

Summary for Community Contributors

Who we are

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth who have been displaced by conflict and crisis. We travel to refugee settings and talk with refugees and migrants to find out what they need. We also speak with UN agencies and international and local organizations. We then make recommendations to international and national organizations about what should be done to improve the lives of refugees and migrants.

What we did in Italy

WRC has a project that is looking at sexual violence against refugee and migrant men and boys in Italy. Sexual violence against men and boys can include injury to the private parts, being forced to have sex with another person, or being forced to watch someone else being sexually violated. Perpetrators are usually men, but women can also perpetrate sexual violence. We also looked at the situation of refugee and migrant men and boys who are selling sex in Italy.

In October 2018, two WRC researchers traveled to Rome and Sicily (Catania, Palermo, and Syracuse) to learn more about sexual violence against men and boys traveling the central Mediterranean route to Italy. We held 10 focus groups with 52 refugees and spoke with 63 aid workers working in Italy and Libya. UNICEF helped us with our research, as well as UNHCR, MSF-Belgium, and other organizations.

What we found

You have a right to know what came out of this work. The researchers learned that:

- Many men, women, girls, and boys experienced sexual violence before, during, and after their journey to Italy.
- Some men and boys experienced sexual violence in their home countries, such as during

armed conflict, by family or community members, and in the military.

- A very large number of men and boys suffered sexual violence during their travels to Italy. Many were sexually abused at borders, checkpoints, during random stops, in captivity, and in detention centers.
- In Libya, in particular, sexual violence against men, boys, women, and girls is widespread. Armed groups, guards, and traffickers often abuse men and boys to force their families to send money. Sometimes the perpetrators use sexual violence as punishment.
- In Italy, some boys and young men are selling sex because they need money.
- Refugees and migrants who are gay, bisexual, or transgender may be at particular risk of sexual violence and exploitation. However, all men and boys are at risk during this dangerous journey.
- Men and boys who have experienced sexual violence and torture often have health, psychological, and social needs. There are some services to help these men and boys. With help and assistance, many men and boys who suffered sexual violence can recover and live a normal life.
- There are many barriers that prevent men and boys from accessing services. For example, refugees and migrants have limited information about the available services. They may not know where a man or boy who suffered sexual violence can go for help. Health providers, social workers, and others may not know that men and boys are being targeted for this kind of violence.

What if this happened to me or someone I know?

Sexual violence is NEVER the victim's fault. It is entirely the fault of the perpetrator. Anyone can be a targeted for sexual violence. Sexual violence has medical and psychological consequences that can be treated or managed.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence and needs medical and/or mental health support:

- **Call Emergency Services if you are in immediate danger:** Carabinieri – 112, Polizia di Stato – 113, Emergenza sanitaria – 118.
- **Call the national helpline on violence and stalking:** 1522. The number is free of charge and active 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Advice is provided in Italian, English, French, Spanish, and Arabic.
- Go to the nearest hospital for medical or immediate psychological care.
- Go to <https://www.jumamap.com/ana/map/ALL/all/all/> or <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/centriantiviolenza/> and find the closest service provider on the map.

What's next?

The Women's Refugee Commission has published a comprehensive report on the findings and recommendations from this study, titled *"More Than One*

Million Pains": Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys on the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy. We are working with UNICEF to develop a training to support cultural mediators (interpreters) to better help survivors of sexual violence.

The full report and an adolescent-friendly summary are available in English and Italian at <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/svproject>.

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Informal refugee and migrant settlement at an abandoned penicillin factory in Rome.

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