

# FIGURES AND TRENDS 2020

FROM HOTLINES FOR MISSING CHILDREN  
AND CROSS-BORDER FAMILY MEDIATORS



**Missing  
Children  
Europe**





# General figures

Missing Children Europe (MCE) is the European federation of 31 grassroots organisations working to protect missing and sexually exploited children. MCE coordinates the network of 116 000 hotlines for missing children, a dedicated service for children (at risk of) going missing and their families; and the cross-border family mediators' network that prevents and resolves parental abductions.

Every year an estimated two hundred thousand children go missing in Europe. Due to the lack of comparable official statistics on missing children – the only Europe-wide report<sup>1</sup> is outdated with figures from almost 10 years ago – It is difficult to grasp the full scope of the issue. That is why, since 2014, Missing Children Europe collects and analyses data from the hotlines for missing children and the network of cross border family mediators.

While the hotlines are generally able to give us information about the calls answered, more specific data relating to categories, causes, outcomes and so forth is not always collected. The data collected from our hotlines therefore present a partial but nevertheless important snapshot: this overview of the trends of missing children cases in Europe is the only one collected on an annual basis, and can help us understand the evolution of causes and effects of child disappearance.

A total of 42.662 calls were answered in 2020 by the 22 hotlines who responded to this survey (compared to 55.284 by 23 hotlines last year). In practice, they worked on a total of 8.857

cases including new cases and open cases from previous years compared to 7.582 cases last year, an increase by almost 17%.

**The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures put in place to limit its spread during the year 2020 most certainly had an effect on the number of calls answered, as well as on the number of hotlines and mediators able to participate in the data collection, but clearly this did not decrease the caseload. More and more children and families contact our members through other means, such as online chat services and mobile apps. The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated the need to make services accessible in this way: not everyone could speak freely while confined with family.**

The 116 000 number is currently active in 32 countries in Europe. Hotlines in 22 countries (20 NGO's and 2 governmental agencies) contributed data to this report and 28 cross-border family mediators reported about their activity in solving international parental abduction cases. Missing Children Europe collected data from: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Ukraine.

All the graphs below relate to data from 2020, unless otherwise specified.



## 32

organisations in Europe run a **116 000 hotline for missing children**

## 206

trained **Cross-Border Family Mediators** prevent and resolve parental abductions

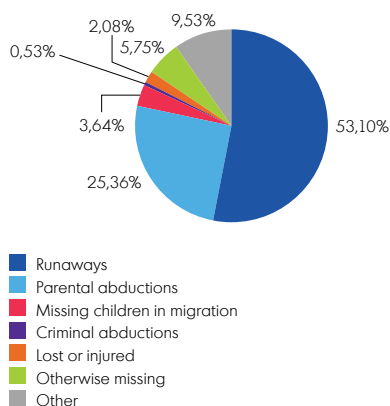
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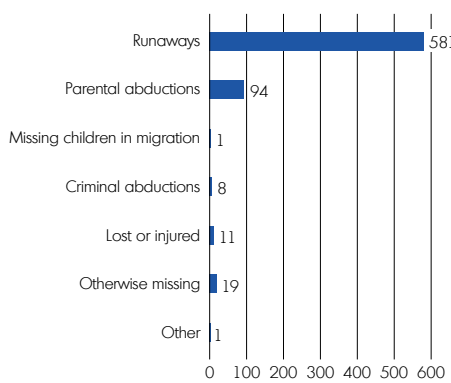
## Missing children cases per category



\* Data from 19 hotlines

The caseload reported to hotlines in 2020 can be broken down into the 6 main categories of missing children shown in the chart. 53,10% of cases concerned children who ran away or were pushed out of home or care, making runaways the bulk of missing children cases. At 25,36% parental abductions constitute the second largest category of cases showing an increase in share by 3,3% compared to last year. A number of cases in this category concern siblings which means the share of children (as opposed to cases) in parental abductions is slightly larger at 30,75%, with runaways still at 50,44%. Some of the cases mentioned under the "other" category involve cases of violence in adults, support to parents, prevention, and requests for information.

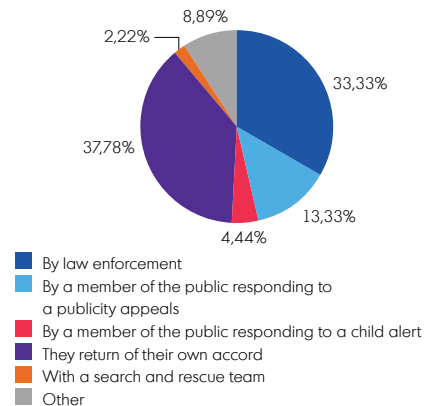
## Cases opened with an element of violence or abuse



\* Data from 10 hotlines

715 missing children were reported to have faced an element of violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation. Over 81% of these cases involved runaway children and 13,15% of such cases concerned parental abductions. According to other research, many children in migration face situations of abuse, violence or exploitation during their journey to and within Europe. This is underrepresented in hotline data, likely due to underreporting and a lack of trust in authorities among these children.

