



Victim Support Monitor 2022 (3rd measurement)

Summary

Colophon

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Summary

I. Introduction

Background

Since the start of this century, the position of victims in criminal proceedings has been greatly improved. Victims have become more rights and organisations involved in judicial victim support have worked on the improvement of the services they offer and their approach. The Victim Support Monitor is a periodic review to measure the experiences of victims with judicial victim support. It has been developed to monitor the quality of judicial victim support from the perspective of victims. The first measurement was carried out in 2012 and the second one in 2016. This report describes the research carried out for the third measurement and the results of the study. The target group consists of victims of offences and their relatives, who have been in contact with judicial victim support by police, the public prosecution service (hereafter: CPS), the judiciary, Victim Support Netherlands (hereafter: Victim Support), the Violent Offences Compensation Fund (hereafter: Compensation Fund) or the SIS, an information centre for victims on compensation measures, which is part of the Central Judicial Collection Agency (CIJB).

Aim and research question

The aim of the Victim Monitor is to monitor the quality of judicial victim support as experienced by victims who come into contact with judicial organisations.

The following questions are central in this research:

- How do victims assess the quality of judicial victim support in 2022?
- Has the quality assessment with regard to the police, the CPS, the judiciary, Victim Support, the Compensation Fund or the SIS changed compared to the previous measurements of 2012 and 2016?

These research questions were broken up into sub questions, focusing on the one hand on the *experiences* of victims with the – different aspects of – support they received and on the other hand on the *significance* they attach to these various aspects of support. This boils down to the question in which areas quality gaps are mainly existing, i.e. areas to which victims attach great importance, but with which the experiences are less favourable.

Research method

A questionnaire has been used to determine how victims perceive the quality of the provided support. The questionnaire consists of general blocks of questions, aimed at gaining insight into the nature of offences and victim support, and more specific blocks of questions for each judicial organisation separately focused on experiences with, and the significance of, aspects of victim support. This questionnaire was developed in 2012 and was also presented, in a slightly revised version, to the target group in 2016. For the third measurement the original questionnaire has been further revised.

In order to be able to correct for the possible effects this revision could have on the comparability of the results between the second and the third measurement, it was intended to perform a simultaneous survey by using the original questionnaire, whereby people would be contacted in



the same way as in the first measurement. In 2016, an opt-out procedure was used beforehand and victims were contacted by phone during the data collection. Due to stricter privacy laws it was, however, not possible to contact the respondents in the same way. As a result of this, conducting a simultaneous survey to achieve an optimum comparison of the measurements was no longer viable. Instead, a new way of contacting respondents and a new method for collecting data were used.

Four out of six of the judicial organisations mentioned above selected a random sample from their own register for the third measurement. It involved victims and relatives who had been in contact with an agency three months prior to the sampling. People who were included in the sample received an invitation to take part in the survey. If necessary, two reminders were subsequently sent out. Respondents could complete the questionnaire online or in writing. One of the changes was, that in contrast with the first and second measurement, it was no longer possible to approach respondents by phone. A lower response among victims with a migration background was beforehand expected as a result of this adapted method of data collection. In order to involve this group into the survey as much as possible, a comprised questionnaire was developed which was sent out to victims in (dense) urban areas, together with the second reminder. Respondents in (dense) urban areas were thus given the opportunity to complete a comprised questionnaire after they had received the second reminder.

The questionnaire was, eventually, completed by 2,900 victims resulting in a response rate of 22 per cent. The response rate per judicial organisation varies between 17 and 26 per cent.

II. Experiences with different aspects of victim support

The appreciation of victims for the different judicial organisations was measured based on varying aspects of victim support. In line with the previous measurements, a factor analysis was subsequently used to summarise these into main factors for each judicial organisation, and an (average) overall appreciation was calculated. The main aspects per judicial organization are set out in Table S.1.

Most victims are positive about the support by the judicial organisations

The majority of the victims are positive to very positive about the victim support provided by the judicial organisations. The percentage of victims that is (very) positive varies between 58 and 87 per cent. For all organisations it was found that that the proportion of victims that is positive about victim support is larger than the proportion that is negative. However, this positive image in general does not alter the fact that there are victims who have had a negative or very negative experience with victim support by the judicial organisations. The percentage of victims that is (very) negative varies between 6 and 25 per cent.

