



NATIONAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

SEMIANNUAL REVIEW

1 January — 30 June 2020

The coronavirus has affected the emergence of human trafficking

IKUT project seeks the employment of victims of human trafficking

Statistics for the start of 2020



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FOREWORD:

THE CORONAVIRUS CAUSED A DROP IN THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS



The Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking has continued to operate relatively normally throughout the spring of 2020. Even though the Assistance System team has mainly worked from home, the aim has been to handle client meetings in the usual way as far as possible, whilst taking the safety of both parties into account.

The coronavirus and related measures have made seeking admittance to the Assistance System somewhat more difficult. This may be linked to the fact that personal meetings have been avoided in all fields in March and April in particular. Identifying victims of human trafficking and getting them help may frequently require several meetings, preferably face to face. The parties that would usually have referred victims to the assistance system have not always had the chance to do this. There is a clear drop visible in the number of applications to the Assistance System in April and May (see statistics, p. 9).

In June, the number of applications rose again to the same level as before March. Organisations and shelters in particular referred potential victims of human trafficking to the Assistance System in June (a total of 12 proposals). In June, potential victims of human trafficking themselves have also sought help

more often than in the previous months (12 applications).

In fact, applications submitted by the victims themselves have become the second most common way of seeking admittance into the Assistance System in the beginning of 2020.

Applications submitted by the victims themselves have become the second most common way of seeking admittance into the Assistance System.

In any case, a record number of applications for admittance into the Assistance System were submitted in the beginning of 2020: there were over 30 applications more than during the same time the previous year, which means that hopefully the coronavirus has not caused any great damage.

P.S. The Assistance System will place one of its Senior Advisers in Tampere as of 1 August 2020. From the Tampere office, the Senior Adviser can be more present in the networks of the area and meet clients in Inland Finland and the western coast faster. The Assistance System currently has offices in Helsinki, Oulu and Lappeenranta (the Joutseno reception centre).

The unique

IKUT PROJECT

DEVELOPS

THE WORKING LIFE SKILLS

OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



On 1 June 2020, the Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking started a new 2.5-year project with the aim of strengthening the working life skills and abilities of victims of human trafficking, as well as increasing the participation of the private sector in the work against human trafficking.

The IKUT project is one of the first European projects to focus on the working life skills of victims of human trafficking.

During the IKUT project, a working life model is being built for the victims of human trafficking, with the aim of strengthening the working life skills and abilities of the victims and supporting them in the transition into working life.

In order to support the model and

increase information, a study on the labour market situation of the victims of human trafficking and their reception of employment services will be completed in the project.

There is very little information available on the working life position of the victims of human trafficking or in the employment services. The IKUT project seeks to establish how the victims of human trafficking could be helped in a more comprehensive manner.

‘This is largely a pilot project: nothing like this has been implemented in Finland before,’ Project Manager **Veikko Mäkelä** relates.

The aim is to increase the involvement of the private sector in the work against human trafficking by organising training for companies, in

addition to two seminars on corporate responsibility and human trafficking. In the training sessions and seminars, information on human trafficking is being provided for the private sector, and methods are being developed for companies to use in the effort to prevent human trafficking.

The IKUT project is provided with support from the European Social Fund (ESF). Funding for the project is granted by the Häme Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment.

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SEVERAL FORMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ARE IDENTIFIED IN FINLAND



In Finland, exploitation was detected particularly in the restaurant and cleaning industries. Stock photo.

In the beginning of 2020, a record number of clients that may have become victims of human trafficking in Finland have been admitted into the Assistance System.

More and more cases also involve a threat to the safety of the client, to which the Assistance System must react. In certain cases, the threat level has been fairly high.

The threats to safety are most often linked to forced marriage and human trafficking offences committed in Finland.

Three people were admitted into the system, because they are acting as

witnesses in a criminal investigation process related to human trafficking, and therefore require special assistance. With witnesses, their need for help is often linked to a threat to their safety.

Even minors are used for forced labour

Most often the people exploited in Finland have been in conditions indicative of forced labour. Forced labour has been discovered in the restaurant and cleaning industries in particular. New clients also include people who have worked in the construction industry.

In three cases, a minor has been subjected to conditions indicative of forced labour in Finland.

In the beginning of 2020, human trafficking related to sexual exploitation has involved exploitation in prostitution in particular. Other forms of sexual exploitation indicative of human trafficking, such as conditions resembling sexual slavery, have also been discovered.

Human trafficking related to sexual exploitation is still poorly recognised in Finland. Those who have been referred to the Assistance System have usually been identified in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

Lesser known forms

Five clients had become victims of human trafficking related to forced criminal activity, four of them in Finland. In this form of human trafficking, the victim is forced to carry out criminal acts, whilst the party exploiting the victim receives the financial or other benefits of the activity.

The activities are considered to be forced when, taking the circumstances into account, the person being forced could not be expected to act otherwise.

According to law, victims of human trafficking must not be sentenced for offences they were forced to commit. Very serious offences, such as homicide, remain outside the scope of this definition.

Benefit fraud as a form of human trafficking was discovered in two cases. In this lesser known form of human trafficking, the victim is controlled for the purpose of financial exploitation.

The victim is kept in poverty and in conditions that violate human dignity, so that the exploiter can take the allowances and benefits paid to the victim and/or take out a loan under the victim's name, for example. More information about benefit fraud as a form of human trafficking can be found on page 15.

