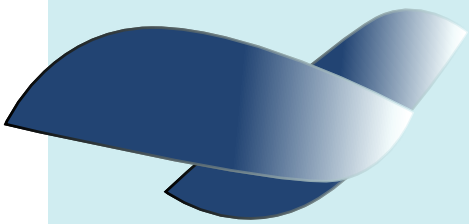


Annual Report on Human Trafficking 2024



NATIONAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM
FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Year 2024 in Brief

The National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking (NAS) is a national expert authority and centre of excellence in the work against human trafficking. In addition, the statutory duties of the NAS include counselling and guidance as well as identifying and helping victims.

The NAS's continuous and extensive stakeholder cooperation and training for operators in the sector have increased awareness of the phenomenon, promoted the detection of cases and facilitated the identification of victims. The NAS consults, trains and instructs a wide range of operators in Finland and also participates in international work against human trafficking.

In 2024, a total of 207 new clients were admitted to the NAS, 90 of whom had been victims of human trafficking in Finland. Of the new clients admitted to the NAS in 2024, 45% were victims of forced labour and 32% were victims of forced marriage. The rest were victims of sexual exploitation (20%) or forced into criminal activity. Of all the referrals, 58% were submitted in the second half of the year.

In the early part of the year, fewer referrals were submitted for admission to the NAS, but the numbers levelled out towards the end of the year. During the last six months of the year, the number of new clients admitted to the NAS doubled compared to the beginning of the year.

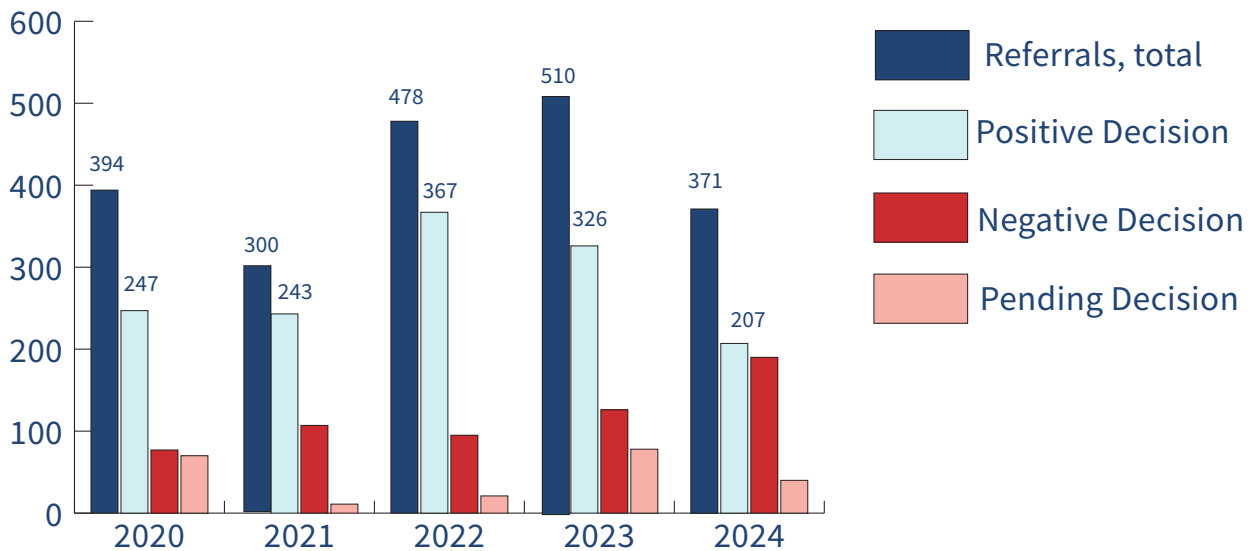
The Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking does not perform outreach work. Therefore, victims of human trafficking and exploitation are referred to the NAS through other authorities and operators. The victims also often personally contact the NAS. The NAS assesses whether there are grounds for a client relationship based on the referrals it receives. A client relationship is not established without the victim's consent. In addition, the definition of human trafficking must be met and the victim must have a need for help provided through the NAS in order to be accepted as a client.

The statistics system was renewed and digitalised in 2024. This change has, in part, changed some statistical practices. More information about this project can be found on page 12.

