



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

Annual figures
Human trafficking

2023

trafficking

in

human

beings

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INTRODUCTION

The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children (hereinafter referred to as the National Rapporteur) has a statutory duty to investigate the nature and extent of human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands and to advise the Dutch government on how to tackle these types of crime. For the second year in a row, we are publishing the Annual Figures on Human Trafficking in order to provide a numerical update on the state of human trafficking in the Netherlands. In this report, we present figures on both the victims and (potential) offenders in 2023 and the report also includes the figures from the previous four years to put the latest figures into perspective.

The figures provide an insight into the victims identified by both civil society organisations and investigative agencies and into (potential) offenders who are on the police's radar and the number of prosecutions and trials. The Annual Figures are based on reporting and registration figures from the Coordination Centre against Human Trafficking (*Coördinatiecentrum tegen mensenhandel*, CoMensha), the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst*, IND), the Centre of Expertise on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (*Expertisecentrum Mensenhandel en Mensensmokkel*, EMM) and the Public Prosecution Service (*Openbaar Ministerie*, OM). Publishing the Annual Figures helps the National Rapporteur to monitor recent developments and problems when it comes to tackling human trafficking.

The Annual Figures on Human Trafficking are published every year. The National Rapporteur also publishes the Human Trafficking Monitor every two years and that contains additional figures and allows more room for their interpretation and a discussion of relevant developments. The next Human Trafficking Monitor is going to be published in December 2024.

The records kept by organisations that monitor (potential) offenders and victims shed light on aspects of the nature and extent of human trafficking in the Netherlands, each from a specific perspective. However, the fact is that this information only identifies some of the victims and offenders, so it is important to keep looking for ways of gaining a more (numerical) insight into the nature and extent of human trafficking.

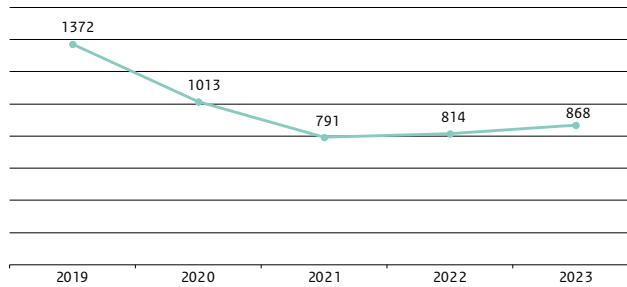
Victims



A SLIGHT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF REPORTS OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A total of 868 victims of human trafficking were reported to the Coordination Centre against Human Trafficking (CoMensha) in 2023. That is 54 more than the previous year. However, the number of identified victims is still low. The actual number of people who fall victim to human trafficking every year is estimated as being around 5,000.

A greater insight into the process of detecting and identifying victims is needed in order to establish how improvements can be made. The National Rapporteur’s ongoing research into detecting and identification will help to achieve this goal.



Source: CoMensha

TYPES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

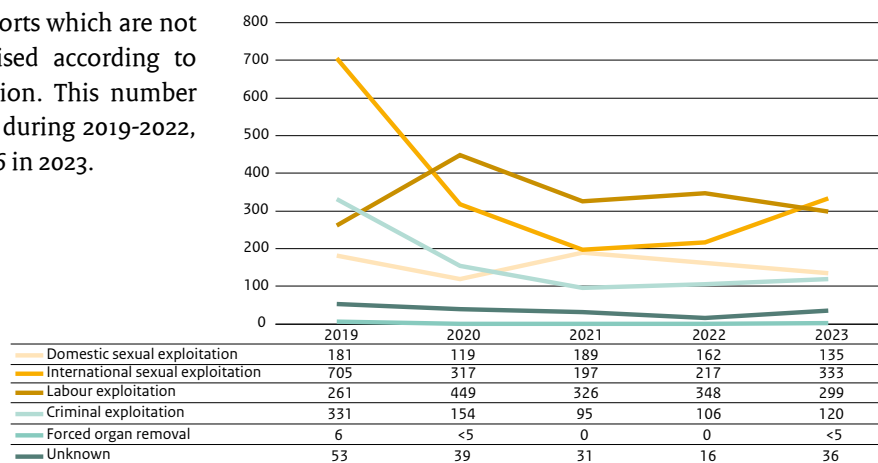
Sexual exploitation still the most frequently reported form of human trafficking

More than half of all reports of victims of trafficking made in 2023 related to (domestic and international) sexual exploitation.

Compared to 2022 there was a significant increase in the number of reported victims of international sexual exploitation (+53%). By contrast, the number of reports of domestic sexual exploitation fell by 17%.

In 2023 the number of reported victims of criminal exploitation increased by 13% compared to the previous year. The number of reported victims of labour exploitation fell by 14%.

There are also reports which are not further characterised according to form of exploitation. This number fell from 53 to 16 during 2019-2022, but increased to 36 in 2023.

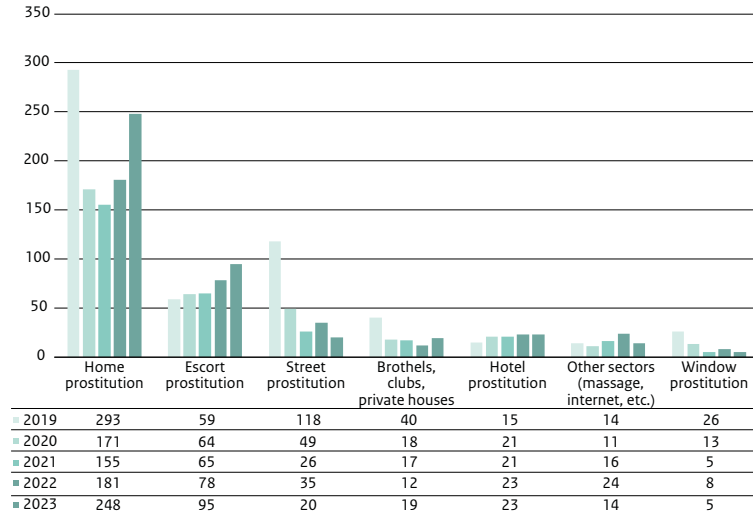


Note: The numbers add up to more than the total number of victims, because victims may have experienced multiple forms of exploitation.
Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

Increase in reports of sexual exploitation in home-based prostitution

As was the case in previous years, the majority of reports of victims of sexual exploitation concerned home-based prostitution (53%), followed by escort prostitution (20%). In 2023 the number of reports increased in both sectors compared to the previous year. By far the most significant increase was in home-based prostitution (+37%).