The victim is in Finland illegally

At the outset of 2020, a total of eight reconsideration periods were granted to victims of human trafficking staying illegally in Finland. Seven of them were granted by the Assistance System and one by the Police.

Usually the reconsideration period has been granted for six months, i.e. the maximum period. The duration of the reconsideration period varies

from one to six months.

The Police, Assistance System and Border Guard can grant a reconsideration period for a potential victim of human trafficking.

New clients included asylum seekers who had become victims of forced labour in Finland.

The period grants potential victims of human trafficking a legal stay of 1–6 months in Finland and gives them time to consider if they wish to cooperate with the pre-trial investigation authorities in order to resolve the human trafficking offence.

Seven of the victims who were gran-

ted a reconsideration period were believed to have become victims of a human trafficking offence in Finland, or that the human trafficking started abroad and continued in Finland.

Why asylum seekers in particular are identified as victims of human trafficking

A total of 54 per cent of the new clients had become victims of human trafficking outside Finland. Most of these victims were asylum seekers who had been exploited either in their home country or whilst travelling from their home country to another state. After arriving in Finland, they may still suffer from the problems and symptoms caused by exploitation. The safety of some may also be threatened.



Activities indicative of human trafficking have been identified in the cleaning industry for years. The phenomenon is still going strong, however. Stock photo.

In Finland, people with an asylum seeker background who have become victims abroad are identified particularly well. The Police, Finnish Immigration Service and reception centres communicate with the asylum seekers. They are asked how they are doing and if they could relate any violations of their rights which they have experienced. In that situation, trained personnel can recognise indications of human trafficking. No other group of people in Finland passes through such screening.

New clients also include asylum seekers who have usually become victims of human trafficking related to forced labour in Finland. Typically, they have received one or more negative decisions for their applications for international protection, and they accept poor work offers whilst hoping for work-based residence permits. Employers take advantage of this vulnerability.

Conflict zones and migration expose people to the risk

The profile of clients who have become victims of human trafficking abroad has remained more or less the same compared to recent years.

A total of 24 of those exploited abroad were subjected to exploitation while they were minors. The exploiter was often a relative, and the exploitation could be related to forced labour, forced prostituti-

tion.

In Libya, exploited people have typically ended up in conditions indicative of slavery or even targets of the slave trade.



In conflict zones, women and children in particular become targets of exploitation.

on or forced marriage.

Many of the new clients have been exploited for forced labour on their way from their home country to Europe. The exploiter has often been a smuggler who arranged the victim's trip from one point to another.

People staying in a foreign state as migrants may have also relied on the grey labour market to gain a livelihood, which has led to exploi-

Women and children have been exploited in prostitution, especially in conflict zones as well as on their way from their home country to other states.

According to the statistics of the Assistance System, the exploitation of West African women in prostitution and forced criminal activity is typical, especially in the countries of the European Union.

APPLICATIONS AND NEW CLIENTS AS STATISTICS, 1 JANUARY — 30 JUNE 2020

The following pages contain statistics for the beginning of 2020 on the people who have sought (been proposed for) admittance and been admitted into the Assistance System.

The Assistance System received 176 applications for admittance as a client of the Assistance System. De-

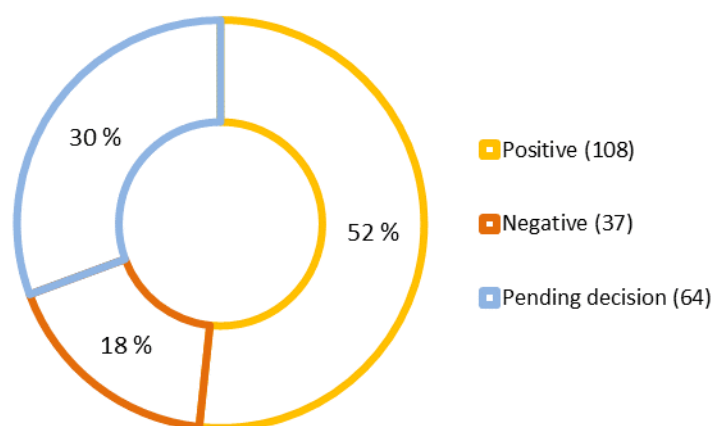
isions have also been granted for dozens of applications submitted in late 2019.

The Assistance System does not engage in outreach work or try to reach the victims; instead, potential victims of human trafficking become clients when another authority, organisation or private service pro-

vider refers them to the Assistance System.

