



ANNUAL 2020 REPORT 2022



BORDER SURVEILLANCE UNIT

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION & EMIGRATION - SRI LANKA

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The Border Surveillance Unit has been established centered on the Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB) since July 2019 as a successful outcome of the proposal made in 2017 regarding the emerging importance of immigration and emigration surveillance system at designated border controlling ports of Sri Lanka. The unit's mission is to keep surveillance on movements to screen irregularities with fraudulent/counterfeit travel documents, boarding passes, and impersonations and to identify potential victims of human trafficking to create an overview of variations in modus operandi used in activities of organized criminal groups.

The Border Surveillance Unit has been empowered under 1948 No 20 of the Immigrants and Emigrants Act with subsequent amendments and specially designed Standard Operating Procedure which was approved on 27th September 2021 (See Annual Report 2021). Border Surveillance Unit keeps its professionalism at optimum standards for passenger handling with regular training, capacity-building programs, and current updates from stakeholders of the Department of Immigration and Emigration.

Department of Immigration and Emigration had led more efforts to enhance the efficiency of investigation units. Consequently, a new system interface for BSU and RAC has been designed and developed to aid such units to perform their tasks in a more efficient manner.

The Unit was able to reach its objectives at highly satisfactory levels, unfolding transnational organized criminal activities and minimizing such attempts in significant figures. For the year 2022, the unit has foiled **137 forged papers**, numbers of significant irregular trending of migration developed worldwide, uncovered facilitators involved in such activities, clients and victims involved in crimes, and certain elements of human trafficking incidents centered in Sri Lanka.

The Unit has been operated under the guidance of Controller Visa and Border Ms. Geethani Athukorala (Continued from January 2022 until September 2022) and Mr. PGS Abeykoon (From September 2022); with the supervision of, Mr. MGK Kariyawasam (Deputy Controller-Investigations), Mr. RMDS Rathnayake (Assistant Controller -BIA), Mr. PP Aluthge (Chief Immigration Officer – BSU, RAC, BRAC, Human Trafficking Prevention Unit). Under mentioned (19) Immigration Officers have engaged in delivering tasks of BSU in order to achieve prescribed objectives.

1. Mr.HAA Sandaruwan (Immigration Officer - BSU)
2. Mr.KP Susantha (Immigration Officer - BSU)
3. Mr. KANG Bandara (Immigration Officer - BSU)
4. Mr.RMNB Rathnayake (Immigration Officer - BSU)
5. Mr.KKGJ Bandara (Immigration Officer - BSU)
6. Ms.I Nilanthi (Immigration Officer - BSU)
7. Ms.MDUU Gunathilaka (Immigration Officer - BSU)
8. Mr.PACP Pathiraja (Immigration Officer - BSU)
9. Mr.DADP Ohan (Immigration Officer - BSU)
10. Mr.RPMAS Bandara (Immigration Officer - BSU)
11. Mr.AU Ariyasinghe (Immigration Officer - BSU)
12. Mr.TACP Priyadasun (Immigration Officer - BSU)
13. Mr.BG Punchihewa (Immigration Officer - BSU)
14. Mr.DMCJ Dasanayaka (Immigration Officer - BSU)
15. Mr.PGSNS Karunarathne (Immigration Officer - BSU)
16. Mr.HWEH Rambukwella (Immigration Officer - BSU)
17. Mr.KPDKM Kapurubandara (Immigration Officer - BSU)
18. Mr.ARSC Prabha (Immigration Officer - BSU)
19. *Mr.HIS Kalansooriya (Immigration Officer - BSU)*

The Unit has been operated under the Investigations division of the Department of Immigration and Emigration. A total of 19 Immigration Officers has been assigned duties with a daily basis roster system to Bandaranaike International Airport.



Series of local training programs, one-day workshops, residential workshops, number of overseas training sessions, representing annual forums of international migration-related entities, for the purpose of human resource development. Such programs were arranged in order to fulfill the necessity of capacity building and to accomplish identified gaps and loopholes at the functional level and targeting initiatives of sustainable policy decisions regarding migration-related issues. Department of Immigration and Emigration with the coordination of the DIE Training Unit has designed programs with the following organizations for the year 2022.

1. **Australia High Commission** at Colombo, resource person performed Document Examination Training Session, at DIE Head Quarters in January.
2. **UNODC** sponsored STARSOM (International partners of law enforcement) Session 2 – Residential workshop on Human Smuggling with Maldivian Law enforcement authorities, at Jetwing Lagoon - Negombo in January.
3. **The Open University of Sri Lanka**, an expert panel of lecturers conducted a Short Course on irregular migration; Human Smuggling, and Human Trafficking in a zoom platform for the Second Batch of Immigration Officers.
4. **USA Embassy** in Colombo, a panel of resource persons performed a sequence of training programs, on Behavioral observation and Document Examination techniques, at DIE Head Quarters.
5. **IOM** Sponsored DESC, provided a sequence of the awareness program on updates in Verifier TD&B e-Dashboard System as online webinars.



6. **Australia High Commission** – Colombo sponsored, with an expert panel of resource persons conducted a sequence of two weeks of training programs on Investigations of Transnational Organized Crimes, at Taj Samudra – Colombo.
7. **UNODC** Sponsored STARSOM Session 3, conducted by expert resource persons on International Corporations against the crime of Human Smuggling, at Male – Maldives.
8. **Australian High Commission** sponsored Australia Home Affairs Ministry, with a resource person conducted a training program on Intelligence Cycle, Document Swapping, and Open-Source Intelligence collection at Taj Samudra – Colombo.
9. **IATA and Aviation** provided overseas training on the Application of Cyber Security in the Border Control Process in Singapore.
10. **UNODC** Sponsored STARSOM Session 4, conducted by expert resource persons on International Corporation and Mutual Legal Assistance against the crime of Human Smuggling, in Vienna - Austria.
11. **Canada Embassy** – Colombo, with an expert resource person provided a Document Examination training program on Canada-bound documents at DIE Head Quarters.
12. **Bali Process** – Annual General Meeting, Application of Technology Developments into Border Control Systems and a workshop on Human Smuggling, in Bangkok – Thailand.
13. **IOM** Sponsored ANDEX Annual Session on regional irregular migration trends and developments conducted by the DESC team online from Bangkok – Thailand.
14. **IOM** Sponsored DIE, AGD and CID collaborated Awareness session on legal perspectives on transnational organized crimes, at Waters Edge – Battaramulla.
15. **Australia High Commission** – Colombo, with an expert resource person provided an Advanced Document Examination training program at Taj Samudra – Colombo.
16. **Australia High Commission** – Colombo, with an expert resource person provided a Demonstration on operations of the newly donated VSC 80 station at BIA.
17. **The Department** - Embilipitiya, Outbound training and 5 years plan discussion at Embilipitiya Sri Lanka School of Military Engineering

04 KNOWLEDGE SHARING FOR CAPACITY BUILDING OF OTHER FIRMS

1. Conducted an elaborated awareness program on Sri Lanka Passport Security Features to officers in **USA Embassy** – Colombo at the Embassy Premises.
2. **BIT – Basic Immigration Training program** was conducted for **Sri Lankan Airlines Officers** scheduled in four sessions targeting a **hundred officers**. Each session consists of the Immigrants and Emigrants Act, the Security Features of Sri Lanka travel documents, the Sri Lanka Visa system, and the significance of transnational organized crimes in Sri Lanka at BIA.
3. Conducted an awareness session on human smuggling, and trafficking issues in Sri Lanka to a **delegation from the USA** at DIE Head Quarters.
4. Conducted an outcome briefing of STARSOM sessions to a **delegate from UNODC** at DIE Head Quarters.
5. Conducted lectures on the Smuggling of migrants in Sri Lankan perspectives in the training sessions for **law enforcement authorities of Sri Lanka, organized by the Australian High Commission** – Colombo and Australian Federal Police at Taj Samudra – Colombo



DEVELOPMENTS IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

I. High Commissions/Embassies/Airline and Immigration Liaison Officers

BSU has currently established diplomatic relations with Airline and Immigration liaison officers attached to High Commissions/ Embassies in Sri Lanka for travel-related document verifications in cases of comprehensive signs of irregularities observed. The Federal Republic of Germany, the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Romania, Austria, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

An event of Get-together in collaboration with international partners and DIE held in Canada House – Colombo as a way forward in strengthening relationships.

III. Sri Lankan Airlines

Sri Lankan airlines improved their connections with BSU in sharing codes to view Advanced Passenger Information systems. With this, BSU is eligible to assess risks and any significance in passenger movements, trends, and variations of modus. The Sri Lankan airlines transfer desk office is actively sharing any signs of irregularities in passenger movements with BSU.

- Inadmissible persons at destinations/ transit ports
- Deportations of persons
- Missing passenger records

II. ANDEX

BSU is the country representative in the Asian Network of Document Examiners forum. ANDEX is a platform to share migration perspectives annually among regional countries and the forum is conducted by International Organization for Migration and funded by the Canadian Government. Document Examination Support Center has continuously liaised with BSU for operations, updates, awareness programs, issues, and drawbacks in handling the Verifier TD & B stations at BIA.

IV. Other Airlines

Airline ground handling officers and BSU have well-maintained relationships for document verifications and passenger assessments. This corporation has an immense contribution to reducing the circulation of fraudulent documents. A significant number of activities related to human smuggling in terms of document fraud have been uncovered and successfully combatted with these corporations.



V. Department of Immigration and Emigration

Internal information sharing with the following sub-divisions with BSU has become a leading part of the operations of the unit.

- **Immigration and Chief Immigration Officers – Sharing questioned documents**
- **Human Trafficking Prevention Unit - Departure notifications of refugees**
- **Risk Assessment Center – Risk passenger arrivals**
- **Border Risk Assessment Center – Potential risk passenger movements**

DIE and Informatics cooperatively designed and developed an interface system for BSU and RAC. The system had some demonstration sessions done by Informatics and concluded the final draft. The new system will enable BSU and RAC to perform their designated tasks more efficiently.

VI. National Central Bureau (NCB) - Colombo

Interpol NCB has a corporation with BSU for providing information required on secondary investigations of travel-related documents. BSU has successfully shared information on passports in the Interpol SLTD database.



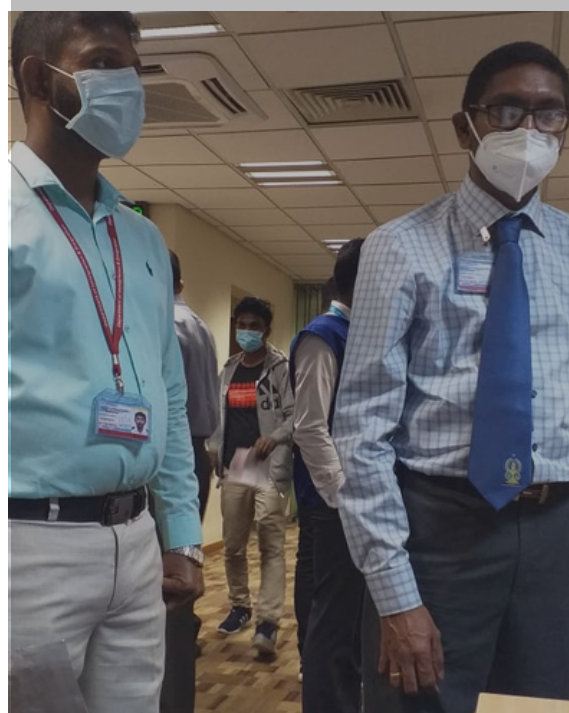
ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT



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Sri Lanka Police



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6.1 Technology in the Document Laboratory in 2019 – The beginning

Equipment

1. Verifier TD & B station
2. Visual Spectral Corporator -40 (VSC 40)
3. Document Microscope
4. Retro-reflective document analyzer

Technology

1. Advanced Passenger Information System (API)
2. Passenger Reconciliation
3. Passenger Manifest Inquiry
4. Border Control System

With the utmost innovative concepts and dedication of leaders and fellow officers in designing and delivering duties, BSU has reached magnificent success in the process of achieving objectives. The success drives stakeholders to make more attention to the unit, especially on capacity building of fellow officers and infrastructure development of the document examination laboratory. The Investigation division (DIE) put its best efforts into coordinating each required opportunity to achieve such developments.

6.2 Periodic Infrastructure Developments

Donations from Australia High Commission - Colombo

1. Forensic portable document magnifiers
2. Visual Spectral Comparator (VSC) – 80 workstation

Donations from USA Embassy - Colombo

3. Forensic portable document magnifiers

Donations from UK Embassy - Colombo

4. Ultraviolet torches



07 FORMALITIES FOR THE YEAR 2022

7.1 Arrivals

Passenger arrivals were marginally low for the first half of the year 2022 and become increased to an average of 6000 passenger arrivals per day at the end of the year. Screening potential risk passenger movements with the aid of pre-arrival surveys done using the Advanced Passenger Information System was facilitated for BSU with the periodic information sharing platform maintained by BSU and the BRAC. BSU was able to prevent risky passenger arrivals to Sri Lanka and uncover regional trends of such migrants in South - East Asian countries (*See section 10.8*).

