

VICTIM SUPPORT MONITOR FACTSHEET

Experiences of victims receiving judicial
victim support (first assessment)

- factsheet final report-

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1 The quality of judicial victim support monitor

The Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice has set up the victim support monitor in order to periodically assess the experiences of victims receiving judicial victim support.

The various organisations within the judicial chain that are involved in this monitor have their own core responsibility and also take care of part of the victim support offered to victims. The police, to whom the victim reports an offence or crime, are responsible for conducting the criminal investigation into the incident, and tracking down and arresting the suspect or suspects. The case may or may not then be passed on to the Public Prosecution Service, which is responsible for prosecuting the suspect or suspects. The Judiciary is, finally, responsible for the trial of the suspect or suspects. During the process the victim can, in addition to the victim support offered by the three judicial chain partners, choose to make use of the victim support offered by '*Slachtofferhulp Nederland*' (Victim Support Netherlands).

In order to correctly interpret the results of the quality of judicial victim support monitor, it is important to emphasise that the group of victims who were questioned is not the same for each organisation. Victims who were questioned about their experiences with the police did not necessarily also have experience with the Public Prosecution Service. Reporting to the police does not always lead to criminal prosecution by the Public Prosecution Service. The same applies to victims who have had dealings with the Public Prosecution Service. Only some of them have experience with the Judiciary, as it is by no means the case that all instances lead to legal proceedings.

The questionnaire for the monitor was developed by Intervict. Regioplan Policy Research, in cooperation with Ipsos, made the first assessment with samples of victims drawn from registrations by the police, the Public Prosecution Service and '*Slachtofferhulp Nederland*' (Victim Support Netherlands). This factsheet contains the findings of the assessments.

Response

A sample of 1,017 respondents were surveyed for the first assessment, partly via Internet and partly by telephone. A wide range of offences that the respondents fell victim to were chosen: property offences, violent offences or public order offences. The response rate was 26% on average.

2 Judgements on the judicial victim support offered by the police

The police presented the respondents with 28 statements on aspects of the quality of the judicial victim support. Using statistical analysis, these 28 statements were divided into six factors, each of which are seen as related parts of judicial victim support offered by the police:

- *treatment*: the way in which victims are treated by the police;
- *security/repairs*: the effort made by the police to increase safety and arrange repairs;
- *police duty*: the extent to which the police show a willingness to carry out their core responsibilities, such as conducting investigations, making arrests, providing information on developments in the case and on the following up on the legal proceedings;
- *help offered to the victim/position of the victim*: the degree of information provision on victim rights and possible assistance;
- *consultation/participation*: the degree of consultation when taking decisions and the extent to which the victim's rights are taken into account;
- *streamlining*: the extent to which information transfer and drawing up the official report run smoothly.

2.1 Judgements on aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the police

Treatment

In general, the respondents had very positive experiences with regard to treatment of the victim. The results show that 82 per cent of the respondents were (very) positive, whereas 7 per cent had a (very) negative experience. Considering the underlying aspects of this component, we can observe that the 'polite treatment' aspect scores highest and the 'showing sympathy' aspect scores least well.

Safety/repairs

Respondents were predominantly negative when it came to aspects regarding efforts made by police officers in terms of safety and repairs for victims. Almost half of the respondents (45%) had a negative experience, while less than a third had positive experiences (29%). The aspects that were rated lowest were the commitment to compensation of damages, information about compensation of damages and reducing the risk of recurrence. The respondents were most negative about the aspect 'increasing the feeling of safety'.

Police duty

Overall, less than half of the respondents (44%) were positive about their own experiences with regard to issues directly related to police duty. A third of the respondents had negative experiences in this area. Almost two thirds of the respondents had positive experiences with regard to receiving information on further steps and an explanation on the procedure after reporting the offence. The most negative experiences concerned the tracking down and prosecution of the offender.

Help offered to/position of the victim

On the whole, almost two thirds of the respondents (61%) had positive experiences regarding the help they received. Less than a quarter (23%) had negative experiences in this area. This also applies to the individual aspects (information on possible assistance, information about the services of victim assistance and an explanation of victim rights).

