

Risk assessment for Dutch perpetrators of transnational child sex offences

Summary in English

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Colophon

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Summary in English

Research topic

All over the world, children fall victim to sexual abuse perpetrated by traveling sex offenders. Although data on the scale, nature, and severity of the problem are lacking, it is clear that Dutch nationals also engage in various forms of child sexual exploitation abroad. Perpetrators travel abroad for shorter or longer periods of time and/or participate online in the sexual abuse of minors in other countries. The law offers possibilities to prosecute these offenders either abroad or in the Netherlands, but identifying these perpetrators poses a major challenge for law enforcement, and investigative procedures are complex and time-consuming.

Although various initiatives have been launched by criminal justice agencies as well as NGOs to address this issue, in recent years particular attention has been paid to the prevention of repeat offending by already known sex offenders. A recent WODC report by Wolsink and colleagues (2021) aimed to create an overview of the measures available to the Dutch government to prevent (convicted) perpetrators of transnational child sex offending from creating new victims. This study concluded that, from a legal standpoint, the Netherlands has sufficient measures at its disposal to address transnational child sex offenders, such as imposing travel bans, revoking passports, or informing foreign authorities about the travel movements of a (suspected) perpetrator. At the same time, the researchers observed that these measures are very rarely applied in practice.

One explanation for this is that the application of such measures depends on an assessment of the risk of recidivism among these perpetrators. Due to the infringement on the privacy of those involved and/or the restrictive nature of the measures, it is important that measures are applied proportionally and selectively to those individuals who pose a high risk of reoffending. In short, adequate risk assessment is essential so that measures are used only for the group that is most likely to create new victims. Such risk estimates can also contribute to the feasibility and practical implementation of these measures, given the limited capacity of law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies. However, experts have expressed concerns about the applicability and implementation of existing risk assessment instruments for transnational child sex offenders (Wolsink et al., 2021). These concerns formed the starting point of our research.

This summary aims to provide an accessible overview of the main lines of this study. We begin by outlining the research questions, followed by a brief explanation of our research methods. We then summarize the most important findings for each research question. We conclude this summary with several recommendations. We advise policymakers and experts in the field of transnational child sex offending to consult the full (Dutch) report for more detailed recommendations, source references, and argumentation.

Research questions

Five research questions are central to our study. The first two sub-questions concern the characteristics (*who?*) and modus operandi (*how?*) of transnational child sex offenders (TCSOs). In addition, we ask several questions about differences between this group and other child sex offenders, as well as differences *within* this group:

1. What are the *characteristics* of transnational child sex offenders?
 - a. To what extent do TCSOs differ from perpetrators of other forms of child sexual abuse?
 - b. To what extent do perpetrators of online TCSO differ from perpetrators of offline TCSO in these characteristics?
 - c. To what extent do intentional TCSOs differ from situational TCSOs?
 - d. To what extent do first-time offenders differ from repeat offenders?
2. What is the *modus operandi* of TCSOs, and to what extent do online and offline perpetrators, intentional and situational offenders, and first-time offenders and repeat offenders differ in this regard?

The following three research questions concern the method of risk assessment among TCSOs:

3. To what extent *do existing risk assessment instruments* for estimating sexual recidivism *align* with the characteristics and modus operandi of perpetrators of various forms of TCSO?
4. Which organizations apply risk assessment instruments, and at which stages, to combat to TCSO, and *what implementation challenges, legal and/or judicial issues do they encounter* in doing so?
5. What *recommendations* can be made with respect to (a) the content and (b) the use of risk assessment instruments for the purpose of estimating the sexual recidivism risk of TCSOs?

Methods

Two research methods were used to answer the research questions outlined above. First, we conducted interviews with professionals working within the Dutch criminal justice system, such as the police, Public Prosecution Service, and probation services. From spring 2023 to spring 2024 we spoke with a total of fifteen respondents who in their daily work are, or have been, involved with either the investigation or prosecution of TCSOs or with risk assessment of sex offenders more generally. The interviews provided insight into how professionals perceive the characteristics and modus operandi of TCSOs and helped identify the challenges they face in the execution of their daily tasks.