## How missing children were found



\* Data from 19 hotlines

116000 hotlines work closely with law enforcement who initiate and conduct investigations into finding missing children. In 2020, 33,33% were found by law enforcement. More children returned of their own accord with 37,78% of children (compared to only 30% last year). Search and rescue operations played a larger part in locating children this year, in 2,22% of cases. Other categories include children found by family members, youth and welfare services, and children returned through legal proceedings.

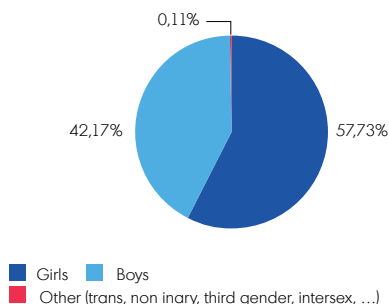
**Fewer cases were solved using publicity appeals (13,33%) and with the help of child alerts (4,44%). These last two figures are substantially lower (share of 17%) compared to last year (share of 38%). Several members indicated they received fewer tips, due to COVID-19 related restrictions of movement.**

1. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/655b34ad-341b-4348-9e3b-38741ff40f23/language-en>

# Cases and calls

The total number of cases supported by 116 000 hotlines and law enforcement agencies include 6852 new cases opened in 2020 and 2005 ongoing cases from the previous year. This demonstrates how long it can take to find a missing child and how essential ongoing support and follow up is to ensure their safety.

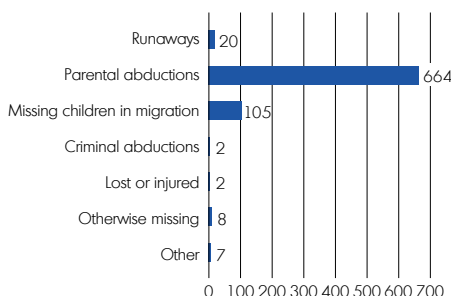
## Gender breakdown



\* Data from 17 hotlines

Girls constituted the majority of missing children reported (57,73%) followed by boys (42,17%) and other gender identities (0,11%).

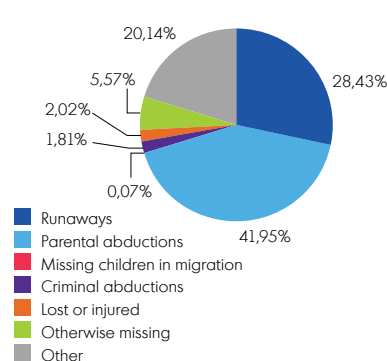
## Cross border cases in 2020



\* Data from 15 hotlines

Children not only go missing within their country but also across borders. The large majority of cross-border cases opened in 2020 concerned international parental abduction cases (82,6%), followed by cases of missing children in migration (13%) and runaways (2,48%). 66,4% of missing children in migration cases opened in 2020 were cross-border in nature (compared to 83% last year). Strengthening cooperation among 116000 hotlines and coordination of case managers, law enforcement and other actors involved in the search for a missing child in different countries remains crucial to enhance cross-border responses to child disappearance.

## Type of calls received by hotlines



\* Data from 12 hotlines

Of the 42662 answered calls, 1435 were about prevention, which is a decrease from 11% to 3,4% of all calls compared to last year. Prevention calls concerned mainly parental abductions (41,95%) and runaways (28,43%). These types of calls are important because effective prevention measures can protect children from situations of violence and save limited investigation resources. For 63,5% of callers no information was recorded by the hotline, or it was not provided at the time of the call. Adults continue to make up a significant portion of known callers (24,7%) to hotlines for missing children. A probable cause of this is children's preference for chats and apps when it comes to communicating. While it is still important to raise awareness of the 116000 hotlines, equal access now means online access and requires investment.

It is likely that the closure of borders to limit the spread of COVID-19 is responsible for the slightly higher share of parental abductions and slightly lower share of children missing in migration and runaways across borders, compared to 2019.

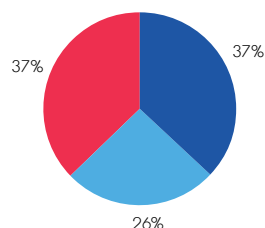
# COVID-19 impact on hotlines

Measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 gravely impacted children at risk of going missing and exacerbated the challenges faced by the 116000 hotlines. 37% received more calls, and the caseload increased by 16,8% compared to last year (with fewer hotlines reporting). With no other sources of support, each case required more intensive follow-up

56% of hotlines reported that the pandemic had impacted their funding.

