



NATIONAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

OVERVIEW

1 January – 31 December 2019

Forced labour - it's used in Finland, too

Statistics for 2019 – number of customers doubled in a couple of years

The Assistance System is a One-Stop Shop for human trafficking affairs



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FOREWORD



The Assistance System has had a productive year. In March, the Assistance System and HEUNI published a report on human trafficking and exploitation of children and adolescents in Finland. Then an account drafted by the Assistance System of how human trafficking is dealt with by the Finnish news media was published during the summer.

The training of the pre-trial investigation authorities, which was started during the IHME project, continues, both within the police force and the Border Guard. Although the project itself was finished in summer 2019, the training modules created during the project became a permanent part of the training of pre-trial investigation authorities.

The Assistance System received a record number of proposals for admitting a person into the system in 2019. A record number of clients (229 persons) were also admitted, and the total number of clients is more than twice the number from 2017.

Guidance by the Assistance System is in demand

At the same time, the Assistance System has been contacted through its website or the information hotline considerably more often than before. Besides authorities, callers are increasingly often people who have been abused in Finland in one way or another, or regular citizens who are concerned about the situation of someone they have met.

Statistics are not compiled of these contacts, but the small assistance team has noted the increase in their operations. This growth is, of course, a positive thing – we are clearly needed more than ever!

Municipal obligations clarified

A sort of milestone was also reached in June 2019, when the Parliamentary Deputy Ombudsman ruled on the provision of services for victims of human

trafficking in a Finnish city (ruling EOAK/3489/2017). According to the ruling, a victim's rights had been violated in a manner that critically compromised the client's legal protection and the right to obtain assistance due to victims of human trafficking.

The Deputy Ombudsman found it essential that the municipality creates a general operating plan in regard to providing assistance to victims of human trafficking, and makes sure that the municipality has a functional assistance structure. The municipality is also to make sure that its employees have a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities in regard to the assistance of victims of human trafficking.

Although the ruling and the circumstances preceding it are sad as such, the ruling has had positive consequences. It has been noted in many municipalities. It has also made it clearer to municipalities – as well as others – what the rights of a victim of human trafficking as a municipal customer are.

The Assistance System is happy to collaborate with municipalities and to support them in the promotion of the implementation of the rights of victims of human trafficking. The Assistance System supports municipal employees and provides them with information – they are free to contact us at any time.

Towards something new

The new year, 2020, is the fifteenth operating year of the Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking. The 15th anniversary celebrations will take place in 2021.

The new year was kicked off by a larger team: a social worker joined the Assistance System last summer, and a social instructor in the autumn. The full-time assistance team now consists of ten people.



When you need information about human trafficking and how to recognise it, about providing assistance to its victims, or about other related matters, it helps if that information is available in one place.

The Assistance System provides assistance to authorities, private citizens, companies and organisations – as well as the victims themselves.

Emergency assistance is also available to victims of human trafficking.

This one-stop strategy is very useful.



ONE SHOP STOP

One-stop strategy in human trafficking affairs

EXPERTISE

There is no need to look for information – it's available from the Assistance System.

The humantrafficking.fi website and the information hotline are available 24/7.

SUPPORT IN PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Assistance System supports the pre-trial investigation authorities by looking after victims. Each victim's safety is ensured in collaboration with the investigation authorities.

CONSISTENCY

Consistency is easier to ensure when all decisions about admissions into the Assistance System are made in one place.

The Assistance System is also a target of scams, and recognising these requires knowledge and experience.

HELP, RIGHT AWAY

Emergency assistance for victims of human trafficking can be one call or message away.

TRAINING

Training has been provided for pre-trial investigation authorities, municipalities and many other parties.

SUPPORTING MUNICIPALITIES

The Assistance System provides municipalities with information about matters related to the rights of victims of human trafficking

STEERING YOU ON YOUR WAY

The Assistance System provides guidance and information for people in different situations, referring them to other services when needed.

HELP FOR VICTIMS

Victims of human trafficking can obtain help through the Assistance System. It makes sure that the victims' rights are respected, so that recovery can begin.

FORCED LABOUR

IS USED IN FINLAND ALSO

IN 2019, DOZENS OF PEOPLE THAT WERE SUSPECTED TO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO LABOUR IN FINLAND WERE REFERRED TO THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING. THE NUMEROUS CONTACTS RELATED TO FORCED LABOUR INDICATE THAT THE PROBLEM IS NOTEWORTHY; THESE DAYS, THE PROBLEM IS ALSO RECOGNISED TO A GREATER DEGREE THAN IT USED TO BE.

Forced labour is used especially in the restaurant, cleaning and construction industries. Signs of forced labour have also been detected in the conditions of persons hired as domestic help by private families, as well as in the conditions of farm workers.

Most often, a person forced to labour is not a Finnish citizen, while employers also include Finns.

A total of 33 persons possibly forced to labour in Finland were admitted as new clients in 2019.

In addition, the Assistance System has been contacted by a much larger number of people who have suspected that they have been victims of labour exploitation or even forced labour in Finland. Statistics have not been compiled of the number of these cases.

Sometimes those contacting the Assistance System only wish to consider their situation and alternatives. In such cases, the Assistance System offers discussion aid.

A person contacting the Assistance System can also be referred to other services if they have not been a victim of human trafficking.

Contacts from concerned citizens

In 2019, the Assistance System was contacted by concerned citizens in increasing numbers.

Someone may have noticed that an employee at a restaurant close to their workplace was always on



More and more concerned people contact the Assistance System. Stock photo.

duty and seemed tired. A sex purchaser may have become concerned about the situation of the person having sold sex.

Various ways of dealing with the situation are discussed with the caller, as is whether the matter could be reported to the authorities, such as the police or the occupational safety and health authorities. Often solutions can be found through discussion.

The increased number of contacts indicates that people have started recognising human trafficking and other exploitation better than they used to.

The number of forced marriages more than doubled

More than twice as many forced marriages were identified than during the previous year. A total of 52 victims of human trafficking forced into marriage were admitted as clients of the Assistance System.

