominance of a particular typology of homicide, which in Latin America is often related to organized crime and gangs, whereas in Europe it is more closely linked to interpersonal and family-related violence. ■

Figure 2: Trends and projections of the homicide rate by region



Source: UNODC Homicide Dataset; UNODC estimates for the period 2020-2030

Targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2

TO ELIMINATE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Women and girls continue to be particularly affected by trafficking in persons, with an increasing share of all detected victims trafficked for the purpose of forced labour.

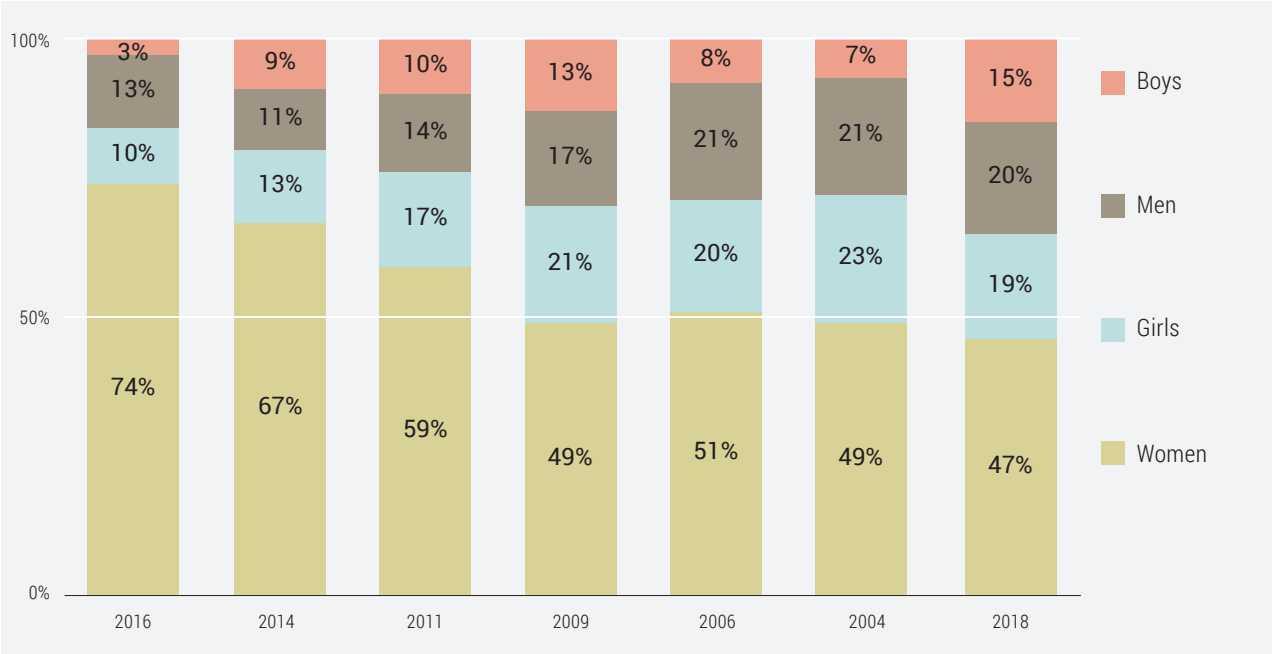
Indicator 16.2.2:
Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation

Female victims continue to be particularly affected by trafficking in persons. In 2018, for every 10 victims detected globally, almost five were adult women and two were girls. About one third of the overall detected victims were children, both girls (19%) and boys (15%), while 20% were adult men (see **Figure 3**). Women and girls are mainly trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (77%), while boys and men are trafficked for forced labour (68%). Overall, most of the detected victims are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (50%).

However, an increasing share of detected victims are trafficked for forced labour (38%) and for other forms of exploitation (12%) (see **Figure 4**). Among the "other forms" of trafficking, most detected victims in 2018 were trafficked for committing criminal activity (6%), for begging (1.5%), for forced marriages (1%).

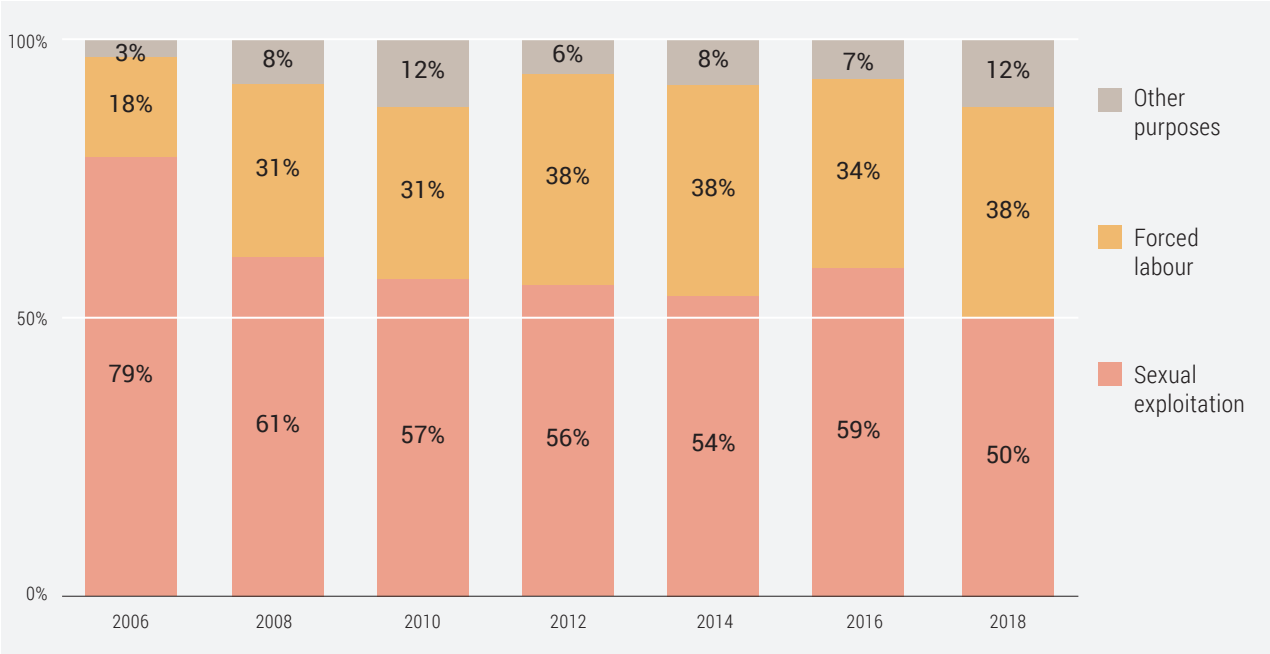
The sharp rise in unemployment rates brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to trigger increased trafficking in persons, particularly from countries experiencing the fastest and most persistent drops in employment rates. Job seekers from these countries are likely to be more willing to take high risks in the hope of improving their opportunities. ■