The number of reports of sexual exploitation in other sectors remained relatively low.



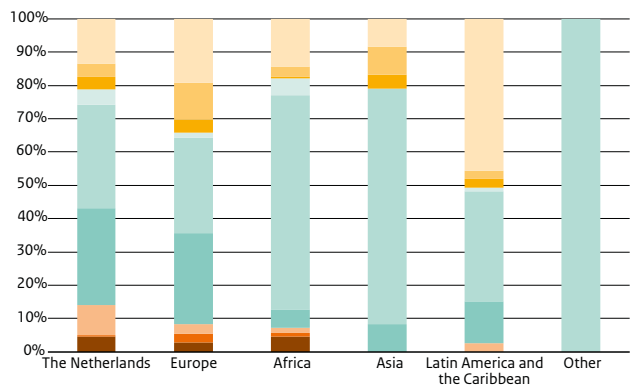
Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

Significant increase in the number of victims of sexual exploitation with African and Latin American nationality

The substantial growth in the number of reports of victims of international sexual exploitation was largely due to an increase in the number of victims with African or Latin American nationality. They are often exploited in the context of home-based prostitution.

In 2023 a total of 178 African victims of sexual exploitation were reported, compared to 119 in the year before. This represents a 50% increase. Many of the victims were exploited in a home-based prostitution context. This resulted in 126 reports in 2023, compared to 77 in 2022, and this represents a 68% increase.

A total of 68 Latin American victims of sexual exploitation were reported in 2023, compared to 26 in the previous year. The number has therefore more than doubled. Once again, these victims were often exploited in a home-based prostitution setting, leading to at least 26 reports in 2023, compared to 12 in 2022. It should be pointed out that no information was available on the specific sector in which the exploitation occurred in the case of 36 reports of sexual exploitation of Latin American victims.



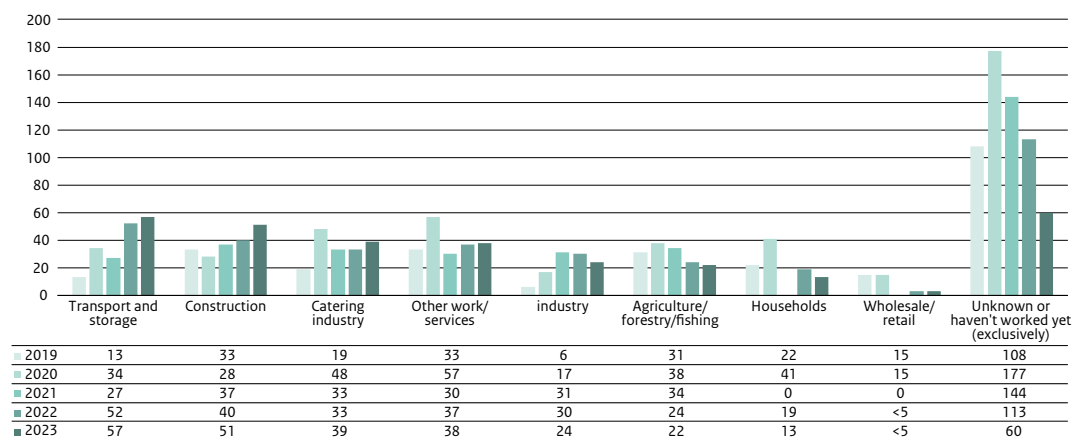
| | The Netherlands | Europe | Africa | Asia | Latin America and the Caribbean | Other |
|---|-----------------|--------|--------|------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Unknown (exclusively) | 24 | 14 | 28 | <5 | 36 | 0 |
| Haven't worked yet (exclusively) | 7 | 8 | 6 | <5 | <5 | 0 |
| Other sectors (massage, internet, etc.) | 7 | <5 | <5 | <5 | <5 | 0 |
| Street prostitution | 8 | <5 | 10 | 0 | <5 | 0 |
| Home prostitution | 56 | 21 | 126 | 17 | 26 | <5 |
| Escort prostitution | 52 | 20 | 11 | <5 | 10 | 0 |
| Hotel prostitution | 16 | <5 | <5 | 0 | <5 | 0 |
| Window prostitution | <5 | <5 | <5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brothels, clubs, private houses | 8 | <5 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Note: The numbers add up to more than the total number of victims, because victims may have experienced multiple forms of exploitation.
Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

Small decrease in reports of labour exploitation, especially in the industry and household sectors

Incidents of labour exploitation were reported most frequently in the ‘transport and storage’, ‘construction’ and ‘hospitality’ sectors in 2023 and the actual number of reports increased in these sectors compared to last year. The victims reported in the ‘transport and storage’ sector came, relatively frequently, from Spain (15) and Romania (13). In the ‘construction’ sector, there were 12 victims from Romania and 12 from Brazil. Most of the victims in the ‘hospitality’ sector came from Spain (11).

In the past, information on the specific sector was often omitted when reporting labour exploitation. In recent years, however, it has become increasingly clear in which sector the labour exploitation has taken place, as can be seen in the decline in the numbers in the column furthest to the right.



Note: The numbers add up to more than the total number of victims, because victims may have experienced multiple forms of exploitation.
Source: CoMensha.

INCREASE IN LATIN AMERICAN VICTIMS OF LABOUR EXPLOITATION AS WELL

There was a significant increase in the number of victims from Latin America in 2023, namely 124 victims compared to 53 in 2022 and 44 in 2021.

Of these people, 68 were (potentially) victims of international sexual exploitation in 2023 and the majority came from Venezuela and Colombia. Most of them had fled a desperate situation in their home countries and ended up in the Netherlands, via Spain or another country and had none of the necessary documentation to allow them to stay and usually did not speak Dutch or English. They had been recruited by people who also arranged the advertisements, clients, workplaces and payments and had been forced to hand over at least 50% of their earnings. There are indications of organised networks being behind this exploitation.¹

An increase in the number of Latin American victims of labour exploitation is also evident, with there being 50 in 2023, 27 in 2022 and 11 in 2021. The vast majority (45 in 2023) were reported by FairWork and were employed in ‘construction’ and ‘other services’ (including healthcare, electricity, water, information, culture), as well as in ‘transport and storage’ and as ‘domestic workers’.

