Mapping Forced Marriage Risk in Nottinghamshire

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Using a new comparative judgement method, the Rights Lab has mapped the risk of forced marriage at ward level in Nottinghamshire. The study found that the ward areas of Hyson Green, Radford and Berridge had the highest risk of forced marriage, with areas in Bassetlaw having the lowest risk.

Key findings

The study estimated the risk of forced marriage in each ward of Nottinghamshire, with the inner-city wards of Nottingham having the highest risk. Using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 16 indices of multiple deprivation, the research found high estimated risk of forced marriage to be correlated with poor quality housing, poor living conditions and low income for the elderly. This aligns with theories that forced marriage is used to increase a family's economic stability. Further research is required to distinguish correlation with causation.

Our findings and recommendations are intended to support those responsible for drafting and implementing the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021 – 2025.

Why is this important?

At present, there are no ward or county level estimates of forced marriage prevalence and risk. This limits the development of local policies to tackle forced marriage and protect potential victims. Mapping forced marriage risk enables practitioners to advocate for increased funding, services, and training for professionals in the most at-risk areas to prevent and safeguard victims of forced marriage.

This is the first time that forced marriage risk estimates have been compared to indices of multiple deprivation to assess correlation. Identifying and interrogating whether causal links exist between deprivation indices and forced marriage risk will enable the development of targeted interventions to address these causal factors.

## Recommendations for Nottinghamshire Police and local authorities

o   Alert agencies working in Hyson Green, Radford and Berridge to the high risk of forced marriage in these neighbourhoods. Alert agencies working in Mansfield South to the higher risk of forced marriage compared to other areas in Mansfield.

o   Record forced marriage cases at the ward level to enable more granular prevalence mapping.

o   Support further research to interrogate whether there is a causal link between forced marriage risk and: poor-quality housing and living conditions; an individual's location in relation to services and amenities; and income deprivation among the elderly, at the ward level.

Estimating local risk of forced marriage

To estimate the risk of forced marriage in Nottinghamshire, the research team carried out a comparative judgement study. Comparative judgement is a new method to estimate risk of human rights abuses and has previously been used to estimate deprivation levels at local levels in developing countries (more information about the research methodology can be found in Seymour et. al. (2022)).

In this study, 12 forced marriage experts (members of the Nottinghamshire modern slavery partnership and staff from local non-governmental organisations) were shown pairs of wards and asked which of the pair has a higher prevalence of forced marriage. It is often easier to compare areas than to rank them outright of to place areas of a scale of low/high risk. The participants provided us with 1,844 comparisons of pairs of wards in the county. From all the comparisons, it was then possible to rank the wards from highest to lowest risk of forced marriage.

The map below shows our estimated risk of forced marriage in each ward in Nottinghamshire, with red areas having the highest estimated risk and blue the lowest.
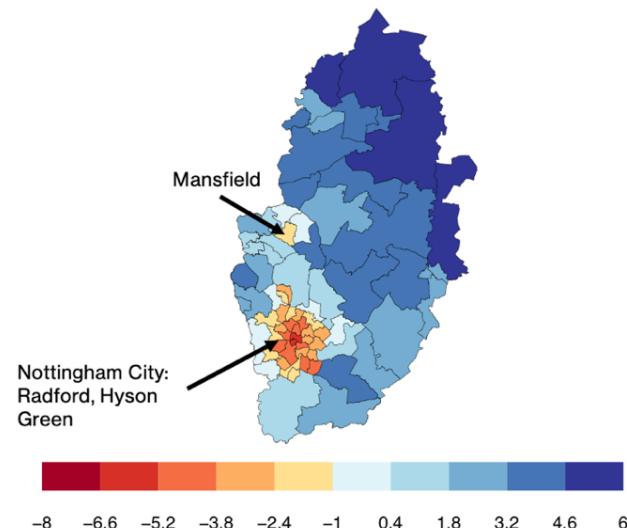
The wards we found to have the highest risk of forced marriage in the county are:

1. Hyson Green & Arboretum
2. Radford
3. Berridge
4. Wollaton West
5. Basford

We also found wards in Mansfield to be medium risk. The figure below shows wards in Nottinghamshire grouped by estimated risk of forced marriage and location within the county. The red group has the highest risk, yellow medium risk, and blue the lowest risk.
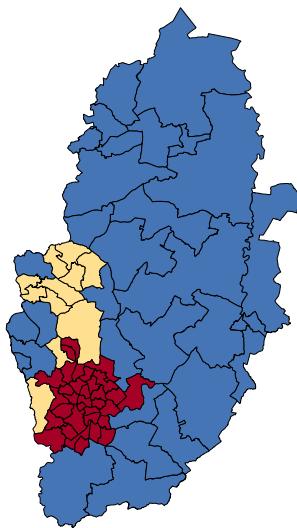
Understanding the drivers of forced marriage

In the UK, forced marriage is defined as taking place: 'where one or both parties are coerced into a marriage against their will and under duress' (Foreign and Commonwealth Office et al 2006: 4).