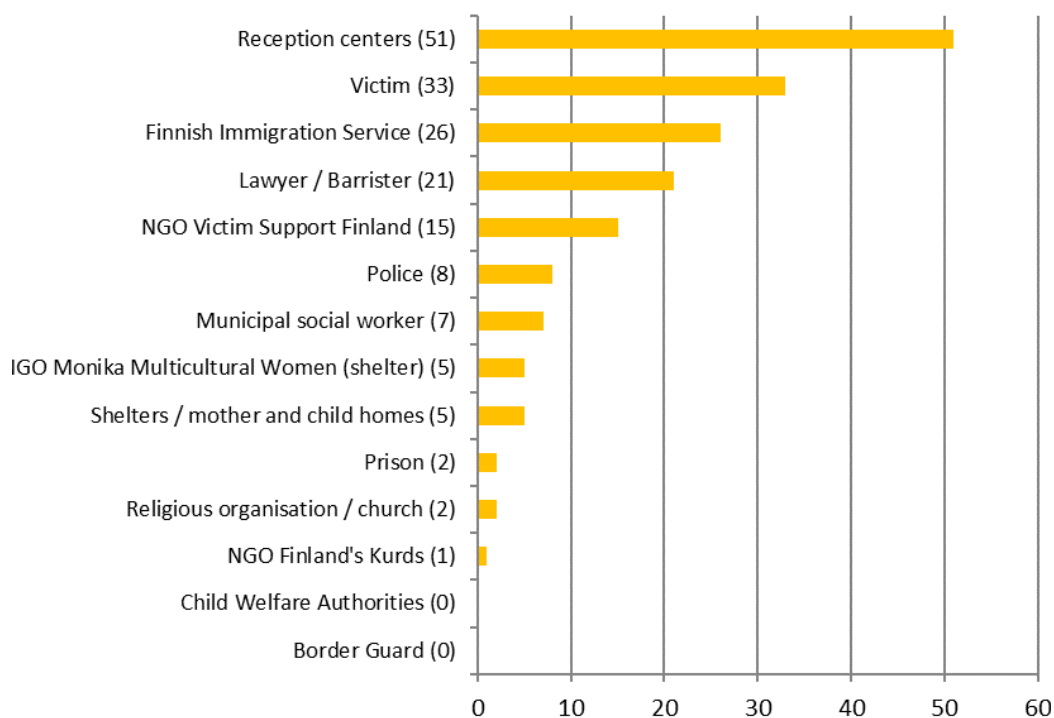
Direct contacts from victims have increased, however. At the outset of 2020, applications submitted by the victims themselves were the second most common way of seeking admittance into the Assistance System.

Decisions on admittance into the Assistance System at the outset of 2020 (165 decisions)



The Assistance System received 176 applications, i.e. proposals, for admittance as a client of the Assistance System. Due to the backlog, there were still 64 applications waiting for decisions on 30 June 2020. 108

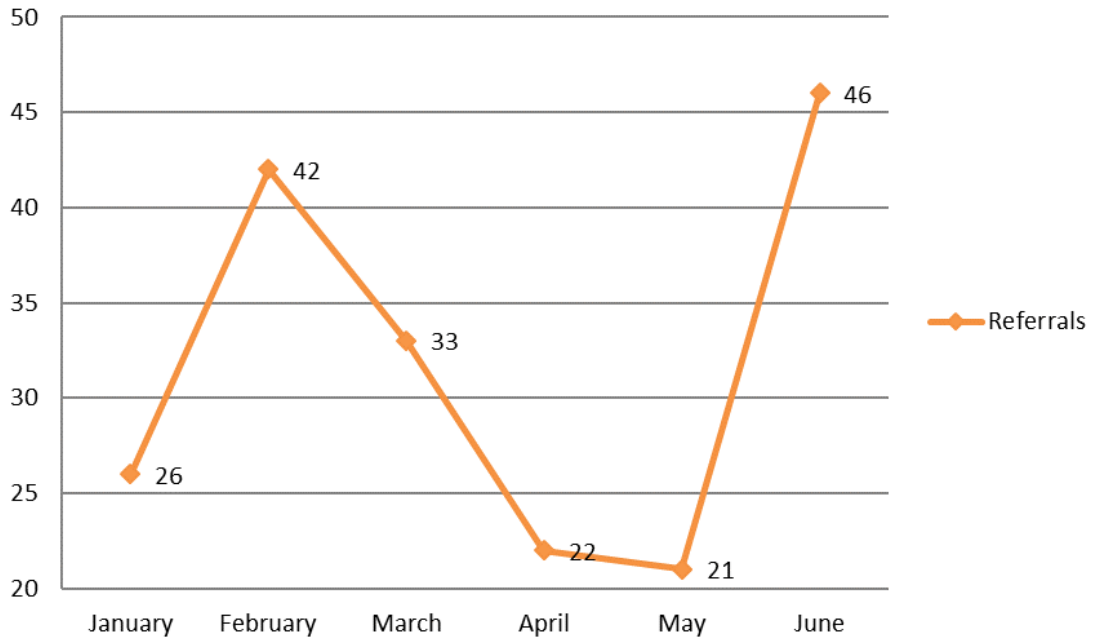
Parties who referred victims to the NAS 1 Jan - 30 June 2020 (176 referrals)



The identification of potential victims in health care and at hospitals is still virtually nonexistent. In the beginning of the year, applications submitted by the victims themselves were the second most common way of seeking admittance into the Assistance System.

APPLICATIONS AS STATISTICS, 1 JANUARY — 30 JUNE 2020

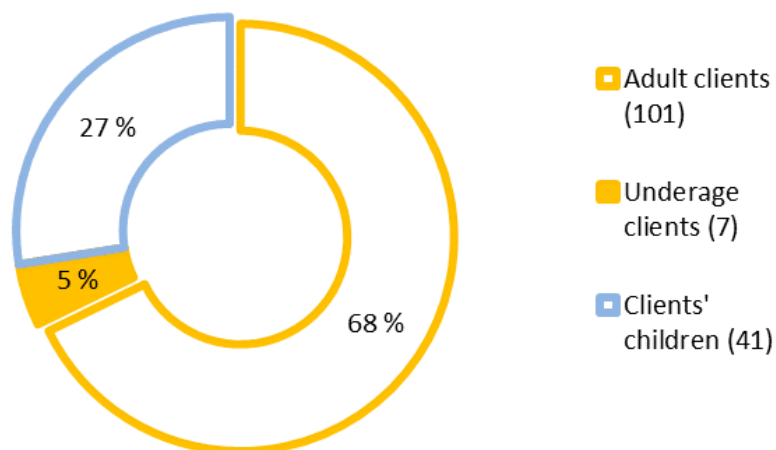
Referrals by month 1 Jan - 30 June 2020



The coronavirus affected applications into the Assistance System in April and May in particular. Proposals refer to applications for admittance as a client of the Assistance System.