Twenty of them had been forced into marriage in Finland or had been married abroad and continued to be married in Finland.

The spouse had perhaps come to Finland with a residence permit granted on the basis of family ties. Although the spouse had perhaps come to Finland unaccompanied,

the marriage was not entered into voluntarily. After arriving in Finland, the spouse forced into marriage had perhaps been subjected to demeaning circumstances.

In Finland, forced marriages are identified especially when authorities have had to intervene because of domestic violence or intimate partner violence. The situation of the subordinate spouse has been revealed in a shelter, which has then contacted the Assistance System.

A record number of persons that became victims in Finland

In 2019, 70 individuals who had potentially been victims of human trafficking in Finland became clients of the Assistance System.

The figure is considerably higher than in previous years. The number of victims admitted as clients was 43 in 2016, 50 in 2017 and 52 in 2018.

The number of victims of human trafficking that had been abused sexually was 11. The figure is considerably lower than in 2018.

In 2018, several victims were identified and referred to assistance particularly through the efforts of the police to uncover crimes. This was not the case in 2019.

Often the situation of sexually abused victims of human trafficking is particularly difficult: it involves overall exploitation and control, violence, and feelings of shame, worthlessness and hopelessness.

Such victims find it extremely difficult to get out of the situation on their own. Someone has to put an end to it. If this does not happen,



In Finland, human trafficking related to forced labour has been identified in the cleaning industry and in domestic work.

the abuse may continue.

Clients of the Assistance System in Finland include persons coerced to undertake criminal activities or to beg. The persons who had been forced to beg (two cases) had also been intimidated into criminal activities and into collecting bottles for the purpose of financial gain for their exploiters.

The victims are often in Finland legally

Of the individuals that became victims in Finland, 19 were asylum seekers. 51 persons were in Finland on other grounds. In the most common cases, the victim was in Finland on the basis of family ties, by virtue of EU citizenship (incl.

Finnish citizens), e.g. on a work-based residence permit, or completely illegally.

Most were exploited abroad

The majority of new clients (nearly 69%) had been exploited outside of Finland. The largest client group were victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (70 individuals). Those who were victims of human trafficking related to labour exploitation (43) had in most cases been exploited outside the EU, usually in their home country or an adjacent country. The exploitation often involved a lot of violence.

32 clients had been forced into marriage in their home countries, but had managed to escape to another country. In most cases, the victims were married when

they were still children.

Two victims of organ harvesting were identified, and four persons had been exploited as child soldiers. This had usually happened in the victim's home country, where a long-standing conflict was going on.

Clients (4) had been coerced into criminal activities both within and outside the EU.

Who refers clients to the Assistance System?

A person who has become a victim in Finland is usually referred to the Assistance System by an organisation, shelter, lawyer, or the police. An increasing number of victims also contact the Assistance System themselves or with the help of another person.

If someone has become a victim of human trafficking abroad, this is

often only found out in a reception centre, in an interview with the Finnish Immigration Service or in a meeting with a legal aid counsel involved in the process.

It is therefore a positive thing that asylum seekers talk about their experiences with several different people (reception centre employees, the police, migration authorities) who are able to identify indications of human trafficking and refer the person to the Assistance System.

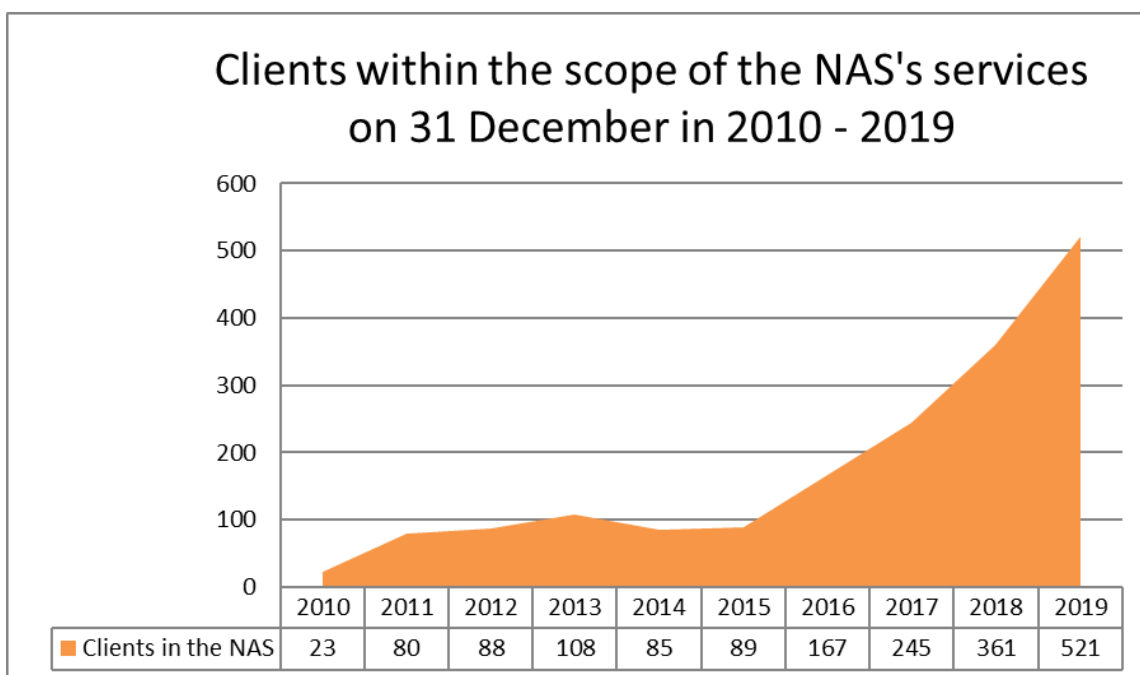
People who become victims in Finland are not always as lucky. A Finnish citizen or a person residing in Finland does not necessarily meet authorities or other people in conditions that include such extensive questioning regarding their circumstances and experiences. This means they also will not hear about opportunities to obtain help.

A record number of clients

On 31 December 2019, the Assistance System had more clients than ever before and over one third more than at the same time in 2018.

