Missing children facts and figures 2014
Caseload data from missing children organisations and cross-border family mediators across Europe

116000

> Highlights

- There is a continued increase in the number of calls received by hotlines for missing children as well as in cases handled, with a 7.3% increase in number of reported calls received and a 21% increase in the number of reported cases handled compared to 2013.
- The proportion of cases per category of missing children for 2014 is similar to the reported data for 2013: 51% (vs. 50 in 2013) concern runaways, 37% concern parental abductions (vs. 36% in 2013), 10% (vs. 10% in 2013) concern lost, injured or otherwise missing children, 1% (vs. 2% in 2013) concern missing unaccompanied migrant children and 2% (vs. 2% in 2014) concern criminal abductions.
- 67% of the missing children for which cases were opened by a hotline in 2014 were found within the same year.
- An overall 25% of the cases reported to missing children hotlines are cross-border or international in nature, mainly involving EU Member States.
- Parental abductions reported include primarily young children (peak at 4 to 5 years old).
- Both runaway cases and cases of missing unaccompanied migrant children reported mainly concern adolescents (peak at 15 to 16 and 15 years old respectively). Yet, runaway children as young as 7, and missing unaccompanied migrant children as young as 8 have been reported to the missing children hotlines.
- In 2014, mediators from the Cross-Border Family Mediators’ network dealt with an average of 3 cross-border family mediation cases per mediator. 73% of the cases concerned intra EU family conflicts. 49% concerned international parental abductions.

> Background and methodology

The data provided in this report has been collected by Missing Children Europe’s Brussels-based Secretariat through 2 separate online questionnaires, both using the tool SurveyMonkey. The language used for the questionnaires was English.

- The first ‘general’ missing children data questionnaire was shared with 31 organisations from 29 European countries, including Missing Children Europe’s membership organisations as well as hotlines for missing children operated through the 116 000 telephone number. The questionnaire consisted of 64 questions. Responses (both partial and complete) to the
questionnaire have been received from all except two 116 000 hotlines for missing children. Additional responses have been received from 4 member organisations from Missing Children Europe who do not operate a hotline. The data was analysed by Missing Children Europe’s General Secretariat, and is being released on the occasion of International Missing Children’s Day.

- The second, more specific questionnaire, was shared with 100+ specialised mediators from 31 European countries by the Cross-Border Family Mediators' network. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions and was responded to by 32 mediators.

Missing Children Europe is the European federation for missing and sexually exploited children, representing 30 grassroots organisations from 24 European countries. Hotlines for missing children reachable through the same 116 000 telephone number are currently operational in 29 European countries (all EU Member States except Finland + Serbia and Albania) to provide free services including emotional, psychological, administrative, social and legal support to children and families. The hotline is operated by a member organisation of Missing Children Europe in 22 countries.

The Cross-Border Family Mediators’ network is coordinated by Missing Children Europe and brings together over 100 mediators specialised in bi-cultural, bi-national mediation in cross-border family conflicts.

> Overview of main results

A. Missing children hotlines: calls and cases

- 26 hotlines reported to have received a total of 268,309 calls in 2014 (7.3% increase compared to the data reported by 25 hotlines for 2013).
- 27 hotlines reported to have handled 6,119 missing children cases in 2014 (21% increase compared to the data reported by 25 hotlines for 2013).
- The proportion of cases per different category of missing children for 2014 remains broadly steady compared to data reported for 2013.
- From the data reported by 17 hotlines, children were found within the same year for 67% of the missing children cases reported for 2014.
- An overall 25% of the cases concerned cross-border or international missing children cases, with 79% being intra EU.
With the financial support from the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020" Programme of the European Union.

Number of calls received on the 116 000 hotlines

Data from 26 hotlines

Number of new cases opened per year reported by 116 000 hotlines

Data from 27 hotlines
Categories of missing children (new cases opened by hotlines in 2014)

Data from 26 hotlines

- Runaways: 10%
- Parental abductions (national & international): 14%
- Missing unaccompanied migrant children: 51%
- Criminal abductions: 10%
- Lost, injured or otherwise missing children: 37%

Missing children requests received through other channels (in addition to 116,000 telephone hotline)

Data from 17 hotlines

- Other
- Face to face meetings
- Email: 3,500
- Text message: 3,500
- Chat
% of cases opened in 2014 from the different categories that were found in the same year

Data from 17 hotlines

- Runaways: 90%
- Parental abductions (national & international): 60%
- Missing unaccompanied migrant children: 50%
- Criminal abductions: 30%
- Lost, injured or otherwise missing children: 50%

On average, 67% of all children reported missing in 2014 were found in the same year.