NEW CLIENTS (108 + 41) AS STATISTICS, 1 JANUARY — 30 JUNE 2020

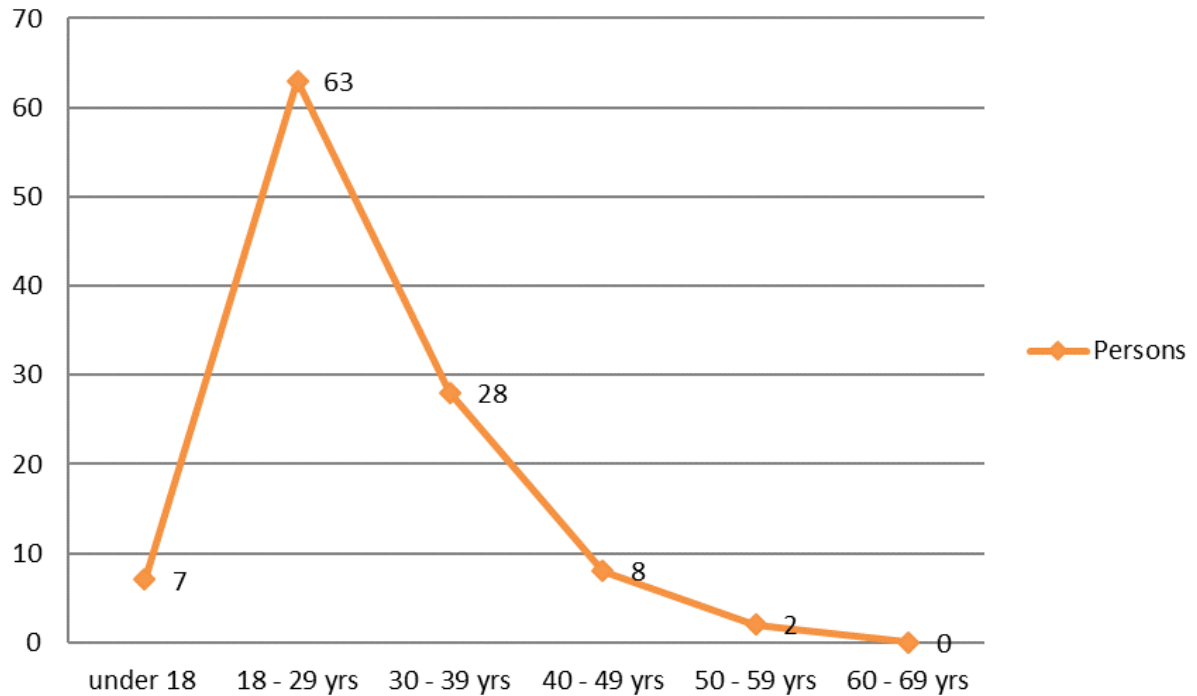
New clients (108 + 41)



There were 115 new clients admitted into the Assistance System the same time last year, but only 76 in 2018.

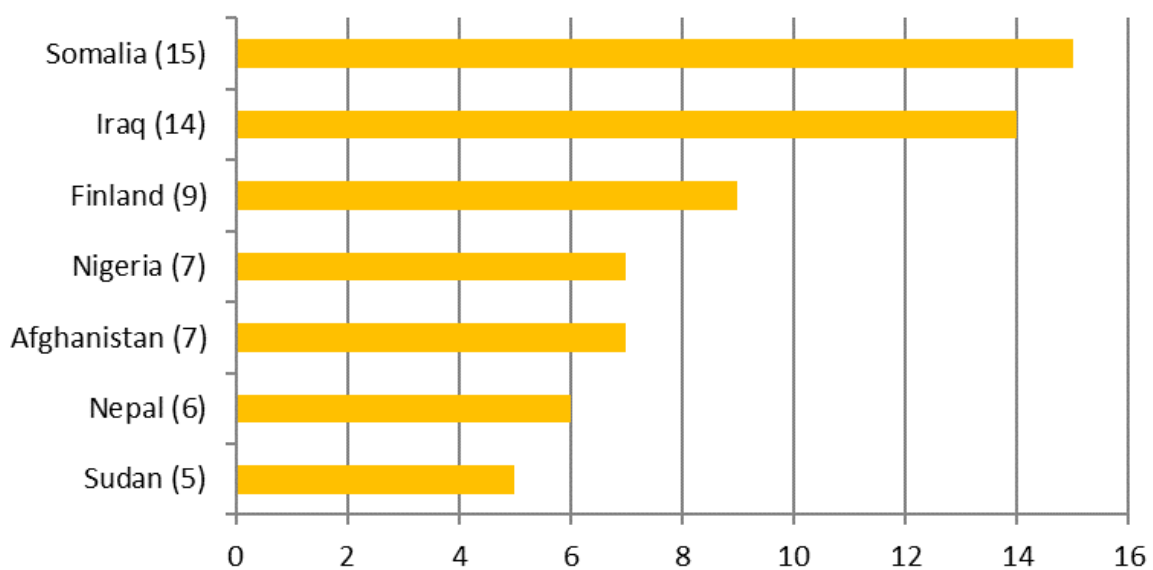
NEW CLIENTS (108) AS STATISTICS, 1 JANUARY — 30 JUNE 2020

New clients (108) by age group



Most of the new clients are young adults. There were seven minor clients admitted into the Assistance System. However, a much larger number had been exploited while underage.