The number of referrals in 2024 was moderate

In 2024, fewer new referrals were entered in the NAS than in the previous year, totalling 371. The higher number of referrals in the previous two years was due to criminal cases in the berry industry, which led to a large number of Thai nationals being directed to the NAS. The referral numbers for 2024 are in line with years preceding the previous two years.

All Referrals 2020-2024

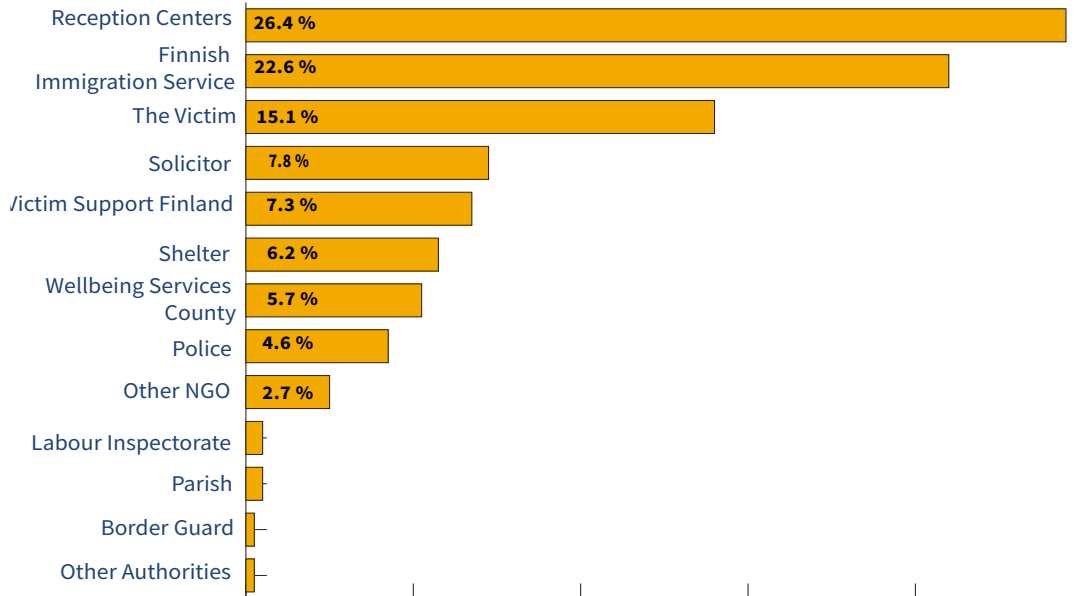


Looking back at the statistics, we can see differences in the annual numbers. COVID affected the number of applications and decisions in 2021, and the criminal cases in the berry sector are reflected in the numbers for 2022 and 2023. The number of referrals received in early 2024 was exceptionally low, which is reflected in the full-year statistics. In late 2024, the numbers were at a more normal level.

Many factors have contributed to making the human trafficking phenomenon visible. In 2024, the NAS organised training for stakeholders to identify victims of human trafficking. The regional networks against human trafficking (IKV) were active in their operations. Various operators highlighted human trafficking and its identification in their projects, training and activities. The common goal is to combat human trafficking.