Calls were made by:
- Adults: 75%
- Children: 25%
- Unknown: 13%

National versus international or cross border cases opened in 2014

Data from 17 hotlines

- International or cross border cases: 25%
- National cases: 75%
B. Missing children hotlines: Structure, staff, challenges

- 27 hotlines reported a total of 864 staff working for the hotline (compared to 558 for 25 hotlines in 2013), of which 59% are volunteers.
- Lack of financial resources remains the main challenge reported by the hotlines, followed by a lack of public awareness on the 116,000 number and lack of support from the government.
- All 27 reporting hotlines declare that the service is operational 24/7, either within the organisation, or through a cooperation established with law enforcement or other relevant services for a specific number of hours.
- All 27 reporting hotlines except one report being NGOs or not for profit organisation.
- The number of staff members working on the hotlines varies greatly from one country to the next: from 2 remunerated staff members for the smallest organisation to 60 remunerated staff members to the largest organisation.
### C. Specific issues related to focus groups of missing children

#### A. Runaways

**Definition:** Children who run away from home, from the institution where they have been placed, or from the people responsible for their care.
- Runaways constituted 51% of the cases reported by 27 hotlines in 2014.
- 19 hotlines reported on cases of runaways starting at the age of 7, up to 21 years old.
- Up to 45% of the calls related to cases of runaways from institutional or foster care.
- Out of the 2,780 cases of runaways opened by the hotlines in 2014, 69 concerned cases of runaways who ran away twice and 133 concerned cases of runaways who ran away between 3 and 5 times.
With the financial support of the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020" Programme of the European Union.

Prevalence of reported case per age range: runaways

Data from 19 hotlines

Runaway calls: running away from...

Data from 12 hotlines

Time-lapse for cases that were closed: Runaways

Data from 15 hotlines
B. Parental abductions

Definition: Parental abductions are cases where a child is taken to or kept in a country or place other than that of his/her normal residence by one or more parents or persons with parental authority, against another parent's will or against the will of the person with parental authority.

- Parental abductions constituted 37% of the cases reported by 27 hotlines in 2014. Of these parental abductions, 60% concerned international parental abductions.
- 19 hotlines reported on cases of parental abductions starting at the age of 0, up to 17.
- 75% of the cases handled by the members of the Cross-Border Family Mediator’s network concern intra-EU situations.

Time-lapse for cases that were closed: Parental abductions

Cases mediated by the Cross-Border Family Mediation Network (data collected from 32 member mediators)
C. Missing unaccompanied migrant children

Definition: Disappearances of migrant children, nationals of a country in which there is no free movement of persons, under the age of 18, who have been separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult, who by law is responsible for doing so.

- Missing unaccompanied migrant children constituted 1% of the cases reported by 27 hotlines in 2014. It is however known from other data sources that many more unaccompanied migrant children go missing, but are not reported to the hotline.¹

¹See for example: In Belgium, research undertaken by Child Focus recorded that unaccompanied minors seeking asylum disappear in approximately 25% of the cases within the first 48 hours upon arrival. (See “Studie over het profiel en het traject van niet-begeleide minderjarige asielzoekers in ons land”, 2005). In Sweden, more than 800 minors have disappeared in the last 5 years, with the record in 2014 (374, of which only 59 have been tracked down) (see Sveridge
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- 6 hotlines reported on cases of missing unaccompanied migrant children starting at the age of 8, up to 17 years old.

### Time-lapse for cases that were closed: missing unaccompanied migrant children

Data from 4 hotlines

- Less than a week: 19%
- Less than a month: 9%
- Less than 6 months: 16%
- Less than a year: 56%

### Prevalence of reported case per age range: missing unaccompanied migrant children

Data from 6 hotlines

- 8 years old: 0
- 9 years old: 0
- 10 years old: 0
- 11 years old: 0
- 12 years old: 0
- 13 years old: 0
- 14 years old: 0
- 15 years old: 0
- 16 years old: 0
- 17 years old: 0

Radio, [http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6092786](http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6092786). In 2010, Terres des Hommes calculated that up to half of unaccompanied migrant children vanish yearly from reception centres in Belgium, France, Spain and Switzerland, mainly in the first 48 hours after their admission in the centres. Frontex reported that in 2010, 60% of the unaccompanied children accommodated in social care centres in the UK are estimated to go missing and are not found again. In Italy, The CONNECT project funded by the EC in 2013 reported that 24% of registered unaccompanied migrant children went missing from reception centres in Italy and that many more go missing before registration. Minister Alfano reported that in 2014, 3,707 unaccompanied migrant children went missing from reception centers, on 14,243 registered.
D. Use of public appeals in finding missing children

- Public appeals have been used in 45% of the cases opened, using both online and offline dissemination channels, according to data provided by 12 hotlines.
- In countries where a ‘child alert’ or ‘amber alert’ system\(^2\) has been reported as being available, the system has been used 1 – 5 times in 5 countries, and has not been used in the other 9 reporting countries in the course of 2014.

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\(^2\) Child alert systems are used to swiftly alert the general public at large of life-threatening missing children cases, following the decision of a mandated law enforcement agency or organisation with official status regarding missing children within the framework of a protocol signed with the national law enforcement authorities, listing the responsibilities and procedures to be followed.
For further information, please:

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