In addition to the 521 adult clients, there are also their 155 underage children who are in Finland. The total number of persons in the Assistance System at the end of June was 676.

In 2019, a record number of 229 new clients were admitted into the system. At the same time, 74 underage children in a client's care were admitted.



The number of clients of the Assistance System has increased substantially in recent years. Heavy growth continued throughout 2019.

CLIENTS OF THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AS STATISTICS

A record-high number of new customers were admitted into the Assistance System in 2019. The following pages include statistics on who these people were and what had happened to them.

The Assistance System does not undertake investigative work itself; it needs potential victims to be referred to it. Applications, which are called proposals, can be submitted orally or in writing. Victims may also seek assistance themselves.

The statistics also reveal who identified potential victims of human trafficking and referred them to the Assistance System. This is an important piece of information,

revealing where human trafficking is detected and where the detection methods should perhaps be improved.

Persons admitted as clients of the Assistance System can be potential victims of human trafficking who are therefore in need of assistance. Persons who are assisting in a criminal investigation, as well as underage children in the care of clients, can also be admitted into the system.

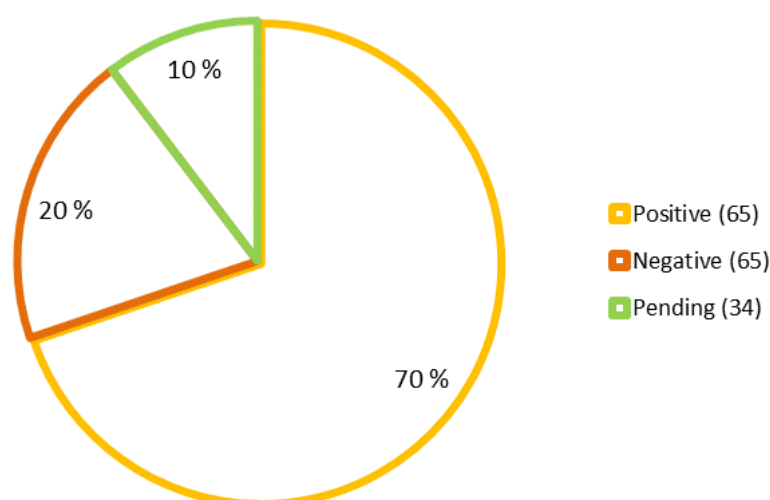
In 2019, the Assistance System received 303 oral or written proposals for admitting a person into the Assistance System. The number of persons accepted as clients was 229.

65 people did not become clients of the Assistance System, either because they were assessed not to have been victims of human trafficking or because they were not in need of the kind of assistance provided by the Assistance System.

The increase in the number of proposals and clients has resulted in congestion in the processing of proposals. On 31 December 2019, a total of 34 proposals were pending processing. However, the Assistance System is still able to process urgent cases without delay.

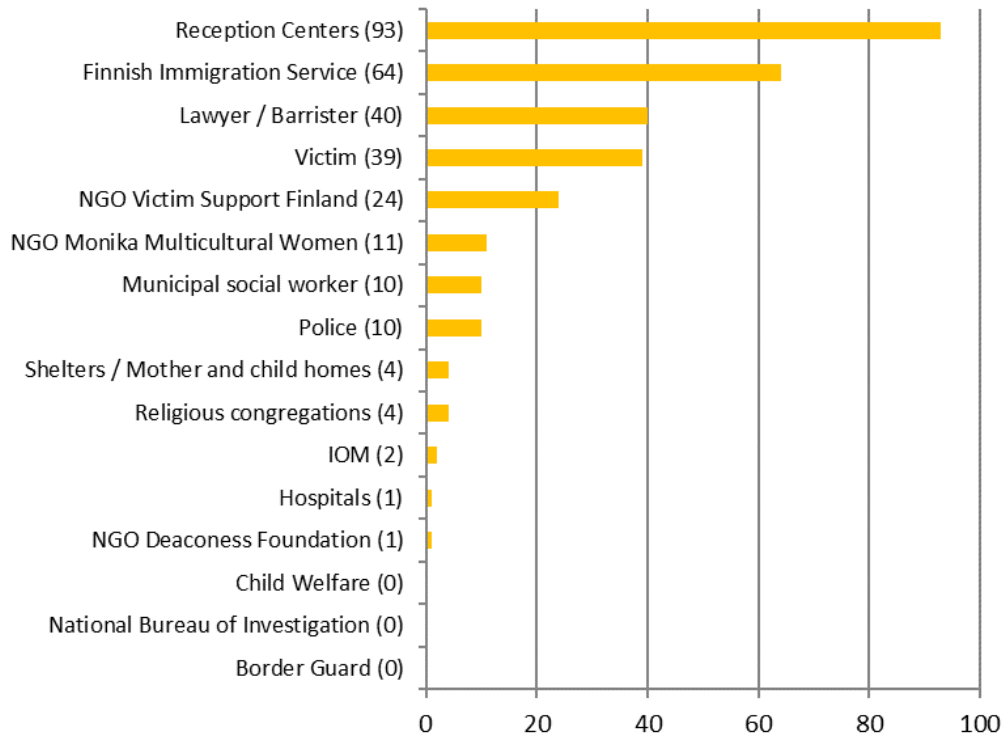
PROPOSALS FOR ADMISSION INTO THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

Decisions on referrals (303 referrals)



A record number of people were referred to the Assistance System. In 2018, the number of proposals received was 228 – one quarter less than in 2019.