Figure 3: Global trend in the profile of detected victims of trafficking in persons (share of total detected victims by sex and age status)



Source: UNODC estimates

Figure 4: Global trend in the purpose of exploitation of detected victims of trafficking in persons (share of total detected victims by forms of exploitation)



Source: UNODC estimates

Target 16.3

TO PROMOTE THE RULE OF LAW AND ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL

There has been little progress in improving access to justice for persons held in detention without being sentenced for a crime – in 2019 the share of unsentenced prisoners remained at the same level as in 2000 – at around 30 per cent.

Indicator 16.3.2:
Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population

Globally, the total number of persons in detention has continued to grow, from an estimated 9.3 million in 2000 to more than 11.5 million individuals in 2019, an increase of around 25%, mainly reflecting population growth.[1] As of 2019, this amounted to approximately 153 prisoners per 100,000 population. The most recent UNODC data suggest that around 31% of those prisoners worldwide are held in detention without being sentenced for a crime, the same level as in 2000. In 2019, there were more than 3.6 million prisoners held in detention without being sentenced for a crime, a figure which has been steadily increasing since 2000 in absolute terms. These figures highlight enduring gaps in accessibility to justice with many prisoners being denied a fair trial within a reasonably short period of time.

At a regional level, some opposing trends can be observed between the magnitude of the prison population and the proportion of unsentenced prisoners. In Northern Africa and Western Asia as well as in Latin America and Caribbean, the growing prison population, both in relative and absolute terms, is associated with a decreasing proportion of unsentenced detainees. In contrast, Europe and North America, despite seeing a reduction of the prison population relative to the population, have seen an increase in the proportion of unsentenced detainees between 2015 and 2019 (see **Figure 5**).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has heavily impacted the prison population worldwide. According to a global analysis of official and media sources, as of May 2021, it was estimated that nearly 550,000 prisoners in 122 countries have become infected with COVID-19, with close to 4,000 fatalities in prisons in 47 countries.[2] Prisons have represented a particularly high-risk environment during the pandemic due to unavoidable close contacts and over-crowding, which remains a significant problem in many countries. Of the 100 countries and territories for which UNODC has data on both prison capacity and prison occupancy between 2014 and 2019, 47% are operating at more than 100% of intended capacity.[3] A smaller share of countries and territories (18%) operate at more than 150% of the intended capacity. Besides leading to inhumane conditions of incarceration, prison over-crowding also facilitates the spread of the virus among prisoners, prison officials and visitors. Some governments have put in place prison restrictive regimes, such as limiting or prohibiting visitors and avoiding interactions resulting in a worsening of detainees' conditions.[4] The pandemic caused delays in criminal justice systems which, combined with emergency actions to facilitate exits and limit entries in prisons in an attempt to limit prison over-crowding, resulted in a sharp decrease of the global prison population.[5] Since March 2020, at least 700,000 persons around the globe – or roughly 6% of the estimated global prison population – have been authorized or con-

1 According to the United Nations Population Division, the world population in 2000 was 6,143,494,000 and in 2020 it was 7,794,799,000, representing a growth of 21%.

2 Justice Project Pakistan, COVID-19 and Prisoners, Infected prisoners and deaths across the world. Available at www.jpp.org.pk/covid19-prisoners