Consultation/participation

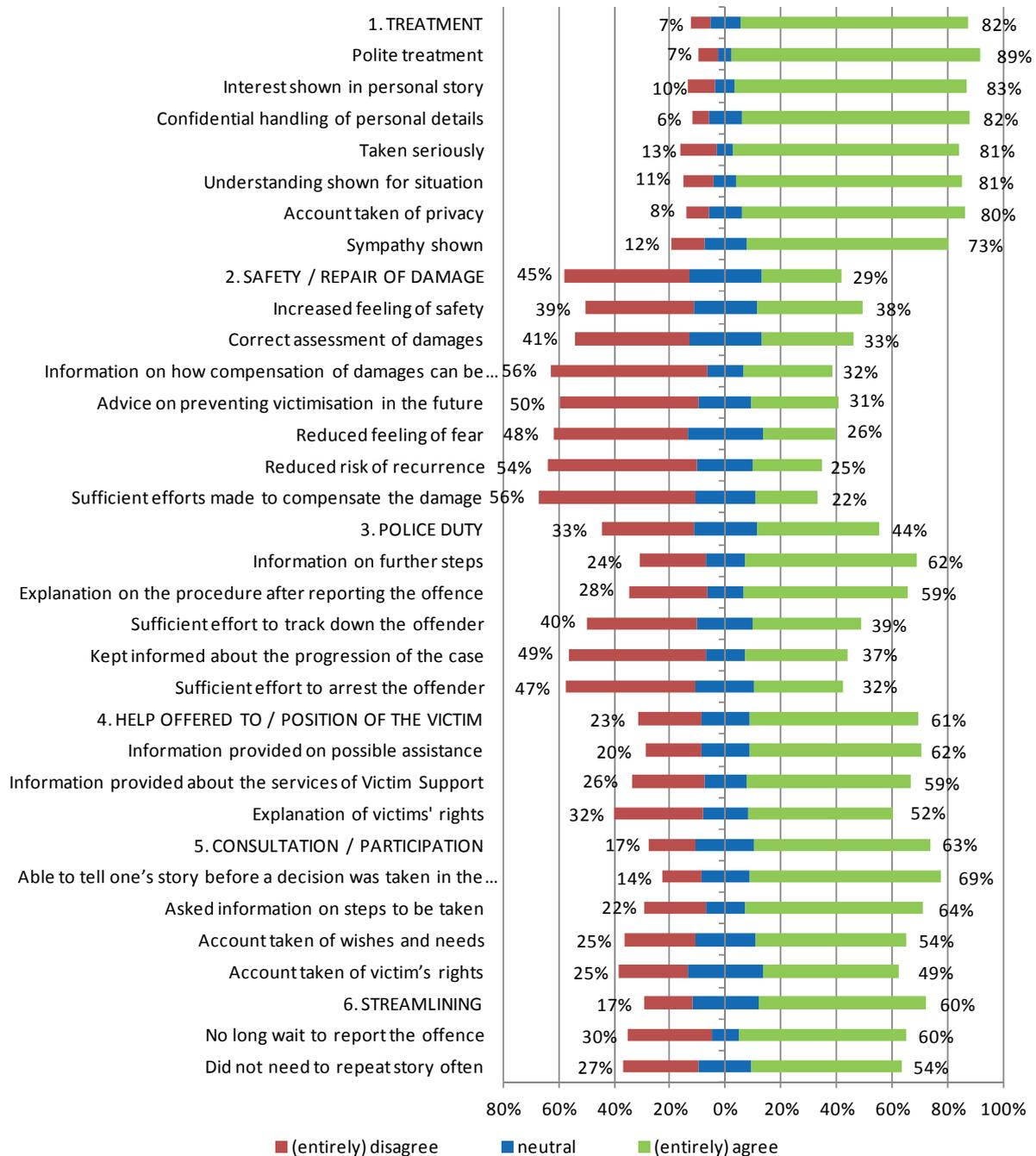
On the whole, the majority of the respondents (63%) had positive experiences with regard to the degree of consultation and participation of victims in the procedure. A smaller proportion of respondents (17%) had negative experiences. Most respondents had positive experiences with regard to 'being able to tell one's story before a decision was taken in the case'. Respondents were, relatively speaking, least satisfied with the degree to which their rights as victim were taken into account.

Streamlining

A majority of respondents (60%) were positive about the 'streamlining' of the process by the police. Less than a fifth of the respondents (17%) had negative experiences. In particular, the speed with which charges could be pressed was assessed as good by a majority of respondents and just over half of the respondents felt that they did not have to repeat their story often. Nevertheless, for both aspects almost a third of the respondents had a negative experience.