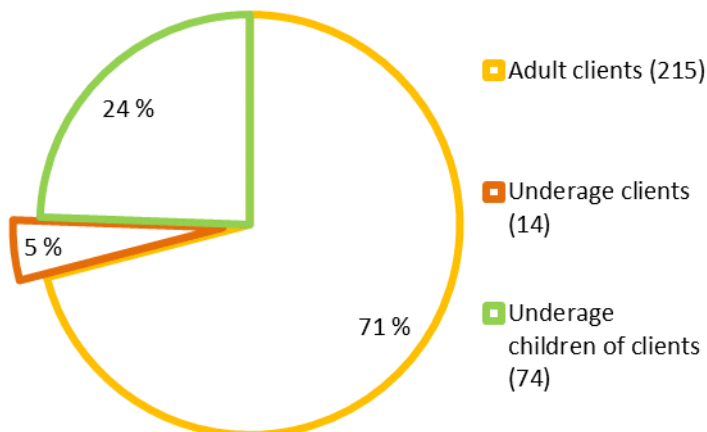
Parties who referred victims to the Assistance System in 2019 - 303 referrals



The statistics show the parties that have submitted an oral or a written proposal for admitting a person into the Assistance System. Victims themselves usually submit an oral proposal.

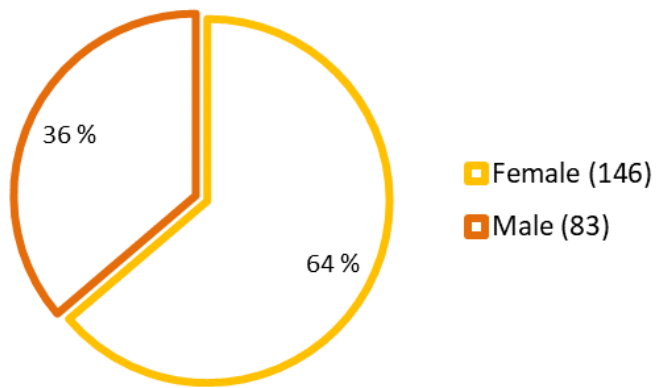
NEW CLIENTS FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2019

New clients (229 + 74)



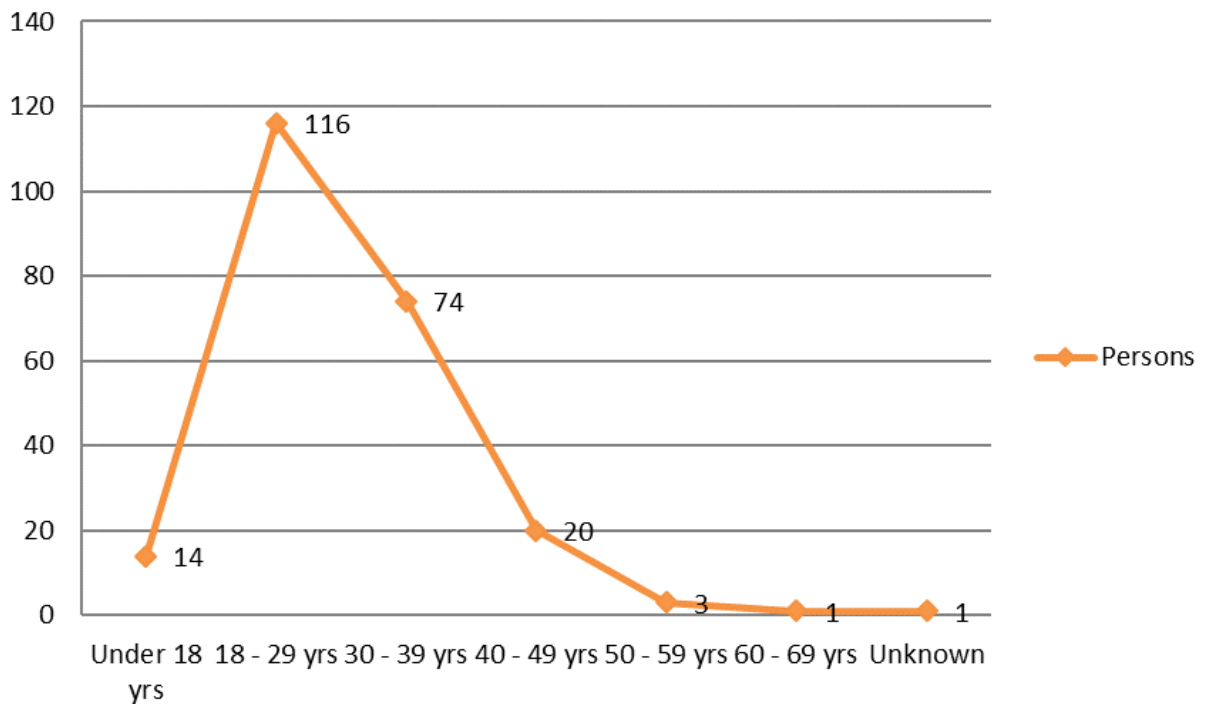
The persons admitted as clients included 229 potential victims of human trafficking and 74 underage children of these clients. The total number of persons admitted into the system was thus 303.

Gender distribution: new clients
(229)



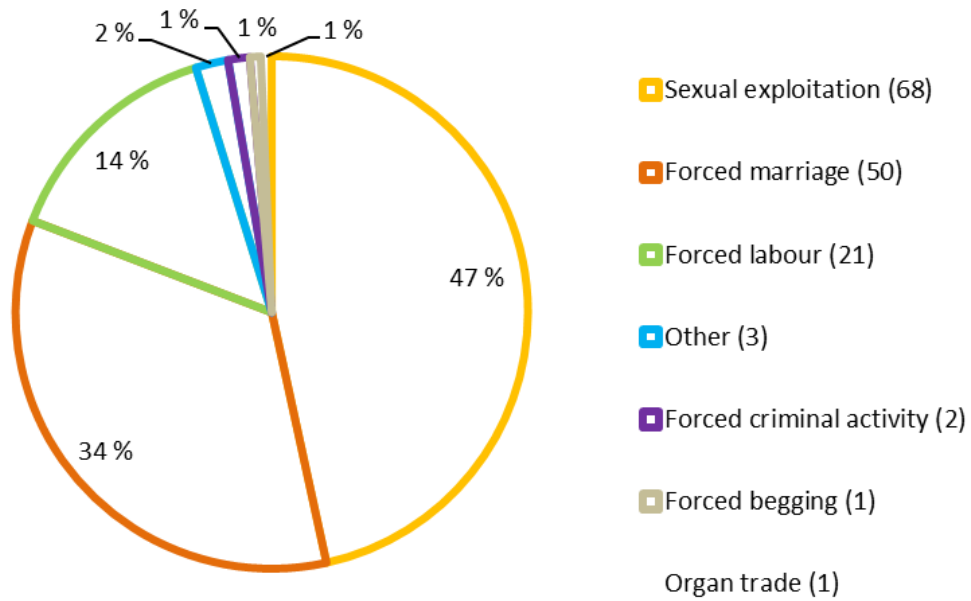
The majority of new clients are female.