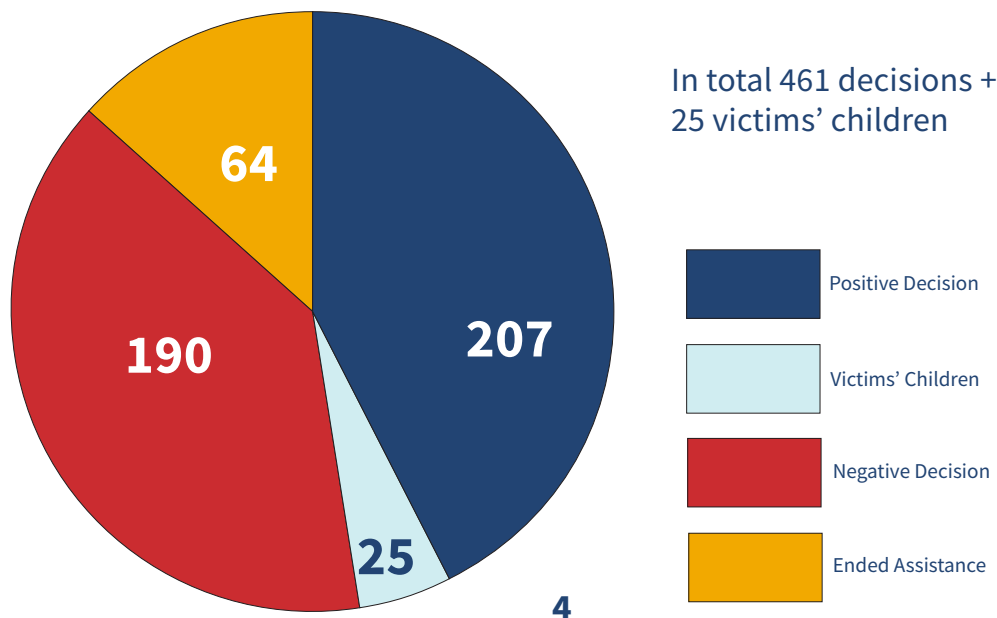
371 New Referrals in 2024

Operators that Referred Clients to the NAS in 2024
371 Applications in Total.



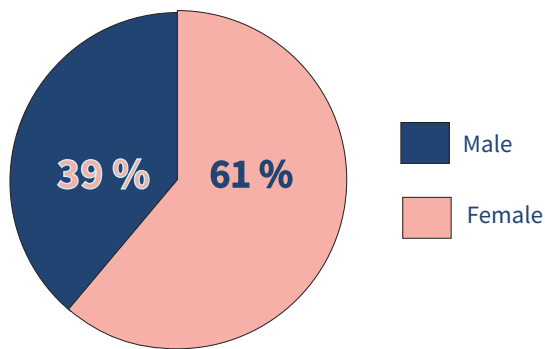
The NAS does not perform outreach work. Instead, the system receives referrals through various parties. The highest number of referrals came through the Finnish Immigration Service and the reception centres, coordinated by the Finnish Immigration Service. The NAS is subject to public liability in carrying out decision-making on the applications received. The year 2024 saw an increase in negative client admittance decisions. The most common reason for negative decisions was that the applicant did not need the help of the NAS or that the exploitation was not a matter of human trafficking.

Decisions Made in 2024



New Clients in 2024

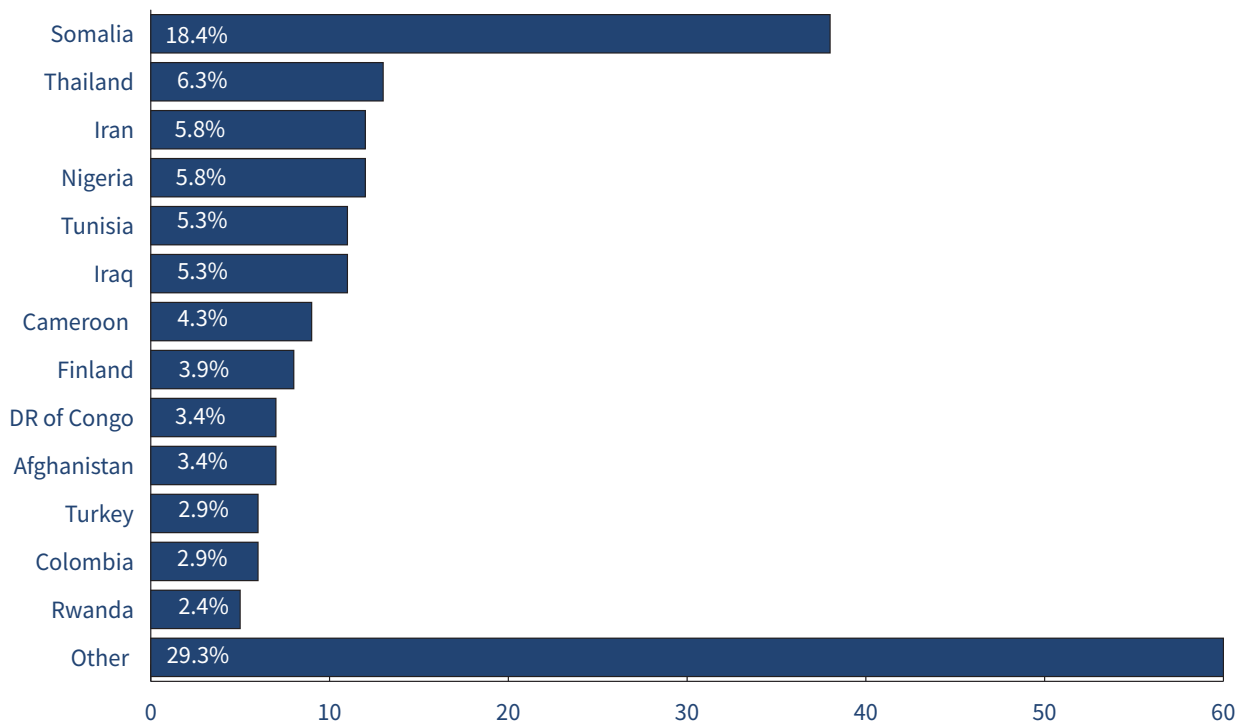
New Clients in 2024
197 adults, 10 minors