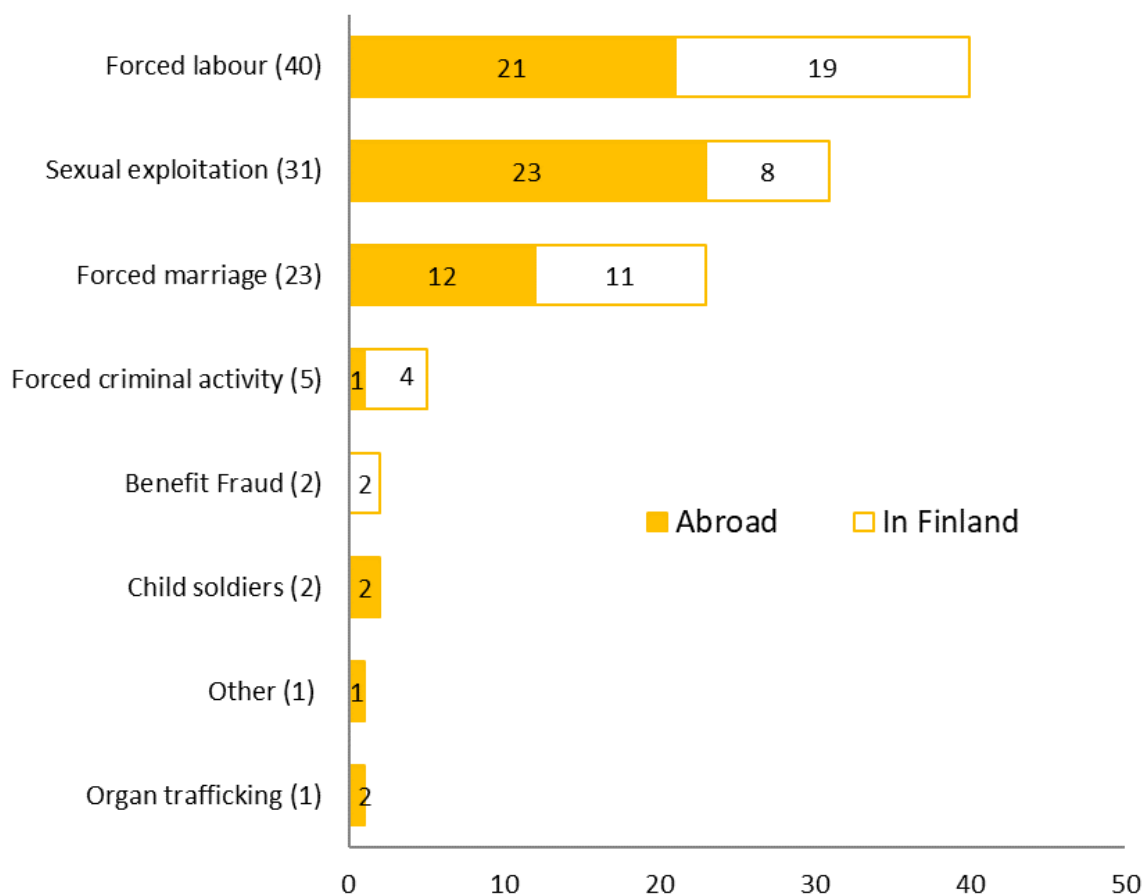
New clients: top nationalities (108)



The new clients of the Assistance System represent 37 nationalities. The table lists the nationalities represented by five or more clients.

NEW CLIENTS (108) AS STATISTICS, 1 JANUARY — 30 JUNE 2020

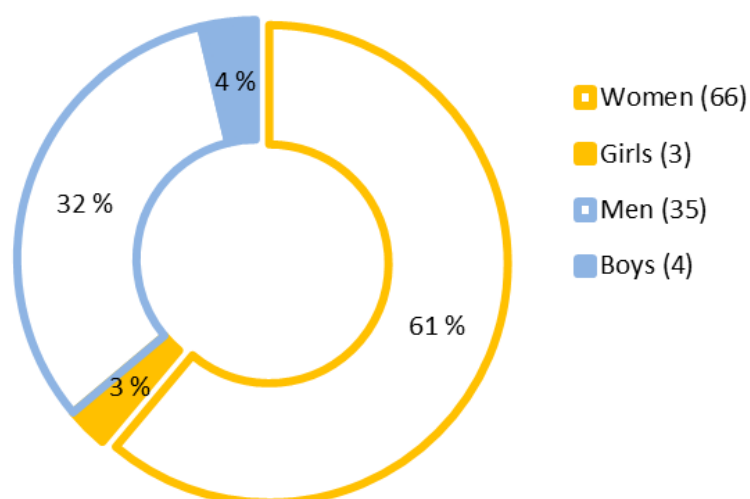
New clients (108) according to place and form of exploitation



In addition, three people were admitted into the system, because they are acting as witnesses in a criminal investigation process related to human trafficking.