Further, BSU was able to identify attempts made by economic migrants to travel through Sri Lanka toward Global North countries, especially to destinations in Europe with fraudulent identities.

7.2 Departures

Pre-departure surveys have been conducted regularly to check any irregularities in exit from the country. These surveys are done based on the API system for certain scheduled flights on daily basis.

Secondary inspections of travel documents and assessments of suspected passengers with in-depth interviews are done regularly. Such inspections are done for instances of reference of passengers with documents to the unit by other firms or based on observations at random surveillances: for identity and authenticity verification purposes.

Random surveillance operations have been carried out at the departure lounge (passenger lobby, airline check-in area, and transit area). Random operations are done to investigate on developing trends, migration patterns, and variations in modus operandi.

08

THE OUTPUT OF THE YEAR

It is detailed that electronic formats were utilized to record all activities outlined in *Section 7*, resulting in the creation of appropriate databases. These databases were regularly updated on a daily basis through the use of intercepts, investigations, and data collections. The following databases were maintained:

Activity Reports:

A reporting structure was provided to stakeholders on intercepts, with a total of **108** activity records recorded for the year.

Suspicious Movements:

Data collection on strange routings and journeys was carried out, with a total of **335** suspicious movements observed and recorded for the year.

Deportees and Refusals:

Data collection on Sri Lankans who were deported or refused entry from other countries was carried out and outlined in more detail in *Section 12*.

Form X Servings:

Data collection on foreign passengers denied entry to Sri Lanka was carried out and outlined in more detail in *Section 11*.

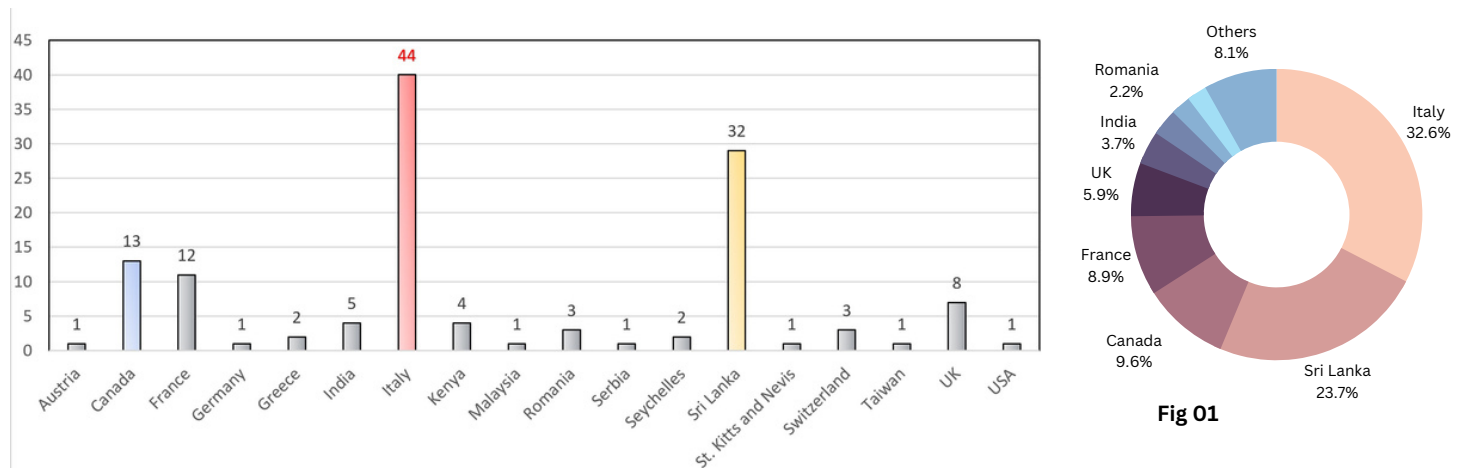
9.1 Variations in Modus Operandi

The **Border Surveillance Unit** has observed a sequence of variations in the methods and tactics used in the modus operandi of smuggling persons overseas during the year. Techniques such as the use of ***fraudulent documents, swapping of travel documents, border crossings with impostor documents, and counterfeiting of travel-related documents*** have been frequently intercepted at the Bandaranaike International Airport. The Unit is constantly adapting its approach to identify and combat these criminal activities.

Forgery Type	Count
Counterfeit Residence Permits	33
Counterfeit Visas	26
Passport Biodata Page Substitutions	23
Impostor Passports	09
Fraudulently Obtained Passports	09
Altered Residence Permits	09
Counterfeit Passports	09
Impostor Residence Permits	07
Altered Passports	03
Counterfeit SLBFE Registrations	02
Fantasy Visas	02
Altered Visas	01
Counterfeit CDCs	01
Counterfeit Identity Cards	01
Fantasy Passports	01
Impostor Visas	01

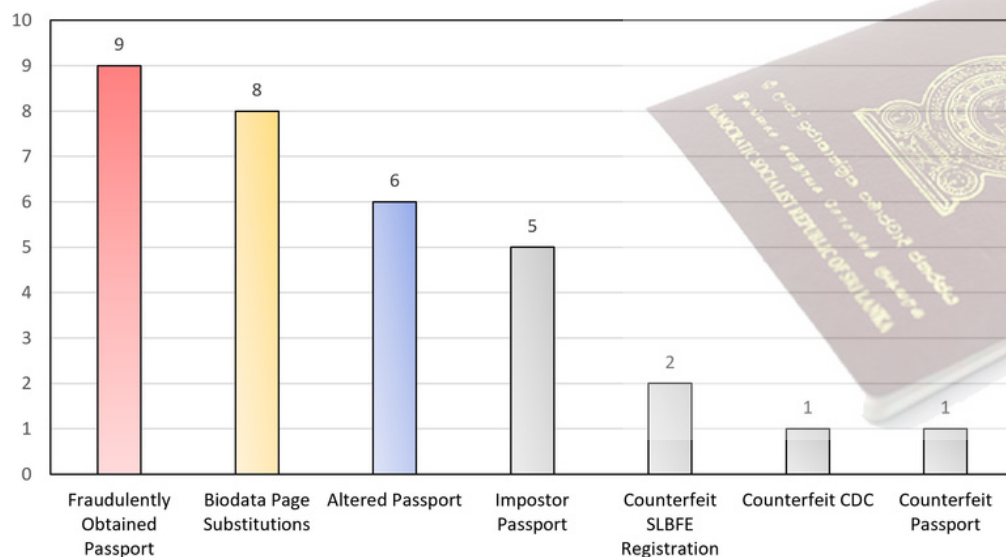
Table 01: Variations in Modus Operandi

The following graphs provide an illustration of the variation in the modus operandi used by individuals engaged in smuggling persons overseas. The data presented shows that **Italy is the most targeted** country by the smugglers of these criminal activities. The graphs help to visualize the different tactics and techniques that are being employed and how they have changed over time. It is worth noting that the modus operandi of smuggling is a dynamic and ever-changing field.



Graph 01: Use of Fraudulent Documents (Total :137)

The following graph shows the trend of fraudulent **Sri Lankan documents** usage in smuggling persons to foreign countries. It helps identify the specific areas where this tactic is frequently employed.



Graph 02: Use of Fraudulent Sri Lankan Documents (Total :32)

The most commonly used form of forgery in Sri Lankan document is the **fraudulent obtaining of Sri Lankan passports**. Relevant authorities should be aware of this and take steps to reduce human smuggling by detecting and preventing the fraudulent obtaining of passports.

The following graph illustrates that the use of **counterfeit residence permit cards** was a prevalent tactic employed by criminal groups to smuggle individuals to **Italy**. These forgeries were used to deceive airline staff and other officials, allowing the smuggled individuals to travel undetected. However, with the help of airline staff trained to identify forgeries, the Border Surveillance Unit was able to detect and reduce the circulation of such documents, making it more difficult for criminals to use them as a means of smuggling.

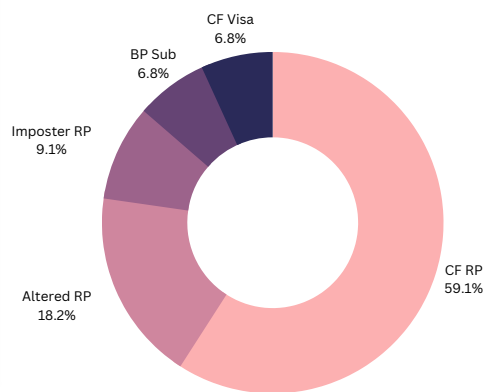
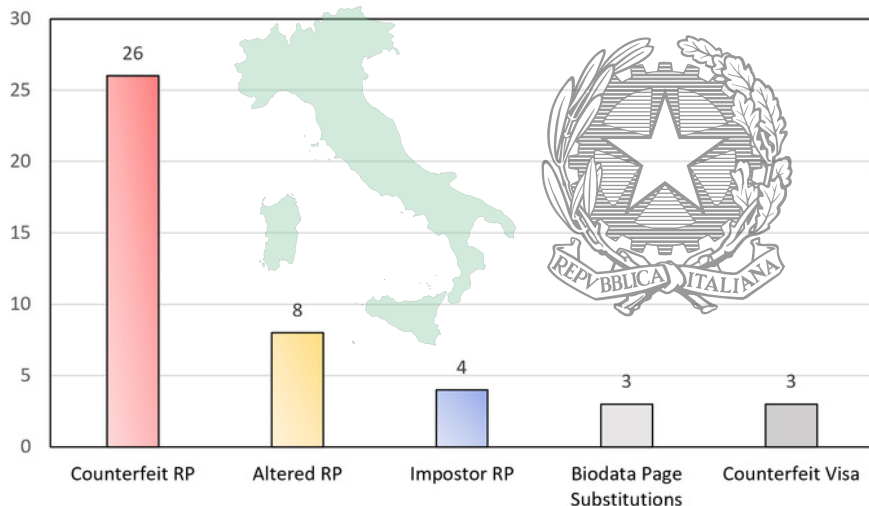
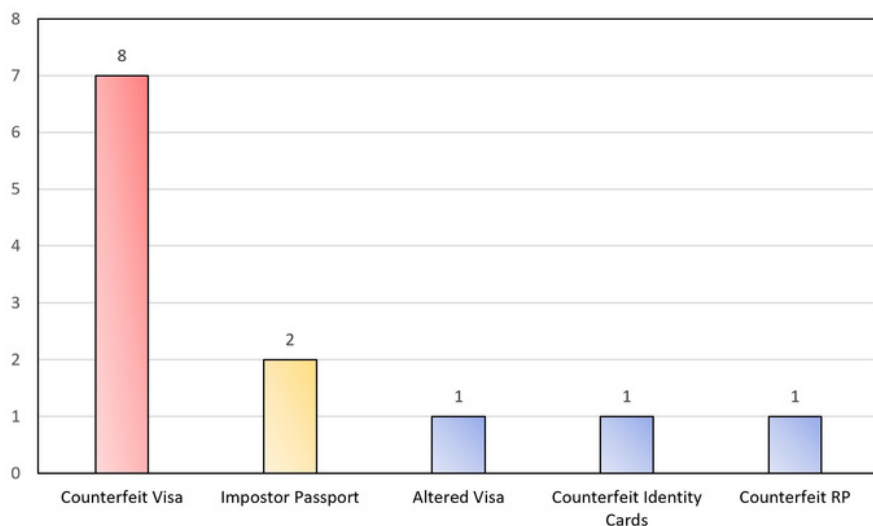


Fig 02

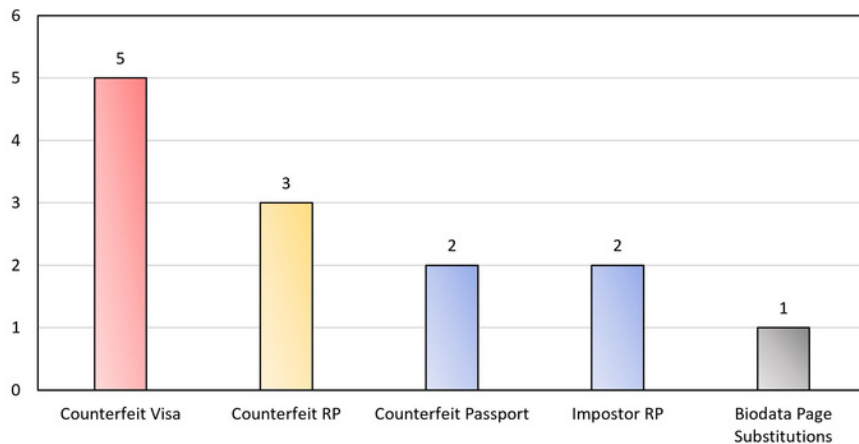
Graph 03: Use of Fraudulent Italian Documents (Total :44)

The graphs indicate that the use of **counterfeit visa stickers** was the most intercepted case type for the attempt to smuggle migrants to **France** (EU) among all other forms of forgeries. This data suggests that criminals frequently employ this modus operandi to facilitate the illegal migration to the European Union.



