



National Rapporteur  
on Trafficking in  
Human Beings and  
Sexual Violence  
against Children

trafficking sexual  
in violence  
human against  
beings children

## Human trafficking: what is it and how frequently does it occur?

Human trafficking involves the exploitation of another person. Exploitation takes a number of different forms. These include, for example, being forced to have sex, working for no or low pay and under degrading conditions, being forced to commit criminal offences, or to give up an organ. Examples of coercion include the perpetration of violence, blackmailing someone or abusing the vulnerability or dependence of the victim.

It is estimated that every year, there are:



between  
**5,000** and **7,500**  
victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands.



around  
**1,300**  
child victims of domestic sexual exploitation in the Netherlands.



around  
**1,400**  
victims of labour exploitation or criminal exploitation in the Netherlands.

Offender statistics:



**120-130**  
offenders annually, on average, are prosecuted for human trafficking by the court of first instance. On average, that is 70-75% of the suspects accused.



**1 year** and **10 months**  
is the average length of the non-suspended prison sentence served by those convicted of human trafficking.


## Introduction

Any one of us could come into contact with human trafficking or sexual violence against children in our day-to-day lives. Human trafficking in the Netherlands manifests itself in a wide range of harrowing ways. In addition, one in three children in the Netherlands has experienced a physical form of sexual violence.

Victims of sexual violence and human trafficking are often in a vulnerable position. They are dependent on others or are unaware of their own rights, or they have an intellectual disability, difficult family circumstances or a poor financial situation. Children are always vulnerable, for the simple reason that they are children.

The psychological, physical and emotional consequences for victims of sexual violence and human trafficking are often long term and far reaching. As a society, it is crucial that we protect vulnerable individuals from these crimes. In addition, national and international laws and treaties require the Netherlands to prevent and counter sexual violence and to take measures against human trafficking. The appointment of a national rapporteur is one such measure.

Through research and advice, the National Rapporteur aims to enable agencies, aid workers and other organisations to prevent, recognise and tackle human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the best possible way.



*It is often difficult for victims to talk about what has happened to them.*

# What is an effective strategy for tackling human trafficking and sexual violence against children according to the National Rapporteur?

It is often difficult for victims to talk about what has happened to them. This may be due to threat, violence, shame or fear. Also, family members, providers of help and support or other people around them are often not fully aware of what is going on. As a result, human trafficking and sexual violence against children often remain hidden.

If we are to provide effective support for victims and prevent new victims, we need to gain insight into the characteristics of human trafficking and sexual violence against children and the frequency of its occurrence. Insight is crucial in defining an effective strategy to tackle the problem and measuring whether this strategy actually works. In addition, a wide range of different parties are involved in preventing, identifying, stopping and providing support in the context of human trafficking and sexual violence against children. These complex issues require all the parties involved to work together.



‘Human trafficking is an extremely serious offence, which has a traumatic impact on the victim. This type of crime often goes unnoticed when sufficient attention isn’t being paid to the signs. Unfortunately, too many offenders in our city are still able to go about their business unhindered. As mayor, I believe it is crucial that everyone who can play a part in combating human trafficking commits in full to doing so. Our aim as a municipality is to protect vulnerable groups, support victims, tackle offenders and facilitators and close the net at the regional level.’

**Femke Halsema**  
Mayor of Amsterdam

## A comprehensive approach to human trafficking and sexual violence against children



‘If you think slavery came to an end in 1863, think again. The problem is bigger than ever. Don’t turn a blind eye to it, that’s exactly what the human traffickers want you to do. The most powerful weapon we have here is our voices. Most victims don’t get the chance to ask for help and protection, so we have to get out there and reach out to potential victims: that’s how we’ll win the fight against human trafficking.’

**Daniëlle van Went**  
Team Manager, Centre of Expertise  
on Human Trafficking and (Youth) Prostitution



‘Although we are constantly strengthening our efforts to combat human trafficking and sexual violence against children, thorough scientific and policy research is lacking. In a systematic review of strategies to tackle human trafficking, my colleagues and I found 144 studies. Only four devoted attention to outcomes. We found no evidence whatsoever of an effective approach; the outcomes were unknown. What we therefore need is a research programme that provides insight into results and helps us modify our approach where necessary.’