■ Higher number of calls  
■ Lower number of calls  
■ Roughly the same amount of calls

\* Data from 19 hotlines



In 2020 MCE supported the network of hotlines with a statement on the impact of COVID-19 and a campaign for member state support to Hotlines. The EU Child Rights Strategy published on March 24th acknowledges the key role of missing child hotlines and child helplines during the pandemic and recommends, again, that Member States invest in the good operation of such services.

# Support Missing Children Europe

## Make a donation

Support Missing Children Europe in its work to prevent and protect missing and sexually exploited children. Together we can give more than hope to children and their families!

### Donations via Bank Transfer

IBAN: BE43 310 165 832 401  
BIC/SWIFT: BBRUBEBB

Are you a resident of Belgium, Luxembourg or France? For donations of 40 EUR or higher, you are eligible for a tax exemption certificate. Please, transfer to:  
IBAN: BE 41 363 025 760 210  
BIC/SWIFT: BBRUBEBB

### Donations via PayPal or credit card

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<https://missingchildreneurope.eu/donate/>

## Special thanks to our sponsors and donors



With the financial support of the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020" Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Missing Children Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

# Runaways



## Definition

All children who voluntarily run away from or are pushed out of home/institution of where they have been placed<sup>2</sup>.

- Professionals working with runaway children identified stigma as a symptom of the misconception that runaway children are to blame for running away and that little can be done to change their behaviour, creating the false idea that runaways are not minors at risk – and a main cause for underreporting and lack of support.<sup>3</sup>

- Youth who experience multiple placements in foster care, have a history of running away from them, and who have spent time in a group home are most at risk of homelessness. Those aged 15 when they first enter foster care have the highest risk of running away.<sup>4</sup>
- More than a decade of data suggest that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are disproportionately represented among runaway and throwaway youth. An estimated 20% to 40% of teenagers who are homeless identify as LGBTQ, compared with 4% to 10% of non-homeless peers.<sup>5</sup>

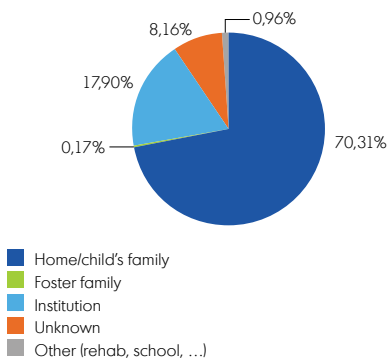
**"Well, in the afternoons I would sleep at the train station, having had sleepless nights with basically no food nor drink. I tried to see if I could get something to drink because there had been a strike or a cancelled train, so they handed out free tea for the passengers who were supposedly waiting. I finally got some... after five days of having barely eaten or drunk a thing."**

Young girl, Belgium (age unknown)

## Caseload, Age and Gender of runaways

Hotlines for missing children supported 2303 runaway cases opened in 2020 of which 908 (39%) were ongoing cases from the previous year. Like last year, the youngest runaway child reported missing was 7 years old while the median age of runaway children across Europe was 15. Of the runaway cases reported to the hotlines in 2020, 1546 (65,62%) were girls followed by 809 (34,34%) boys and 1 child of other gender identity.

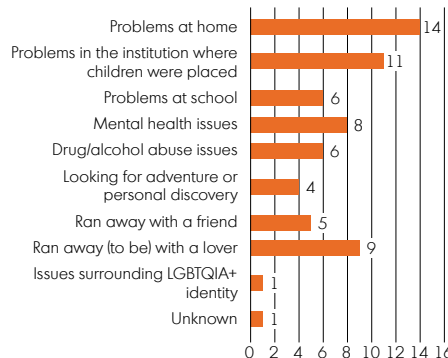
## Where do children run away from?



\* Data from 12 hotlines

70,4% of runaways were reported to have ran away from home, a slight increase compared to last year's 68,6%, potentially related to COVID-19 restrictions on movement and social gatherings. 17,9% ran away from a care institution, and less than 0,2% from a foster family. This latter figure represents a significant decrease from last year. Fewer children ran away from care and in more cases the point of departure was unknown or not recorded.

## Reasons why children run away



\* Data from 14 hotlines

The most common reasons why children ran away were problems at home and problems in the institution where they were placed. This highlights the importance of acknowledging the role families and societal institutions play in children's wellbeing and of leveraging their role in safeguarding a child.

Other common reasons included running away to be with a partner (from 4th to 3rd place this year) and because of mental health challenges (5th to 4th). Problems at school dropped from 2nd to 5th most important reason.

**These shifts are likely due to COVID-19-related measures such as school closures and restrictions on movement and social gatherings.**

Among problems faced at home, a climate of violence and a period of heightened conflict/tension in the family were ranked as most serious issues.

The desire to re-join one's family and a period of heightened conflict were listed as important reasons for running away from an institution, whereas bullying was ranked as the highest risk factor at school.