Figure 2.1 gives an overview of the scores for all components and aspects

Figure 2.1 Experiences of victims with regard to victim support offered by the police



2.2 The importance of aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the police

Respondents were able to indicate to what extent they found the aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the police important. It turned out that they in fact found all aspects important. Four aspects stood out, as at least three quarters of all the respondents found them of utmost importance. These were:

- Confidential handling of personal details.
- Giving the impression that they were taking you seriously.
- Making a sufficient effort to track down the offender.
- Making a sufficient effort to arrest the offender.

3 Judgements on the judicial victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service

The respondents were presented with 22 statements, each of which dealt with an aspect of the victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service. Using statistical analysis, these 22 aspects were divided into four factors, each of which could be considered as related parts of the judicial victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service:

- *treatment*: the way in which victims were treated by employees of the Public Prosecution Service;
- *information provision*: the extent to which employees of the Public Prosecution Service properly informed the victim of developments in the case and on the following up on the case;
- *consultation/repairs*: the degree of consultation with regard to decisions and the extent to which support aimed at compensating for damage was offered;
- *safety*: the effort made by employees of the Public Prosecution Service to increase safety, including the effort to prosecute and convict the offender.

3.1 Judgements on aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service

Treatment

In general, the respondents had positive experiences with regard to treatment by the Public Prosecution Service. Almost three quarters of them (72%) were (very) positive, compared to 19 per cent of the respondents who had a (very) negative experience. Considering the individual aspects of this component, we see that polite treatment was assessed most positively and that showing sympathy was, relatively speaking, assessed least positively.

Information provision

More than half of the respondents (58%) were (very) positive and slightly more than a quarter (28%) were (very) negative about the information provision component. Respondents were most explicitly positive about the provision of information on the following up on the case and the extent to which they were

kept informed about the progression of the case. They were more negative in their judgements on the extent to which the Public Prosecution Service informed them about the reasons for particular decisions.

Consultation/repairs

Less than half of the respondents were (very) positive about the consultation and damages component and a third of the respondents were (very) negative about this aspect. Victims had positive experiences with regard to the confidential handling of personal details and they often found that the Public Prosecution Service took their rights as a victim into account. They less often felt that the Public Prosecution Service supported them sufficiently in terms of arranging compensation of damages and correctly estimating damages.

Safety

Overall, more than a third (38%) of the respondents were (very) positive about the safety component; likewise more than a third (36%) were (very) negative about this component. With regard to the general picture, the respondents were relatively positive about the efforts of the Public Prosecution Office to prosecute and convict the offender. They less often felt the Public Prosecution Office reduced the risk of recurrence, increased their feeling of safety and reduced their feelings of anxiety.

