

# Summary

The Department for Sanction and Prevention Policy (DSP) of the Ministry of Justice is responsible for the judicial victim policy. When setting its priorities for the coming years this Department wants to take the needs of victims of crime into account. This has resulted in this review of empirical research into the needs of victims since 1980. The research questions are:

- 1 What needs do victims of crime have, as shown by empirical research?
- 2 What general needs are there and what specific needs do victims of certain types of crime have?
- 3 What is known about the prioritisation of the needs?
- 4 What needs do victims have immediately after the crime, what needs do they have in the subsequent period, and what needs do they have in the longer term?

Points for attention in the review are the possible influence of gender, ethnic origin and repeat victimization.

Needs may be determined in different ways. The review is limited to studies in which the victims were asked about their needs directly; the needs are therefore only those expressed by the victims themselves. Needs of which the victims themselves are unaware are therefore not included; neither are needs that may be deduced from, for instance, the use of facilities. One restriction is the fact that, in the review, only needs into which empirical research has been conducted are found; needs that have so far not caught the interest of researchers do, by definition, remain outside the scope of this review. 33 Key publications form the heart of the study.

Over the years various 'human needs theories' have been developed. The report discusses a number of general needs theories (Maslow, 1943; Staub, 2004), as well as the (focusing more on the area of law) theory regarding procedural justice (based on theory formulation by Thibaut & Walker, Tyler & Lind and Röhl, reflected by Malsch, 2004) and restorative justice (based mainly on Christie, 1977 and Walgrave, 2004). Based on the above a number of expectations have been formulated with regard to the needs of victims (see the first two columns of overview S2).

The studies have found victim needs in the area of emotions, in the area of the criminal proceedings in a broad sense, in the area of information, in practical areas, in the financial area and in the primary area (see overview S1). Most of these needs are directed to police and the judiciary and 'other persons and agencies'; the latter category includes the victim's own network of family, friends etc. but also, for instance, Victim aid and legal aid providers.

## Overview S1 Clusters of needs expressed by victims and the expected fulfilment

Needs per area	Victims want to see fulfilment from
<b>Emotional</b>	
(Initial) response, care, support	P, O
Further and/or specific assistance (e.g. counselling)	O
Characteristics of assistance (e.g. quickly available, low threshold)	O
Acknowledgement of the person	PJ
Acknowledgement of the incident	PJ
Recovery/restoration (e.g. apology, talking it over), repair of relationship(s)	D, V, O
Mentally coping with the crime	V, O, D
Closure	V
<b>Criminal proceedings in a broad sense</b>	
Initial police response (e.g. arriving quickly)	P
Assistance with initial actions, such as reporting the crime	O
Legal aid	O
(Opportunity to) provide input in criminal proceedings	PJ, V
Being treated as an interested party; being consulted	PJ, V
Assent and power to make decisions	PJ
No role in process	PJ
Process characteristics (e.g. speed)	PJ
Outcome (e.g. arrest, punishment; material and immaterial restitution)	PJ, D, O
Process of awareness of consequences of action in offender	D
Meeting between victim-offender	D, V, PJ
Advocacy: information/support surrounding the criminal proceedings	O
<b>Information</b>	
Relating to role as party with an interest in the case	PJ
Explanation (about systems etc.)	PJ, O
Other information (about offender, crime, motives)	PJ, D
Information about mentally coping with the crime	O
Information about prevention	PJ, O
Characteristics of the information (timely and in victim's own language)	O
<b>Practical</b>	
Assistance in repairing property	O
Transportation	O
Assistance with domestic tasks, (personal) care	O
Assistance with paperwork/ formalities	O
Medical assistance and support	O
Crisis management/organiser	O
Work/school-related matters	O
With respect to language: translation/interpretation services, materials in victim's own language	O
Other (e.g. return of possessions, separate waiting rooms)	PJ
<b>Financial</b>	
Compensation/ return of possessions/money	D
Financial aid; assistance in requesting financial aid	O
<b>Primary</b>	
Immediate safety	PJ, V, O
Preventing repetition/ protection of self and others	PJ, V, O
Housing: temporary and permanent	O
Work/daily occupations	O
Emergency requirements (food, clothing)	O

P=police; PJ=police/judiciary.; V=victim; D=offender; O=other persons/agencies or non-specified person or agency

The needs that were found were then positioned against the background of the aforementioned needs theories (see the third column in overview S2). Physiological needs are found in the form of the emergency need for food, sometimes needed by victims who are homeless (for instance because they fled from domestic violence) and own virtually nothing at that time. No other victims list this requirement. The safety-related needs are clearly visible: victims indicate a need for immediate safety and focus on preventing a repeat of the crime. The (emotional) need for initial help and support could also be seen in terms of the need for safety. This also applies to the need to mentally cope with the crime and closure and the need for further help victims occasionally have.

The need for love, security and positive relationships with other people is clearly recognisable in the observed need for the repair of relationships. The relationship the victims want to repair is sometimes the relationship with the offender (for instance in the case of domestic violence) but sometimes also the relationship with others in the community.