Graph 04: Use of Fraudulent French Documents (Total :13)

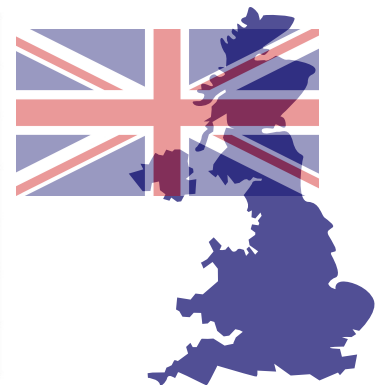
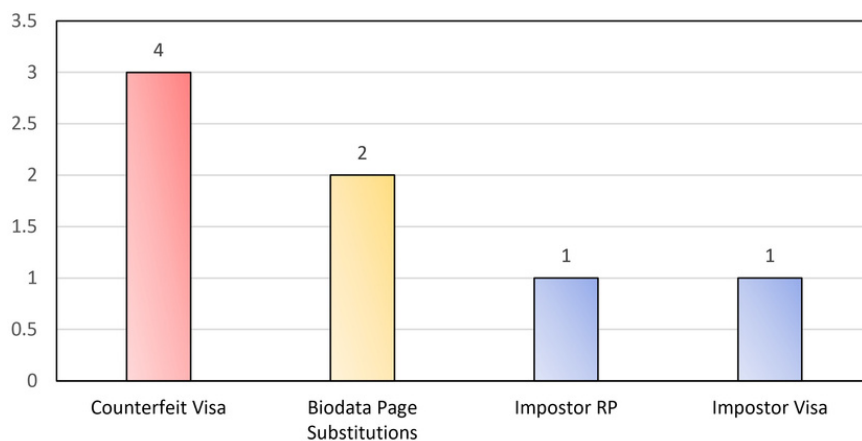
The data illustrates that the same modus operandi of using **counterfeit visa stickers** was also used to smuggle migrants to **Canada**.



Graph 05: Use of Fraudulent Canadian Documents (Total :13)

The data indicates that the tactic of **boarding pass swapping** is being used in smuggling cases to **Canada**. This tactic involves the illegal use of genuine boarding passes to smuggle persons into Canada by switching the identity of the person on the boarding pass with another person. Additionally, the data suggests that there is an increase in **family-motivated** smuggling cases. These cases involve the illegal movement of persons, usually family members, across international borders.

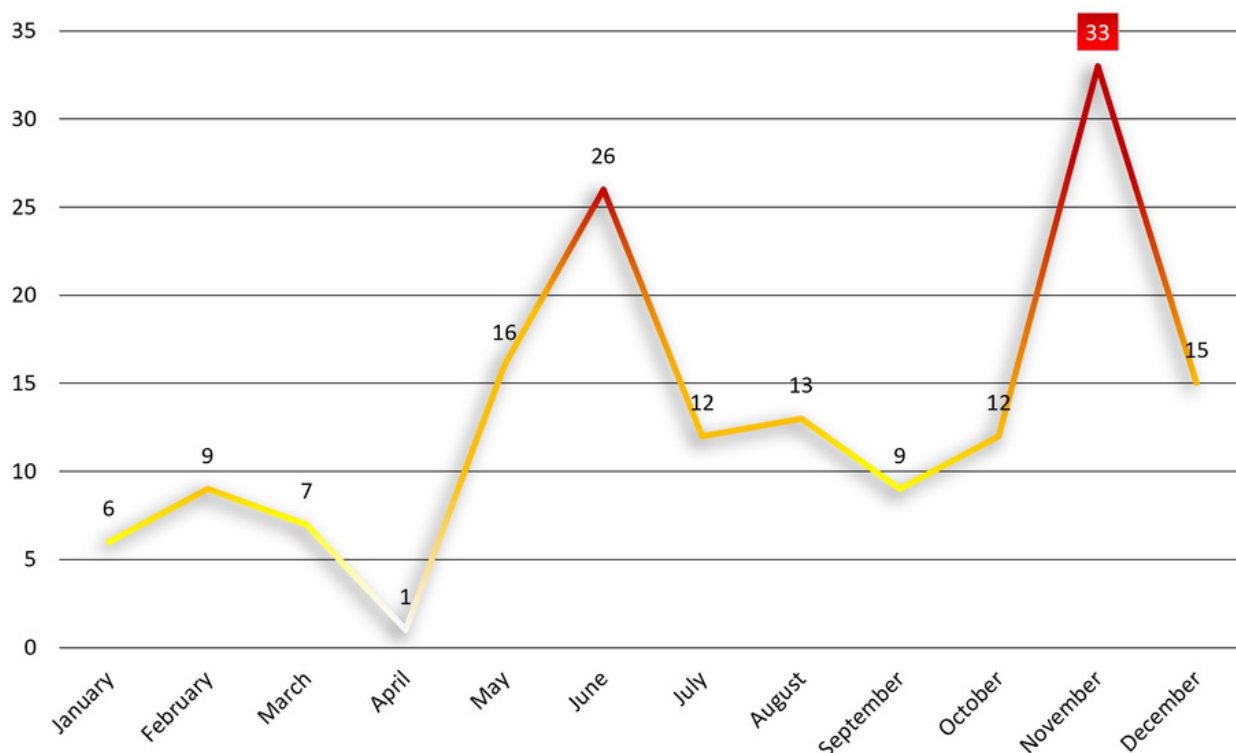
The data presented in the following graphs also indicates that the use of **counterfeit visa stickers** is being used as a tactic to smuggle migrants to the **UK**.



Graph 06: Use of Fraudulent United Kingdom Documents (Total: 8)

The year's observations show that the most frequent document frauds were Italian Residence Permits (counterfeits or face substitutions), which were used to facilitate illegal migration to Italy. Sri Lanka passports (fraudulent or altered biodata pages) were also commonly used, Canada passports (altered biodata pages, impersonations) and France Visa Vignettes (counterfeits) were also observed to be used frequently as a tactic by criminal groups to smuggle migrants to these countries.

9.2 Frequency of interceptions over the year



Graph 07: Frequency of interceptions: 2022

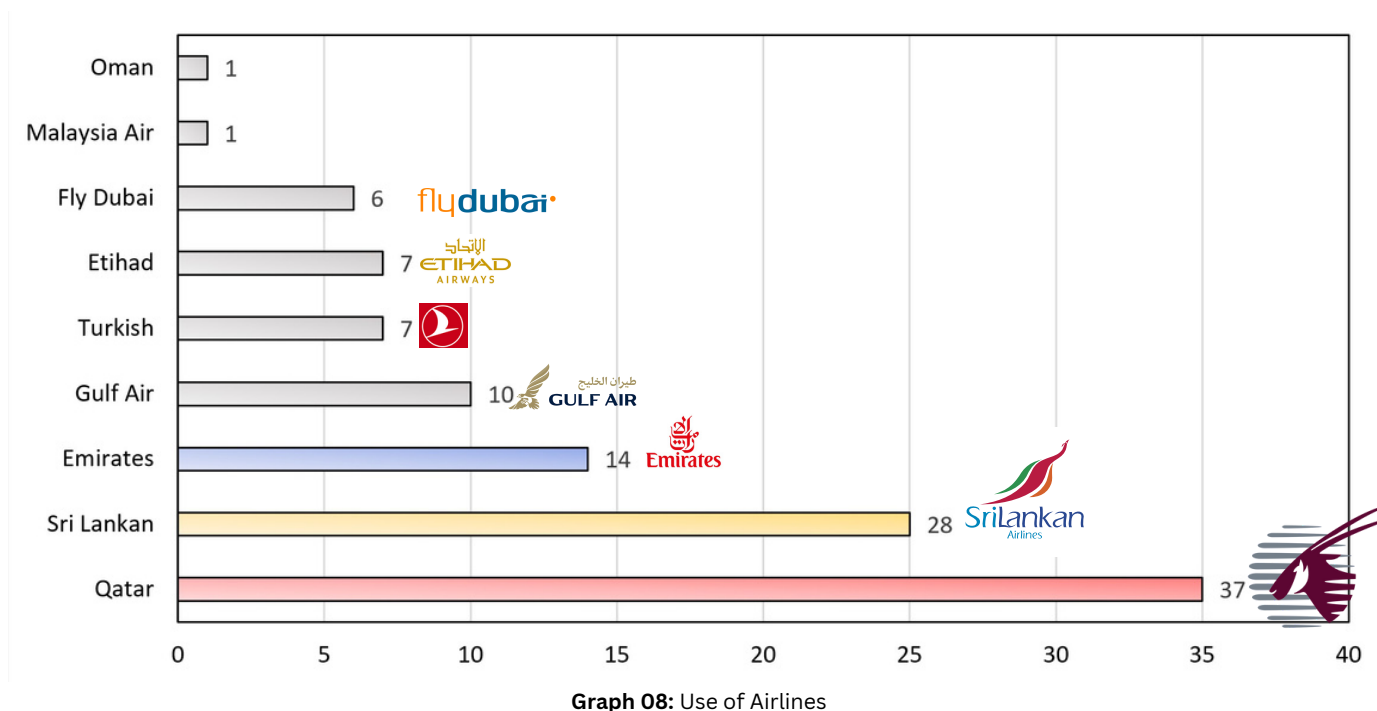
It was observed that the use of fraudulent documents varied in a cyclic pattern over the year. This pattern suggests that facilitators switch the mode of forgery from one to another, in response to increased border security or detection of a specific type of forgery.

They are testing new modes to make their activities successful, in order to evade detection by the authorities. This adaptive behavior of the criminal groups highlights the need for the relevant authorities to be vigilant, adapt their approach, and continuously monitor the trends in order to detect and prevent such activities. It also shows that the facilitators of the smuggling are aware of the countermeasures taken by the authorities and try to find new ways to avoid getting caught.

9.3 Use of the Airline for document forgeries

Doha in Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai in UAE have become popular transit ports for criminal activities involved in human smuggling.

The frequency of flights to intended destinations from these transit ports, particularly Qatar Airways, Sri Lankan airlines (to Abu Dhabi), and Emirates, is likely a contributing factor to their use by criminals as a corridor for smuggling clients. The passenger volume is comparatively higher in foreign airlines to destinations like Doha and Dubai and as a result, the number of successful referrals from foreign airline staff officers to the Border Surveillance Unit is also proportionally higher when compared to Sri Lankan Airlines. This results in a higher number of interceptions being regularly centered on **Qatar Airways and Emirates airlines.**



9.4 Significance in Gender variation

The data indicates that 64% (102) of passengers who were intercepted while using illegal methods to leave the island from Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) for the year 2022 are male.

This suggests that men are more prone to breaking the law and using illegal methods to travel. This could be due to a variety of factors such as cultural norms, economic opportunities, and societal expectations. Additionally, it could also indicate that men are more willing to bear the risk of the journey and have the physical and psychological fitness to endure it compared to women.

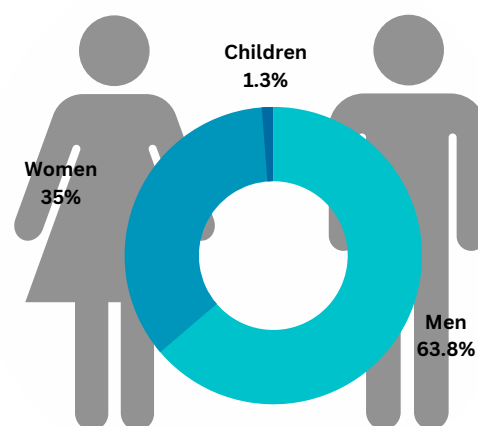
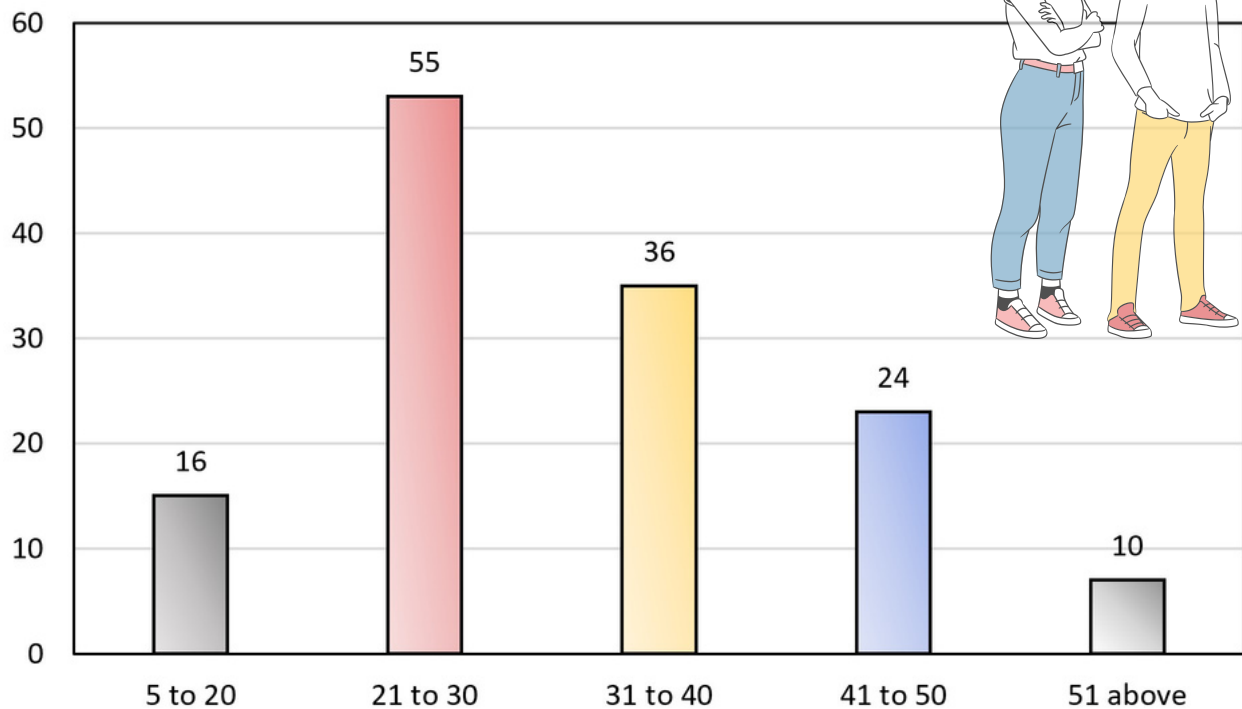


Fig 03: Gender variation

9.5 Significance in Age distribution



Graph 09: Age distribution

The data indicates that the most frequent age range among those intercepted using fake documents is 21-30 years.