Table S.1 – Main aspects per judicial agency, in order of appreciation

Police	CPS	Judiciary	Victim Support	Compensation Fund	SIS
<i>Approach</i>	<i>Information</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Privacy and professionalism</i>	<i>Approach</i>
<i>Information on aid</i>	<i>Involvement and Safety</i>	<i>Involvement</i>	<i>Information</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Information</i>
<i>Intake and Participation</i>	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Information</i>	
<i>Safety Investigation</i>	<i>Understanding</i>	<i>Information</i>		<i>Process</i>	

On average, more victims are positive rather than negative about all main aspects of each judicial organisation. Victims who have been in contact with the police, the judiciary, Victim Support and SIS, appreciate the *approach* by the staff of these organisations the most. Victims who have been in contact with the CPS, appreciate the *information* they received about the process and the case more than the *participation and safety* (participation in the process and the case, and sense of safety). Victims who had contact with the Compensation Fund are most positive about the *privacy and professionalism* of the staff (competence and impartiality of staff).

Differences in experiences with the police, CPS and Victim Support by type of offence

An important question in the study is to what extent there are robust (significant) differences between the experiences of victims of various offence groups. In order to gain a better insight into this, victims were divided according to the three main offence groups they had been confronted with: violent crimes, property crimes and public order offences and vandalism. This study shows that there are indeed differences in the experiences of victims between the various offence groups. Victims of public order offences and vandalism are more negative about the police than victims of violent and property crimes. Victims of violent crimes are more positive about the CPS and Victim Support than victims of property crimes and public order offences and vandalism. Within the offence group violent crimes, victims of sex crimes are more positive about the police and the CPS than victims of other violent crimes. No significant differences in the experiences of victims by type of offence they were confronted with were seen for the other judicial organisations (judiciary, Compensation Fund and SIS).

Victims of violent crimes are more positive about the CPS and Victim Support than victims of other types of offences. Victims of sex crimes are more positive about the police and the CPS than victims of other violent crimes.

Positive outcomes of criminal proceedings contribute to the appreciation of victim support

The outcome of criminal proceedings influences (parts of the) experiences with victim support for all judicial agencies. Victims of incidents whereby the police have arrested a suspect, for instance, are more satisfied with the police in general, and specifically with the main aspects *investigation* (finding and arresting the offender) and *intake and participation* (providing information to the victim during the intake and the extent to which the victim was able to participate during the process) compared to victims in whose cases no arrests were made.



Victims whose cases resulted in a court case or a penal order (*strafbeschikking*) are more positive regarding the CPS about *participation and safety* (for instance: prosecution, sense of safety and being listened to) and *appreciation overall*. Victims whose cases resulted in a penal order are more satisfied with the judicial system in general and about all four main aspects, compared to victims in whose cases suspects were not punished.

This also applies to Victim Support. Victims are more satisfied about the main aspect *providing information* (for instance: on the rights of the victim and criminal proceedings) of this organisation if the case resulted in a penal order, compared to victims in cases whereby the suspects were not punished. Victims who were awarded compensation are more satisfied with the support of Victim Support, and specifically with the four main aspects, compared to victims who did not receive compensation. Victims who were awarded damages, are more positive with the SIS than victims who were only partly compensated or did not receive any damages at all.

Victims are more positive about the quality of service in case of a favourable outcome of the criminal proceedings: arrest (police) and prosecution of the offender (CPS), imposing a penalty (judiciary and Victim Support), payment of compensation (Compensation Fund) and making sure that victims receive the compensation (SIS)).

The appreciation of support is only to a limited extent influenced by the background of victims. There is no difference in how men and women¹ experience victim support, with the exception of the aspect *approach* by staff of Victim Support. Women are more positive about this than men. The education level is also in most cases not related to the experiences of victims with victim support. Although, the police and the CPS are an exception to this. The higher the education level, the less satisfied victims are with the main aspect *safety* of the police. Furthermore, victims with an intermediate education level, in comparison with highly educated people, are more positive about the support provided by the police in general and more specifically, about the *approach*. Victims with a low education level are more negative about the *provision of information* by the staff of the CPS and their *overall appreciation* is lower than that of victims with a high education level. Furthermore, it appears that age influences the *overall appreciation* of victims with the police and the SIS. The older the victim, the more positive they are about victim support. Additionally, victims without a migration background are more positive about (parts of) victim support provided by the police and the judiciary than victims with a migration background and victims whose parents have a migration background.

The education level has an influence on the appreciation of support provided by the police and the CPS, age on the appreciation of the police and SIS and a migration background on the appreciation of the police and the judiciary.

¹ In the questionnaire, the option 'other' was included in the question on gender, but this category was not included in the analysis as the number of respondents in this category was too low.

III. The importance of victim support

Not only were victims asked about their appreciation of several aspects of victim support, but they were also asked to indicate the level of importance of these aspects. Subsequently, these aspects were also categorised into the same main aspects as with the experience with victim support.