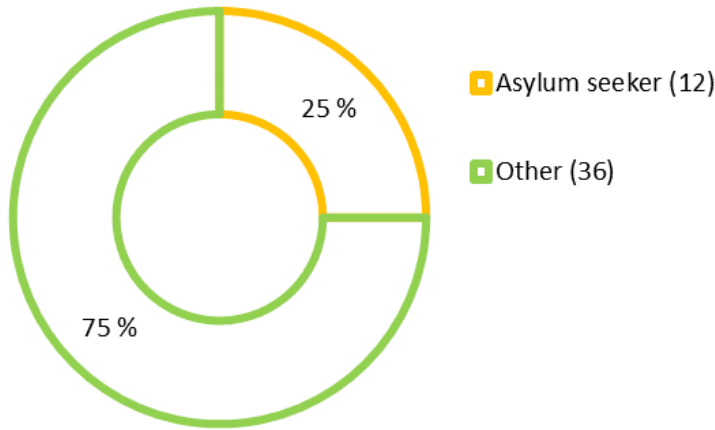
Gender distribution - new clients (108)

Of the 48 people who became victims in Finland, 69% were women.



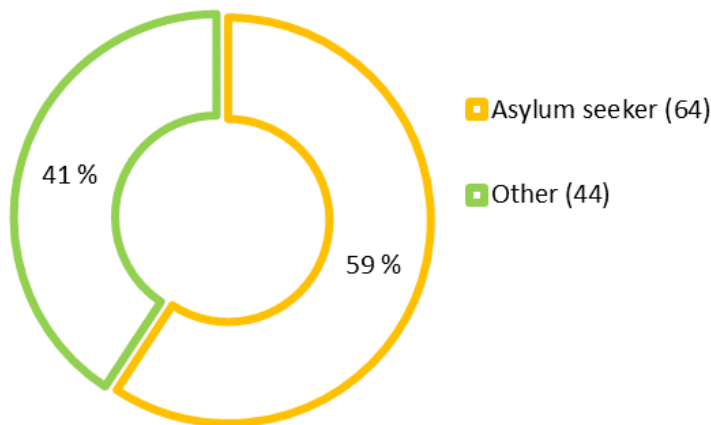
NEW CLIENTS (108) AS STATISTICS, 1 JANUARY — 30 JUNE 2020

New clients exploited in Finland (48) by residence status



The people exploited in Finland were usually in the country with a visa / residence permit or illegally, or they were Finnish citizens. One quarter of them were asylum seekers.

New clients: residence status (108)

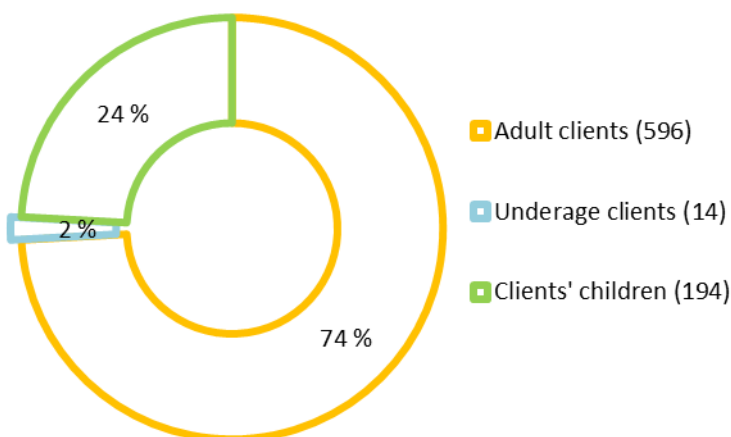


All in all, 59% of the new clients had an asylum seeker background.

However, the share of new clients without an asylum seeker background has grown.

ALL CLIENTS OF THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM, 30 June 2020

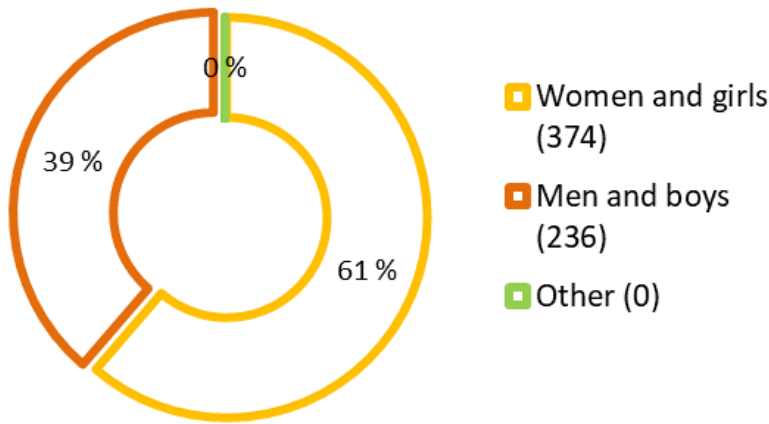
All clients in the NAS on 30.6.2020 (804)



The total of people within the scope of the services of the Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking comes to 804.