These individuals are often from under-educated and unemployed backgrounds. This age group is particularly susceptible to being both clients of migrant smuggling or victims of human trafficking during their journeys, due to their irregular movements.

This highlights the need for relevant authorities to not only address the issue of document fraud but also to address the underlying socio-economic issues that make young adults in this age range more vulnerable to being caught up in illegal migration and trafficking activities.

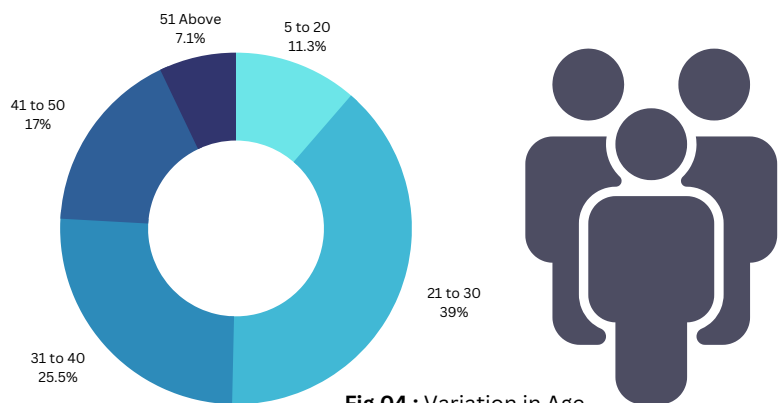
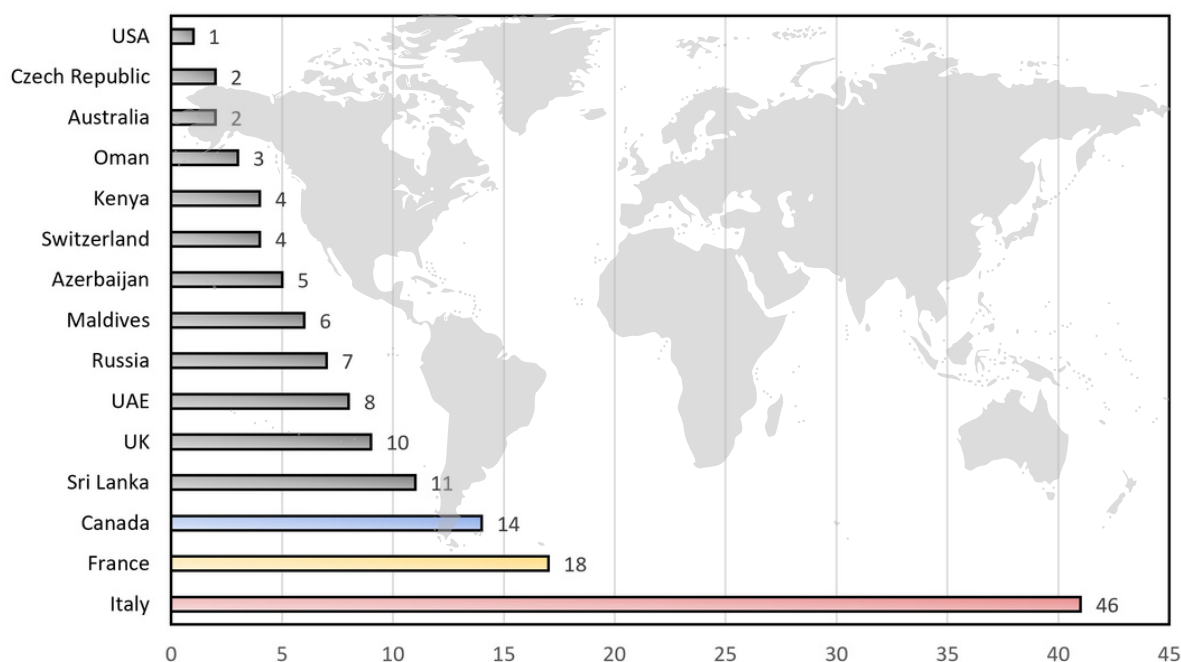


Fig 04 : Variation in Age

9.6 Intended destinations of irregular migrants



Graph 10: Intended Destinations

The data indicates that the highest number of interceptions are of passengers heading to **Italy**. However, **Canada, France, and the United Kingdom** have also become popular destinations.

The data also shows that foreign passengers intercepted with fraudulent documents upon arriving in Sri Lanka are using Sri Lanka as an indirect transit country to reach their intended destination.

This highlights the need for relevant authorities to be vigilant not only at the point of departure, but also at transit points to detect and prevent such illegal activities. It also shows that the facilitators of the smuggling are aware of the countermeasures taken by the authorities and try to find new ways to avoid getting caught.

9.7 Modes of irregularities of migration

The data indicates that most Sri Lankan smuggled migrants are facilitated by a chain of criminals who reside in Sri Lanka and are located in transiting ports and destination countries. These criminals rarely travel with the migrants.

The clients often have barriers to following regular methods of exiting Sri Lanka and have no other option but to use illegal methods. Additionally, these clients are often motivated by factors such as eligibility for asylum in developed countries and the influence of well-established migrant communities. Migrants also often show signs of vulnerability to being trafficked, as they typically have a lack of general language skills and are often in the young and energetic age range.

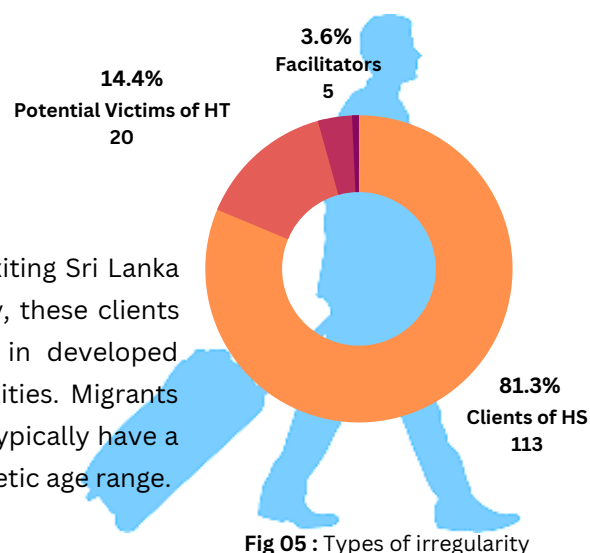


Fig 05 : Types of irregularity

9.8 Location of Interception

The data indicates that a high number of forgery attempts have been intercepted due to the strong collaboration between airline staff and immigration officials.

This has led to most forgery attempts being foiled at the step of airline check-in. Passengers with questionable documents or low profiles are subjected to secondary examinations during the front-line checks at arrivals and departures. Additionally, this also leads to more forgery attempts being foiled at the step of immigration/emigration clearances.

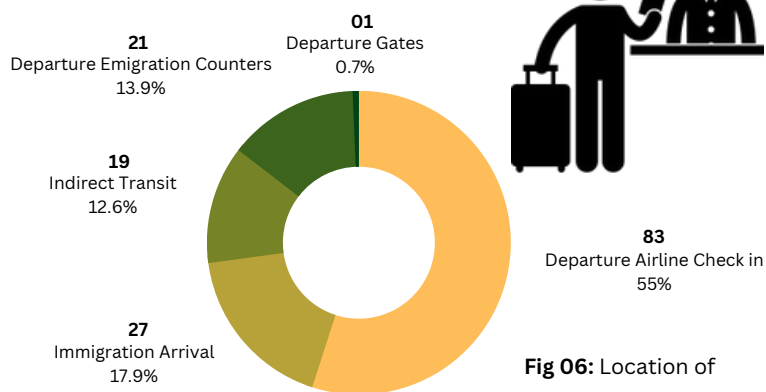
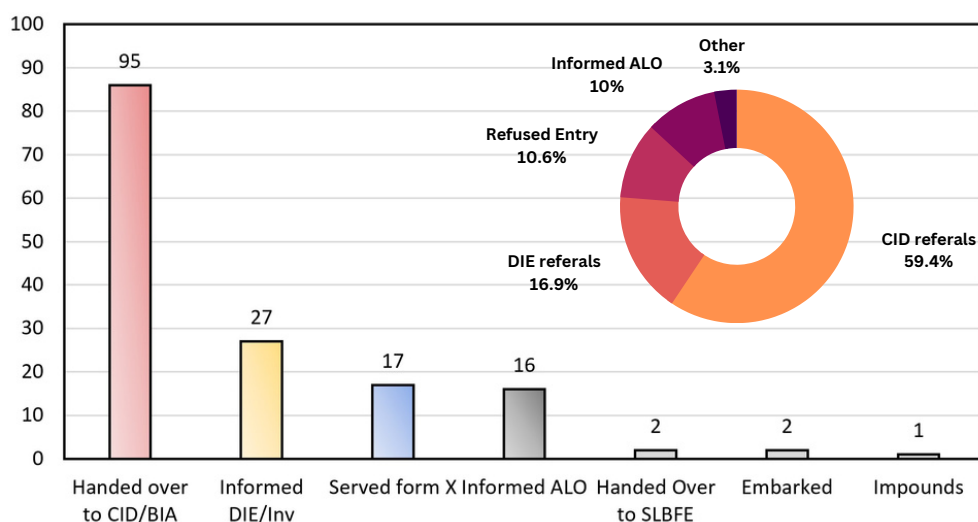


Fig 06: Location of interception

The Border Surveillance Unit (BSU) is able to reconcile passenger manifests and scan through Advanced Passenger Information systems, which enables officers to identify such migrants. Professional channels have been created to forward successful information to officers located at indirect transit ports and interceptions are followed during the journey. This highlights the importance of strong collaboration and the use of technology in detecting and preventing document fraud and illegal migration.

9.9 Actions taken for interceptions



Graph 11, Fig 07: Actions taken for interceptions

The data indicates that all formats of document forgeries intercepted at departure terminals were handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) for further investigations.

A total of 95 passengers with fraudulent documents were uncovered for the year 2022. Additionally, 27 irregularities of travel records were reported to the Department of Immigration and Emigration (DIE)/Investigations division for further inquiries. A total of 17 passengers were identified as non-genuine and were refused entry into Sri Lanka.



The analysis of Border Surveillance Unit (BSU) databases for the year 2022 revealed a significant trend of irregular passenger movements heading to ASEAN countries and South American countries, utilizing e-Visas.

The individuals in question claimed to be visiting these countries for tourism purposes for a short period of time. Despite the legitimacy of their travel documents and fulfillment of requirements set by the destination countries, there were concerns regarding their seemingly low-profile nature. Further investigation and analysis of BSU databases were conducted to determine any potential red flags or indicators of irregular migration or human trafficking.

The Border Surveillance Unit (BSU) has maintained comprehensive databases of passenger movements through various data collection methods (*refer to Section 8*). Analysis of this data revealed that a significant percentage of suspicious passengers who departed Sri Lanka on legitimate travel documents and fulfilled the requirements of their destination countries **did not return on the prescribed dates** as outlined in their itineraries. Some of these passengers were later identified in **Europe, particularly in France, Italy, and North America, holding fraudulent documents or as undocumented migrants.**

An analysis of BSU databases for the year 2022 revealed a significant trend of migration of Sri Lankans to various ASEAN countries, such as **Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, and Singapore**, often utilizing e-visas obtained for short-term tourist purposes. This trend was found to be associated with instances of human trafficking, with a significant number of Sri Lankan migrants facing consequences and facing exploitation in their occupation within these ASEAN countries. This trend was often facilitated through irregular travel means, utilizing tour visas (as depicted in Map B).



This picture released on November 8, 2022 by the Vietnam News Agency shows crew members of the Japan-flagged 'Helios Leader' vessel rescuing suspected migrants from Sri Lanka on board the Myanmar-flagged 'Lady 3' fishing vessel after it began taking on water, around 250 nautical miles off Vung Tau on Vietnam's southern coast. - More than 300 suspected migrants from Sri Lanka were rescued off the coast of Vietnam, Vietnamese authorities said on November 8, 2022, adding the boat was thought to be heading to Canada. (Photo by Doan M?nh Duong / Vietnam News Agency / AFP)

A significant number of individuals attempting to travel to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for low-skilled employment opportunities were observed using irregular migration methods to exit Sri Lanka.