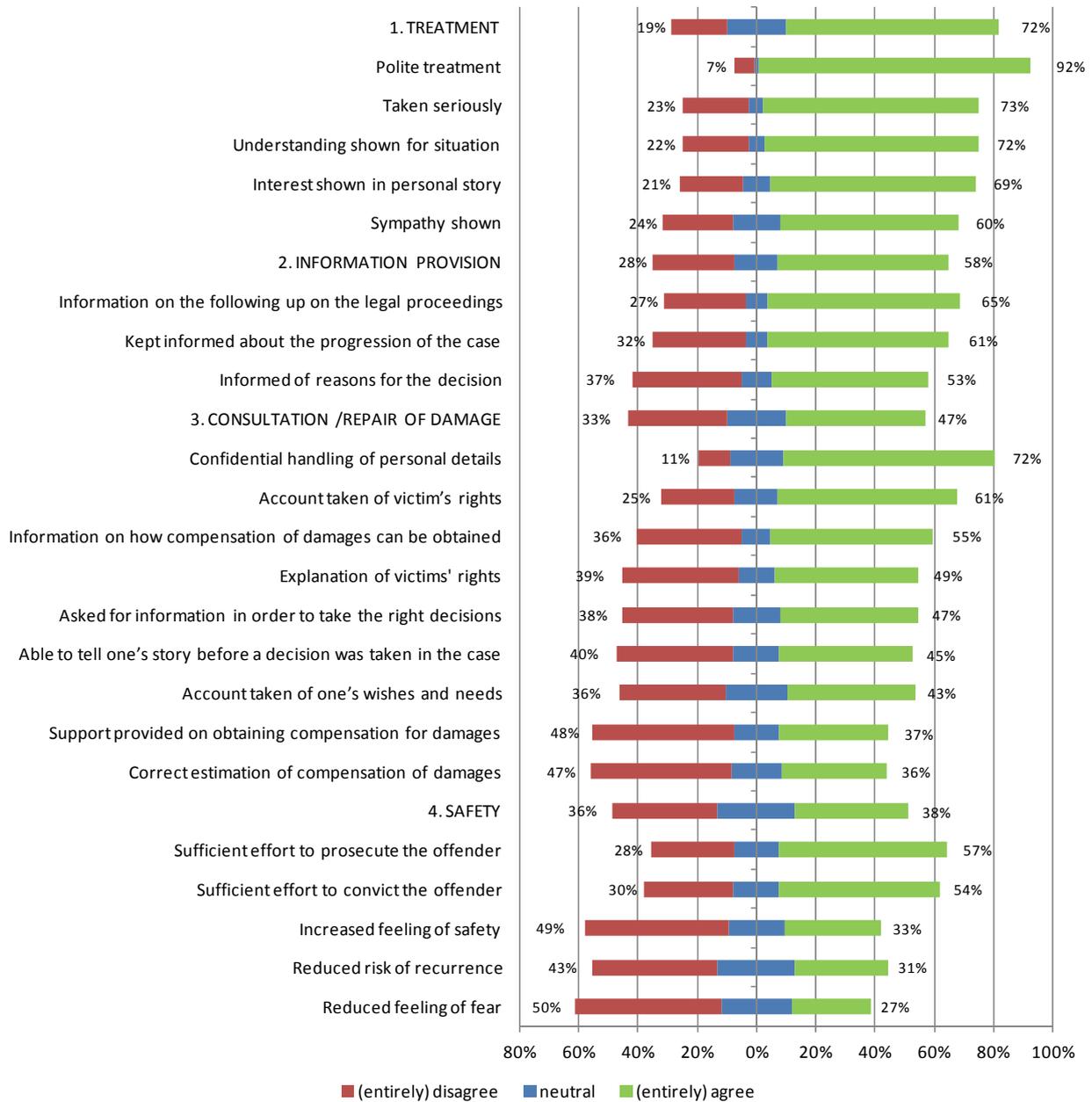
Figure 3.1 (see following page) gives an overview of the scores for all components and aspects of the victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service.

3.2 The importance of aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service

Respondents found all individual aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service important. This applied more strongly to five aspects than to the 17 other aspects. These were:

- Giving the impression that they were taking you seriously.
- Confidential handling of personal details.
- Explaining your rights as a victim.
- Making a sufficient effort to prosecute the offender.
- Making a sufficient effort to convict the offender.

Figure 3.1 Experiences of victims with regard to victim support offered by the Public Prosecution Service



4 Judgements on the judicial victim support offered by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands)

‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands) presented the respondents with 20 statements on aspects of the quality of the judicial victim support. Using statistical analysis, the aspects were grouped into three related parts:

- *treatment*: the way in which victims were treated by employees of ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands);
- *support*: the extent to which victims received information and advice on (legal) support;
- *safety/emotional support*: the extent to which victims felt safer and supported in an emotional sense.

4.1 Judgements on aspects of the judicial victim support offered by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands)

Treatment

In general, victims experienced treatment by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands) as positive. Ninety per cent of the respondents were (very) positive about it, whereas no more than six per cent were (very) negative about it. There were hardly any differences between partial aspects: they were all seen as (very) positive by 85% to 95% of the respondents. Not one of the partial aspects was judged to be (very) negative by more than eight per cent of the respondents.