¹ More detailed information can be found in the National Rapporteur’s contribution to the Myria Annual Report, which contribution is entitled ‘Latin American sex workers as victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands’ (*Latijns-Amerikaanse sekswerkers als slachtoffers van mensenhandel in Nederland*). Publication scheduled for December 2024.

ORIGIN

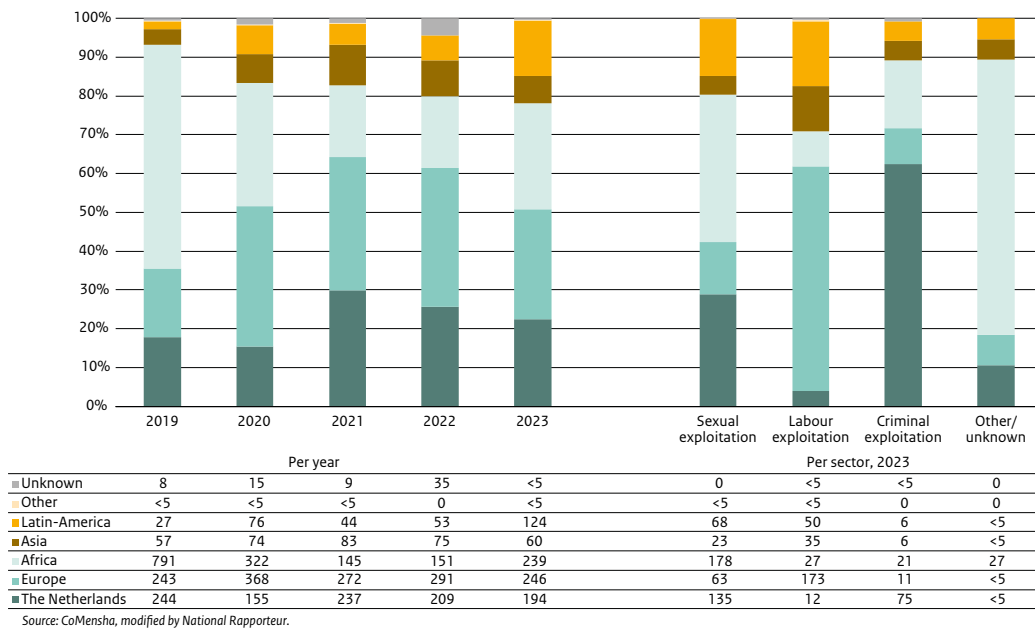
Relationship between origin of victim and sector of exploitation

In 2023, 22% of reported victims of human trafficking had Dutch nationality. This means that the vast majority of victims came from elsewhere, for example from another European country (28%), from Africa (28%) and increasingly from Latin America (14%). The number of reports of African and especially Latin American victims increased sharply compared to 2022 (by 58% and 134% respectively).

A correlation can be seen between the nationality of the victims and the sector of exploitation in that we relatively frequently see that the victims of sexual exploitation are Dutch, the victims of labour exploitation have a different European nationality and the majority of victims of sexual exploitation have an African nationality.

More than half of the 124 victims with Latin American nationality suffered sexual exploitation. Another 40% or so were victims of labour exploitation.

As is the case with Latin American victims of trafficking, Asian victims are often victims of either sexual exploitation or labour exploitation.



Top 10 nationalities according to sector of exploitation

The table shows the 10 most common nationalities of victims of human trafficking who were reported to CoMensha in 2023. The numbers have been broken down according to type of human trafficking.

The table makes it clear that, if we look at nationality, the number of reports of Dutch victims is highest. They were, in particular, victims of sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. The second largest group of victims were of Romanian nationality and they primarily suffered labour exploitation.

The largest number of victims of sexual exploitation were of Ugandan and Nigerian nationality, while there were 15 reports of people of Nigerian nationality also being victims of criminal exploitation.

The number of reports of Latin American victims from Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela increased compared to previous years. The people in question were primarily reported as victims of sexual exploitation and labour exploitation.

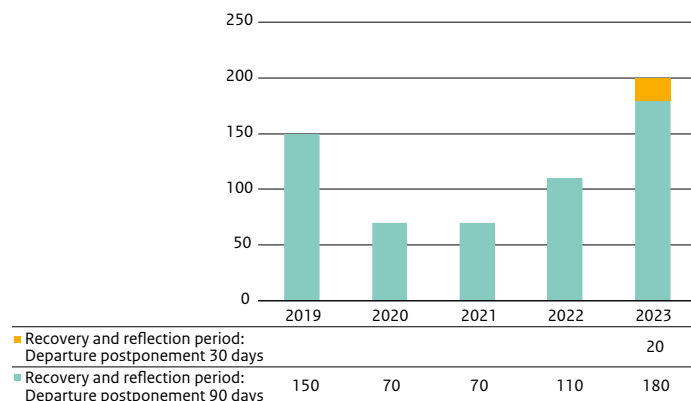
| Nationality | Total no. of victims | Sexual exploitation | Labour exploitation | Criminal exploitation | Unknown |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| 1 Dutch | 194 | 135 | 12 | 75 | <5 |
| 2 Romanian | 83 | 17 | 63 | <5 | <5 |
| 3 Ugandan | 76 | 69 | 7 | <5 | <5 |
| 4 Nigerian | 60 | 41 | <5 | 15 | 6 |
| 5 Spanish | 51 | <5 | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 Colombian | 44 | 30 | 14 | <5 | <5 |
| 7 Brazilian | 34 | 10 | 24 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 Bulgarian | 29 | 17 | 12 | <5 | 0 |
| 9 Venezuelan | 24 | 20 | <5 | <5 | 0 |
| 10 Sierra Leonean | 21 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: CoMensha.

More postponements of departure following decline during the coronavirus pandemic

Refugees and asylum seekers are vulnerable to trafficking, both during their journey and in the various places they stay. The IND grants a postponement of departure to victims of human trafficking who have come from another country during what is referred to as the period of reflection. This period of reflection lasts for up to 30 days in the case of victims who are subject to the Dublin Regulation and for up to 90 days in the case of other victims. This period of time is intended to enable victims to recuperate and decide whether they want to cooperate with a criminal investigation.