Within the UK discourse, forced marriage has often been constructed as intrinsic to specific countries and cultures, particularly South Asian and/or Muslim populations (Chantler et al 2009: 589; Oprea 2005). Forced marriage is therefore situated as a product of immigration, prompting stricter immigration controls, and increasing racial stereotypes toward certain minority communities, thus directing vital support away from forced marriage victims (Gill and Mitra-Khan 2012: 115; Chantler et al 2009: 589).

Contrary to these assertions, forced marriage is not a problem specific to one specific country or culture. According to Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) statistics, the unit dealt with cases related to 54 countries across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and North America in 2020 (UK Home Office 2021). Furthermore, 53 cases (7%) had no overseas element, with the potential or actual forced marriage taking place entirely within the UK (UK Home Office 2021).

Forced marriage is a gendered concern – it affects more women than men; in 2020, the Forced Marriage Unit found that 79% of forced marriage victims were women (Neighbourhood Watch, 2020). This is tied to increased levels of deprivation. Globally, 40% of girls in the world's poorest countries are married as children, twice the worldwide average (Girls Not Brides 2022). Patriarchal norms devalue and commodify women; women are much more likely to be economically dependent on men since they have disproportionate access to education, welfare and protection, and financial security. As a result, families may consider marriage as their daughter's only option for a prosperous life. Similarly, in times of economic distress, a dowry or "bride price" may be a welcome source of income for a girl's family (Girls Not Brides 2022).

Existing literature perceptively theorises that higher levels of deprivation are correlated with an increased risk of forced marriage. When families are experiencing extreme poverty, marriage is seen as a method to minimise family expenditures and attain financial security (Girls Not Brides 2022).

Quantitative analysis to understand the drivers of forced marriage in the county

We investigated the correlation between the risk of forced marriage in each ward to 16 indices of multiple deprivation from the Office for National Statistics. Indices of multiple deprivation describe different kinds of deprivation for neighbourhoods across the UK and are generated by the Office for National Statistics for use across government.

o **Living environment deprivation**

Wards with a high estimated risk of forced marriage were also wards with high levels of living environment deprivation. This index of deprivation measures the quality of the local environment, combining:

- Housing in poor condition
- Houses without central heating
- Rates of road traffic accidents
- Air quality: nitrogen dioxide, benzene, sulphur dioxide, and particulates

This correlation aligns with theories within the literature that higher levels of deprivation and poorer living conditions can increase the risk and prevalence of forced marriage due to related practices of "bride price" or a dowry in certain instances, which can help families to escape deprivation.

○ Income deprivation affecting the elderly

An increase in the 'Income deprivation affecting older people' score aligned with an increase in the estimated risk of forced marriage value across Nottinghamshire. This aligns with theories within the literature that higher levels of deprivation can increase the risk and prevalence of forced marriage due to the necessity of older people needing to attain financial security throughout retirement age. Furthermore, there is evidence within the literature to suggest that in certain situations, such as family grief, when a parent, especially the father, dies, the surviving parent or other family members may feel pressure to ensure that the children marry (HM Government, 2014).

○ Wider barriers subdomain

The 'Wider barriers subdomain' score measures issues related to housing such as affordability, homelessness, and overcrowding. As the wider barriers score increased, the estimated risk of forced marriage was also higher. This aligns with theories in the literature that prevalence of forced marriage is seen as a method to minimise family costs and increase the quality of life and standard of living.

○ Geographical barriers

The strongest correlation to risk of forced marriage was with geographical barriers. This relates to how close residents are to local services. It is calculated by combining (all in km):

- Road distance to a post office
- Road distance to a primary school
- Road distance to general store or supermarket
- Road distance to a GP surgery

This correlation may mean that urban neighbourhoods face higher risk of forced marriage than rural neighbourhoods, but it could also mean that those in rural neighbourhoods may have fewer or weaker connections to support services and so are less likely to report forced marriages.

Further research is required to interrogate whether there are causal links between these indices of deprivation and forced marriage risk.

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