In 2024, the NAS admitted a total of 207 victims of human trafficking and 23 of their children as new clients. Of the victims, 61% were women and girls. About 5% of the new clients were minors, 41% were 18–29 years old, 34% were 30–39 years old, 13% were 40–49 years old and 7% were 50–59 years old. Two clients were older than this. When examining the age structure, the average age of the clients is slightly younger than before.

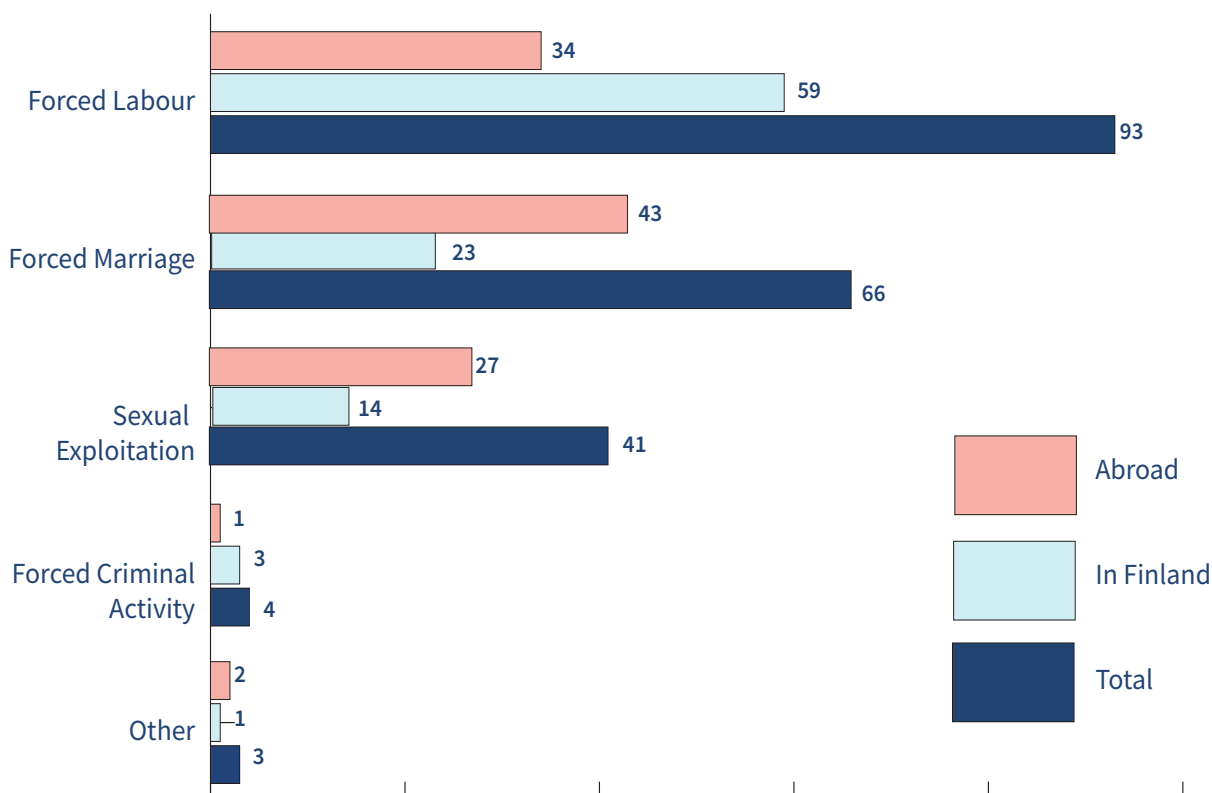
The new clients represented 47 nationalities. There were also Finnish nationals among those exploited. The other countries on the list (29.3%) are all the nationalities with fewer than five representatives.