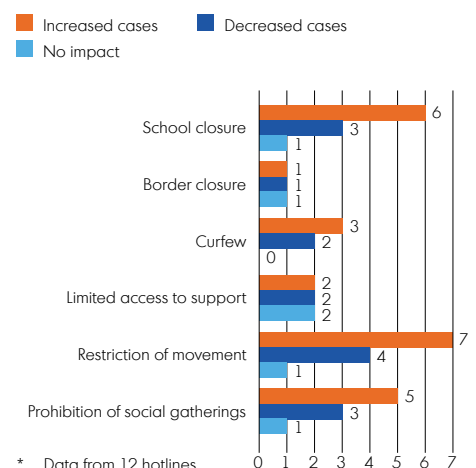
## How long does it take to find runaways?

Almost all runaway children who were found, were found within 6 months – two thirds of them (66%) within a week of their disappearance. 6,8% were not found within the year, an improvement from last year's 14%, although it's important to note that significantly fewer hotlines were able to report on this item.

## Repeated runaways

56,97% of repeat runaways ran away twice and 40,6% of children ran away between 3 and 10 times. Four children (2,42%) were reported to have run away over 10 times. These numbers demonstrate that too often the situation from which the child runs away does not improve after the child's return, calling into question the ability of current interventions in addressing the root causes and needs of runaway children.

## Impact of measures on runaways



\* Data from 12 hotlines

**According to 60% of hotlines, the COVID-19 measures had an impact on runaway cases. School closures, restriction of movement and prohibition of social gatherings were listed among the primary measures which have generally increased the number of runaway cases.**

2. <https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/rug01:001222769>

3. <https://missingchildren.europa.eu/download/full-radar-research-report/>

4. <https://www.ojp.gov/files/archives/blogs/2019/invisible-faces-runaway-and-homeless-youth>

5. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/145/2/e20193752>

# Missing children in migration

## Definition

A child who migrated from their country of origin fleeing conflict or persecution, in search of survival, security, improved standards of living, education, economic opportunities, protection from exploitation and abuse, family reunification or a combination of these or other factors, whose presence became known to authorities or caregivers of the country in which the child arrives and whose whereabouts cannot be established<sup>6</sup>.

- > More than 18000 migrant children are estimated to have gone missing since arriving in Europe between 2018-2020 according to new data collected by Lost in Europe in 30 European countries<sup>7</sup>.
- > Children in migration continue to be underreported to hotlines or the police. Lack of comparable data and insufficient cooperation between cross-border authorities render addressing the disappearance of unaccompanied minors extremely challenging<sup>8</sup>.
- > Children in migration and unaccompanied minors are at higher risk of trafficking and exploitation. Although the exact scale of trafficking of unaccompanied minors remains unknown, a future increase is expected<sup>9</sup>.

**"When I arrived in Europe, I was alone, I was 15 years old. It was difficult for me to start a new life, I had no one here, I didn't know anyone. If I could have had the Minila app during my journey I would have gotten information about basic services and organisations providing support in different countries on my arrival."**

Taj, 20, Afghan refugee in Belgium

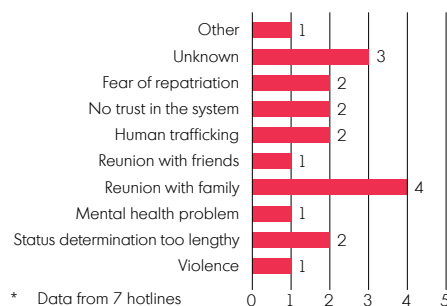
## Caseload, age and gender

In 2020, 158 cases concerning missing children in migration were opened and 360 more were ongoing from previous years. The youngest missing child in migration was **4 years old** whereas the median age for this group of missing children remains stable at **16 years old**. Of the cases reported in 2020, 76,1% were boys and 23,8% were girls.

## Which children do hotlines work with?

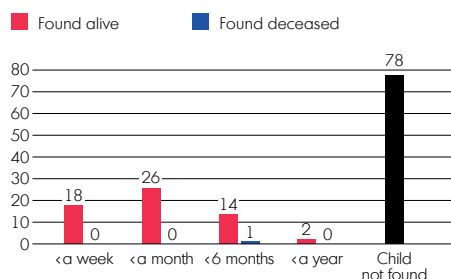
While more than 90% of hotlines surveyed work with runaways and parental abductions, only 42% of surveyed hotlines work with this category of missing children in migration. While external data suggests that tens of thousands of children in migration continue to disappear<sup>10</sup> and that trafficked and unaccompanied children are still much more likely to go missing than other children<sup>11</sup>, few cases are reported to hotlines or the police, which is worrisome.

## Why migrant children go missing?



The most common reason why children in migration went missing in 2020 was the same as the year before: the desire to reunite with the family members. If they feel that the formal reunion process takes too long or is not properly explained to them, children may decide to leave and try to reach their family members alone. Other common reasons for disappearance include fear of repatriation, lack of trust in the system, long status determination procedures and the issue of human trafficking.