Support

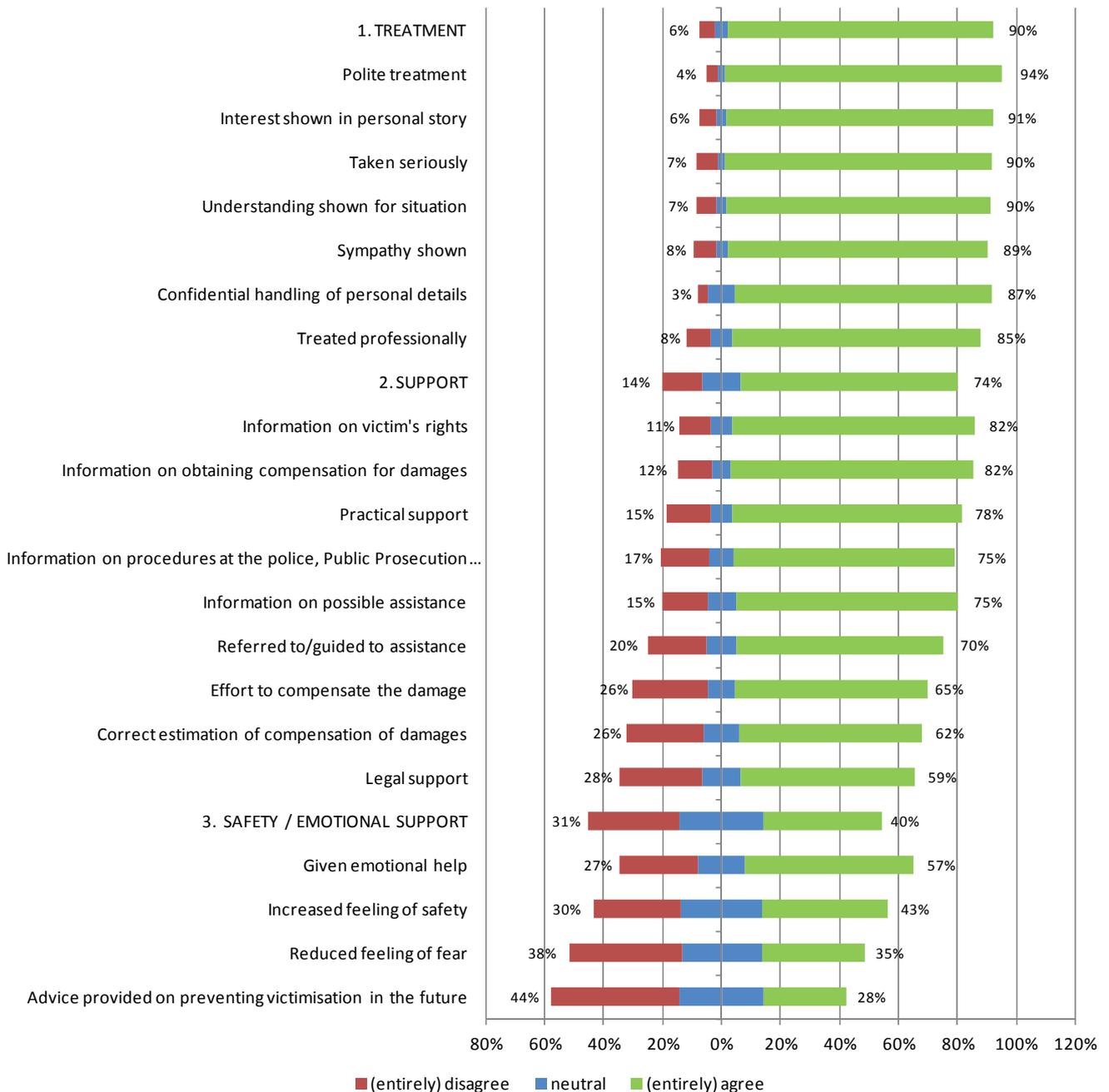
The support offered by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands) was also seen as (very) positive by a large majority (74%) of respondents. Fourteen per cent of the victims, however, experienced this support as (very) negative. In particular, the provision of information on victim rights and the procedure for receiving compensation of damages was valued by most respondents as (very) positive. Respondents had a relatively less positive assessment of the effort or lack of effort to offer legal support, correctly assessing damages and the efforts made to compensate the damage.

Safety/emotional support

Less than half of the respondents had positive experiences with the extent to which ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands) offered a feeling of safety and emotional support. Forty per cent had (very) positive experiences and 31% actually had (very) negative experiences in terms of this overarching component. The respondents were relatively positive about the emotional help and the increase in the feeling of safety. They were less positive about the extent to which ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands) gave advice about how to prevent being a victim in the future.

Figure 4.1 gives an overview of the scores for all components and aspects of the victim support offered by 'Slachtofferhulp Nederland' (Victim Support Netherlands).