New Clients (Tot. 207) by Nationality in 2024



Forced Labour the Most Common Form of Exploitation

Forms of Exploitation 2024



Forced labour was the most common form of human trafficking in 2024 (45%). Forced marriage became the second most common form of human trafficking (32%). The number of forced marriages (66) increased from the previous year (50), but in 2022, the number was higher than in 2024 (72). There is no clear growing trend in the number of forced marriages, but the relative share has increased. Of all the new clients, 20% were victims of sexual exploitation. In 2024, of all cases of exploitation among new clients, 44% occurred in Finland. The share is lower than in 2023 (64%).

Finland also helps people who have fallen victims of human trafficking abroad. For example, a forced marriage may have taken place entirely or partially abroad, even if the victim had already lived in Finland. Forced marriage and sexual exploitation are most commonly targeted at women. Men were at greater risk of falling victim to forced labour. Of all new clients, 10 were minors.

Criminalisation of Forced Marriage

Every year, several dozen victims of forced marriage are admitted as clients of the NAS. Forced marriage refers to marriage or a similar relationship in which one or both spouses have not been able to influence the conclusion of the marriage or the choice of spouse.

On 12 November 2024, Parliament approved the bill included in the Government proposal HE 65/2024 vp concerning the criminalisation of forced marriage. Forced marriage was added to the provisions on human trafficking in the Criminal Code. It was criminalised before, either as coercion or as part of human trafficking legislation by applying conditions that violate human dignity. Now the human trafficking legislation criminalises forced marriage more clearly than before. The updated act entered into force on 1 January 2025.

The spouse may have been pressured or coerced to join the union, for example by extortion, threats or violence. Refusal of forced marriage may mean being rejected by family and community, threat of violence related to honour or even death. However, family, religious or cultural factors are not always the reason behind forced marriage. In some cases, the person may have been forced to marry, for example, a third-country national in order to grant the latter a right of residence. Most often, the union was formed abroad and it has continued in Finland after the family moved to Finland. The union may also have been concluded in Finland, either officially or unofficially, or the spouse may have been brought to Finland from abroad as the spouse of a person residing in Finland.

Refusal may mean being rejected by family and community, threat of violence or even death.

Finnish authorities have developed their ability to identify situations where a girl or young woman with an immigrant background living in Finland is sent abroad and forced to marry a man living abroad.

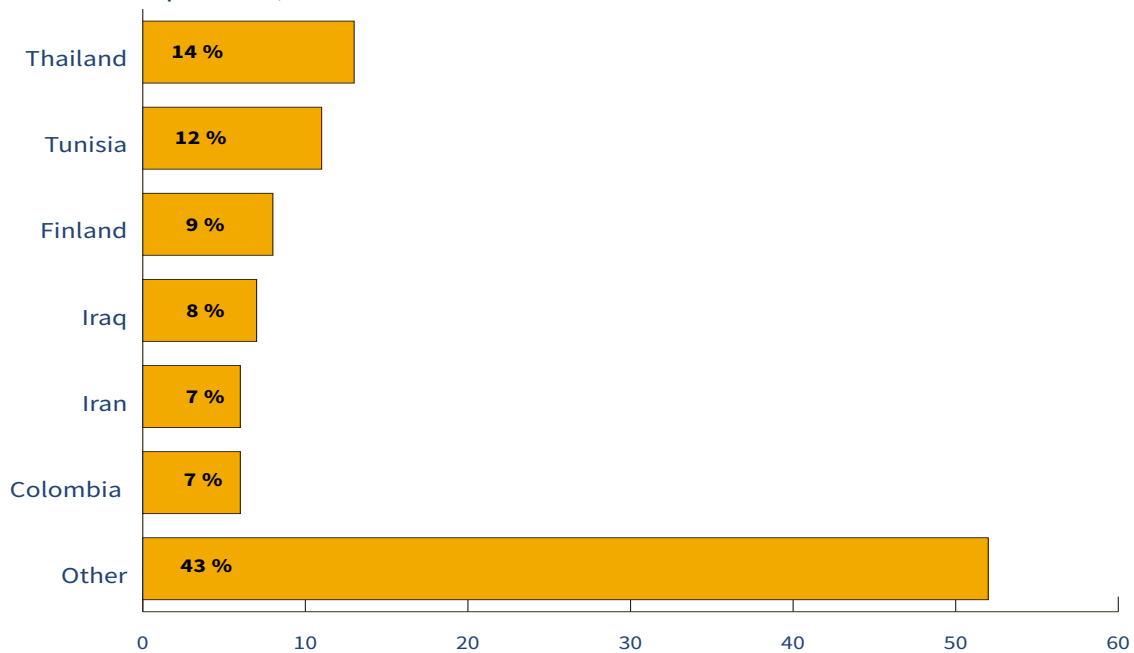
Forced marriages or similar forms of coercion can also occur in Finnish communities. The phenomenon is therefore not only related to immigration.