The number of people who were granted a postponement of departure by the IND declined significantly in the years 2020-2022 during the 2019-2023 period. This decline is presumably related to the travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to fewer migratory movements overall.



Note: Figures are rounded off to the nearest ten.
Source: IND.

Fewer applications for residence permits for victims of human trafficking covered by the Dublin Regulation

The number of temporary residence permits for victims of human trafficking granted by the IND decreased during the COVID-19 period and showed an upward trend again from 2021 onwards.

Interestingly, the number of victims of human trafficking who are subject to the Dublin Regulation and who applied for a permit has fallen dramatically since 2020. This can partly be explained by the August 2019 policy change for victims to whom the Dublin Regulation applies. The change in question basically meant that residence permits should only be granted to these victims if, in the opinion of the Public Prosecution Service, the victim needs to be present with a view to investigating and prosecuting a case of human trafficking.

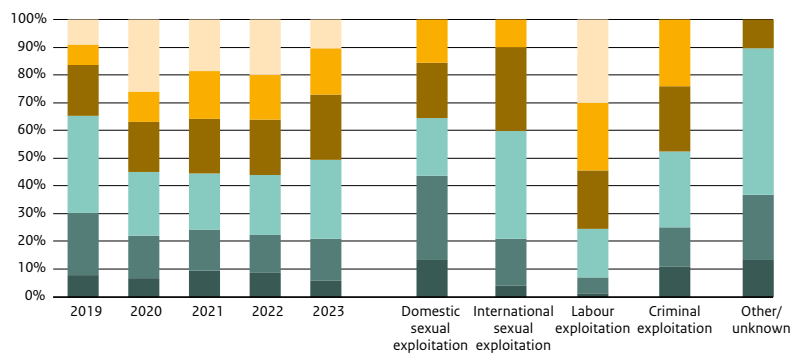
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|---|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| Applications by victims of human trafficking who are covered by the Dublin Regulation | 490 | 300 | 80 | 70 | 90 |
| Applications by victims of human trafficking who are not covered by the Dublin Regulation | 160 | 120 | 80 | 110 | 130 |
| Permits granted to victims of human trafficking | 410 | 170-180 | 100 | 110-120 | 150 |

Note: Figures are rounded off to the nearest ten.
Source: IND.

AGE AND GENDER

Little change in terms of age of victims since 2020

The average age of reported victims varies by type of trafficking. On average, the youngest victims are those who suffer domestic sexual exploitation (28.3 years old) and international sexual exploitation (29.5 years old). Victims of criminal exploitation are older (32.2 years old). The oldest victims are those who suffer labour exploitation and they are, on average, 36 years old.



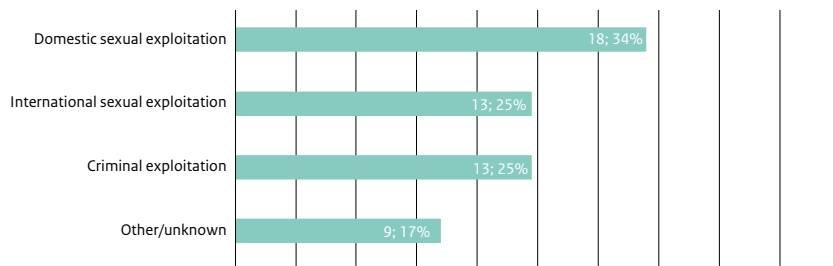
| | Per year | | | | | Per sector, 2023 | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|----|----|----|
| Unknown | 123 | 264 | 147 | 162 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 90 | 0 | 0 |
| ≥40 years | 104 | 111 | 137 | 131 | 144 | 21 | 34 | 73 | 29 | 0 |
| 30-39 years | 248 | 183 | 155 | 163 | 205 | 27 | 100 | 63 | 28 | <5 |
| 23-29 years | 481 | 231 | 161 | 177 | 247 | 28 | 129 | 52 | 33 | 20 |
| 18-22 years (adolescent) | 308 | 156 | 116 | 111 | 130 | 41 | 57 | 17 | 17 | 9 |
| Minor | 108 | 68 | 75 | 70 | 52 | 18 | 13 | <5 | 13 | 5 |

Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

Fewer reports of underage victims

A total of 52 underage victims of human trafficking were reported in 2023. Once again, this is fewer than last year. A third of the reports related to victims of domestic sexual exploitation, a quarter related to victims of international sexual exploitation and another quarter concerned victims of criminal exploitation.

Of the 52 underage victims, 30 had Dutch nationality. The other victims had a different European nationality (8), African nationality (11) or Asian nationality (<5).



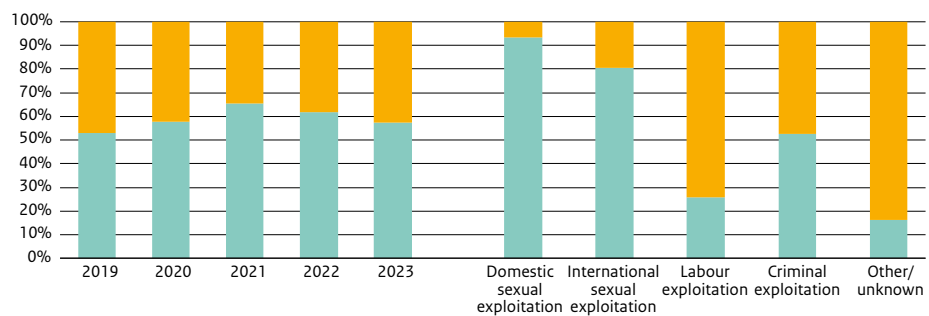
Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

More women than men reported as being victims of human trafficking

As was the case in previous years, more female victims than male victims were registered in 2023 as well. A total of 493 female victims and 364 male victims were reported, while the gender of 37 victims is unknown.

However, the proportion of reports of male victims has increased in recent years from 34% in 2021 to 42% in 2023.

Women are primarily victims of sexual exploitation, while men are more likely to be victims of labour exploitation. As far as criminal exploitation is concerned, the proportion of male and female victims is roughly equal.



| | Per year | | | | | Per sector, 2023 | | | | |
|--------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|-----|----|----|
| Male | 643 | 420 | 268 | 309 | 364 | 9 | 63 | 220 | 57 | 31 |
| Female | 725 | 576 | 510 | 500 | 493 | 126 | 263 | 76 | 63 | 6 |

Note: Excluding gender unknown.

Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

REPORTS

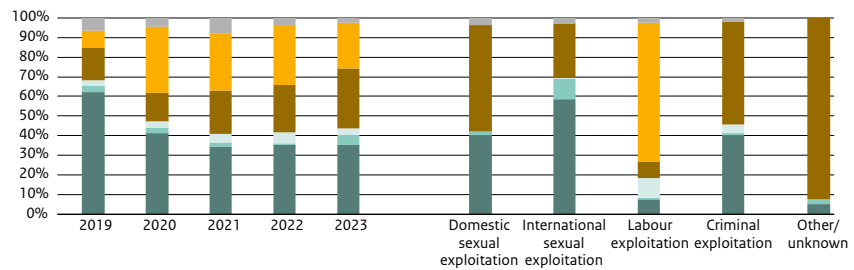
An increase in the number of reports by care coordinators, the police and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar)

The number of reports made by the police has declined in recent years. However, the number of reports increased by 11% in 2023 compared to 2022. The police mainly report incidents of sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and, to a limited extent, labour exploitation.

FairWork almost exclusively reports cases of labour exploitation. They also report by far the largest number of cases of labour exploitation, followed at some distance by the Netherlands Labour Authority (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, NLA), care coordinators and the police.

The number of reports by care coordinators increased compared to last year (+40%) and they mainly related to sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation.

The number of reports made by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee declined sharply in recent years, but that decline will not continue in 2023. The KMar made 50 reports in 2023, of which most concerned international sexual exploitation.



| | Per year | | | | | Per sector, 2023 | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|-----|----|----|
| Other reporters | 99 | 53 | 72 | 32 | 25 | 6 | 11 | 8 | <5 | 0 |
| FairWork | 134 | 378 | 255 | 274 | 233 | 0 | <5 | 232 | 0 | 0 |
| Care coordination | 252 | 164 | 198 | 216 | 303 | 91 | 111 | 27 | 73 | 36 |
| NLA | 46 | 38 | 40 | 50 | 33 | 0 | <5 | 33 | 6 | 0 |
| KMar | 48 | 31 | 16 | 6 | 50 | <5 | 41 | <5 | <5 | <5 |
| Police | 953 | 468 | 307 | 317 | 354 | 67 | 235 | 25 | 56 | <5 |

Source: CoMensha, modified by National Rapporteur.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

CoMensha data is the main source of data used to gain an insight into the number of victims of human trafficking. Nevertheless, we also know that not all victims of human trafficking are reported to and/or registered with CoMensha. Consequently, the National Rapporteur also uses other sources to obtain a more complete picture of the nature and extent of human trafficking, for example data from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (*Schadefonds Geweldsmisdrijven*), the Safe Home (*Veilig Thuis*) domestic violence and child abuse advice and reporting centre and the Chat with Fier (*Chat met Fier*) chat site for victims. Victims included in these sources will, to some extent, also be present in CoMensha's data. It is impossible to say how large this overlap is.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund offers financial compensation, subject to conditions, to victims with serious psychological or physical injuries as a result of a violent crime and ac-

cepted 72 applications relating to human trafficking in 2023. Most of these applications concerned sexual exploitation.

Safe Home is a domestic violence and child abuse advice and reporting centre. The organisation provided advice in 710 cases which included a human trafficking element in 2023.

Chat with Fier is an anonymous chat service provided by the NGO Fier. Fier focuses on providing help to victims of violence in relationships of dependence. Chat with Fier identified 255 victims of human trafficking in 2023.

The Human Trafficking Monitor 2019-2023, which is to be published in December 2024, will discuss these and other additional sources in more detail.

Offenders



INVESTIGATIONS

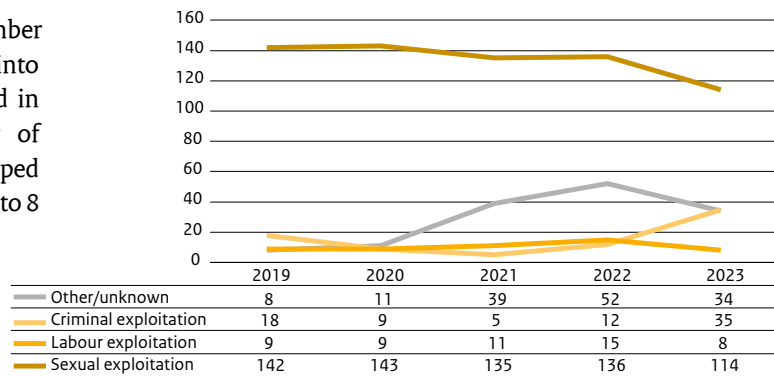
More criminal investigations into criminal exploitation, fewer into sexual exploitation

The police, KMar and NLA launched 174 criminal investigations into human trafficking in 2023. This is almost in line with the five-year average of 177 criminal investigations per year.

The number of criminal investigations initiated into sexual exploitation decreased in 2023 compared to 2022 (-16%), despite an increase in the number of reports of victims of international sexual exploitation.

The number of criminal investigations initiated into criminal exploitation rose sharply, from 12 in 2022 to 35 in 2023.

After an increase in the number of criminal investigations into labour exploitation initiated in recent years, the number of criminal investigations dropped substantially from 15 in 2022 to 8 in 2023.



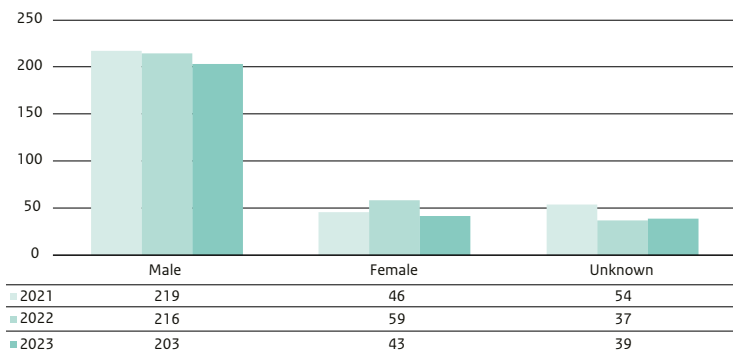
Source: EMM, modified by National Rapporteur.