These individuals often bypassed standard procedures, such as registering with the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) and fulfilling relevant requirements, and instead utilized short-term tourist visas. Upon arrival at their destination, these individuals were then promised job opportunities and had their visas converted to employment visas. This trend revealed a high vulnerability to human trafficking for these individuals during their overseas travel (See map a).



Crossing the Darien Gap - pic (SkyNews-Stuart Ramsay)



The Map of the Darien Gap

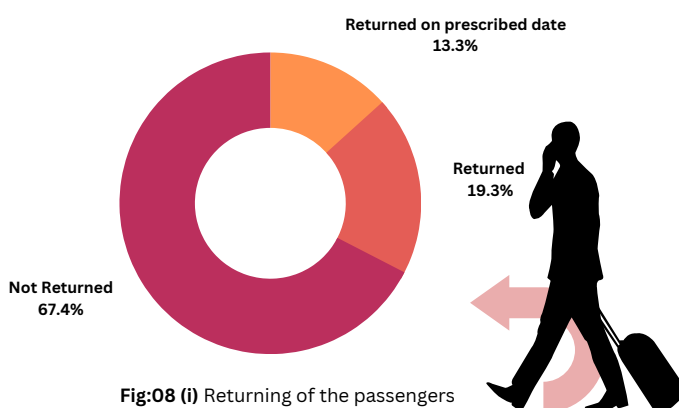


Fig:08 (i) Returning of the passengers



A notable trend of illegal migration from Sri Lanka to Brazil was observed, with many individuals transiting through Doha or Dubai on short-term tourist visas.

This pattern is indicative of potential human smuggling activity, as individuals may be attempting to enter North America via the porous Darien Gap border region. Due to the lack of infrastructure and law enforcement in this area, it is a known transit point for smuggling operations. This trend highlights the need for increased cooperation and intelligence-sharing among law enforcement agencies in order to combat the illicit movement of individuals through this route.

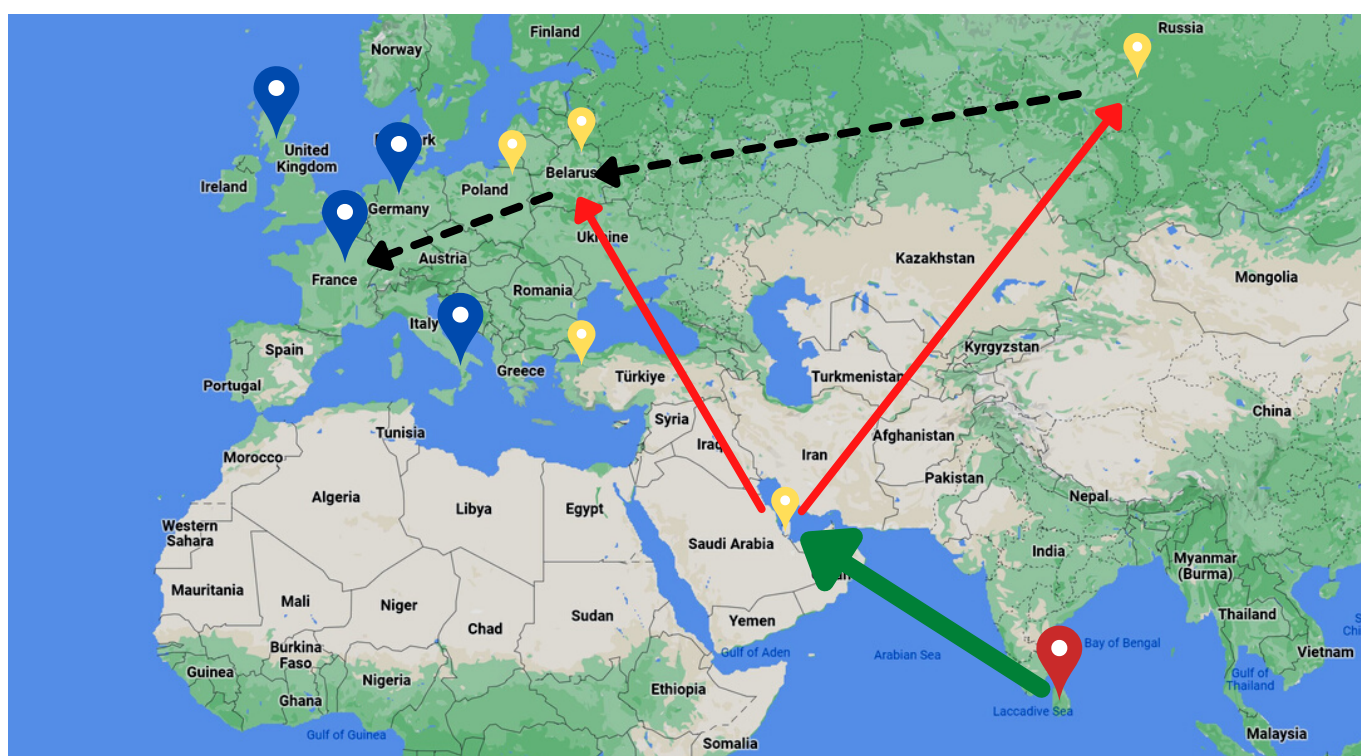
The report is a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from detailed interviews of 335 randomly selected passengers who were intercepted at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) for the year 2022. The sample was selected based on the criteria of having suspicious journeys and low profiles.

This data was collected through various perspectives, including information on the passengers' travel itineraries, documents, and personal details. The data was analyzed to uncover prominent trends and patterns of irregular passenger movements, and to identify potential vulnerabilities for human trafficking. Overall, the report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation of irregular migration and human trafficking at BIA, to inform relevant authorities and stakeholders in their efforts to combat these issues.

Only 13% of passengers flagged as potential irregular migrants by the Border Surveillance Unit returned to Sri Lanka on the date specified in their travel itinerary, with nearly 70% failing to return at all by the end of the year. The remaining 20% returned on a different date than what they had declared to immigration upon departure.

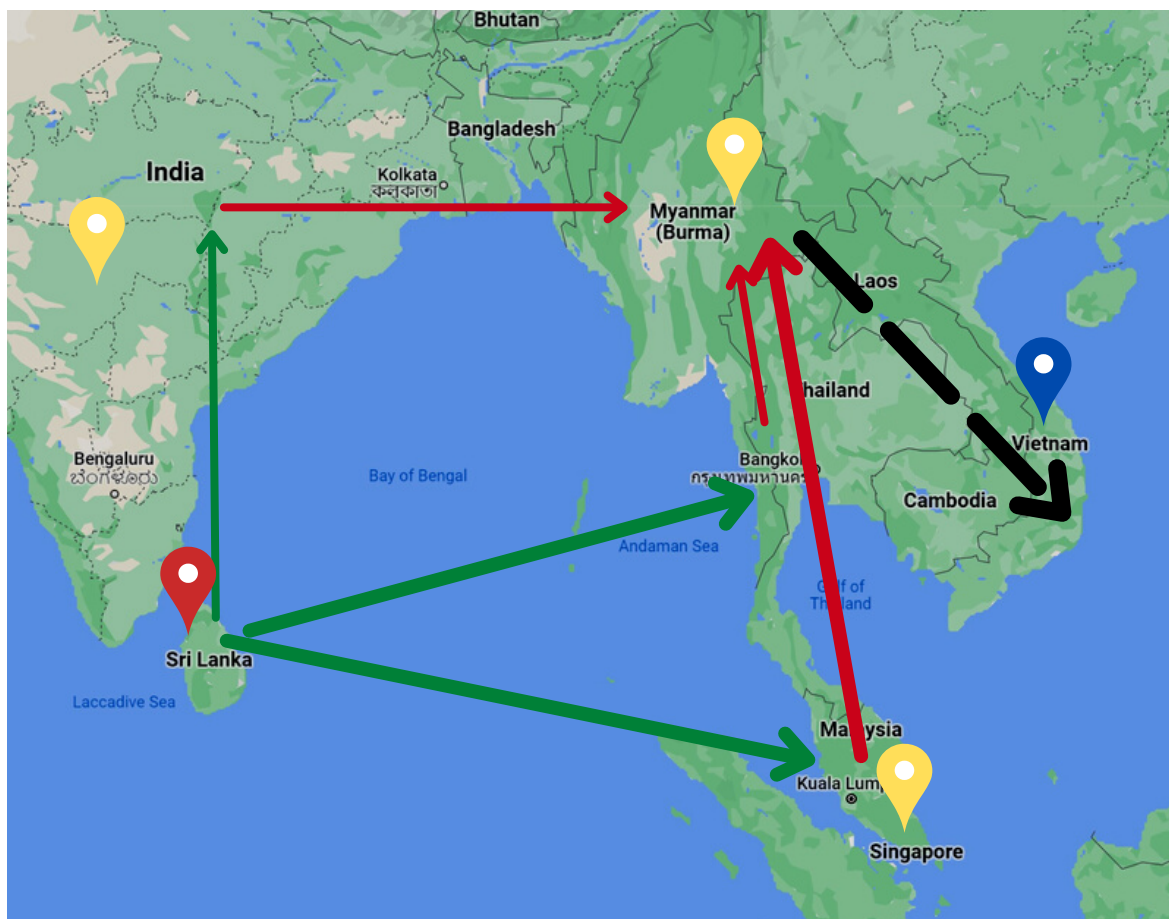
Region	Countries	Count
ASEAN Countries	Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos	66
Middle East	UAE, Oman	Unknown
Central Asia	Russia, Uzbekistan, Iran	45
South America	Bolivia, Brazil, Guyana	31
Eastern Europe	Greece, Azerbaijan, Albania	26
West Africa	Benin, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania	16
South Asia	Maldives, Nepal	10
East Africa	Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda	08

Table 02: Significance of irregular migration centered to Sri Lanka



	Legitimate departure from CMB to West European Countries and Russia via Doha, Duabi, or Istanbul
	Transit through above mentioned ports to intended West European countries or Russia
	Then cross the land border into countries such as France, Germany, Italy, or the United Kingdom.

Map (a) Colombo , Middle east, West Europe Route



Map (b) Colombo, ASEAN route, and migrants' route to the Ship Lady R3

	Legitimate departure from CMB to India, Thailand, Malaysia or Singapore
	Stay at Myanmar
	Travel to Vietnam to get the ship

10.1 Demographic analysis of migrants

10.1.1 Gender variation

87% (293) of passengers who have been identified as using irregular modes of travel are male. This suggests that men are more willing to take the risk of the journey and have the physical and psychological fitness to endure it compared to women.

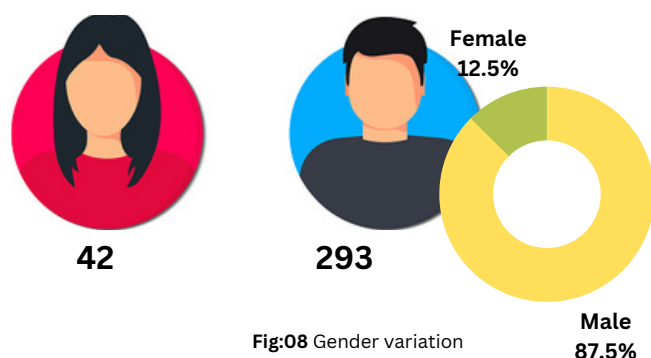


Fig:08 Gender variation

10.1.2 Age Distribution

The most frequent age range among those using irregular and suspicious routes for their journeys is 24-28 years old. These individuals often come from under-educated and unemployed backgrounds. They may be clients of migrant smuggling or at risk of being victimized by human trafficking during their journey due to their irregular movements.