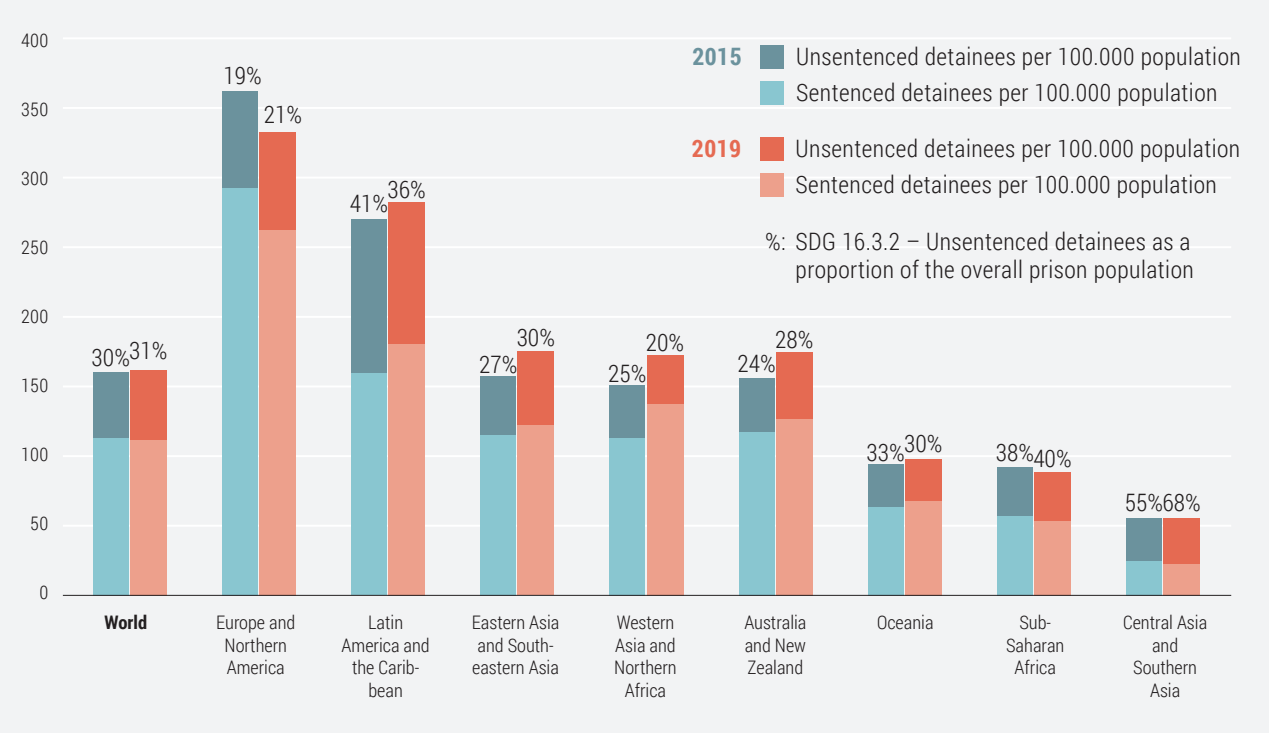
3 For each country, the latest available year (between 2014 and 2019) with data points for both adult prison capacity and adult prison occupancy were used to calculate the prison occupancy rate. A country's occupancy rate is equal to the ratio of the adult prison population over the reported adult prison capacity multiplied by 100. Countries with an occupancy rate exceeding 100% are overcrowded.

4 UNODC. 2021. COVID-19 guidance note - Core principles on mitigating a disruptive impact of infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in prison settings.

5 UNODC. 2021. COVID-19 Guidance Note - Emergency release mechanisms for detainees and prisoners during COVID-19: Findings and recommendations, p.2

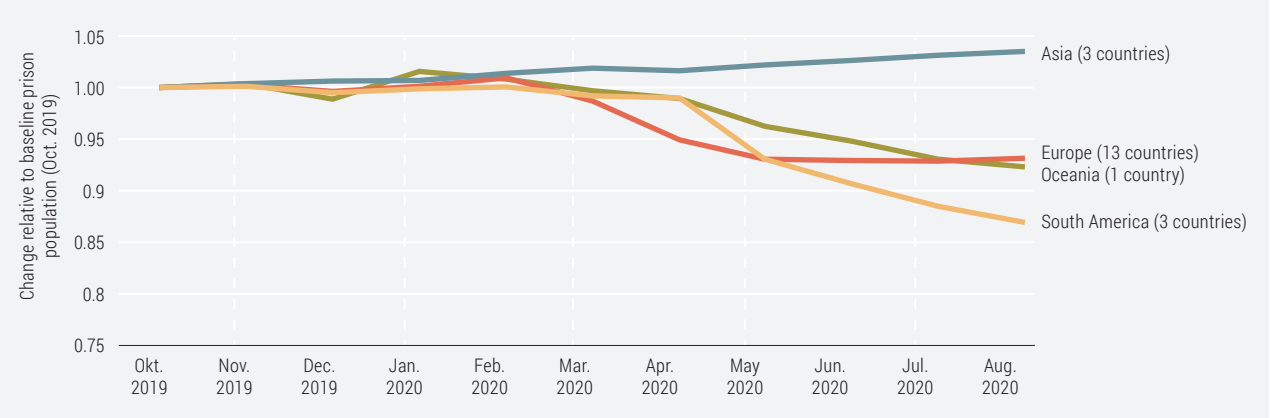
sidered eligible for release through emergency release mechanisms adopted by 119 Member States.[6] Monthly data reported by 20 countries show that prison populations experienced a downward trend (reductions between 7% and 13%) between October 2019 and August 2020 in South America, Europe and Oceania (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 5: Number of sentenced and unsentenced detainees per 100.000 population, by year and region



Source: UNODC estimates

Figure 6: Regional monthly trend in the total prison population for the period October 2019 to August 2020



Source: UNODC estimates based on data collected through the Global initiative to improve knowledge on COVID-19's impact on crime and drugs; Note: Asia (MAC, KOR, THA), Europe (ALB, BGR, HRV, GRC, ITA, LVA, LTU, POL, PRT, ROU, SVN, ESP, GBR), Oceania (NZL), South America (COL, GTM, URY). Note: The y-axis shows the change in absolute terms relative to the baseline prison population (October 2019), which was normalised to a value of 1.