Victims find all aspects of support slightly important to very important

In general, victims find all aspects of support slightly important to very important. *Approach* is considered to be the most important for the police, followed by *intake and participation* (providing information to the victim during the intake and the extent to which the victim was involved) and *information on aid*. *Information* is more important than *participation and safety* for the CPS. As far as the judiciary and Victim Support are concerned, do victims indicate that there are no differences between the significance of the different main aspects. *Privacy and professionalism*, *information and approach* are considered to be more important for the Compensation Fund than *process* (the process prior to the decision).

IV. Potential areas of improvement

Potential areas of improvement in supporting victims for all judicial organisations become apparent by comparing experiences with significance. Victims indicate that improvements can be achieved, in the first place, in the area of *providing information* (on rights and the criminal proceedings) at Victim Support, the Compensation Fund and the SIS. Another area of improvement for the Compensation Fund is the involvement of victims in decision taking. The police could improve on *tracking down* suspects. Areas of improvement for the CPS are: making a correct estimate of damages, taking the wishes of the victims sufficiently into account and making well-informed decisions. Finally, in criminal proceedings it is important to *involve* victims and that the judge has done his or her utmost to be able to bring the offender to justice.

For all organisations applies that improvements can be achieved in some aspects of their service.

V. Trends in the Victim Support Monitor

The method used for the third measurement of the Victim Monitor differs from the one used in the second measurement. For that reason, comparisons with 2012 and 2016 only refer to the relative appreciation and the significance of various aspects of victim support.

No change in aspects of victim support that were appreciated the most

Experiences with support by judicial agencies in the period 2012 to 2022 correspond to a high extent. Which means that the aspects that victims were relatively satisfied with in 2012 were the same as in 2016 and 2022, and vice versa. The similarities in experiences are highest for the police, the CPS, Victim Support and the Compensation Fund, and to a slightly lesser extent for the SIS. Similarities are lowest for the judiciary. But all in all, there is no significant change in the relative appreciation of aspects of victim support.



The *relative* appreciation of various main aspects of victim support has not changed between 2012 and 2022.

Significance of *approach* of victims by judiciary increased compared to *performance of duties*

The relative *importance* of the various aspects of victim support has changed more significantly than the experiences in the years between 2012 and 2022. Although it must be said that most dimensions are considered to be very important. As a result, relatively small changes in the percentage of respondents that finds a dimension ‘very important’ can lead to major changes in the ranking. For the judiciary, the significance of *approach* aspects has increased compared to *performance of duties*. Several shifts in the significance of dimensions since 2012 can also be seen for the CPS. Victims attach relatively greater importance to being treated politely by the CPS, that a good estimate is being made of their damages and that their wishes and needs are being taken into account sufficiently in taking decisions. Victims find it relatively less important that the CPS explain to what they are entitled to.

The number of potential areas of improvement within the main aspects of victim support has decreased

When looking at the relative development of *areas of improvement*, the picture looks differently for each of the judicial agencies. The picture is stable for the police and for Victim Support. The main aspect *intake/investigation* has been an area of improvement for the police since 2012. There are no areas of improvement for Victim Support during the period 2012–2022, as far as the main aspects of victim support are concerned. For the CPS, the judiciary and the SIS there are no longer any main aspects in 2022 which are a potential area of improvement. This can be seen as a positive development, as these organisations still had one or more potential areas of improvement (or gaps in the quality) in 2016. It was not possible to make a comparison between the main aspects for the Compensation Fund as a subdivision into main aspects had not been made for this judicial organisation in 2016.

VI. Final Considerations

The report ends with a reflection by the researchers on the execution and the outcomes of the Victim Support Monitor, whereby various recommendations are made for the follow-up. From this third measurement, it appears that there is a strong correlation between the outcomes of the criminal proceedings and the appreciation of victims for the support. The research design for the fourth measurement needs to take better account of this. It is hardly possible to differentiate between the various aspects of support that are most important to the victims, as practically all aspects are considered to be slightly important to very important. The outcomes on the significance of the different aspects of victim support for victims are therefore rather unsatisfactory. It is also possible to look at it differently. In essence, the third measurement of the Victim Support Monitor has again produced a unique wealth of data on the experiences with – and also the use of – victim support of a large group of victims.

It is hardly possible to differentiate between the various aspects of support which are most important to the victims.



Conclusion

The majority of victims are, all in all, positive to very positive about the present quality of victim support provided by the judicial organisations. For all agencies, it applies that a majority of the victims is positive about victim support. Additionally, the support of all judicial organisations is considered to be important. Nevertheless, there is also a group of victims that has a negative to very negative experience with victim support provided by the judicial organisations. This dissatisfaction is partly related to the outcomes of the criminal proceedings. There are also still aspects of support which receive a relatively low appreciation from victims, but are at the same time considered to be important. There are still enough challenges for the judicial organisations to further improve on victim support.



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