Exploitation Cases in Finland

In 2024, a total of 90 cases of exploitation came to light in Finland. Of these, 46 were targeted at men and 44 at women. The persons represented 35 nationalities. In Finland, the majority (60%) of the persons had fallen victim to forced labour. The sectors included the restaurant industry, construction, forestry and wood harvesting, catering, cleaning, wholesale and retail trade, and working for private individuals. Of the persons, 23% were victims of forced marriage. The rest were victims of sexual exploitation (13%) or forced to engage in criminal activity.

Persons Exploited in Finland 2024 by Nationality

Total 90 persons, 31 nationalities

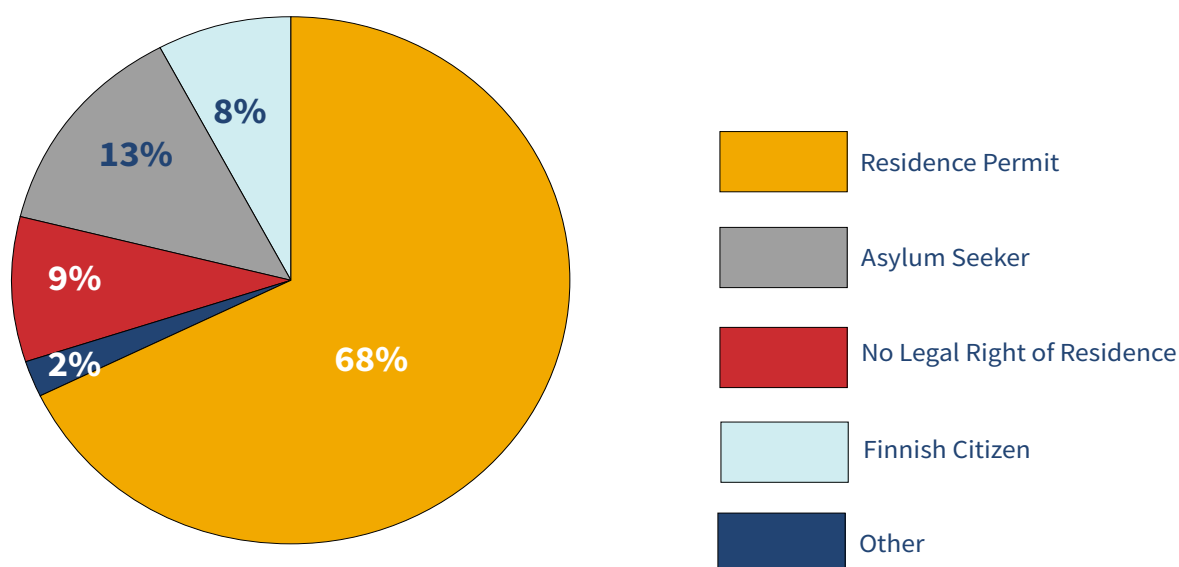


In 2024, there were no major criminal cases of human trafficking in which a specific nationality group would have been highlighted, which is why the numbers of nationalities are more even than in the previous two years. Thailand has long been at the top of the list of the nationalities of victims of human trafficking, but this percentage is now lower than before. Finland ranks third in the statistics on the most common nationalities.

In international comparison, sexual exploitation is the most typical form of human trafficking and accounts for more than 50% of all human trafficking cases. In Finland, the share of sexual exploitation is exceptionally low.

Exploitation varies by gender. In 2024, nearly all of the men who were victims of exploitation in Finland were victims of forced labour (94%). Among women, almost half (49%) were victims of forced marriage, 26% were victims of sexual exploitation and 23% were victims of forced labour (2% other reasons).