Age distribution of new clients (229)



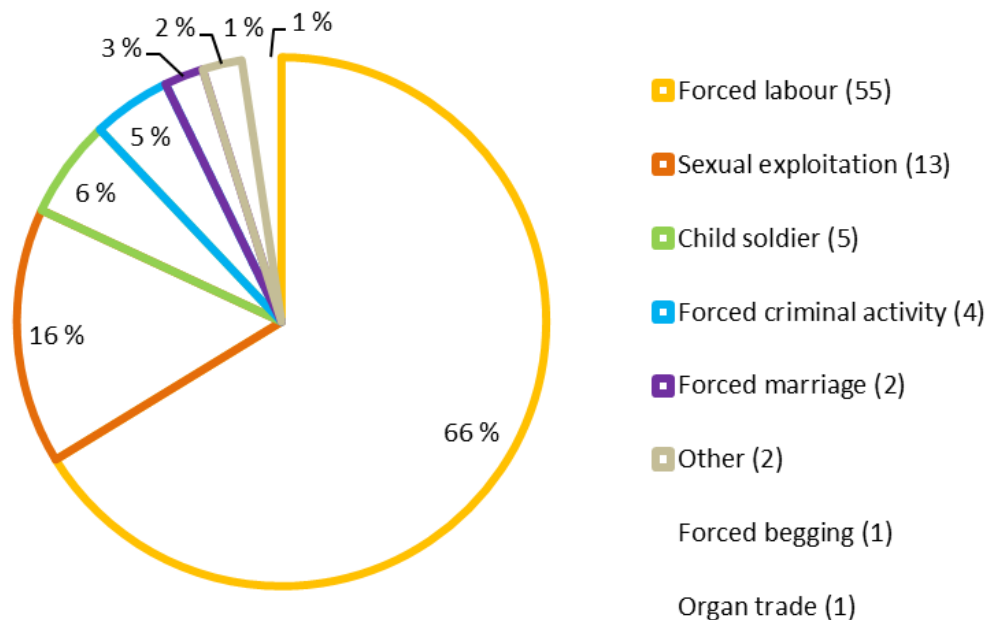
Of the new clients, 14 were minors. Over 40% of the clients between 18 and 25 years of age had been victims of exploitation related to human trafficking when they were underage.

Form of exploitation: women and girls (146)



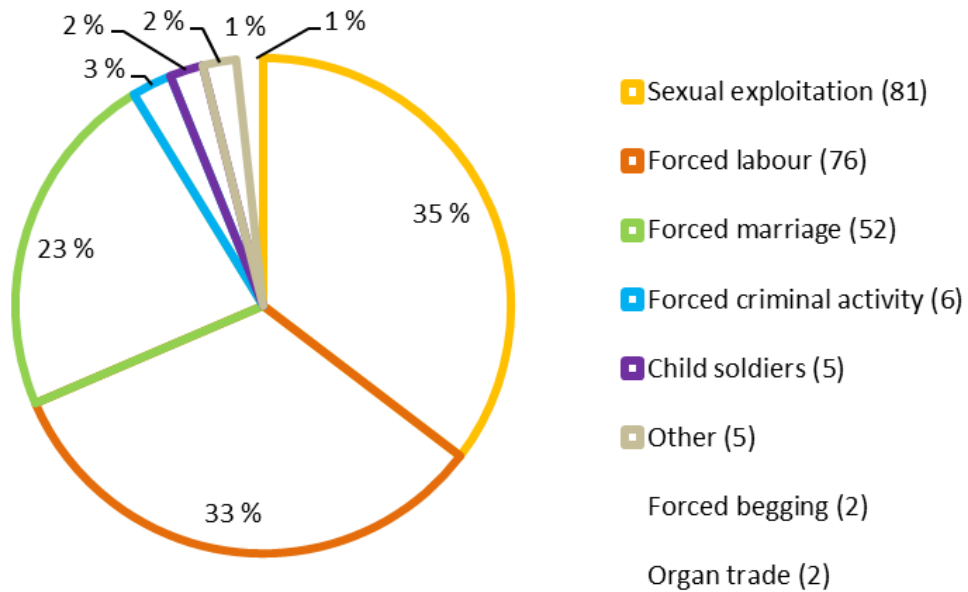
Women are forced into marriage or become victims of sexual exploitation more often than men. However, men can also be subjected to sexual exploitation or be forced to marry. Underage boys and young men are particularly exploited.

Form of exploitation: men and boys (83)