**Peter van der Laan**

Acting Director Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR)

Case study: youth care registration

## The right help for young victims of sexual violence

The National Rapporteur believes in the importance of strengthening the learning capability of organisations that are involved in strategies to tackle the problem. This requires data on both the nature and extent of human trafficking and sexual violence against children and the strategies employed to tackle it. On youth care for young victims of sexual violence, for example. There is little national information on locally provided youth services. There is no overview, for example, of the reasons why children receive support. This information is important: if we do not know why children are given support, we cannot determine effectively whether the support meets their needs. Following research by the National Rapporteur, an investigation is currently under way to establish how we can improve our understanding of the youth care that is offered to children who have been affected by sexual violence.

*One in three children in the Netherlands has experienced a physical form of sexual violence.*



# What does the National Rapporteur do against human trafficking and sexual violence against children?

## Research and advice

The National Rapporteur investigates the nature and extent of human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands. In the annual monitors and the thematic studies, the emphasis is on monitoring reports and improving the strategies for tackling human trafficking and sexual violence against children.

Based on information from a wide range of sources, the National Rapporteur advises national and local government, other administrative bodies, international organisations and professionals who provide help and support, on how to prevent and combat human trafficking and sexual violence against children.

## Bringing together

The context in which strategies to tackle human trafficking and sexual violence against children are deployed is constantly changing. To this end, the National Rapporteur maintains close contact with organisations that work to combat these issues as well as with the media, politics, business and industry, and research institutes. Through its own research and these contacts, the National Rapporteur can identify and clarify changes in the issues and approach and bring networks together.

## Providing insight

In order to give authorities greater insight into the issues around human trafficking and sexual violence against children, the National Rapporteur regularly publishes monitoring reports, studies, letters and news reports. In addition, the National Rapporteur actively provides information by organising expert meetings, sitting on supervisory committees and presenting research, for example.



## Responding to a need for information

The National Rapporteur is constantly looking for new information, in order to gain insight on the nature and scope of human trafficking and sexual violence against children, and the impact of strategies aimed to tackle these phenomena. To this end, it seeks out new data sources and collaborations that will provide it with interesting new material. One such example is the collaboration with Statistics Netherlands (CBS) over the Sexual Violence against Children Victims Monitoring Report 2017-2018. The CBS was able to indicate whether and, if so how, support was provided following the issuing of a protection order in the case of victims of sexual violence. To do this, the CBS requested information from the Child Care and Protection Board, and linked it to other available information. This indicated that 15% of children were not offered youth support within six months of the court issuing a family supervision order. Without this linking of data, this information would not have come to light. Various youth care organisations have indicated that there is a need for this information.



‘Unfortunately, human trafficking is still taking place on a large scale all over the world. For the traffickers, financial gain is often the main motive: every year, some 136 billion euros is earned in this way from this human suffering. We all have a responsibility to fight this problem, and the Netherlands therefore contributes to this field in a number of ways. In addition, given its independent position and expertise, the Dutch National Rapporteur is regarded internationally as an example of best practice. By sharing its expertise, we can achieve closer international co-operation between governments. Through this and other (international) initiatives, we will continue to work together to fight this dreadful form of human exploitation.’

**Stef Blok**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



‘Tackling human trafficking and illegal prostitution is a complex issue, that will take time. It is all stays under the radar. Therefore, it’s not easy to gain insight into what is going on. Luckily, we are no longer in denial over this issue. What we need now is a comprehensive approach. Although it is local authorities themselves that are responsible, we need to work together, if we are to avoid the so-called waterbed effect.’

**Peter Oskam**  
Mayor of Capelle aan den IJssel

Case study: regional perspective on human trafficking

## Local authorities step up efforts to tackle human trafficking

Local authorities work closely with their residents and play a key role in strategies to tackle human trafficking and sexual violence against children. They play an important role in the identification, for example, and are responsible for providing support and reception for victims.

