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LONDON (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – Human traffickers across Britain are preying on homeless people and luring them into slave labor with promises of accommodation and work, charities said on Monday, warning that growing numbers are at risk of being enslaved.

People sleeping rough are increasingly being targeted by traffickers around homeless shelters, soup kitchens and support groups, and tricked into modern slavery, several charities said.

“While modern slavery affects many sections of society, we feel this group (homeless people) is particularly vulnerable,” said Carly Jones, chief executive of the charity Sifa Fireside, which is based in Birmingham, Britain’s second-biggest city.

“There have been occasions outside our own service where traffickers have been attempting to ‘recruit’ our clients,” Jones told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by email.

At least 4,100 people slept rough across England on any given night last year – a 16 percent increase on 2015 and more than double the amount in 2010, according to the charity Crisis.

Homeless migrants are especially vulnerable to enslavement as they are less likely to seek shelter or support from charities for fear of being detained or deported, said Matthew Downie, director of policy and external affairs at Crisis.

Many slavery victims are also at risk of ending up homeless and being trafficked again, according to the charity St Mungo’s.

“We have started to see an increase in people on the streets that showed possible indicators of being victims of trafficking,” said Karen Savant of St Mungo’s in London.

“They had photocopied documents, they had little understanding of where they were, did not give a coherent story about their situation, or let other people talk for them.”

It is unclear how many homeless people in Britain are trafficked or forced into modern slavery, as there is no national database or system for recording such incidents.

In a recent high-profile case, nine members of a British traveler family who enslaved 18 homeless adults to fund their lavish lifestyle were jailed for a total of about 80 years.

At least 13,000 people are estimated by the government to be victims of forced labor, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude – but police say the true figure is likely to be in the tens of thousands with slavery operations on the rise.

Britain is regarded as a leader in global efforts to combat slavery, and passed the Modern Slavery Act in 2015 to crack down on traffickers, force businesses to check their supply chains for forced labor, and protect people at risk of being enslaved.

Source: adapted from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-slavery-homelessness/human-traffickers-lure-uks-homeless-into-modern-slavery-charities-idUSKBN1CZ253>

GLOSSARY:

prey on = depredar, cazar; apresar

lure = atraer con engaños

sleep rough = dormir en la calle

traveller = nómada, vagabundo
(spelt with a single L in AmEng)

crack down on = tomar medidas
contra, combatir

EXERCISES

1.- Find words or phrases in the text that mean the same as the following:

increasing (adj.)
refuges
deceived, cheated
especially
trying

because
look for, search for
expelled from a country
hints, evidence
luxurious

imprisoned
real
probable
increasing (adv.)
considered

2.- Are these sentences true or false, according to the information in the text?

- a) The criminals described in the text promise to give money and a job to poor people in order to attract them.
- b) In order to find their victims, they go to the places where they usually spend time.
- c) Birmingham is not as big as London.
- d) A record 4,100 people slept in the streets on one night in 2016.
- e) In 2010, around 2,000 people did not have a home in Britain.
- f) Immigrants who do not have a home have more probabilities of falling victim to these criminals.
- g) Victims of trafficking often cannot explain why they are homeless.
- h) We do not know exactly how many people are working as slaves in Britain because their numbers are growing.
- i) The government and the police agree on how many people are victims of forced labour in Britain.
- j) The British government has recently passed a law to protect vulnerable people outside Britain, too.

3.- Write questions about the underlined information in the text. Copy only the necessary information to make a complete sentence. Example:

- a) Human traffickers across Britain are preying on homeless people.

ANSWER: *Where are human traffickers preying on homeless people?*

4.- Find all the words in the first paragraph of the text with each of these sounds:

/eɪ/ (6 words)

/iː/ (2)

/ɪ/ (8)

/aʊ/ (1)

/əʊ/ (2)

/ɔː/ (1)

/uː/ (1)