6 UNODC.2021. COVID-19 Guidance Note - Emergency release mechanisms for detainees and prisoners during COVID-19: Findings and recommendations, p.2

Target 16.4

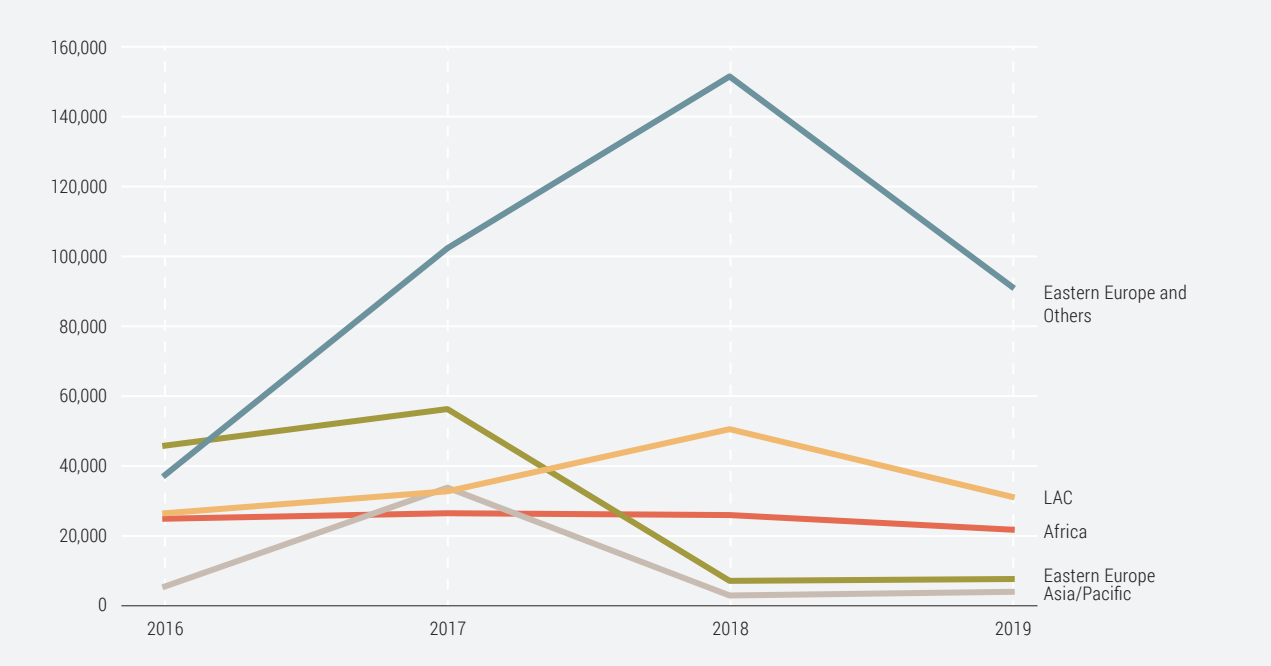
TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE ARMS FLOWS

Tracing the origins of illicit firearms is a crucial step to reduce their trafficking, but it remains a challenge for many countries.

Indicator 16.4.2:
Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments.

The collection of small arms and light weapons (SALW) used in the context of armed conflict, violent crime, and drug trafficking, and the establishment of their origin, are important steps towards promoting peaceful and inclusive societies in line with SDG 16. Between 2016 and 2019, national authorities collected 758,000 SALW.[7] Importantly, the global figure hides significant regional differences. Based on available data, more than 50% of all SALW collected in the period 2016–2019 were collected by authorities in Western European and Other States.[8] Underreporting may explain some of the regional differences. Reporting on SALW remains very limited, with many countries, especially in Asia and the Pacific region, not reporting the relevant data. In most world regions, the total number of SALW collected has remained relatively stable since 2016. A notable exception is Western European and Other States, which recorded a strong upward trend in the total number of collected SALW until 2018, and a significant reduction in 2019 (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Number of SALW Collected by National Authorities, by Region (2016–2019)



Source: National Reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. Based on data from 61 countries. 'Others' includes include Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and the United States.

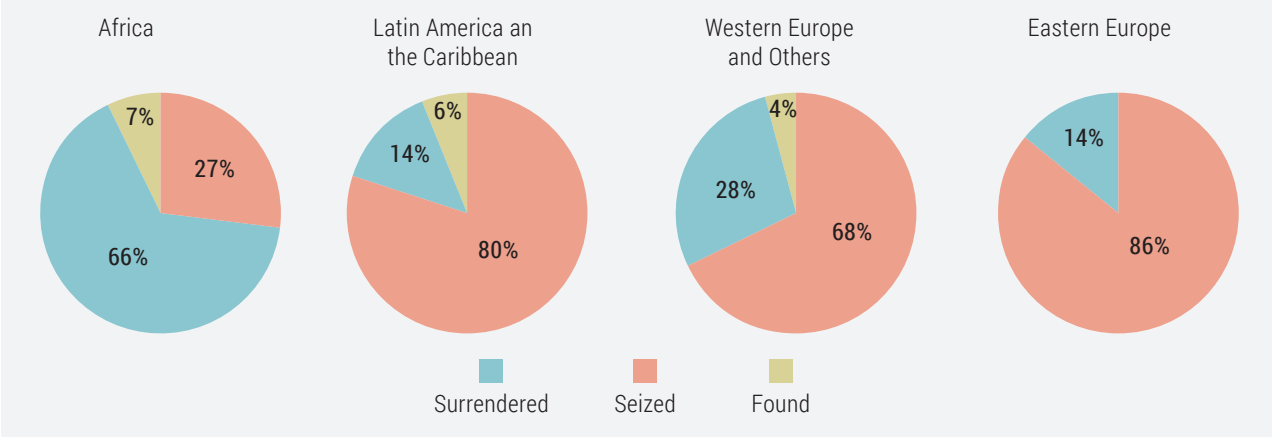
7 Member States submit biennially national reports on their implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons to the Office for Disarmament Affairs. During 2016–2019, a total of 203 national reports were submitted from 125 States. Among them, 61 reports included relevant data on collection of SALW.