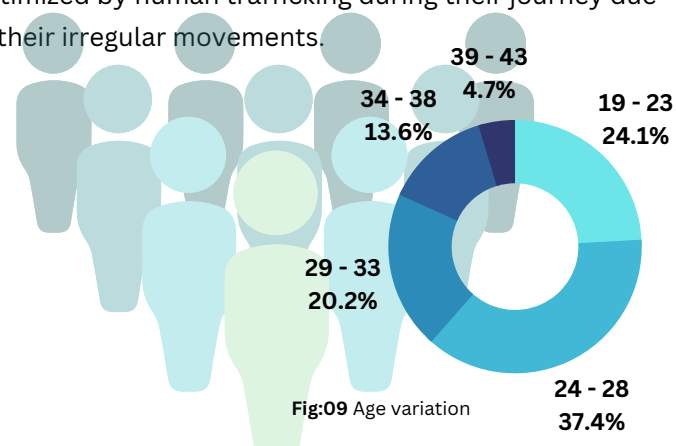
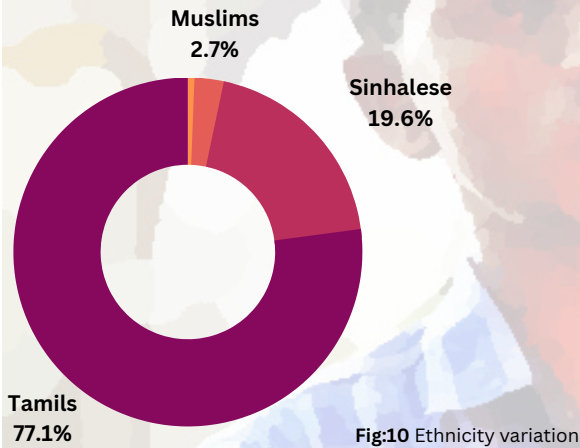


Fig:09 Age variation

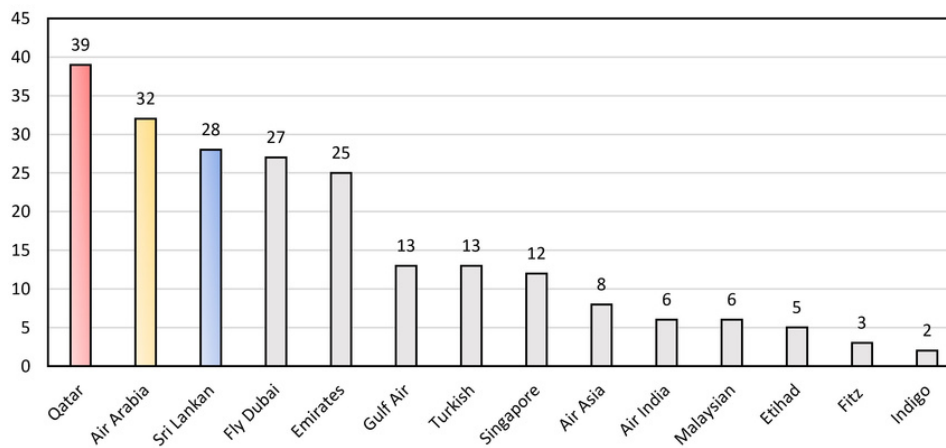
10.1.3 Ethnicity

76% of migrants who were identified as using irregular routes for their journeys were from the Northern and Eastern provinces of the country and belong to Tamil communities.



The reason for 76% of migrants being from the Northern and Eastern provinces of the country and belonging to Tamil communities could be due to a variety of factors such as socio-economic conditions, political climate, and access to resources and opportunities in these regions. It could also be influenced by historical events and conflicts in these areas that may have led to a higher level of displacement and migration from these communities. Additionally, it could also indicate that criminal groups may target these communities more often as they may be seen as more vulnerable to smuggling of migrants and trafficking.

10.2 Use of the Airline for irregular departures



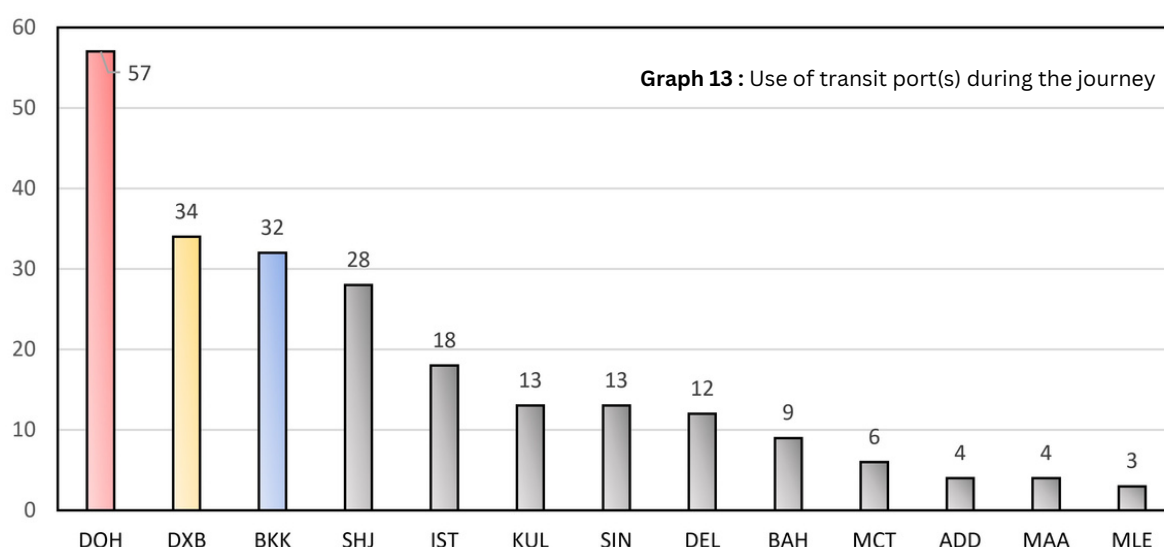
Graph 12 : Use of Airlines

It is observed that Doha and Dubai are the most commonly used transit points for irregular passenger movements. These locations are popular due to the numerous connecting destinations available through the respective airlines. Many of these passengers, who initially claimed to be visiting as tourists, did not return to Sri Lanka on their planned return date.



It was observed that the giant teddy bear located in the Qatar airport had been utilized as a meeting point for facilitators and their clients. This was determined through frequent observations of passengers departing from Sri Lanka, who had obtained photos of the teddy bear from their facilitators.

10.3 Use of transit port(s) during the journey



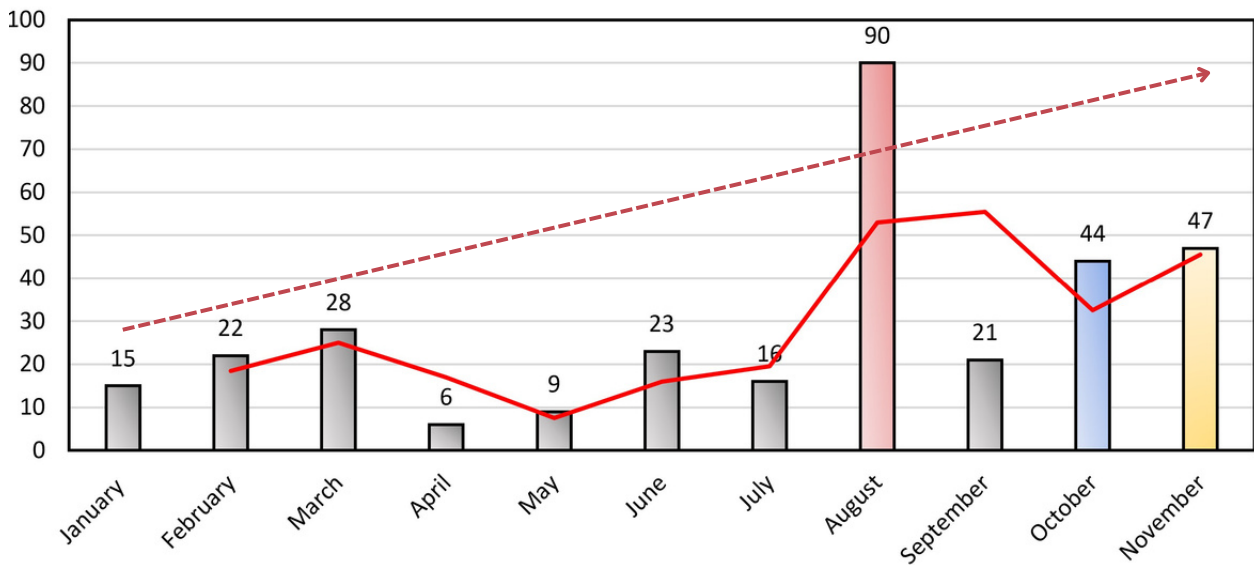
The use of Doha and Dubai as transit ports for passenger movements has been identified as a prevalent trend. These ports are utilized as a means of reaching destinations in countries such as **Russia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, and various countries in Africa**. Reports indicate that a significant number of passengers have utilized these transit ports for document alteration and destination changes in order to be smuggled into destinations in Europe, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Similarly, **Bangkok in Thailand has been identified as a popular transit point for passenger movements to Southeast Asian countries**, with reports indicating that a significant number of passengers have utilized this transit point for document alteration and destination changes in order to be smuggled into destinations in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

10.4 Destination country of irregular migrants

Country	Count	Country	Count
UAE	Unknown	Uzbekistan	6
Russia	42	Thailand	6
Malaysia	34	Gambia	5
Myanmar	28	Singapore	5
Brazil	24	Laos	5
Azerbaijan	20	South Korea	4
Iran	9	Bolivia	4
Nepal	8	Egypt	3
Oman	7	Kenya	3
Cambodia	7	Benin	3
Greece	6	Uganda	2
India	4	Guyana	2

Table 03: Claimed Destination country (See Chapter 5)

10.5 Significance of irregular exits over the year



Graph 14 : Significance of irregular exits

It has been noted that there has been a rise in the number of irregular movements over the past year. This is believed to be primarily due to the economic challenges faced in the country, as well as the reopening of borders following the COVID-19 pandemic and a high demand for labor migrants.

10.6 Visa type

It is observed that 58% of passengers (194 individuals) utilized electronic visas to embark on their journeys from Sri Lanka. These e-Visas, which are often easily obtainable and require minimal screening, are frequently used for irregular modes of migration to countries in the African continent and Southeast Asia.

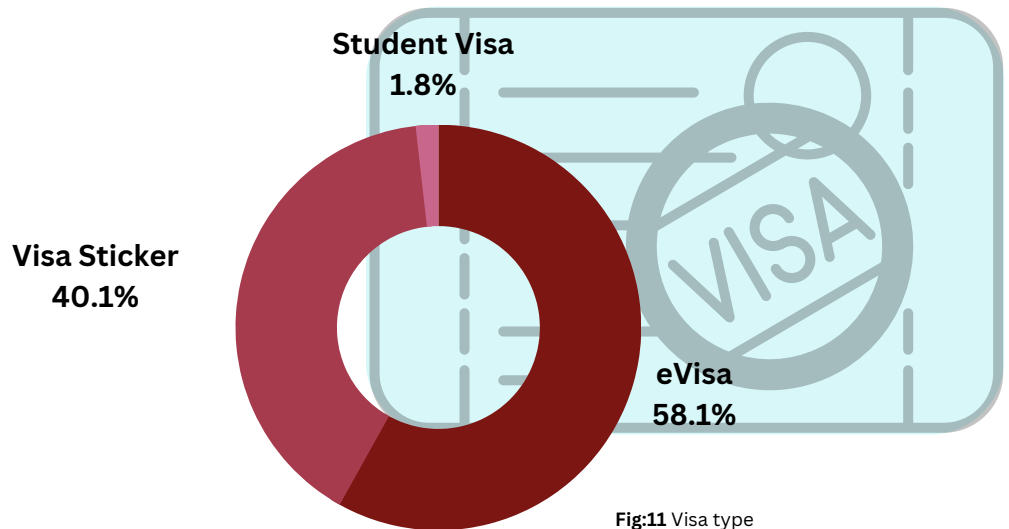
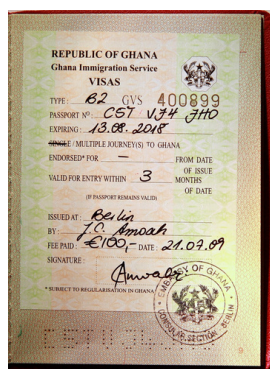


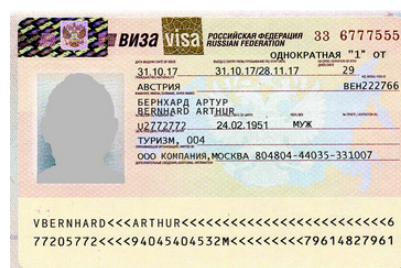
Fig:11 Visa type



Malaysian Visa



Ghana Visa



Russian Visa



Azerbaijan visa

10.7 Purpose of the journey claimed at the exit from Sri Lanka

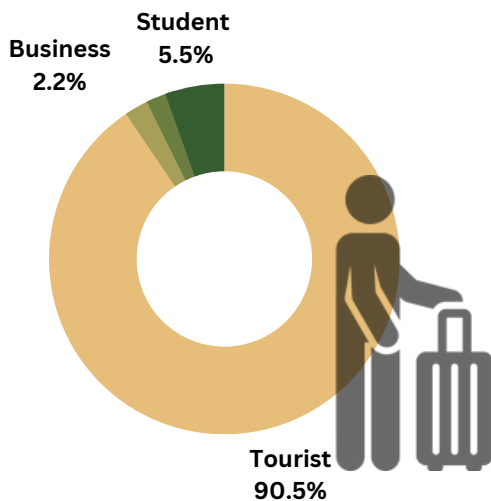


Fig:12 Purpose of the Journey

It is observed that the majority of passengers who used irregular modes of migration, obtained **Tourist Visas (90.5%)** to travel to their destination countries. These Tourist Visas were either easily acquirable or obtained without much screening.

10.8 Case Study – Rescue operation of Sri Lankans in vessel Lady R3311 at Vietnam Sea



The individuals had departed from Sri Lanka and traveled through Myanmar, transiting through Thailand and Malaysia. Of the 306 individuals, 152 were voluntarily repatriated in December 2022. The majority of smuggled migrants were male (143 out of 152) and had education levels up to GCE Advanced Level or below. Some had completed diploma or vocational courses or degrees from recognized institutions. Most of them had been involved in business and were employed as drivers, laborers, technicians, farmers, and fishermen. They had paid varied amounts, with an average of **USD 4,000**, for their journeys up to the point of interception.