## How long does it take to find missing children in migration?



Only 43% of cases opened in 2020 resulted in finding the child, which means that in over half of the cases concerning missing children in migration, the child was never found. Out of 60 children found in 2020, 18 were found in less than a week, 26 in less than a month and the remaining 14 in less than six months. 66% (105) of the new cases are cross border, because many of these children journey across Europe, either because they want to reach family or because they are looking for a safer, more appropriate living situation.

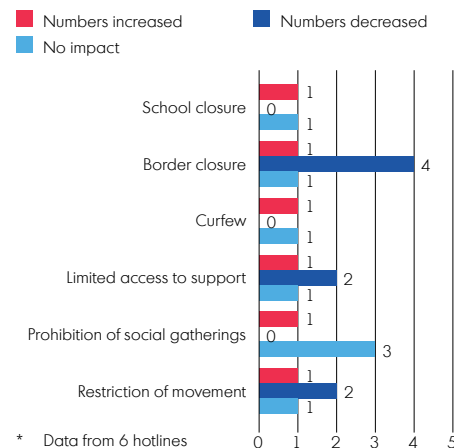
The lack of cooperation by authorities across borders puts children further at risk, as follow up and investigations tend to end at national borders.

Cases of missing children in migration take the longest to be solved in comparison to other categories of missing children or end up not being solved at all. There are many reasons for this: authorities and carers may not have enough information on the child prior to the disappearance, cross-border cooperation is often inefficient, and prioritization of such cases by authorities is low<sup>12</sup>.

## What happens once the case is closed?

"Child not found" was unfortunately the most likely outcome of missing children in migration cases in 2020. It was followed by cases of children found reunited with a family member in a different country and those who were found and taken back to the shelter.

## Impact of measures on children in migration



**62,5% of hotlines reported that the introduction of COVID-19 related measures had an impact on missing children in migration cases, with numbers reported to have decreased due to border closures, limited access to support and restriction of movement. The share of cross-border cases of missing children in migration indeed decline from 81% in 2019 to 66% in 2020, even if the caseload on missing children in migration increased by almost 20%.**

6. <https://missingchildreneurope.eu/children-in-migration/>

7. <https://missingchildreneurope.eu/over-18-000-missing-children-in-migration/>

8. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/00\\_eu\\_inform\\_uam\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/00_eu_inform_uam_2020_en.pdf)

9. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/criminal-networks-involved-in-trafficking-and-exploitation-of-underage-victims-in-eu>

10. [http://emn.ie/files/p\\_201808090907072018\\_emn\\_synthesis\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_09.08.2018.pdf](http://emn.ie/files/p_201808090907072018_emn_synthesis_unaccompanied_minors_09.08.2018.pdf)

11. <https://www.ecpat.org.uk/still-in-harms-way>

12. <https://missingchildreneurope.eu/download/summit-handbook/>



# Parental abductions



## Definition

Children being taken away to or kept in a country other than that of their normal residence by one of their parents or persons having parental authority against the will of the other parent or the other person with parental authority<sup>13</sup>.

- > The principle of the child's best interests does not appear broadly in European case law. In a case law analysis covering 17 EU countries (938 cases considered) reference to the child's best interest was found in only 52% of decisions (38%

explicit and 14% implicit references, meaning the courts used wording such as 'the child's wellbeing', 'growth', 'development',...).<sup>14</sup>

- > Courts tend to prioritize the main goal of the Hague Child Abduction Convention (rapid return of the abducted children) although they must take into account the specific situation of the child in light of the Convention's exceptions. This concept does not expand the scope of application of the Convention's grounds for nonreturn, but it can assist in a more child-centred interpretation of these grounds.<sup>15</sup>

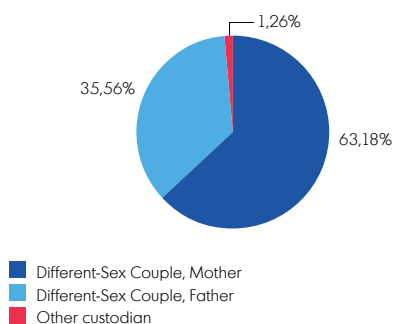
**"And then everyone gets out and I need to go inside. And the only thing I remember is that I said I don't have to go back to South Africa, do I? and then the judge said yes, there's nothing we can do about that. So, I started crying, I just couldn't speak anymore (...) I was all alone in front of the judge, it was very frightening. I, sitting alone in the courtroom with all the empty benches behind me..."**

Young boy, age 10 at the time of hearing

## Caseload, age and gender

1931 cases dealt with by hotlines involved children abducted by a parent or person with parental authority, of which 1404 cases (72,7%) were opened in 2020, an increase both in absolute numbers and percentage. 527 cases were ongoing from the previous years. The median age of children in parental abduction case was 5 years while the youngest child abducted was less than 1 year old. Cases reported by the hotlines concerned similar amounts of girls and boys (42,66% girls, 42,19% boys) and 0,13% with another gender identity. For about 15% no sex or gender was recorded.