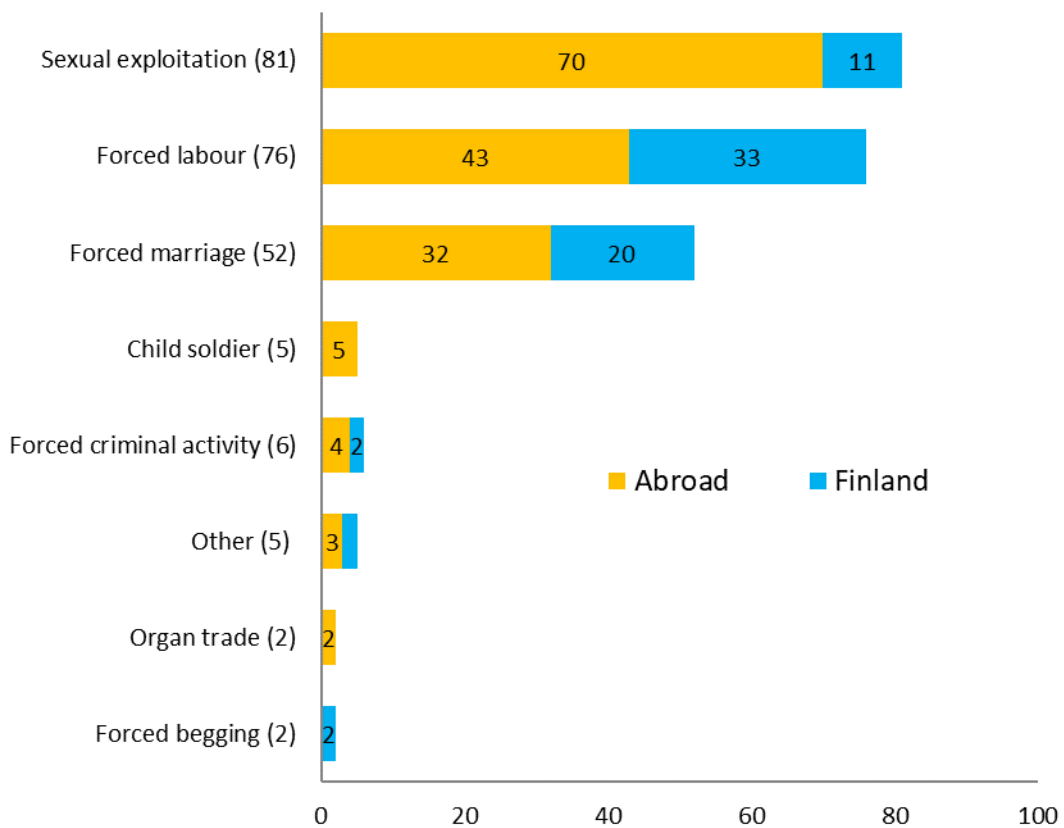


Men are most commonly forced to labour. Exploitation as a child soldier is also human trafficking, and it takes place especially in conflict areas.

Form of exploitation: new clients (229)

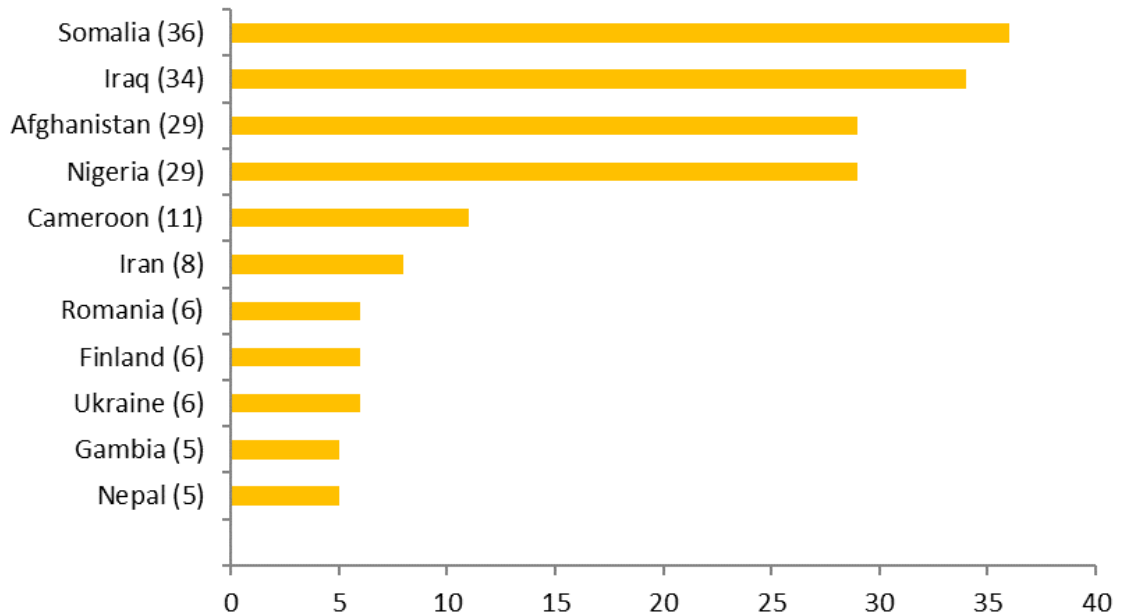


New clients (229) according to place and form of exploitation



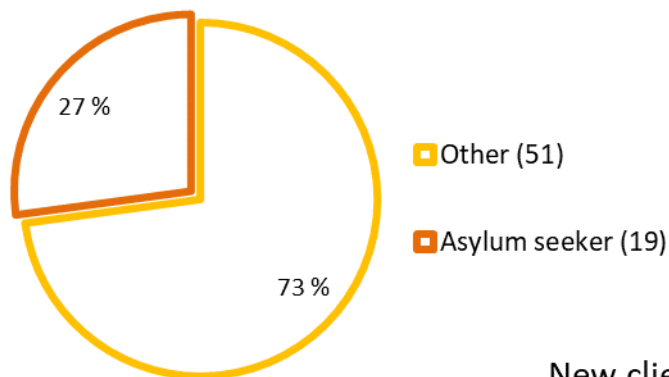
The number of people that became victims of human trafficking in Finland is higher than ever, up to 70.

New clients (229): top nationalities

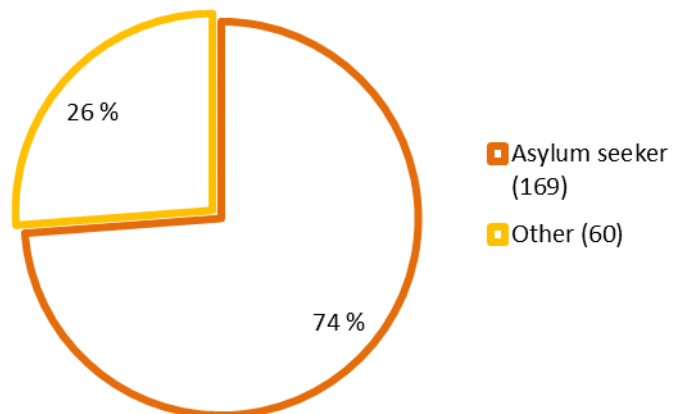


The new clients were of 40 different nationalities. To protect the clients' privacy, the figure only shows nationalities that were represented by five or more clients.