8 These include Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and the United States.

Regional differences are observable in the way in which SALW are collected in terms of been either seized, found or surrendered. In Africa, 66% of all SALW collected by national authorities in 2019 were surrendered SALW. In contrast, seized SALW make up the largest proportion of collected weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (80%), Western European and Other States (68%) and Eastern Europe (86%) (see **Figure 8**).

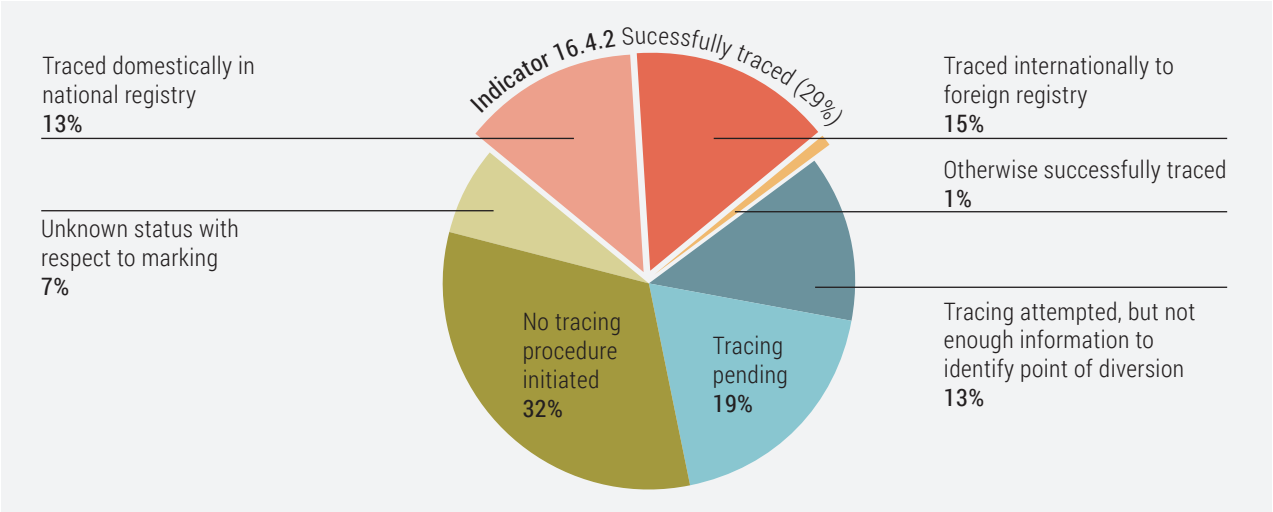
Tracing the origin of collected firearms is a crucial step to detect and reduce illicit arms flows, and a key measure of progress on target 16.4. The available data suggest that tracing remains a major challenge for many countries, with a lack of national tracing infrastructure and/or insufficient communication at the international level. On average, the point of diversion into the illicit market was successfully established for only 29% of all firearms collected between 2016 and 2019 (based on firearms traceable through marking). This percentage is made up of two equally sized components: firearms traced domestically to a national registry (13%) and firearms traced internationally to a foreign registry (15%).[9] For roughly 1 in every 3 firearms collected between 2016 and 2019, no tracing procedure was initiated (see **Figure 9**). Importantly, tracing data remain very limited, with only 15 Member States submitting sufficiently detailed data through the Illicit Arms Flows Questionnaire. ■

Figure 8: Percentage of Seized, Surrendered and Found Small Arms, by Region (2018–2019)



Source: 2020 National Reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (covering 2018–2019 period). Based on data from 23 countries.

Figure 9: Breakdown of potentially traceable firearms, by tracing outcome (2016–2019)



Source: United Nations Illicit Arms Flows Questionnaire. Based on data from 15 countries.

9 1% of potentially traceable firearms is otherwise successfully traced (see Figure 3).