Second, we conducted a survey study among a representative sample of the adult male population in the Netherlands. Using the data from this self-report questionnaire, completed by 9,384 men, we are able for the first time to provide an estimate of the prevalence of TCSO perpetration among Dutch men. In addition, we are able to map the characteristics of this

group and statistically test whether they differ from perpetrators of child sexual abuse within the Netherlands.

Findings

Prevalence of transnational child sex offending by Dutch men

In our representative sample of Dutch men, 2.3% can be identified as perpetrators of offline TCSO. This means they have *at some point in their life* engaged in paid sex abroad with a person under the age of 18, and/or engaged in unpaid sex with a person under the age of 16 while they themselves were older than 21. In a significant proportion of cases (1.5% of the sample), this (also) occurred recently (within the past five years). Nearly three-quarters of TCSOs indicated that they had traveled abroad with the specific intent to have sex with persons under the age of 18.

When extrapolating these figures to an estimate for the Dutch population, this implies that **between 131,000 and 171,000 Dutch men have at some point committed offline child sex offending abroad**. Two-thirds of them did so within the past five years. This would mean that each year at least 20,000 Dutch men engage in child sexual abuse during their travels abroad.

In addition to physically traveling abroad, TCSO can also be committed through online channels. In our sample, 2.3% reported having at some point participated in livestreams in which minors performed sexual acts via webcam. Although it has been documented that this online form of TCSO often occurs abroad, it is possible that Dutch victims are also included in these figures; after all, it is not always possible to determine someone's location when connecting on the internet. Notably, 86% of the 207 online perpetrators *also* reported having committed a physical form of child sexual abuse, either abroad and/or in the Netherlands.

If we assume that livestreams involving minors always have a transnational character, and we therefore count these cases as (online) TCSO as well, then the group of TCSOs (offline and/or online) grows to 3.1% of the total sample. The total estimated number of adult Dutch men who have at some point committed any form of TCSO then comes to 225,000.

Characteristics and modus operandi of TCSOs

The characteristics of TCSOs were identified through expert interviews and examined via questionnaires completed by Dutch men. Professionals often describe perpetrators as older individuals and as having an exclusive sexual preference for children. Their social and financial backgrounds vary: some are single and socially isolated, while others lead a double life with a family and career, using their resources to approach victims abroad. Little is known about their criminal history, although professionals suspect that they may have previously committed (undetected) sexual offenses.

Professionals differ in opinion regarding the similarity between *TCSOs* and *perpetrators of child sexual abuse within the Netherlands*. Some view TCSOs as 'different', for instance

because they are expected to be older. Others, based on the information available to them, indicate they have no reason to suspect substantial differences between the groups. Contrastingly, the survey findings did not confirm the prevailing image of the older TCSO. Instead we found that TCSOs tend to have a more extensive criminal history, experience less empathy, and exhibit a stronger identification with and sexual attraction to children than Dutch domestic child sexual abusers. They also seek (or consider seeking) help for their behavior more frequently. Although differences exist, they are limited in scope: the survey results suggest that TCSOs are more similar to domestic child sexual abusers than they are different.

The differences between groups become more pronounced when zooming in on certain subgroups within the TCSO population, such as intentional versus situational offenders, or repeat offenders versus first-time offenders. The observed differences between TCSOs and domestic child sexual abusers appear to be primarily explained by those TCSOs who deliberately travel abroad. These so-called *intentional offenders* display more risk factors for reoffending across multiple domains than *situational offenders*. As expected, repeat TCSOs score higher on many risk factors than first-time TCSOs, particularly regarding the domains of psychological traits and sexuality. The expert interviews also made clear that professionals have limited insight into situational TCSOs and that there is too little information on repeat offending by known TCSOs to make reliable predictions about differences between repeat offenders and first-time offenders.

Finally, experts described differences between *perpetrators of offline and online TCSO*, particularly in terms of modus operandi. The methods described by professionals interviewed in this study largely correspond with those documented in previous research (CCV, 2024; Hawke & Raphael, 2016; Koning & Rijksen-van Dijke, 2016). For this reason, only the key points are repeated in this summary and a few recent developments are addressed.