Persons Exploited in Finland by Right of Residence 2024

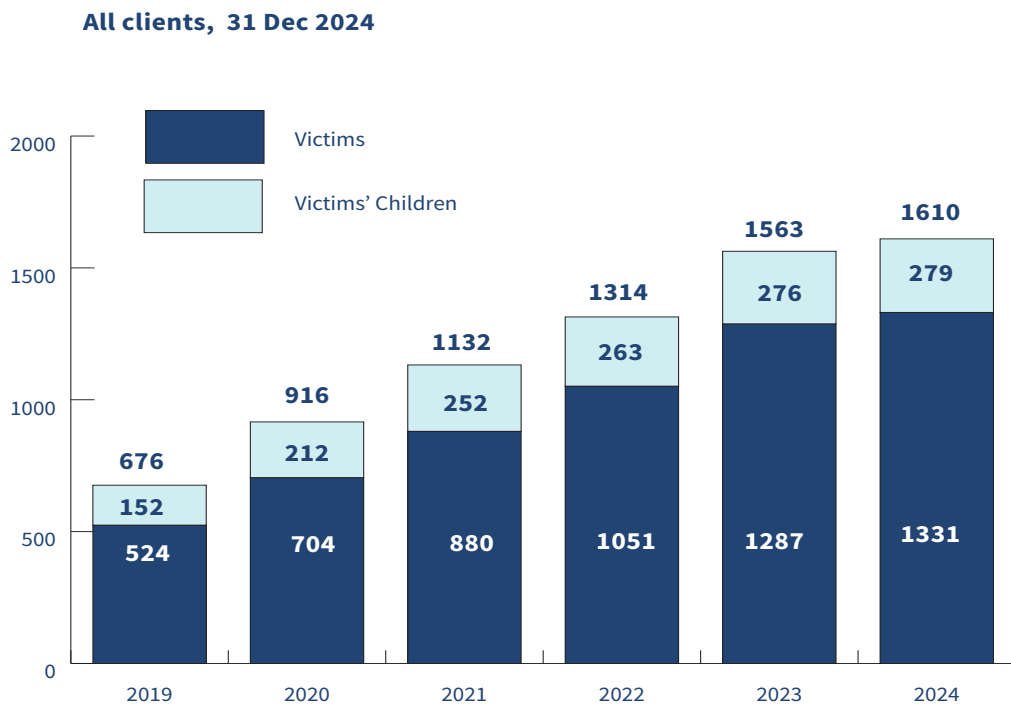


The majority of those exploited had a residence permit in Finland (67%). The proportion of people without a legal right of residence in Finland (9%) was relatively small. The persons without a right of residence in Finland are in a vulnerable position and have an increased risk of being exploited. However, identifying them is challenging for various reasons. They may be intimidated into submission by threats of deportation, for example. They also may not have the means to find information about the laws and rules of Finnish society.

Finnish citizenship does not protect anyone against exploitation. Of the new clients, 9% were Finnish.

All Clients, 31 December 2024

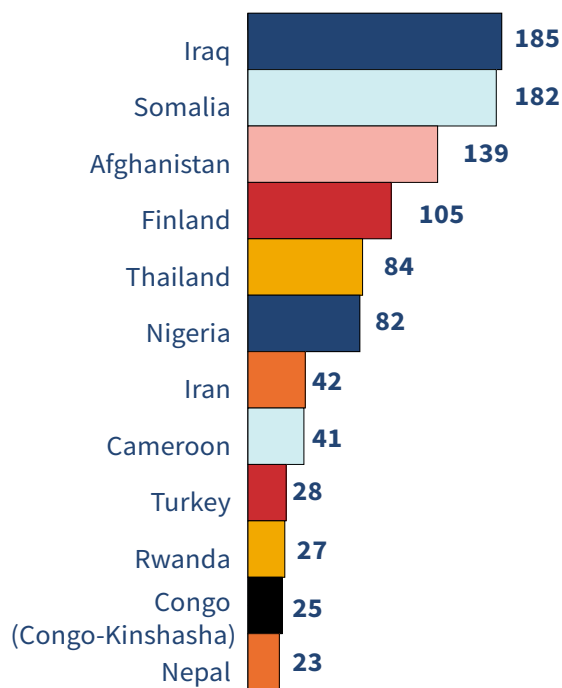
On 31 December 2024, the assistance system had 1,610 clients, of whom 1,331 were identified victims and 279 were their underaged children. There were 12 children among the victims, and 77 clients had been admitted to the system while minors. Women accounted for approx. 61% of the trafficking victims.