Figure 4.1 Experiences of victims with regard to victim support offered by 'Slachtofferhulp Nederland' (Victim Support Netherlands)



4.2 **The importance of aspects of the judicial victim support offered by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands)**

All aspects of the judicial victim support offered by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands) were considered important by the respondents. This applied even more strongly to six aspects. These were:

- Showing interest in your personal story.
- Giving the impression that they were taking you seriously.
- Confidential handling of personal details.
- Treating you in a professional manner.
- Giving information on your rights as a victim.
- Giving information on the procedure with regard to the police, the Public Prosecution Service and the court.

5 **Judgements on the judicial victim support offered by the court**

In addition to the 28 statements about victim support offered by the police, 22 statements about support offered by the Public Prosecution Service and 20 statements about the judicial victim support offered by ‘Slachtofferhulp Nederland’ (Victim Support Netherlands), 16 statements were also presented to the respondents concerning the judge’s contribution to victim support. These 16 aspects fall under two related components:

- *treatment*: the way in which victims were treated by employees of the court;
- *the performance of the judge*: the extent to which the judge dealt with the case in a professional manner.

5.1 **Judgements on aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the Legal system**

Treatment

In general, the victims had positive experiences with the judge. Three quarters of the respondents were (very) positive about this, while eleven per cent of the respondents deemed this component to be (very) negative. Of the various partial aspects of treatment, polite treatment was assessed as positive by the largest number of respondents. The respondents were more negative in their assessments regarding the extent to which the judge asked for sufficient information before making a good decision.