Fewer suspects found as a result of criminal investigations

Criminal investigations identified 285 suspects of human trafficking in 2023. That is 27 fewer than in 2022 when 312 suspects were identified. More suspects were detected in the previous year as well (319).

Despite the decline in the number of suspects identified, the number of criminal investigations that were initiated has remained more or less stable.

The suspects identified in 2023 included 203 men, 43 women and 39 people whose gender is unknown. Almost all suspects were over 18 years old.



Source: EMM, modified by National Rapporteur.

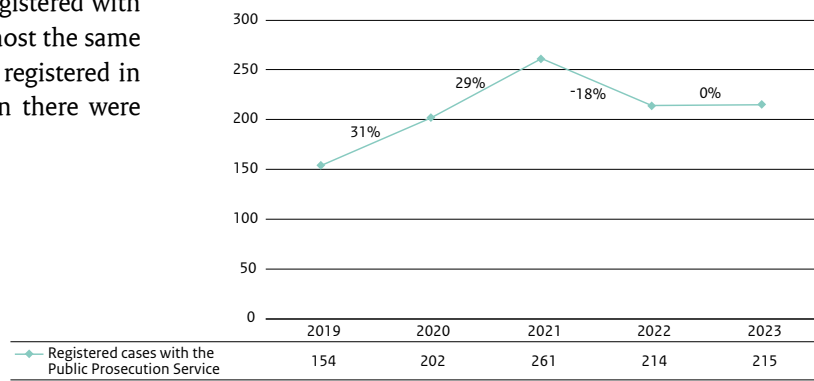
The vast majority of suspects were of Dutch nationality (157). There were also 23 Romanian, 6 Chinese and another 6 Surinamese suspects. The remaining suspects had a wide variety of nationalities from both inside and outside the European Economic Area (EEA).

PROSECUTIONS

Number of cases registered with the Public Prosecution Service the same in last 2 years

A total of 215 cases were registered with the PPS in 2023. This means that the target of 220 – as included in the Security Agenda 2023-2026 – has almost been achieved.

The number of cases registered with the PPS in 2023 was almost the same as the number of cases registered in the previous year, when there were 214 registered cases.



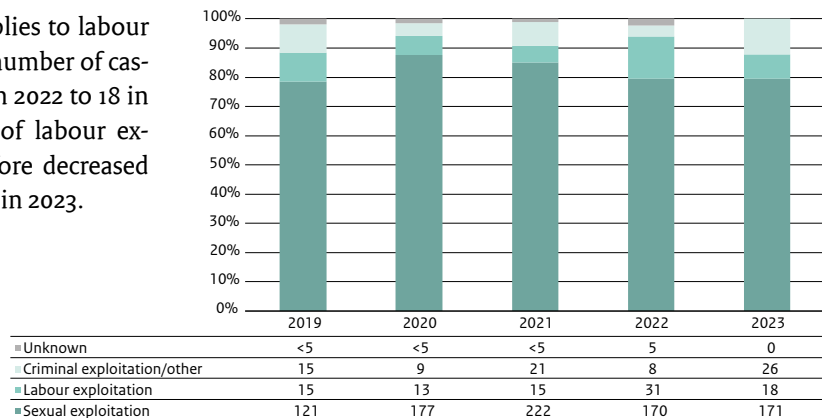
Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

More cases of criminal exploitation registered

On average 82% of the cases registered with the PPS in 2019-2023 involved, in any event, sexual exploitation, while 9% involved labour exploitation and 8% criminal/other types of exploitation.

In 2023, 26 cases of criminal/other types of exploitation were registered. That is 18 more than in the previous year, when 8 cases of criminal/other exploitation were registered. The proportion of cases of criminal/other exploitation therefore increased from 4% in 2022 to 12% in 2023.

The opposite trend applies to labour exploitation, with the number of cases decreasing from 31 in 2022 to 18 in 2023. The proportion of labour exploitation cases therefore decreased from 14% in 2022 to 8% in 2023.

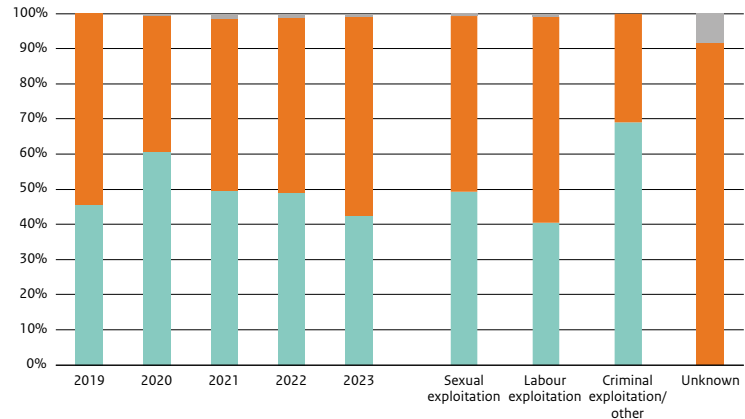


Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

More cases settled, but also more unconditional dismissals

The PPS settled 209 cases on substance in 2023 and that is 31 more than the year before. In the last four years, the percentage of summonses issued in relation to human trafficking has decreased every year, from 61% in 2020 to 43% in 2023. Logically, the opposite is true for the percentage of cases which ended with unconditional (and especially technical) dismissals.

The majority of summonses issued by the PPS related to criminal/other exploitation (69%). As far as sexual exploitation was concerned, summonses were issued in 49% of cases. The fewest summonses were issued in relation to labour exploitation cases (40%).



| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|
| Other | 0 | <5 | <5 | <5 | <5 | 6 | <5 | 0 | <5 |
| Unconditional dismissal | 96 | 69 | 108 | 88 | 118 | 388 | 58 | 22 | 11 |
| Summons | 80 | 108 | 109 | 87 | 89 | 384 | 40 | 49 | 0 |

Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

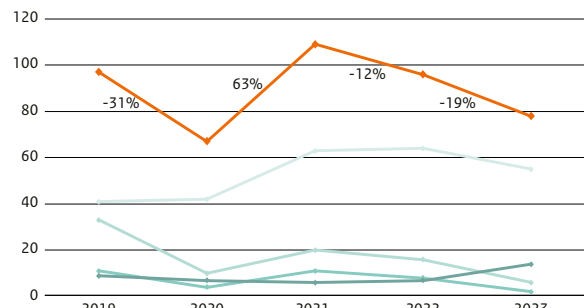
COURT CASES

Fewer cases settled in court

The courts dealt with 78 cases in 2023 and that is 18 fewer than in the previous year and 31 fewer than two years ago.