Target 16.5

TO SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE CORRUPTION

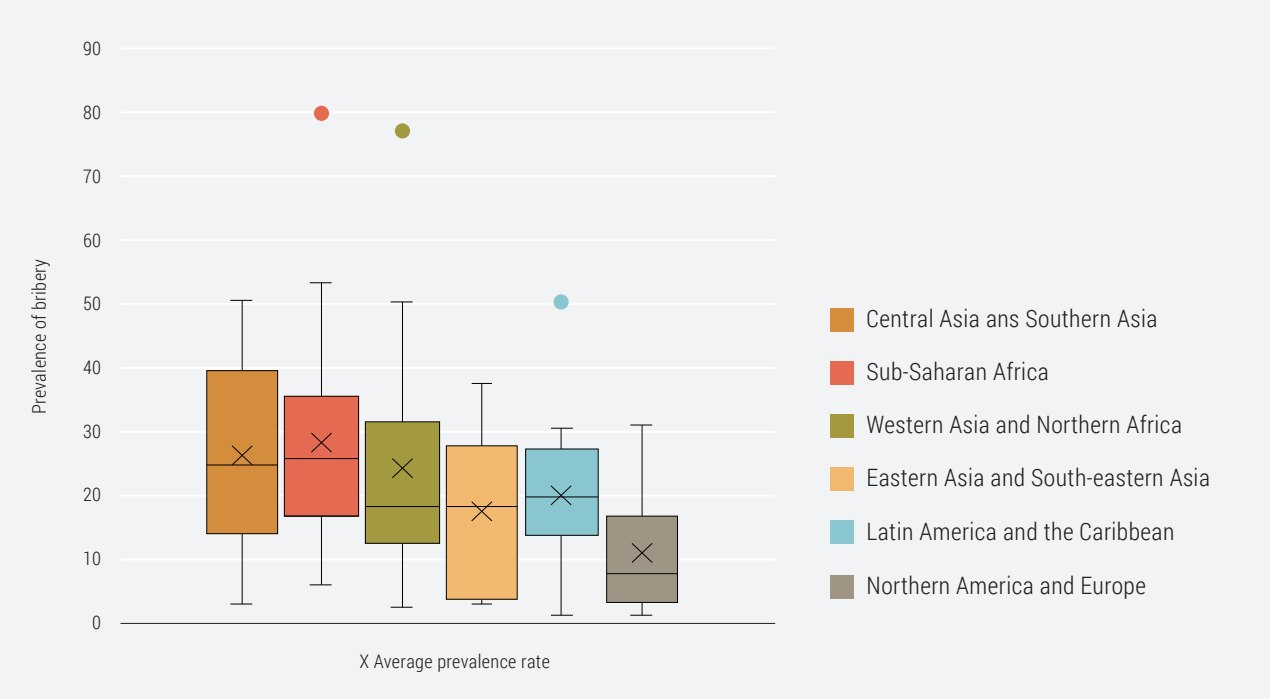
Bribery remains more prevalent in low-income countries, and the COVID-19 pandemic may further exacerbate the situation of those who rely on essential public services and cannot afford to pay bribes.

Indicator 16.5.1:
Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that corruption represents a severe impediment to sustainable development. Corruption is a phenomenon that has a detrimental impact on every aspect of the social and economic performance of a country. Every day, millions of people across all regions of the world are asked to pay bribes to access essential public services such as healthcare, education, water, electricity, or the judiciary. There are, however, some notable regional disparities. Countries from Sub-Saharan Africa and from Central and Southern Asia have the highest average prevalence rate of bribery (27.7% and 25.6%, respectively). This means that, on average, one in four people who had contact with public officials in these regions paid a bribe or were asked to pay a bribe. A significantly lower average prevalence rate is recorded in Northern America and Europe, where only one in ten people who had contact with public officials paid a bribe (10.1%) (see **Figure 10**).

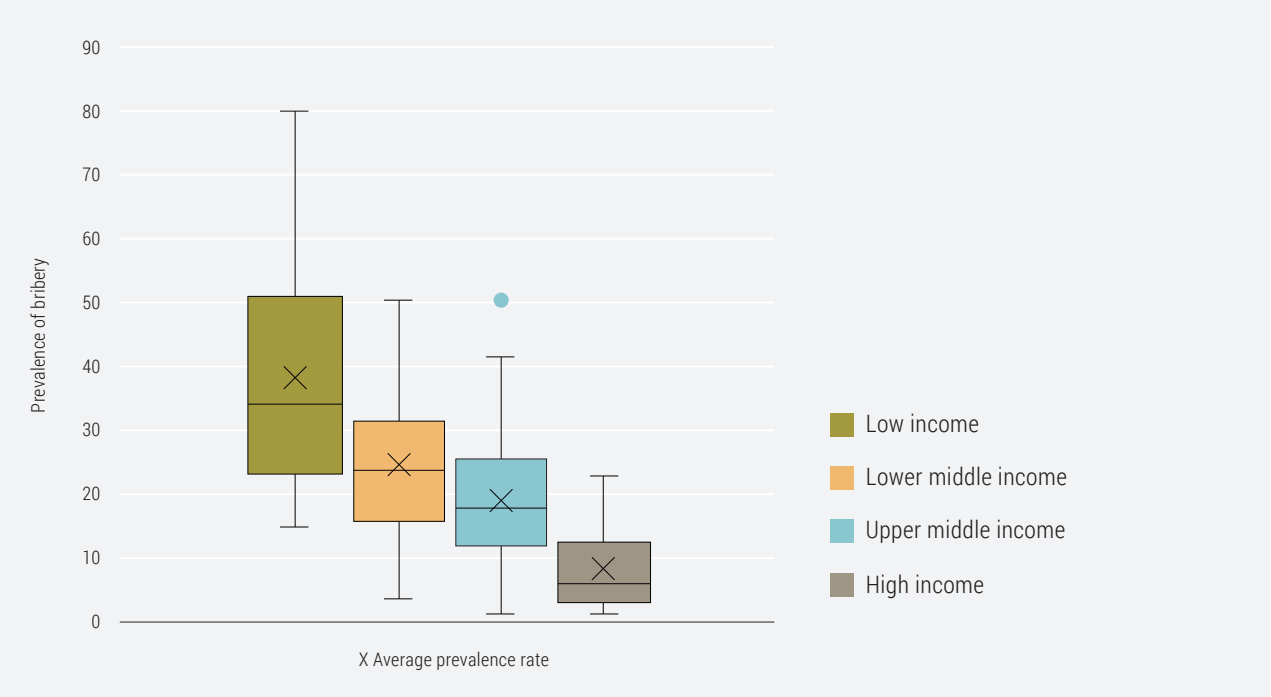
Beyond the regional disparities, the level of socio-economic development of a country is associated with the level of bribery. Data available in more than 120 countries show that people living in low-income countries are those most exposed to bribery. The average prevalence rate of bribery in low-income countries is 37.6%, while high-income countries have an average prevalence rate of 7.2%. The disproportionate social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on low and middle-income countries may further exacerbate the situation of those who rely on essential public services and cannot afford to pay bribes. ■

Figure 10: Prevalence of bribery by region



Note: The y-axis shows the estimated proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months, by region (latest data available in the period 2011–2020). Source: United Nations Crime Trends Survey (UN-CTS) and Global Corruption Barometer. Coverage: Central Asia and Southern Asia (11 countries), Sub-Saharan Africa (33 countries), Western Asia and Northern Africa (15 countries), Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia (12 countries), Latin America and the Caribbean (24 countries), Northern America and Europe (30 countries).