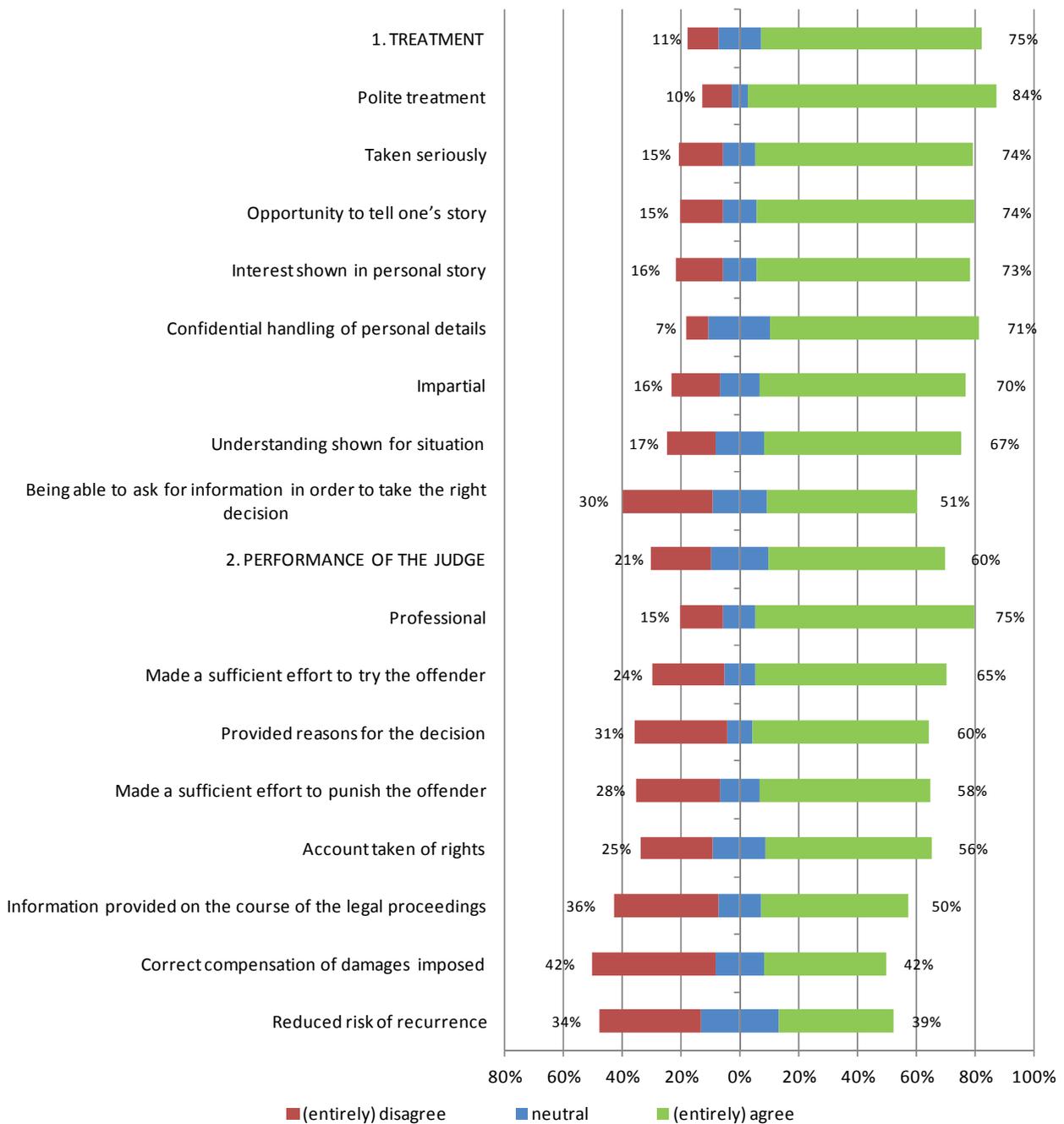
The performance of the judge

The respondents were predominantly positive about the performance of the judge. Sixty per cent of the respondents deemed this to be (very) positive, whereas 21 per cent were negative. Respondents were especially positive about the expertise of the judge and about his efforts to try the offender. They were more negative in their assessment regarding the question of whether the judge imposed the correct compensation of damages, or whether the judge provided

sufficient information about the course of the proceedings, and if the judge reduced the risk of recurrence.

Figure 5.1 gives an overview of the scores for all components and aspects of the victim support offered by the court.

Figure 5.1 Experiences of victims with regard to victim support offered by the court



5.2 The importance of aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the judge

There were six aspects of the victim support offered by the judge that the respondents found more important than the others. These were:

- Giving the impression that they were taking you seriously.
- Confidential handling of personal details.
- Impartiality.
- Expertise.
- Making a sufficient effort to try the offender.
- Making a sufficient effort to punish the offender.

6 Differences between personal characteristics and case characteristics

The extent to which the judicial victim support differed was ascertained for a number of groups (differentiating between personal characteristics and case characteristics). The extent to which these groups differ in terms of the importance they attach to aspects of the victim support was also ascertained. The observation that differences between subgroups were significant does not, however, say anything about the causality of the connection. The results therefore do not warrant the making of a judgement on what the cause is and what constitutes the consequence.

The general picture is that women and older people attach more importance to aspects of the victim support, while more highly educated people attach less importance in this respect. Victims who have participated in the criminal proceedings (through the right to be heard, a victim impact statement, a joinder, an officer meeting or an offender meeting) attach more importance to aspects of the victim support than victims who do not participate.

Older people are more often positive about the quality of victim support than younger people. More highly educated people are less positive than less educated people.

Judgements are more positive if an offender is arrested, prosecuted and/or punished (this applies to assessments of the services of Victim Support Netherlands, which have no influence on this) and if the requested compensation of damages is awarded in full. Victims who have participated in the criminal proceedings are more positive about many aspects of the victim support than victims who have not participated.

Table 6.1 gives an overview.

Table 6.1 Assessments of and importance of aspects of judicial victim support for personal and case characteristics

	Police	Public Prosecution Service	Judge	Victim Support Netherlands
Sex				
Experiences	Men are more positive than women about 4 aspects	-	Women are more positive than men about 5 aspects	-
Importance	Women attach more importance to 13 aspects than men	Women attach more importance to 13 aspects than men	-	Women attach more importance to 5 aspects than men
Age				
Experiences	Older people are more positive than younger people about 10 aspects	Older people are more positive than younger people about 10 aspects	-	-
Importance	Older people attach more importance to 12 aspects than younger people	Older people attach more importance to 6 aspects than younger people	-	Older people attach more importance to 12 aspects than younger people
Education				
Experiences	People with a secondary education are more positive than less educated or more highly educated people about 14 aspects	-	-	-
Importance	More highly educated people attach less importance to 23 aspects than less educated people	More highly educated people attach less importance to 6 aspects than less educated people	More highly educated people attach less importance to 3 aspects than less educated people	More highly educated people attach less importance to 9 aspects than less educated people
Types of offence				
Experiences	-	-	-	-
Importance	Victims of offences against property attach more importance to 11 aspects than others	Victims of violent offences attach more importance to 3 aspects than others	-	Victims of violent offences attach more importance to 4 aspects than others
Arrest				
	Respondents are more positive about 19 aspects if the offender is arrested	∧	∧	∧
Prosecution				
	∧	Respondents are more positive about 11 aspects if the offender is prosecuted	∧	Respondents are more positive about 3 aspects if the offender is prosecuted
Punishment				
	∧	Respondents are more positive about 7 aspects if the offender is punished	Respondents are more positive about 13 aspects if the offender is punished	-
Compensation of damages				
	Respondents are more positive about 16 aspects if the requested compensation of damages is awarded	Respondents are more positive about 14 aspects if the requested compensation of damages is awarded	Respondents are more positive about 2 aspects if the requested compensation of damages is awarded	Respondents are more positive about 14 aspects if the requested compensation of damages is awarded
Participation				
	∧	Respondents are more positive about 16 aspects if they have participated in the proceedings	Respondents are more positive about 13 aspects if they have participated in the proceedings	-