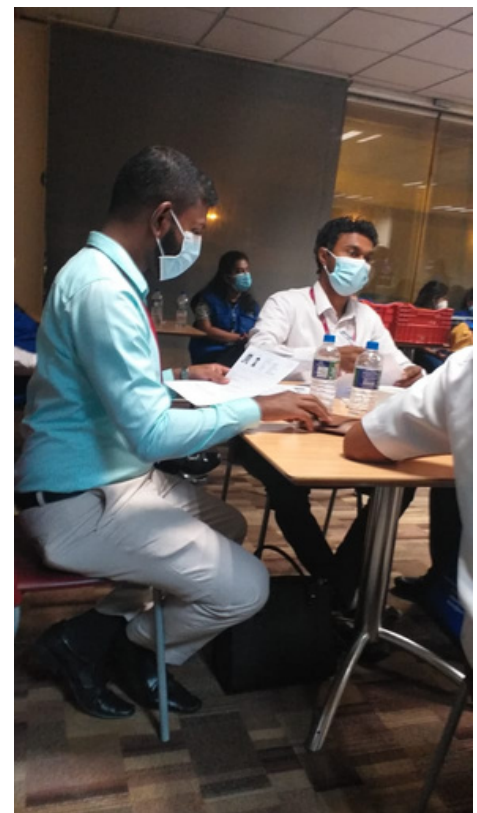
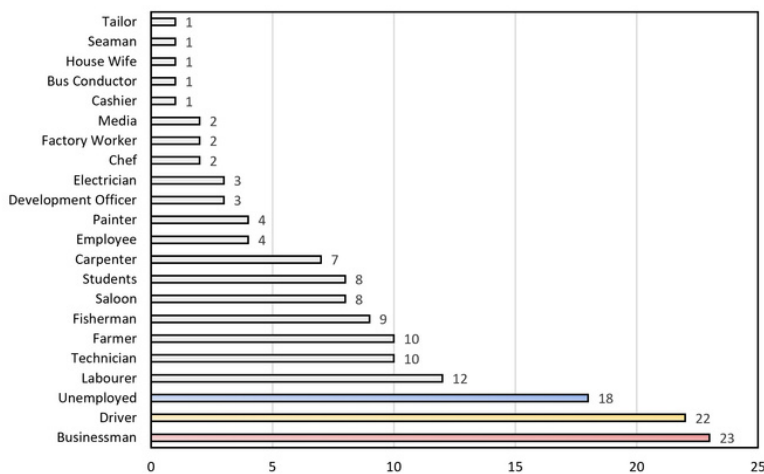
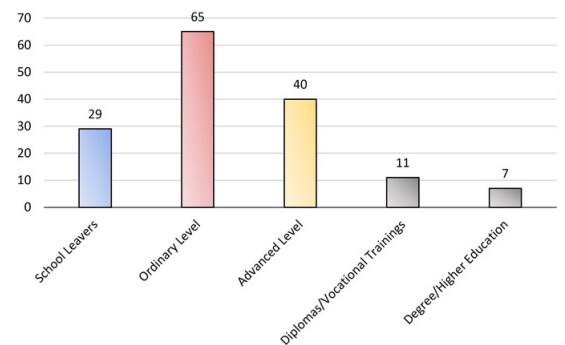
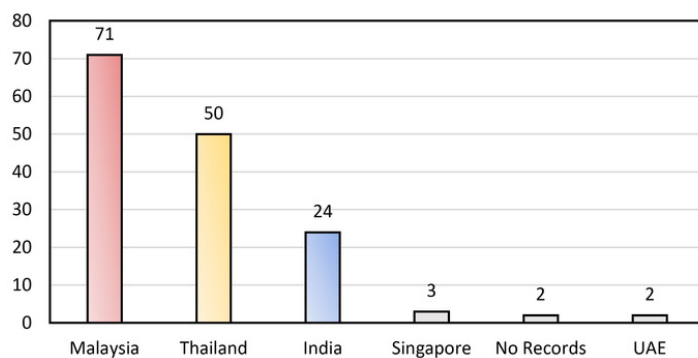
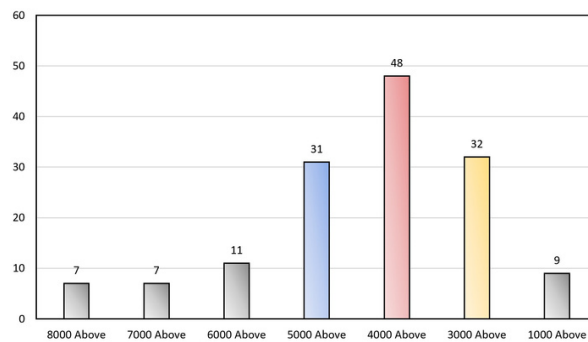
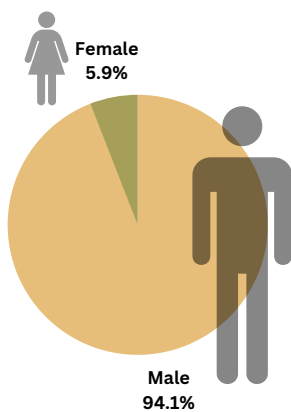
It is reported that in a recent rescue operation on November 8th, 2022, a sabotage fishing vessel (Lady R3311) carrying 306 Sri Lankan migrants was intercepted in the Vietnam Sea.

Through in-depth interviews using a pre-defined questionnaire, it was determined that the majority of the migrants were from lower-educated backgrounds, unemployed, from lower-middle income families, and were mainly Sri Lankan Tamils from the northern province of the country. They had little or no prior experience in overseas migration. These factors suggest that they were likely victims of human trafficking and smuggled migrants en route to their intended destination of **Canada**.



Pic; various news agencies

Statistics of Voluntarily Repatriated Migrants (152)



Pics : Interviewing the passengers at arrivals



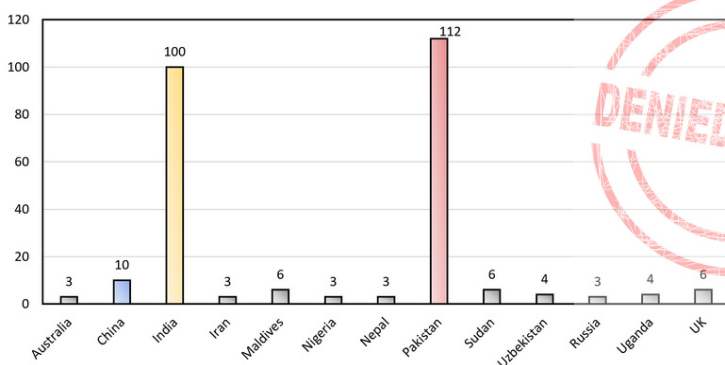
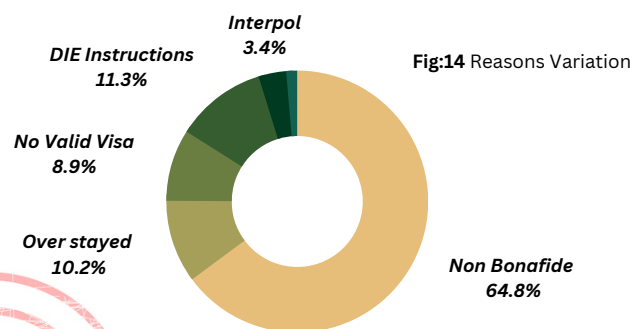
1 STUDY IN REFUSAL OF ENTRY IN SRI LANKA

An analysis of passengers who have been denied entry permission in Sri Lanka was conducted using MS Excel. The primary objective of the study was to identify nationalities that pose a threat to the national security of the country or are not beneficial to the country's goodwill.

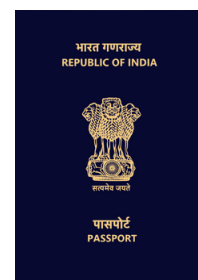
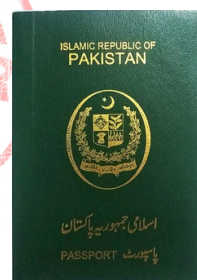
Additionally, the study aimed to uncover the routes these passengers took to reach Sri Lanka, the carriers they used, and their demographic factors. According to the 2021 Annual Progress Report, it was observed that **Indians, Pakistanis, and Afghans** were the most frequent nationals issued with X forms upon arrival in Sri Lanka.

The entry restrictions due to Covid-19 exposure resulted in a greater number of X form servings. Similarly, in 2022, it was observed that most of the X form servings were on **Indians and Pakistanis for being identified as non-Bonafide (non-genuine tourists) / low-profile passengers / economic migrants.**

it was also observed that a significant number of passengers from African and Middle Eastern countries were also issued with X forms, indicating that they may have also been attempting to enter Sri Lanka through irregular means. These findings highlight the importance of continued monitoring and analysis of passenger arrivals in order to identify potential threats and address them effectively. Furthermore, it is important to note that the number of X form servings may fluctuate depending on the current political and economic situation in the country of origin, as well as the overall global situation with regards to migration and travel.



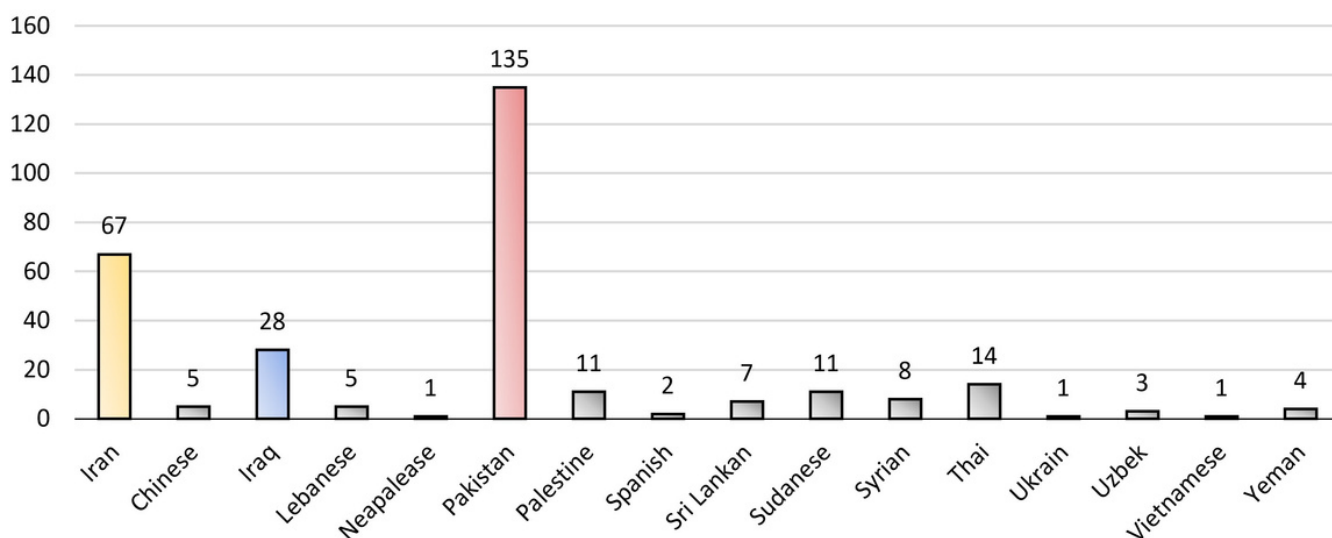
Graph 19 : Frequencies of X form servings 2022



11.1 BRAC (Border Risk Assessment Centre) Referrals

Border Surveillance Unit (BSU) - Border Risk Assessment Center (BRAC) information sharing platform has established a solid foundation for deterring the access of potential risk nationals to Sri Lanka. BSU has been enabled to actively participate in identifying and monitoring pre-identified passengers at the point of arrival in Sri Lanka.

As per the data represented in *Graph 20*, the highest potential risk was identified among nationals from **Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq**. These passengers were primarily identified as economic migrants, transiting travelers (those staying in transit hotels within the country for 24-48 hours), and non-genuine tourists (non-Bonafede) during interviews upon their arrival. The BRAC's utilization of advanced risk assessment techniques has enabled a more efficient and effective screening process to detect such individuals attempting to enter the country.