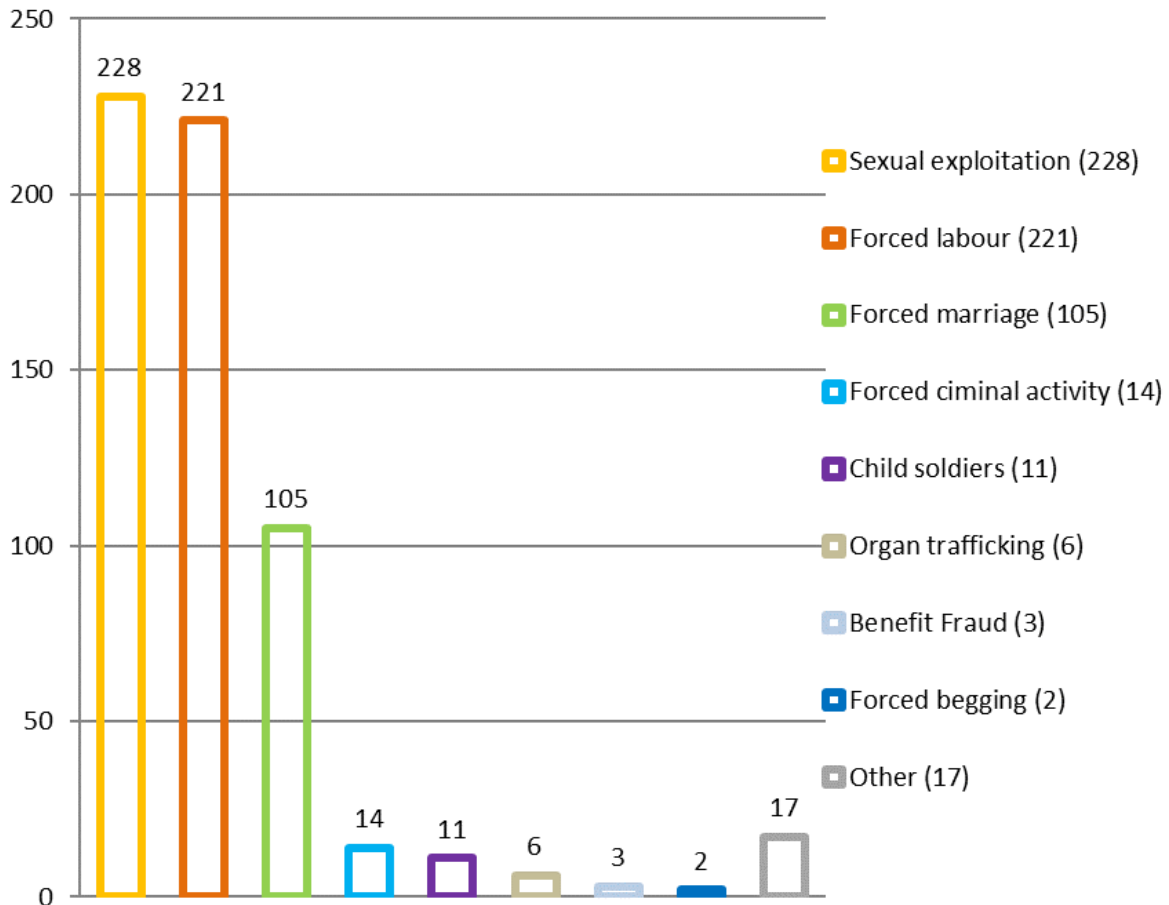
Of them, 610 are potential victims of human trafficking and 194 are their minor children, who are also within the scope of the Assistance System's services.