These decreases can be attributed to a drop in the number of sexual exploitation and labour exploitation cases heard. Only a small number of cases of labour exploitation go to court in any one year, but the total reached a new low of 2 cases in 2023. By contrast, the equally small annual number of cases of criminal/other exploitation increased from 7 in 2022 to 14 in 2023.

Over the 2019-2023 period, an average of 82% of the cases dealt with by the courts involved, in any event, sexual exploitation (59% domestic, 19% international, 4% unknown), 8% involved labour exploitation and 10% involved criminal/other exploitation.



| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|-----|----|----|
| Domestic sexual exploitation | 41 | 42 | 63 | 64 | 55 |
| International sexual exploitation | 33 | 10 | 20 | 16 | 6 |
| Sexual exploitation - unknown | <5 | <5 | 9 | <5 | <5 |
| Labour exploitation | 11 | <5 | 11 | 8 | <5 |
| Criminal exploitation/other | 9 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 14 |
| Total | 97 | 67 | 109 | 96 | 78 |

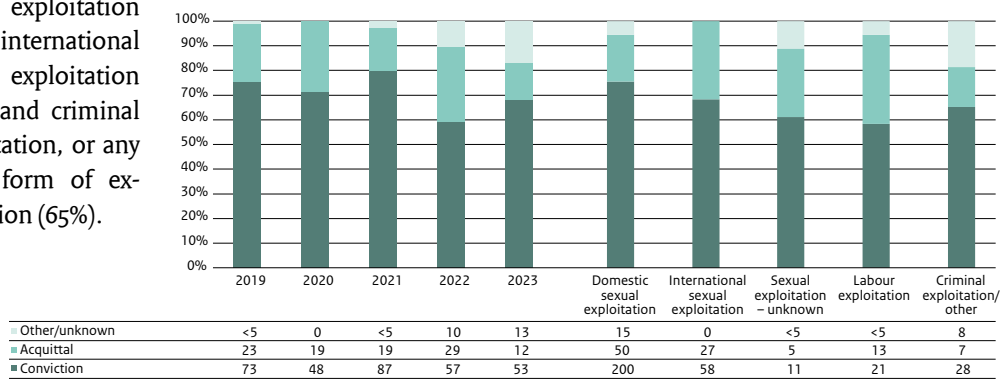
Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

Lack of information on how cases were settled

In 68% of the 78 cases dealt with in 2023, the courts handed down sentences for, in any event, human trafficking.

The conviction rate was lower in the two most recent years than before then, largely because of a lack of information on how cases were settled in 2022 and 2023. Based on the registered convictions, it is also impossible to determine whether sentences were handed down just for human trafficking or exclusively for other offences. Although some information could be obtained for those years from the judgments published on, for example, rechtspraak.nl, it is often the case that no information is available if the judgment is not included on that website.

Courts are less likely to reach a conviction in cases of labour exploitation (58%) than in cases of domestic sexual exploitation (75%), international sexual exploitation (68%) and criminal exploitation, or any other form of exploitation (65%).



Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

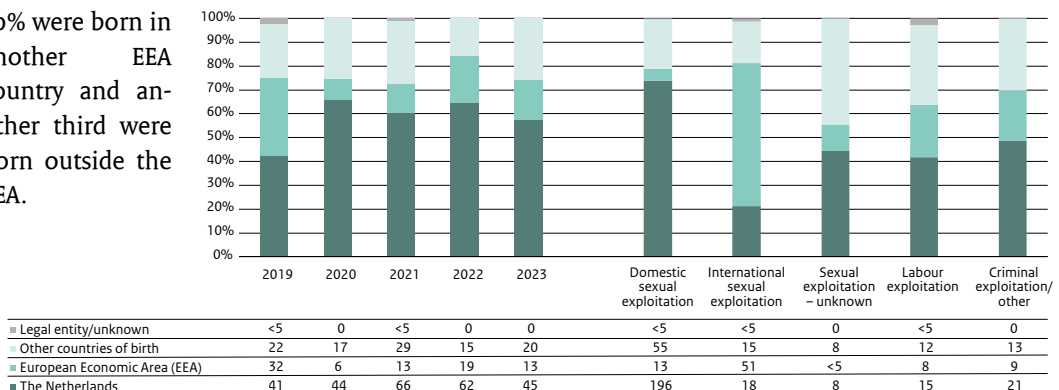
ORIGIN

Three in five suspects tried were born in the Netherlands

On average, 58% of the suspects who were brought to trial were born in the Netherlands, almost a fifth (19%) were born in another country belonging to the EEA and almost a quarter (23%) were born in another country. The percentages for 2023 were not significantly different.

Most of the suspects of domestic sexual exploitation were born in the Netherlands (74%). By contrast, most of the suspects of international sexual exploitation were born in another EEA country (60%).

In the case of both labour and criminal/other exploitation around 45% of suspects were born in the Netherlands, over 20% were born in another EEA country and another third were born outside the EEA.



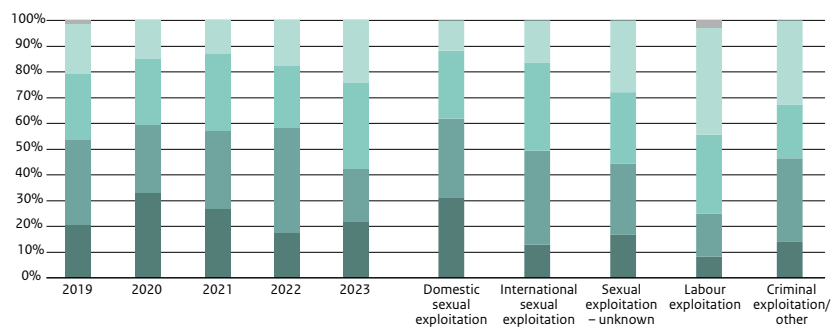
Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

AGE AND GENDER

Increase in the average age of suspects who were brought to trial

On average 23% of the suspects brought to trial were still adolescents (and occasionally even minors) when they committed human trafficking offences. Of these suspects 18% were 40 years old or older. In 2023, fewer than half (42%) of the suspects were aged under 30. That percentage is lower than in previous years, when the percentage was always more than half of the suspects (ranging from 54% in 2019 to 60% in 2020). The average age of suspects brought to trial therefore appears to be higher than in previous years.