## Identity of parental abductor



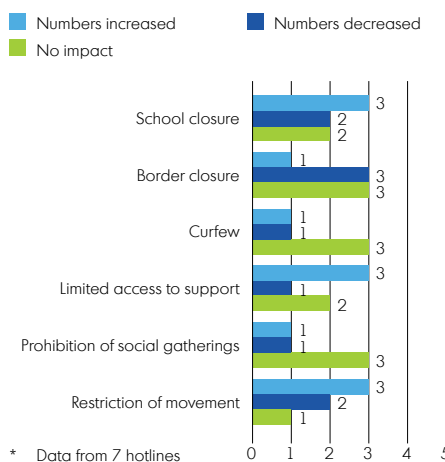
\* Data from 14 hotlines

In over 63% of parental abduction cases, mothers abducted the child, whereas fathers were responsible in 35,56% of reported cases. This constitutes a change compared to 2019 (55% of cases where mothers were the abductors) and 2018 and is closer to figures from years before, where mothers consistently abducted most children in these types of cases (69% in 2008 and 73% in 2015)<sup>16</sup>. More research is needed to determine the cause of these shifts.

## Resolution of parental abduction cases

Limited data was provided by hotlines about the resolution of parental abduction cases. The limited data we have shows more cases (27) being resolved through a court decision, than through mediation (11) or an amicable agreement (10). This while research has shown that cross-border family mediation is cheaper, faster and more efficient. The hotlines also report significant problems with the enforcement of court mandated returns.

## Impact of measures on parental abductions



\* Data from 7 hotlines

**Over 64% of hotlines say that measures introduced due to COVID-19 had an impact on parental abduction cases. Such measures had different effect depending on the country, however, school closures, restriction of movement and limited access to support are reported to have had an increasing effect on the number of parental abductions.**

## Data collected from the network of



## Cross-Border Family Mediators

The network of Cross-Border Family Mediators (CBFM) brings together 206 bi-cultural family mediators from 41 countries trained to deal with cross-border family conflicts including parental abduction. The data in this section were collected from 28 mediators in the CBFM network, regarding cases dealt with in 2020.

## Conflicts addressed

44% of cases involved an international child abduction, 16% of cases involved an international relocation, 13% of cases was related to the prevention of an international child abduction and 11% of cases concerned cross-border visitation rights. 16% of cases were related to other cross-border family conflicts.

## Countries involved

64% of all mediated cases were undertaken between two EU member states. 29% involved one non-EU country? For the remaining 7% of cases we received no information on countries involved. Although the CBFM network welcomes more and more members from outside the EU, the majority of mediators and cases are still based in Europe.

## Outcomes

Most mediation cases resulted in a mediated agreement (45%) or a partial agreement (45%). This shows the added value of mediation. However, it remains a challenge to get parents into the mediation process. Only 69% of pre-mediation cases resulted in an actual mediation. Most couples do not get to the stage of pre-mediation. Almost half of the cases (47%) were referred to the mediators by the Cross-border Family Mediators Network directly (9%) or via another member (38%).

13. <https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/rug01:001222769>

14. [https://crossbordermediator.eu/Portals/1/Docs/Hear\\_me\\_out\\_Case\\_Law\\_Results.pdf](https://crossbordermediator.eu/Portals/1/Docs/Hear_me_out_Case_Law_Results.pdf)

15. Ibidem

16. <https://www.hcch.net/en/publications-and-studies/details4/pid-6598&dtid-32>

# Criminal abductions



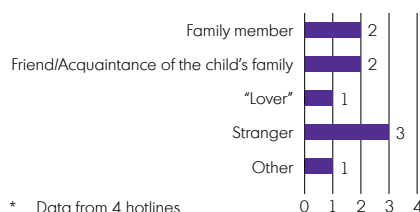
## Definition

Abduction of a child by anyone other than a parent or person with parental authority.<sup>17</sup>

## Caseload, age and gender

In 2020, hotlines for missing children supported 41 cases of criminally abducted children including 18 opened before 2020. While this is an increase from the 29 cases supported last year, criminal abductions remain the smallest category of missing children. 56% of criminally abducted children were girls, 44% boys. This year the median age for a child being abducted by someone other than their parent or guardian was 5 years (compared to 12 last year) while the youngest was less than a year old.

## Relationship of the abductor to the child



Less than half of all abducted children are taken by a stranger. This differs slightly from the previous year where 50% of reported criminal abduction cases were committed by a stranger.

In many cases, the abductor is someone close to the child: family member, an acquaintance, or a partner.