Figure 11: Prevalence of bribery by country income group



Note: The y-axis refers to the estimated Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months, by income (latest data available in the period 2011–2020). Source: United Nations Crime Trends Survey (UN-CTS) and Global Corruption Barometer. Coverage: Low income countries (18 countries), Lower middle-income countries (38 countries), Upper middle-income countries (39 countries), High income countries (31 countries).

Target 15.7

TO TAKE URGENT ACTION TO END POACHING AND TRAFFICKING OF PROTECTED SPECIES

Some progress is visible in the reduction of ivory trafficking, but traffickers are adapting to market dynamics, shifting away from ivory as prices decline and moving to more lucrative products like pangolin scales.

Indicator 15.7.1:
Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked

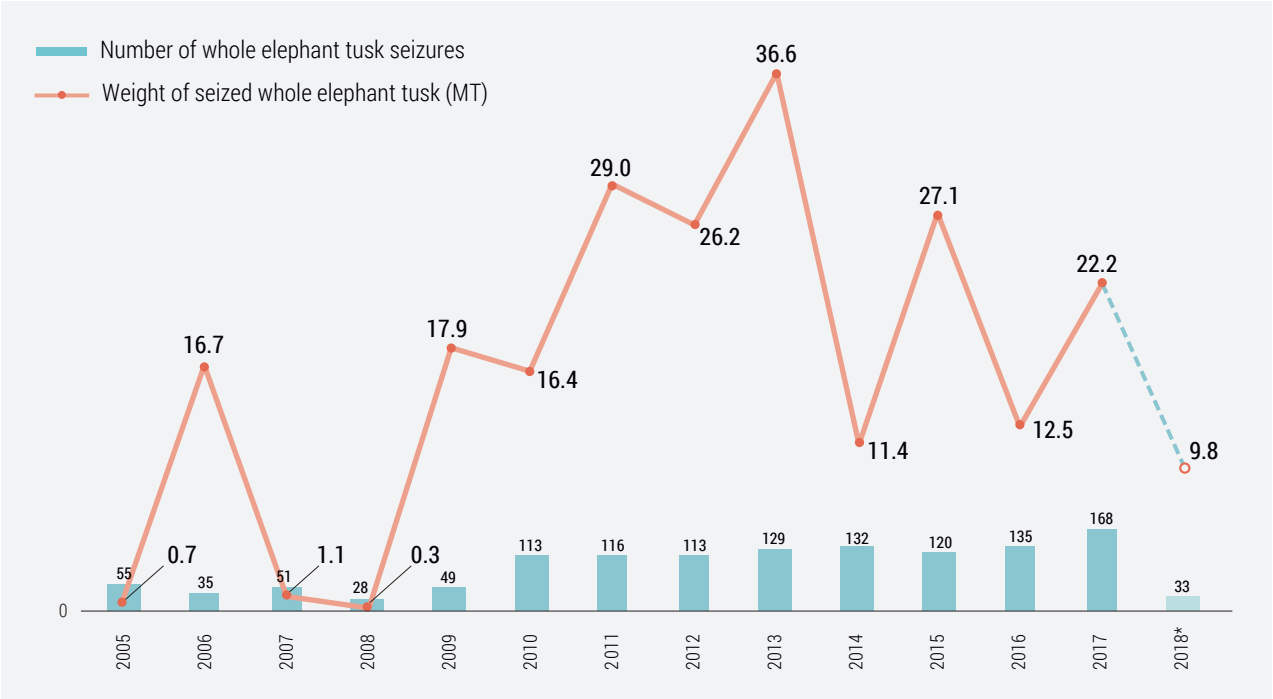
While it is too early to declare success in curbing the illegal trade in ivory, a combination of overall decreasing numbers of poached elephants and ivory seizures, and dropping prices suggest that the market for ivory is in decline. The primary poaching indicator – the Percentage of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species' Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) program – has declined every year from 2011 to 2019.[10] The volume of ivory tusks seized globally has declined overall since 2013, despite fluctuations from year to year (see **Figure 12**).[11] Prices for ivory have declined since 2014. African market prices in 2018 were one-half to one-third of the ivory prices payed in 2014.[12] Asian market prices have also seen a parallel decline in the price of illicit raw tusks, from a high of about 2,000 USD per kg in 2014 to a low of about 700 USD per kg in 2018.[13] There are several possible explanations for the downward trend, but it seems likely that at least part of the decline can be attributed to tightened domestic market controls in East and South East Asia.