New clients exploited in Finland (70) according to residence status



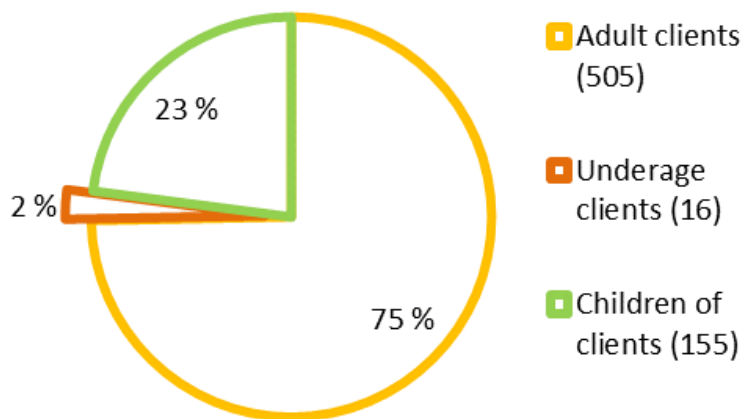
New clients (229): residence status



Of all new clients, 74% are asylum seekers. Fewer than one in three people that have become victims in Finland are asylum seekers. Most victims of exploitation reside in Finland on other grounds.

ALL CLIENTS ON 31 DECEMBER 2019 – A RECORD NUMBER

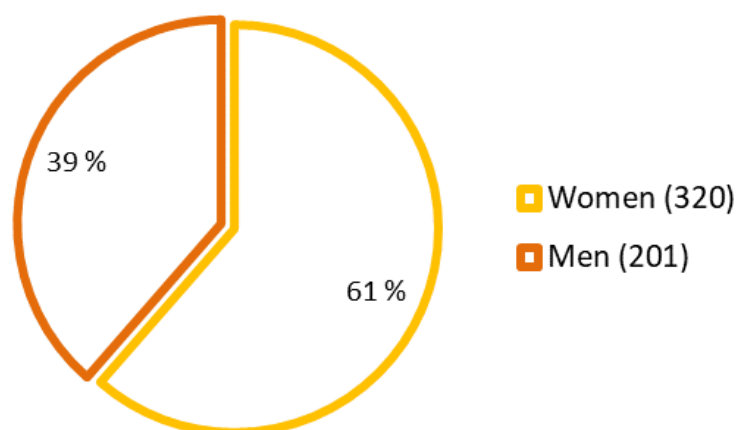
People within the scope of the NAS's services on 31 December 2019 (676)



Of the clients admitted into the system, 48 were underage.

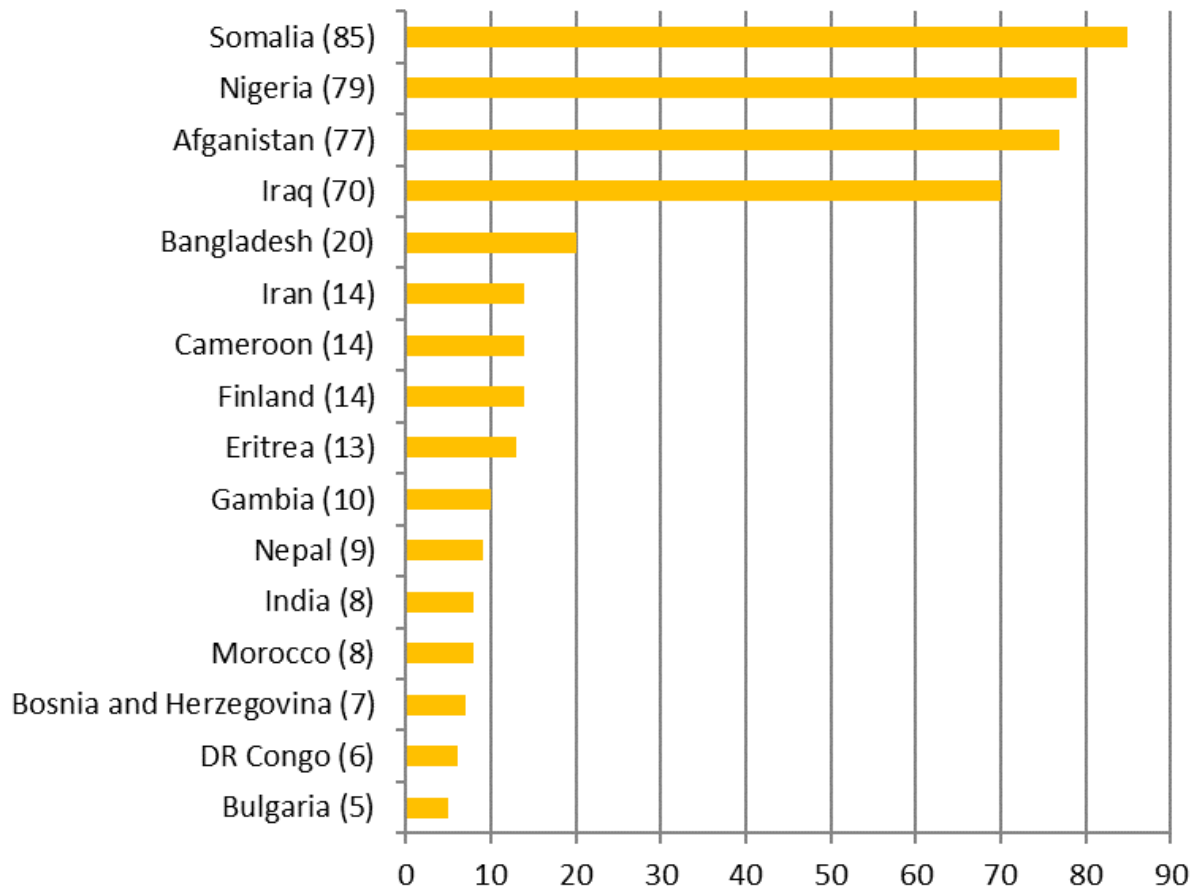
Underage children of victims of human trafficking that are clients of the Assistance System usually become clients with their mother. In fact, many of the clients are single mothers or persons that are solely responsible for their child(ren) for another reason.