Legend: ∧ = not applicable, -- = no differences

7 Points of interest for improvement

During the survey, respondents were asked for their judgements on dozens of aspects of the judicial victim support offered by the police, the Public Prosecution Office, 'Slachtofferhulp Nederland' (Victim Support Netherlands) and the court. The aspects to which the respondents attached most importance were:

Treatment

- confidential handling of personal details (all organisations);
- giving the impression that they were taking you seriously (all organisations);
- showing interest in your personal story (Victim Support Netherlands);
- being impartial (judge);
- treating you in a professional manner (Victim Support Netherlands).

Support

- explaining your rights as a victim (Public Prosecution Service);
- giving information on the procedure with regard to the police, the Public Prosecution Service and the court (Victim Support Netherlands);

The role of the judicial system

- making a sufficient effort to track down the offender (police);
- making a sufficient effort to arrest the offender (police);
- making a sufficient effort to prosecute the offender (Public Prosecution Service);
- making a sufficient effort to sentence the offender (Public Prosecution Service);
- making a sufficient effort to try the offender (judge);
- making a sufficient effort to punish the offender (judge);
- being competent (judge).

The assessments are, relatively speaking, less positive for a number of these aspects of judicial victim support considered important by the respondents. This seems to indicate certain points of interest for improvement. It is striking that a focal point is the roles of the police and the judicial system in investigating and prosecuting.

From the victims' perspective, the points of interest for improvement are:

- the effort made to track down and arrest the offender;
- making a sufficient effort to convict and sentence the offender.
- the trial and punishment of the offender.

The points of interest for improvement specifically for the Public Prosecution Service are:

- giving victims the feeling that they are being taken seriously;
- explaining their rights as a victim.

With regard to the provision of services by 'Slachtofferhulp Nederland' (Victim Support Netherlands), there are no aspects of the victim support that the respondents find very important but that are assessed relatively less well.

8 Periods of research

The first assessment of the quality of judicial support monitor was carried out in two parts and therefore during two different periods. Moreover, the sample periods differed. In the table below, an overview of the sample periods is given, the periods during which the respondents were approached (approach period) and the report data of the results.

Table 8.1 Periods of research per sample

Sample	Sample period	Approach period	Report period
Police	01-04-2011 through to 16-05-2011	February through to April 2012	November 2012
'Slachtofferhulp Nederland' (Victim Support Netherlands)	01-02-2011 until 01-06-2011	February through to April 2012	May 2013
Public Prosecution Service	01-05-2012 until 01-06-2012	January through to March 2013	May 2013

9 Sources

A detailed description of the findings, underlying details and a methodological explanation can be found in the following reports:

- Mierlo, F. van, A. Pemberton and R. van Tol (2009) '*Van tevredenheid naar kwaliteit: een meetinstrument voor de slachtofferzorg*'. Tilburg: Intervict (Tilburg University)/WODC
- Mierlo, F. van, A. Pemberton and I. Lodewijks (2011) '*Vervolg kwaliteitsmeting slachtofferzorg*'. Tilburg: Intervict (Tilburg University)/WODC
- Timmermans, M., Tillaart, J. van den, and Homburg, G. (2012) '*Eerste meting slachtoffermonitor: ervaringen van slachtoffers met justitiële slachtofferondersteuning*'. Part 1: police. Amsterdam: Regioplan Policy Research/WODC
- Timmermans, M., Tillaart, J. van den, and Homburg, G. (2013) '*Eerste meting slachtoffermonitor: ervaringen van slachtoffers met justitiële slachtofferondersteuning*'. Part 2: Public Prosecution Service and Victim Support Netherlands. Amsterdam: Regioplan Policy Research/WODC