Graph 20 : BRAC referrals to BSU 2022

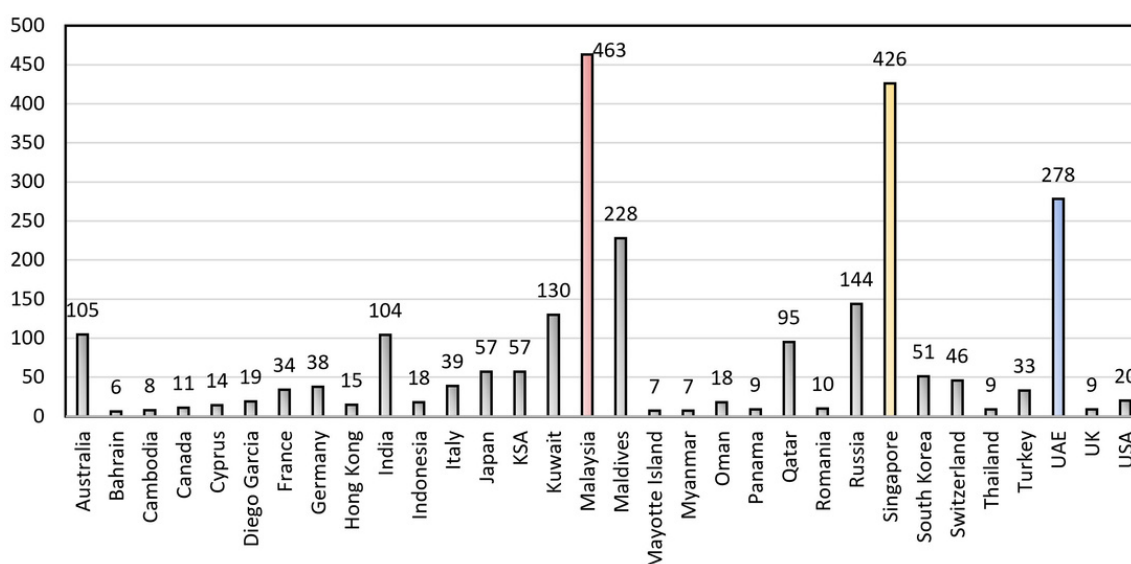


Pic : a Pakistani Transit Group at BIA

12 DEPORTATIONS AND REFUSALS OF SRI LANKANS FROM OVERSEAS

The study aimed to analyze the records of passengers who were subjected to deportation and refused entry from overseas, with the primary objective of identifying the most common destinations for irregular migration from Sri Lanka.

The results showed that the majority of refusals and deportations occurred from passengers traveling to countries in the ASEAN region, such as **Malaysia and Singapore**. These migrants were often searching for employment opportunities, which put them at risk for exploitation and trafficking.



Graph 21 :Destinations of refusals and deportations of Sri Lankans

In addition to the ASEAN region, the study also found high numbers of refusals from South Asian destinations like Maldives and India, as well as from Gulf countries such as the UAE and Kuwait. These findings suggest that there is a growing trend of irregular migration from Sri Lanka to these countries, which could be driven by factors such as economic opportunities and better living standards.

Furthermore, the study identified a significant increase in the number of refusals from passengers heading to **Russia** in 2022. This highlights the need for further research to understand the motivations and factors driving this trend, as well as the risks and challenges that these migrants may face.

Overall, the study aimed to uncover the ways in which irregular migrants from Sri Lanka are vulnerable due to not following safe and orderly modes of migration. The findings of the study could inform policy and programmatic interventions aimed at promoting safe, orderly, and regular migration and reducing the risks and exploitation faced by irregular migrants from Sri Lanka.

The significance of the high number of refusals and deportations from the frequent destinations identified in the study has been demonstrated through the use of following figures.

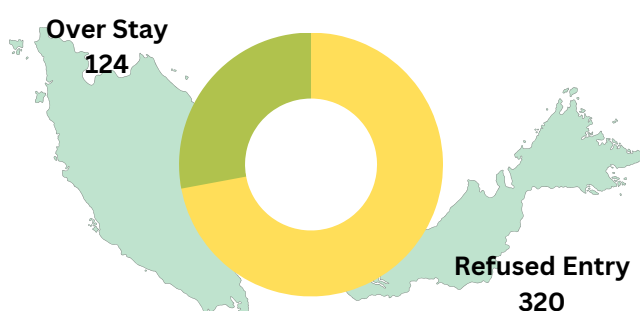


Fig:14 Significance of deportations and refusals from Malaysia

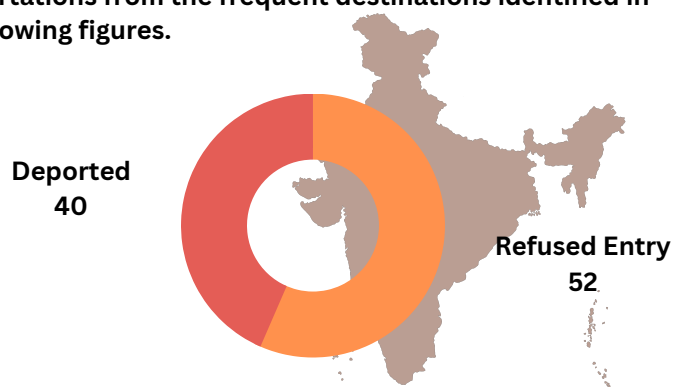


Fig:15 Significance of deportations and refusals from India

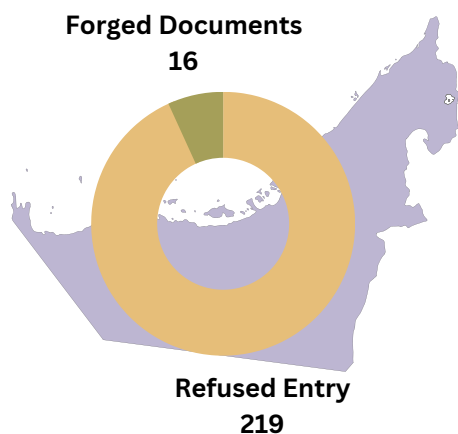


Fig:16 Significance of deportations and refusals from UAE

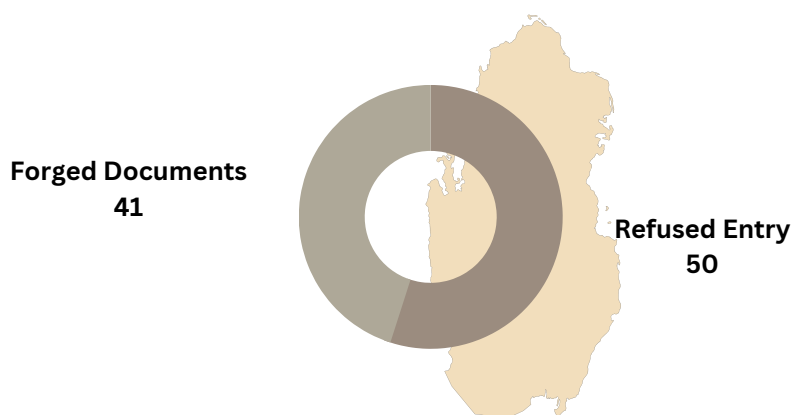


Fig:17 Significance of deportations and refusals from Qatar

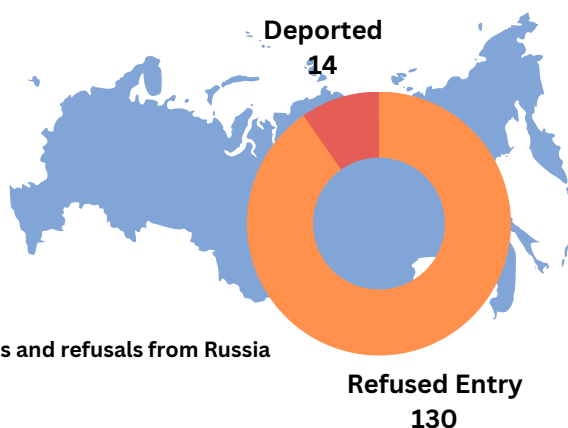
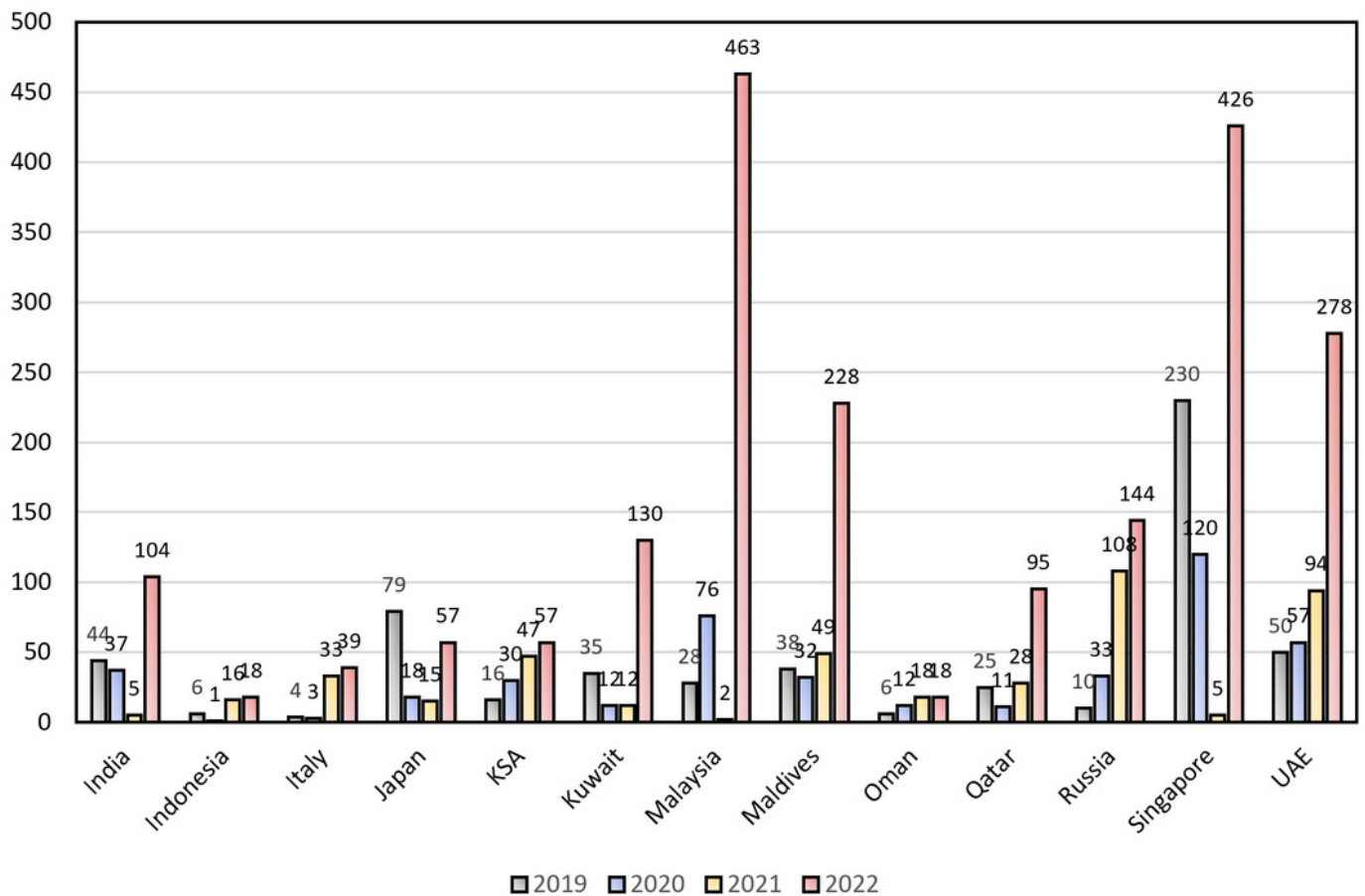


Fig:18 Significance of deportations and refusals from Russia

Moreover, in compared to previous years: the average numbers of refusals and deportations have been observed in greater numbers. It was elaborated in certain destinations in the graph below.



Graph 22 :Comparison of refusals and deportations of Sri Lankans over previous four years

Comparatively high numbers of Sri Lankan passengers have been repatriated voluntarily from European destinations under Re-Admission agreements with **European Union: Switzerland, Germany, France**. Interception and repatriation of Sri Lankan smuggled migrants during marine ventures were comparatively significant during the year 2022: **Australia, Diego Garcia, Mayotte Islands, Canada**.

13

COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIMES.

The Border Surveillance Unit of the Department of Immigration and Emigration in Sri Lanka has implemented a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) aimed at minimizing transnational organized crimes in the country. In 2022, the unit foiled 137 cases of forged travel documents to deter human smuggling.

The Unit screens attempts of irregular migration from Sri Lanka to ensure the safety of passengers and prevent human trafficking. The consequences of these risky journeys, such as loss of life, money, and assets, are communicated to the public through various media platforms to educate potential victims.



The approval of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Border Surveillance Unit, as well as other circulars to address human trafficking and migrant smuggling, were key steps in the effort to combat transnational organized crimes. These measures helped to minimize the risk of transnational organized crimes centered in Sri Lanka by deterring human smuggling through the detection and interception of forged travel-related documents. The Department of Immigration and Emigration worked actively with other law enforcement agencies, such as the **National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (NAHTTF)**, to implement an action plan and prevent irregular journeys that could lead to trafficking and exploitation.

The Unit is coordinating efficiently with newly established investigation units, the **Border Risk Assessment Center (BRAC)** and the **Risk Assessment Center (RAC)**, as well as other law enforcement agencies, such as the Criminal Investigations Unit, Interpol National Central Bureau, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, and other airport-related firms, to address transnational organized crimes.

The Border Surveillance Unit is improving its network of embassies and relevant international immigration liaison officers and seeking their assistance. It is also collaborating with regional immigration authorities for document verification and information sharing purposes.