Prevention should therefore emphasise empowerment of children to understand which strangers they can trust in an emergency and to be able to report any kind of misconduct including inap-

propriate touching, sexual abuse, or exploitation by improving communication and trust in their primary caregivers.

## How long does it take to find an abducted child?

In 2020, most of the child victims of a criminal abduction were found in less than a week. 3 were found deceased, while 3 children were not found within a year.

Research tells us that in this type of abduction, the first 4 hours after the abduction are the most crucial in finding the child alive. This shows the importance of efficient and effective communication and investigation processes in finding missing children.

17. Missing and Sexually Exploited Children in the Enlarged EU: Epidemiological Data in the New Member States (2005), as part of the Childscope project run by Missing Children Europe

# Lost, injured or otherwise missing



## Definition

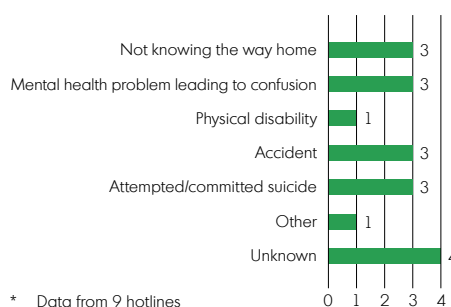
Disappearances of children for no apparent reason of children who may have gotten lost or hurt themselves and cannot be found immediately or whose reason for disappearing has not yet been determined.<sup>18</sup>

## Caseload and age

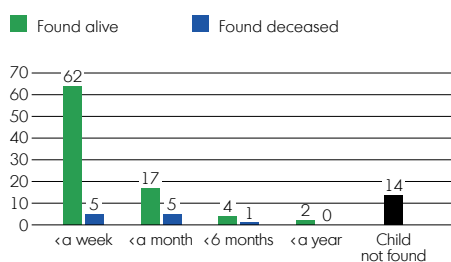
98 missing children cases involved children who were lost or injured (including 7 cases opened before 2020). While the youngest lost or injured child was 1, the median age for this group was 10.

## Most common reasons why children were lost or injured

According to respondents, the causes of these disappearances are usually unknown. However, it is possible to identify some of the reasons why children get lost or injured, and consequently go missing. The most common reasons include an attempted or committed suicide, experiencing an accident, not knowing how to reach home and experiencing a mental health problem.



## How long does it take to find a lost or injured child?



Out of all lost or injured children that were found, most children (67) were found in less than a week, 5 of them were sadly found deceased. 22 children were found within a month, 5 in less than six months and 2 children were found within a year. Compared to data from last year, it took longer to find lost or injured children, which is worrying as time proves to be crucial for children in vulnerable situations. A total of 14 children were reported as not found.

## Otherwise missing children

5,75% of cases opened in 2020 concerned otherwise missing children, where there is no information on how or why a child went missing. They are often the most traumatic for the families left behind, which stresses the importance of the 116000 network of hotlines who can provide support.

## Impact of measures on lost or injured

The measures introduced due to COVID-19 were rated by over 50% of hotlines as having had little to no impact on the cases they received about lost or injured missing children, while 42% of hotlines said they observed an impact. Restriction of movement was deemed to have led to a decrease in cases.

18. Missing and Sexually Exploited Children in the Enlarged EU: Epidemiological Data in the New Member States (2005), as part of the Childscope project run by Missing Children Europe

# Hotlines for missing children

## Hotlines run by members

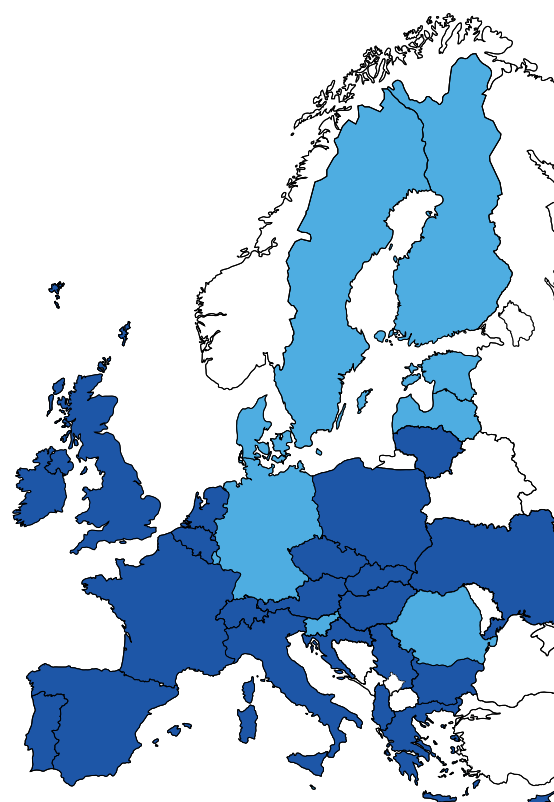
\*Albania: ALO 116  
 Austria: 147 Rat auf Draht  
 Belgium: Child Focus  
 Bulgaria: Nadja Centre Foundation  
 Croatia: Centar za nestalu  
 Cyprus: Consortium: SPAVO & HFC  
 Czech Republic: Cesta z krize, z.ú.  
 France: Droit d'Enfance - 116 000 Enfants Disparus  
 Greece: Smile of the Child  
 Hungary: Kék Vonal  
 Ireland: Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
 Italy: SOS Telefono Azzurro  
 Lithuania: Missing Persons' Families Support Centre  
 Poland: ITAKA  
 Portugal: Instituto de Apoio à Criança  
 Serbia: ASTRA  
 \*Slovakia: Linka detskej istoty  
 Spain: Fundación ANAR  
 Switzerland: Missing Children Switzerland  
 The Netherlands: Centrum Internationale Kinderontvoering  
 United Kingdom: Missing People  
 Ukraine: NGO Magnolia