All clients (521): gender distribution



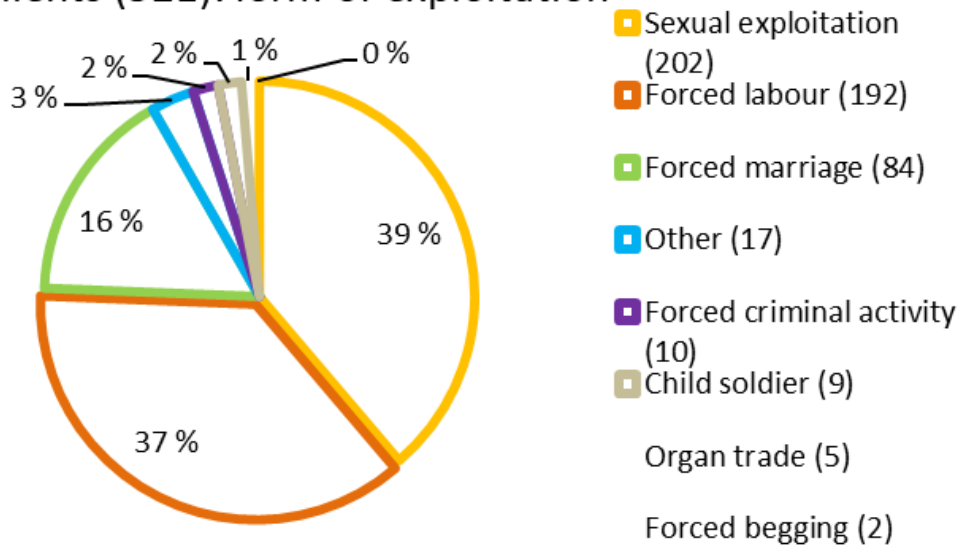
The Assistance System has a record number of clients. Statistics are not compiled of the age or gender of the underage children admitted as clients with a parent. Therefore the above figure shows the gender distribution of both adult and underage clients, i.e. potential victims of human trafficking.

All clients (521): top nationalities



The clients were of 56 different nationalities. To protect the clients' privacy, the figure only shows nationalities that were represented by five or more clients.

All clients (521): form of exploitation



FORMAL IDENTIFICATION BY THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM CAN FORMALLY IDENTIFY A CLIENT THAT HAS BECOME A VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ABROAD.

In 2019, the Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking evaluated 27 clients with a view to officially identifying them as victims of human trafficking.

Of these clients, 23 were identified and two were not: i.e. the latter were assessed not to have been victims of human trafficking. The identification of the two remaining clients is pending.

Formal identification as a victim of human trafficking is evaluated in the Assistance System when the client may have become a victim abroad and the Finnish criminal investigation authorities have not been able to investigate the case.

Individuals who are accepted as clients of the Assistance System are initially classified as *presumed vic-*

tims of human trafficking. Once in the system, clients can be officially identified as victims of human trafficking. Official or *formal* identification can be made by a criminal investigation authority, the Finnish Immigration Service, or the Assistance System.

Prior to making a decision on the formal identification of a client as a victim of human trafficking, the Assistance System consults a multidisciplinary group of experts consisting of representatives of social services, child welfare services and health care services, the Police, National Bureau of Investigation, Border Guard, Finnish Immigration Service and Joutseno Reception Centre. The members of the group of experts are accountable as public officials, and perform their role alongside their normal duties.

Formally identified victims of human trafficking may remain clients of the Assistance System until they no longer need assistance. Individuals who cannot be officially identified as victims of

human trafficking lose their eligibility for Assistance System services. The official identification process has no other legal impact.

Due to the limited resources of both the Assistance System and the group of experts, it has not been possible for the identification process to keep pace with the number of clients. As a result, there were up to 57 clients in the Assistance System awaiting official identification as of 31 December 2019.

However, pending official identification, a client is covered by the Assistance System services and is eligible for assistance provided for victims of human trafficking.

23 CLIENTS WERE IDENTIFIED, WHILE 57 CLIENTS ARE PENDING EVALUATION.

THEY REMAIN CLIENTS DURING THE WAITING PERIOD.

REFLECTION PERIODS GRANTED BY THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

The Assistance System has granted a reflection period to 23 clients that resided in Finland illegally.

The duration of the reflection period varied from two to four months.

Reflection periods can be granted to individuals who are residing in Finland illegally. The maximum length of a reflection period is six

months, and the individual has a legal right to remain in Finland for that period of time.

A criminal investigation authority may also grant a reflection period to victims of human trafficking.

Further information on the reflection period and formal identification is available at humantrafficking.fi.

A REFLECTION PERIOD WAS GRANTED TO 23 CLIENTS RESIDING IN FINLAND ILLEGALLY.

PERSONNEL OF THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

The Assistance System currently employs four social work professionals, five Senior Advisers and a nurse. Some of the total of ten team members are employed for a fixed term.

The Assistance System's social instructors are based at the Joutseno Reception Centre and Oulu Reception Centre. The social worker is located in Helsinki and the nurse in Joutseno. The Senior Advisers have offices in both Helsinki and Joutseno.

In summer 2019, the Assistance System also employed a trainee that worked as an Assistant Adviser, supervised by the Senior Advisers.

All members of the team travel all over Finland to attend to clients' affairs, provide training, and take

part in various networking events and seminars, where they give talks and discuss phenomena and issues related to human trafficking.

The head of the Joutseno Reception Centre also contributes to the operations of the Assistance System significantly.

In addition to working with clients, the Assistance System is a centre of excellence for identifying and assisting victims of human trafficking, and it provides training and consultation services. All employees of the Assistance System participate in the performance of these duties.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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