All clients (610): gender distribution



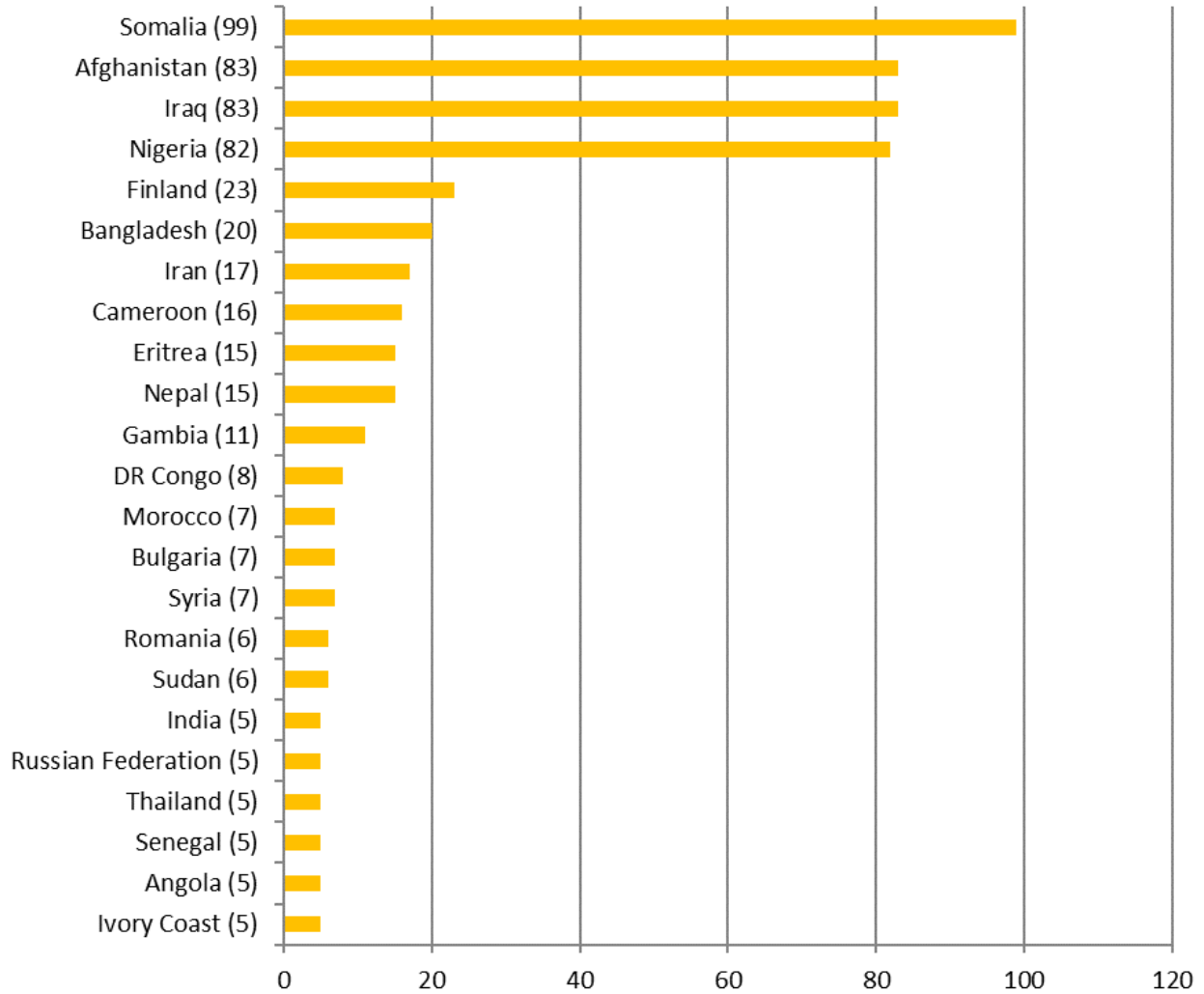
Most clients are women. Women constitute the majority of victims of human trafficking related to sexual exploitation as well as forced marriages. In addition, women are represented in nearly all other forms of human trafficking.

All clients (610): form of exploitation



ALL CLIENTS OF THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM, 30 June 2020

All clients (610): top nationalities



The clients of the Assistance System represent 63 different nationalities. The table lists the nationalities represented by five or more clients.



BENEFIT FRAUD

AS A FORM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Benefit fraud as a form of human trafficking means that the victim under another party's control is kept in poverty and in conditions that violate human dignity, so that the exploiter can collect the wages or other benefits paid to the victim.

Benefit fraud as a term refers to the misuse of benefits as well as fraud. The full name of the phenomenon is *human trafficking for benefit fraud*. The phenomenon is not very well known in Finland.

In this phenomenon, applications for benefits from the state, municipality or other parties are submitted in the name of a person in a vulnerable or otherwise subordinate position. Ordinary and payday loans may also be taken in the victim's name. However, the money does not go to the person in whose name the application was submitted; instead, the exploiters keep the money.

Victims in conditions that violate human dignity

In one way or another, the exploiter takes control of the victim in order to ensure that the exploitation is successful and to guarantee the victim's silence. The victim's vulnerability or dependence on the perpetrator may make it possible to take control of the victim so that the victim cannot prevent the actions of their exploiter or escape the situation.

The victim's freedom may be limi-



The exploiter may take the victim's bank card or online banking credentials, take away the benefits paid to the victim, and take out payday loans in the

ted, but they may be allowed to visit offices where the victim can be expected to receive allowances or other benefits, for example.

During exploitation, the victim is kept in conditions that violate human dignity, usually extreme poverty.

When the victim is no longer needed, they may be returned to their home country if they are a foreign citizen, for example. Often the exploited person may be a minor, disabled, or otherwise in a subordinate position.

More widely known in Europe

Benefit fraud is considered a form

of human trafficking and modern slavery in several European countries, such as Denmark and the United Kingdom.

In Finland, there is no established legal practice yet concerning this form of human trafficking. It may also be difficult to distinguish from the financial abuse often included in domestic violence.

Benefit fraud as a form of human trafficking may occur together with other forms of human trafficking. It may be linked to human trafficking related to, e.g. forced marriage, forced criminal activity, forced labour, forced begging, or sexual exploitation.

PERSONNEL OF THE ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

The Assistance System currently employs four social work professionals, four Senior Advisers, an Adviser, a nurse and a Project Manager. The head of the Joutseno Reception Centre also contributes significantly to the operations of the Assistance System.

The Assistance System's social instructors and public health nurse are based in the Joutseno as well as Oulu Reception Centres. The social worker is based in Helsinki.

The Senior Advisers and the Adviser work at the Joutseno Reception Centre, in Helsinki, and as of 1 August 2020, also in Tampere. From the Tampere office, trips to the areas such as the western coast are faster and easier. The workplace of the Project Manager (IKUT project) is in Helsinki.

In summer 2020, the Assistance System has a university trainee working in administrative services.

The Senior Advisers as well as the social services professionals 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. Even though the work has been much less mobile due to the coronavirus situation, clients have still been met throughout the spring and summer of 2020, while taking the safety of both parties into account.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

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FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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