We do not clearly see a need for self-fulfilment or autonomy. It is not surprising that this is not quickly felt in a crisis situation, which crime is. In terms of Maslow the 'lower' needs for physical safety and sometimes also food and a roof over the victim's head are at stake. The need for self-fulfilment will only manifest itself once these 'lower' needs have been sufficiently fulfilled. Following on from Röhl's expressive theory one could assume that the frequently expressed need to be able to provide input in the criminal proceedings has an independent value for people, that could possibly confirm the individual's autonomy. But it is also feasible that it rather reflects a wish for process control.

The need for esteem/positive identity is found very clearly in the need for acknowledgment: victims want to be appreciated and treated with respect in the criminal proceedings, and considered an interested party. According to Maslow the realisation of this need results in feelings of self-confidence and a feeling of being useful. Undermining these feelings would result in feelings of weakness and helplessness. The proper and respectful treatment of victims may be very important in helping them overcome their 'victim role'. This could be (more strongly) emphasized by promoting the respectful treatment of victims by functionaries of the police, the public prosecution department and the judiciary.

The need to understand the reality or the wish to know and understand is also clearly recognisable in the needs expressed by victims of crimes. Victims need information about the course of the criminal case, about the legal system and about exactly what happened and why. In terms of Maslow acquiring knowledge and systematizing the universe are techniques for the achievement of basic safety.

The need for effectiveness and control, certainly in the meaning thereof in the theory of procedural justice, was observed clearly. The need to be able to provide input in the criminal proceedings in a broad sense, to be

consulted and, on some points, the power of approval or the power of decision, are clear expressions of this need. At the same time it was shown that there are also victims who do not have this need.

Finally the need for justice. On the one hand this need relates to the need for material and immaterial restoration (for instance an apology) from the offender as expected on the basis of the literature about restorative justice. But the wish for punishment also appears to be an aspect of the need for justice.

### **Overview S2 Expressed needs against the background of the needs theories**

Needs according to some theories about basic human needs	Domain-specific needs according to theory on procedural justice and restorative justice	Needs expressed by victims of crimes
Physiological needs		Food Housing
Safety needs		Immediate safety Prevention of repeat Assistance, support, (help with) mentally coping
Love, security, positive connections with others	Friendly treatment	Repair of relationships Mediation
Self-actualization	Possibility to express oneself (irrespective of effect thereof)	Opportunity to provide input in the criminal proceedings
Esteem, positive identity	Polite and dignified treatment by authorities, impartial authorities	Acknowledgment of the person Acknowledgment of the incident Being treated as an interested party
Comprehension of reality/desire to know and understand	Information provision	Information about the course of the criminal case Explanation about the system Information about the offender, the crime, motives Information about mentally coping
Effectiveness and control	Process control Decision control Involvement in criminal case	Opportunity to provide input in the criminal proceedings Being consulted Power of approval and power of decision
Justice	Restoration by offender	Results such as arrest and punishment Results such as material restoration (compensation, return of possessions/ money) and immaterial restoration (apology)

As far as may be deduced from the studied publications, the expressed needs appear to occur among victims of crimes across the entire spectrum (but this does not mean that every victim has every need!). Substantively only the surviving relatives of victims of homicides and victims of

violence (including victims of domestic and/or sexual violence committed by a known offender in particular ) were found to have specific needs. In the case of the latter group these are needs associated with the wish to carry on with the offender and the broader environment regardless of the incident, such as the repair of relationships and the wish not to prosecute the offender. Typical or unique needs that were observed in the surviving relatives of victims of homicides are things such as crisis management and assistance in dealing with the media. Finally, among victims of violence (including domestic violence) in particular we see a need for immediate safety and, in victims of domestic violence, a need for employment or an education. The reason for the latter is that they have to start generating their own income. Here we once again see that a lot of the research was conducted in the United States; in Dutch research we see a less urgent need for a daily occupation.

As stated earlier most of the expressed needs occur, as far as we were able to tell, among victims of crimes across the entire spectrum. The proportion of victims with certain needs does differ per crime group (crimes against property versus violent crime). More victims of violent crimes than victims of crimes against property report 'basic needs' (in terms of the needs theories) in the 'safety' category. In this category there are also more people with a need for a court decision. For victims of crimes against property the 'non-basic needs' (once again in terms of the needs theories), such as practical needs play a role more frequently. These findings could possibly result in more tailor-made aid for certain groups of victims.

The need most frequently expressed by the victims of crimes in the studies in question appears to be the need for emotional support/someone to talk to. The need for information, the need for safety/protection and the need to be heard in the criminal proceedings also appear to be mentioned relatively often. These latter needs are important wishes with regard to the police and the judiciary.

Hardly any research appears to have been conducted into the importance of needs; in other words to prioritisation of needs in the eyes of the victim. Furthermore, sporadic results in this area are not mutually comparable. To the question what needs victims have immediately after the crime, in the subsequent period and in the longer term no answer that transcends the obvious can be formulated on the basis of this review either. More (primary) research is needed to make further pronouncements on this subject.

With regard to the link between needs and variables such as gender, ethnic origin and the question whether or not a person is a repeat victim, little or no research was found. Women appear to have more need for emotional support/someone to talk to than men. The results also indicate that more needs remain unfulfilled in victims from ethnic minorities.