The youngest suspects were those who were accused of involvement in domestic sexual exploitation. Most of these were still adolescent (31%) and a minority were 40 years old or older (12%). Suspects of labour exploitation are in fact the oldest. Only 8% of them were adolescents and as many as 42% were 40 years old or older.



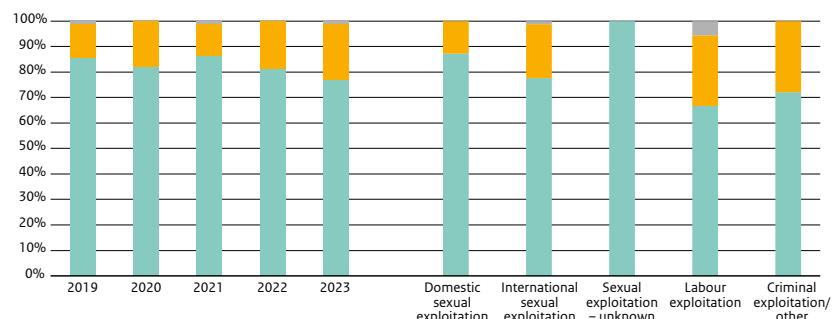
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | Domestic sexual exploitation | International sexual exploitation | Sexual exploitation – unknown | Labour exploitation | Criminal exploitation/ other |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Legal entity/unknown | <5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | <5 | 0 |
| ≥40 jaar years | 19 | 10 | 14 | 17 | 19 | 31 | 14 | 5 | 15 | 14 |
| 30-39 years | 25 | 17 | 33 | 23 | 26 | 70 | 29 | 5 | 11 | 9 |
| 23-29 years | 32 | 18 | 33 | 39 | 16 | 82 | 31 | 5 | 6 | 14 |
| <23 years | 20 | 22 | 29 | 17 | 17 | 82 | 11 | <5 | <5 | 6 |

Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

Five in six suspects of human trafficking suspects brought to trial were men

On average over a period of five years, 83% of suspects brought to trial were men and 17% were women. In the two most recent years the percentage of women on trial for human trafficking increased to 22% in 2023.

Female suspects are proportionally most common in cases of labour exploitation and cases of criminal/ other exploitation (both 28%). Cases of domestic sexual exploitation are the least likely to involve a female suspect, accounting for 13% of cases.



| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | Domestic sexual exploitation | International sexual exploitation | Sexual exploitation – unknown | Labour exploitation | Criminal exploitation/ other |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Legal entity/unknown | <5 | 0 | <5 | 0 | <5 | 0 | <5 | 0 | <5 | 0 |
| Female | 13 | 12 | 14 | 18 | 17 | 34 | 18 | 0 | 10 | 12 |
| Male | 83 | 55 | 94 | 78 | 60 | 231 | 66 | 18 | 24 | 31 |

Source: Phoenix, 26-04-2024.

Reflections



WHAT DO THE 2023 FIGURES TELL US?

1. A slight increase in reports of victims of human trafficking, especially with regard to home-based prostitution

The decline in the number of reports of victims of human trafficking in the years after 2019 has turned into a slight increase in the number of reports. Compared to a year earlier, the police, KMar and care coordinators filed more reports of victims of human trafficking in 2023. However, fewer victims were registered with CoMensha as a result of reports by FairWork, the NLA and other parties. The increase in the number of reported victims particularly concerned home-based prostitution and escort prostitution. In the case of home-based prostitution, these reports were increasingly related to the exploitation of people from Africa and the Latin America. By contrast, the number of Dutch and European victims is on the increase in the escort industry. The rise in the number of victims of home-based prostitution is concerning because of (among other things) the invisible nature of the exploitation in this sector. The fact that sexual exploitation has shifted to less visible sectors means it is necessary to recalibrate and intensify investigative procedures and opportunities for administrative enforcement.

2. Increase in reports of Latin American victims

The figures show that there was a significant increase in the number of victims from Latin America in 2023, especially from Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela. Over half of them were reported as victims of (international) sexual exploitation, often in the context of home-based prostitution or the escort industry. In addition, there were almost twice as many reports of labour exploitation involving Latin Americans in 2023. The vast majority of these were reported by FairWork, which has built a good network in this community and has focused a great deal of resources on speakers of Portuguese. The fact that this approach is paying dividends is reflected in the figures. The effects of the crises in Venezuela in particular are also being keenly felt and are evident in the Caribbean Netherlands and other countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and, for that reason alone, they require special attention.

3. Few cases of labour exploitation brought to court

The number of investigations and criminal prosecutions of cases of labour exploitation in the Netherlands was already limited and decreased even further in 2023. For instance, the number of criminal investigations into cases of labour exploitation by the NLA and police decreased from 15 in 2022 to 8 in 2023. During the same period, the number of labour exploitation cases registered with the PPS decreased from 31 to 18 and the number of cases of labour exploitation dealt with by the courts declined from 8 in 2022 to the new low of 2 in 2023.

4. Further increase in percentage of dismissals

While the number of suspects identified by the police decreased in 2023, the number of cases registered with the PPS in that year stayed the same as in 2022. The proportion of cases that were dismissed increased from 50% to 56% in 2023. This trend has now been going on for several years and has logically resulted in a decrease in the annual number of cases ruled on by the courts. In at least 68% of the 78 cases dealt with by the courts in 2023, the court handed down sentences for, in any event, human trafficking offences. The proportion of cases in which suspects of human trafficking were acquitted therefore appears to be slightly lower again than in 2022. The figures demonstrate the need for a continuing focus on the criminal justice approach to human trafficking. Investigating the effectiveness of the criminal justice chain with regard to cases of human trafficking will therefore continue to be one of the National Rapporteur's priorities in the coming years.

Colophon

Reference: Annual figures Human trafficking 2023

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