A victim of trafficking in human beings residing in Finland without a right of residence can be granted a reflection period of 1–6 months. The reflection period is a temporary right of residence during which residence in Finland is legal. In 2024, the NAS granted 12 reflection periods for victims of human trafficking.

The most common nationalities of all clients in the NAS are almost the same as in 2023. The share of Finns has increased. The reason for that is the fact that some of the existing clients of the NAS acquired Finnish citizenship. Finns are now the fourth most common nationality in the NAS. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has also risen to the list of the most common nationalities.

Largest Nationalities, 31 Dec 2024



10 to 19 persons per nationality:

Eritrea, Morocco, Russia, Vietnam, Syria, Bangladesh, Philippines, China, Tunisia, Uganda, Gambia, Colombia, Ukraine

Less than 10 persons per nationality:

Pakistan, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Sudan, Angola, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Sierra Leone

In addition, 39 nationalities represented by fewer than 4 persons, and 9 individuals of unknown or no nationality.

In total, 77 different nationalities

New Reporting and Statistics System for the NAS

The TILDA project digitalised the case management of the NAS and created a completely new statistics and reporting system. The project received 75% of its funding from the European Union. The project period was 1 April 2023–30 September 2024.

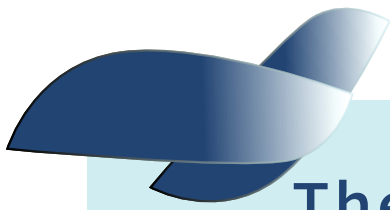
The TILDA project implemented a system that produces accurate and diverse statistics in a secure manner. One of the requirements was that the statistics be compatible with the corresponding statistics of other authorities. The project, therefore, involved extensive cooperation with different operators to ensure that the definitions used in the statistics are consistent. The most important partners were the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of the Ministry of Justice, the Finnish Immigration Service, the National Bureau of Investigation and third-sector operators included in the Reilu Työ network, such as trade unions and Victim Support Finland. Senior Adviser Terhi Tafari served as the project manager.

The project prepared instructions for the case management of the NAS and implemented the mailing of decision documents via the case processing system as so-called eLetters. This means that it is no longer necessary to print and mail the decisions as these measures are carried out electronically. The new statistical system has exceeded the expectations set out in the project in terms of its versatility and usability.

The system created for reporting statistics was completed in September 2024, but its development and testing continues. In September 2024, the statistical system was presented to the OSCE, which has investigated the status of the statistical systems of various states. According

The new statistical system has exceeded expectations in terms of versatility and usability.

to the OSCE's feedback, the system developed in TILDA is the most versatile human trafficking-related statistical system the organisation has ever seen. The fact that statistics can be collected alongside usual work tasks by means of automation was considered a particularly successful solution. The functionalities produced in the project are actively used on a daily basis.



The NAS in a nutshell

The National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking, which has operated since 2006, is a national centre of excellence and expert authority in the work against human trafficking. Joutseno Reception Centre, which is part of the Finnish Immigration Service, is responsible for the system. The NAS has three offices (Lappeenranta, Helsinki and Tampere).

The purpose of the NAS is to help trafficking victims, their underage children, and persons who assist in investigations of trafficking offences. It helps both Finnish and foreign victims of human trafficking equally. As required by their needs, the client may be entitled to advice and guidance, social and health care services, a reception allowance or social assistance, safe housing, and interpretation and translation services. If the client wishes to go back to their home country, they receive assistance for voluntary return. Clients may be provided with legal advice and aid.

The organisation of the assistance and the services provided for victims have been decentralised to different actors. The practical delivery of the assistance depends on the applicant's right of residence. If they do not have a municipality of residence in Finland, their services are provided by the NAS. Asylum seekers receive their basic services from the reception centres, in addition to which they receive advice and, if necessary, services from the NAS. If the client has a municipality of residence in Finland, their services are provided by the wellbeing services county. They may also receive advice from the NAS. Provision of services by the NAS ends when the client no longer needs assistance, leaves the country, or wishes to end their client relationship with the system. This leads to a turnover of clients within the system from year to year.

The NAS maintains the national website ihmiskauppa.fi and a 24/7 helpline at 02954 63 177.

Additional information:

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