In 2017, the National Rapporteur conducted research on what local authorities were doing to tackle human trafficking. According to this research, the majority of local authorities did not have a specific policy on human trafficking. A third of local authorities thought that human trafficking did not occur in their area.

Following this research, it was agreed in the Inter-governmental Programme (IBP) that all local authorities must have a policy on human trafficking by 2022. Local authorities also have an important role to play in the government programme ‘Together against Human Trafficking’. In addition, it has been agreed that a mayor will be appointed as a portfolio holder in every police district, to promote the regional approach to human trafficking. A regional human trafficking forum will also be set up to enable stakeholders to join forces and cooperate.

As the role of local authorities in strategies to tackle human trafficking continues to increase in scope, local authorities regularly ask the National Rapporteur for advice on how to execute these tasks and responsibilities effectively. There is, however, a lack of data on human trafficking and the forms that it takes at local and regional level. Without these insights, an effective policy cannot be defined. The National Rapporteur is therefore advising local authorities on how to achieve a regional perspective and gain insight, and is promoting a joint approach to tackling human trafficking at local and regional level.



*Many victims feel shame and guilt after they have experienced sexual violence.*



‘Online child sexual abuse is a dreadful social problem. From the start of this government’s term of office, I initiated a number of activities to tackle this issue. These activities focus on more effective research, prevention and a cleaner Internet through public private partnerships. The basic assumption is that the police and the Public Prosecution Service will prevent acute abuse situations by tracking down and prosecuting perpetrators. When it comes to cleaning up the public web, the private sector – the IT industry – will lead the way. Web hosting companies must understand that they have a social responsibility to protect children from abuse online and to provide a clean internet.’

**Ferdinand Grapperhaus**  
Minister of Justice and Security



‘Sexual violence and exploitation can have a disruptive and traumatic impact on a person’s life, and without effective support, there is a significant risk that the person will become a victim again. As a government and as a society we must do everything we can to protect people from human trafficking and sexual violence and to provide victims with the support that they need.’

**Herman Bolhaar**

National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children

## Who is the National Rapporteur?

The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children consists of the National Rapporteur and a team of enthusiastic employees with a multidisciplinary background. The National Rapporteur is independent, addresses his reports to the government, and is appointed by law for a four-year term. This term can be extended by four years. Herman Bolhaar has been the National Rapporteur since 1 February 2018.



*Children are always  
vulnerable, for the simple  
reason that they are children.*



‘Many victims still find it too difficult to seek professional help and involve the police immediately after they experience sexual violence. They feel embarrassed, anxious and guilty, and would prefer to forget what has happened. We must reach this group as well. The added value of the Sexual Assault Center (CSG) is that it allows medical, mental health, forensic and policing disciplines to care for victims and investigate the circumstances together, in one location whenever possible. More and more victims are accessing the services of the CSG and getting the help they so desperately need when the abuse has just happened, which is great. If you act quickly, evidence can be secured and problems avoided. However, the amount of persons presenting at CSG, is just the tip of the iceberg.’

**Iva Bicanic**  
Head of the National Psychotrauma Centre  
& Sexual Assault Center

## Sexual violence against children: what is it and how often does it occur?

Sexual violence against children includes all criminal behaviour with a sexual element perpetrated against a minor, for example child sexual abuse material, rape or online grooming. Sexual violence against children is a serious breach of the right of children to develop safely and healthily.



**17%**  
of boys

have been subjected to a criminal form of physical sexual violence before their 18th birthday.



**48%**  
of girls



**36%**  
of boys

who have been subjected to sexual violence do not tell anyone about it.



**25%**  
of girls



**77%**  
of offenders  
of sexual violence  
against children are  
known to the child.



**40%**  
of children  
who were placed in  
a closed youth care  
institution in 2016 were  
there (at least partly)  
as a result of sexual  
violence.



**46%**  
of offenders  
of sexual violence  
against children are  
peers.

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