Meanwhile, there has been a 10-fold increase in the number of whole pangolin equivalents seized since 2014 and the size of individual seizures has also increased. The debate about the zoonotic origins of SARS-CoV-2 has also put the trafficking in pangolins into the global spotlight.[14] Before 2016, the largest seizures intercepted amounted to less than 10,000 live pangolin equivalents while in 2019, just three major seizures were equivalent to more than twice that number. The years 2019 and 2020 also saw a rise in mixed shipments of ivory and pangolin scales (6 of the 11 largest pangolin scale seizures in 2019 involved mixed shipments)[15] with a preference towards the pangolin trade because of lower perceived enforcement risk and higher profits given declining prices paid for ivory.[16]

This species displacement suggests that traffickers are adapting to the market dynamics and shifting to other lucrative species as opportunities allow, possibly reusing existing trafficking chains and infrastructure like that for ivory. In the case of pangolin trafficking, this displacement is made especially simple because collecting pangolins, unlike big game hunting, requires no heavy guns or specialized equipment. Many hunters hunt part-time and many villages have a large percentage of the community involved in the illicit trade.[17]

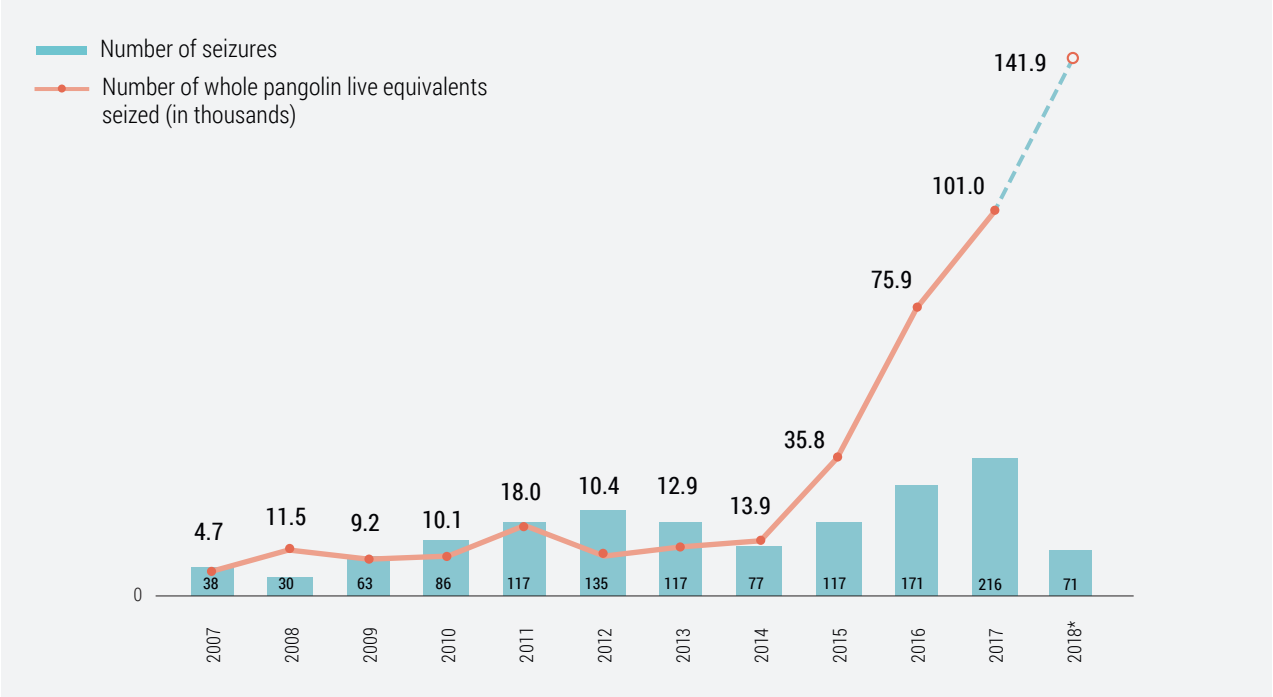
10 Available at: https://cites.org/eng/prog/mike/index.php/portal
11 Preliminary results from 2019 suggest an increase in seizures that could be due to improved interdiction and/or poachers attempting to unload stock in response to declining prices.
12 UNODC. 2020. World Wildlife Crime Report 2020. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/wildlife.html
13 UNODC. 2020. World Wildlife Crime Report 2020. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/wildlife.html
14 See e.g. The Guardian. COVID-19–a blessing for pangolins? 18 April 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/18/covid-19-a-blessing-for-pangolins
15 UNODC. 2020. World Wildlife Crime Report 2020. p.70
16 UNODC. 2020. World Wildlife Crime Report 2020. p.53
17 UNODC. 2020. World Wildlife Crime Report 2020. p.68

Figure 12: Weight of elephant tusk seizures and total number of seizures, 2005–2018 (tons)



Source: UNODC World WISE Database.
* 2018 data collection is not yet complete

Figure 13: Number of whole pangolin equivalents seized and number of seizures annually, 2007–2018



Source: UNODC World WISE Database.
* 2018 data collection is not yet complete

Background

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[18] To track international progress towards realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Statistical Commission developed the global SDG indicator framework, which was approved by Member States in 2017.[19] Under this framework, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is responsible for tracking international progress on several indicators that fall under SDG 16[20], sometimes in partnership with other agencies[21]. These indicators focus on violence, access to justice and governance, and include:

Indicator 16.1.1: The number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population by sex

Indicator 16.2.2: The number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation

Indicator 16.3.2: Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of the overall prison population

Indicator 16.5.1: The proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months

Indicator 16.4.2: The proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments.

This brief summarises UNODC's most up-to-date figures and trends in relation to the listed indicators. In addition, the brief also presents UNODC's most recent figures and trends on Indicator 15.7.1 (the proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked), which falls under the custodianship of UNODC.

18 https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1
19 https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/313
20 SDG 16 calls on Member States to "to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."
21 For a full list of SDG indicators that fall under the custodianship of UNODC, see https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataContacts/?selectIndicator=&selectAgency=UNODC

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