\* Did not provide data for this report

## Hotlines not run by members

\*Denmark: Borns Vilkar<sup>19</sup>  
 \*Estonia: Lasteabi.ee  
 \*Finland: Nödcentralsverket  
 \*Germany: Vermisste Kinder  
 \*Latvia: Valsts Policija (Latvian State Police)  
 Luxembourg: L'Office National de l'Enfanc  
 \*Malta: The Malta Police Force  
 \*Romania: Asociația Telefonul Copilului  
 \*Slovenia: Zavod 116  
 Sweden: SOS Alarm

19. NGO Borns Vilkar was assigned the 116 000 number as of 2020.

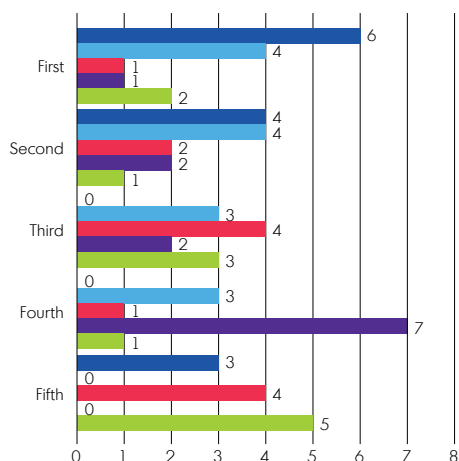


**116 000**

■ Hotline is run by members  
 ■ Hotline is not run by members

# Hotlines: access & funding

## Challenges faced by hotlines

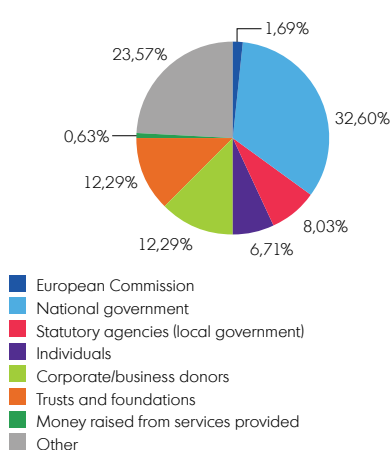


■ Lack of financial resources  
 ■ Lack of awareness of the service by the public  
 ■ Lack of human resources to operate the hotline  
 ■ Lack of support or difficult cooperation with the government  
 ■ Lack of support or difficult cooperation with other actors

\* Data from 14 hotlines

The lack of financial resources is considered the most serious challenge, and it risks impacting sustainability and quality of the service. Lack of public awareness of hotlines and lack of human resources to operate the hotline are other challenges often mentioned.

## Funders from different sources



The European Electronic Communications Code (EECC), published in 2018 shifted the responsibility to ensure enough funding is in place for the hotlines from the European Commission to national governments. Criteria include 24/7 services, and accessibility of disabled end-users. Only 32,6% of funding for the hotlines comes from national authorities (less than the previous year where national governments provided 37,4% of funding), and half of the hotlines (50%) receiving funding from local and national authorities, indicated that it was not sufficient to ensure the expected standard of service. Missing Children

Europe calls on Member States to fulfil their obligations under the EU strategy on the rights of the child to establish (where not yet available) and improve child helpline (116 111) and missing children hotline (116 000), including through funding and capacity building.

## Hotlines available to users with disabilities

Out of 19 hotlines who responded, 7 hotlines stated that they were accessible for users with certain types of disabilities but not for others, while 2 hotlines stated that they were not yet accessible to users with disabilities at all.

## Hotlines overall accessibility means

Hotlines provided an overview of their accessibility for children. 89% of hotlines reported being accessible to all children, including vulnerable children, children living in difficult home environments, and different groups of children such as children in migration and children from different ethnic backgrounds. The most common means of accessibility is email (82,3% of hotlines are accessible via email), and social media (64,7%). Just a little over half of the hotlines are accessible via chat services, with 41% of hotlines not being able to offer this service. Other means of accessibility listed are text services, video relays and website communications.