The modus operandi of online and offline TCSOs differs by definition: whereas offline offenders may travel across the world to commit hands-on sexual abuse, the online offender can do so from the comfort of his own home. Professionals report that this form of online TCSO has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic; offenders who previously engaged in offline TCSO may have shifted to online offending during the pandemic, partly due to the increased availability of technologies such as video calls. However, there is overlap between online and offline offenders; professionals expect that some online offenders eventually progress to offline abuse, particularly when long-term contact with victims is established. The survey data show that 86% of online TCSOs have also committed hands-on abuse. Whether there is a causal relationship or a criminal trajectory from one type of offense to the other remains unknown.

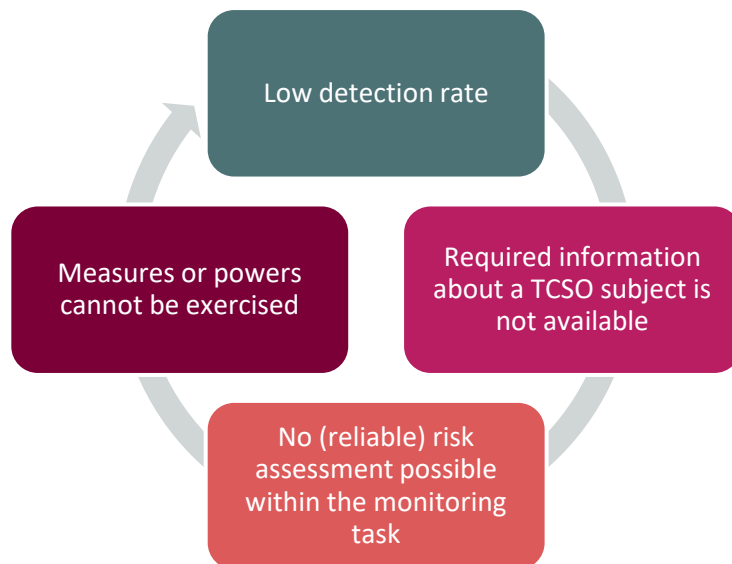
Since professionals had limited knowledge about online TCSOs, little is known about their characteristics. Shared speculations suggests they may be younger, have stronger computer skills, and a different social life. The survey data reveal that online and offline TCSOs differ on various risk factors. Offline offenders more often commit multiple types of offenses, feel less

empathy, identify more strongly with children, and show greater sexual deviance. Age and education level do not differ.

Applicability of risk assessment instruments to TCSOs

Professionals expressed various concerns regarding the applicability and fit of existing risk assessment instruments for estimating sexual recidivism for perpetrators of transnational child sex offending (TCSO). Respondents from law enforcement and the judiciary, for instance, noted that offenders who come to their attention are often of higher age. This higher age results in a low risk score when using the STATIC-99R, which these respondents consider to be an inaccurate reflection of risk. Contrary to these expectations by interviewed professionals, this study found no empirical evidence that TCSO is more commonly committed by older men. Therefore, no grounds were found to abstain from using the STATIC-99R based on its age criterion. A second concern relates to the perception that existing risk assessment instruments may not align well with TCSOs, based on the assumption that these offenders are somehow 'different' from other sex offenders. However, survey results show that TCSOs share more similarities than differences with domestic perpetrators of child sexual abuse within the Netherlands. Therefore it can be expected that existing risk assessment instruments will perform equally well in assessing risk among TCSOs as they do among perpetrators of domestic child sexual abuse. Third, law enforcement professionals mentioned criteria or elements they consider relevant for estimating the risk of reoffending, but which are not included in current instruments. It should be noted that some of the criteria that police professionals identified as important for monitoring the reoffending risk of TCSOs overlap with existing instruments (which are not currently in use by law enforcement). In other cases, such as the possession/distribution of child sexual abuse material, no suitable risk assessment instrument is currently available to them.

In conclusion, the challenges in applying risk assessment instruments to TCSOs likely stem not from fundamental differences between TCSOs and other sexual offenders, but rather from authorities' limited visibility of TCSO perpetrators. This vicious cycle can be summarized as follows:



Implementation of risk assessment with TCSOs

In the Netherlands, risk assessment instruments are used at different stages within the criminal justice system and by various organizations. At the “back end” of the criminal justice process —such as probation services, treatment providers, and forensic psychiatric reporters— risk assessment is an established part of supervision, advice, and treatment. At the “front end” of the criminal justice system, such as the police, risk assessment can serve as a basis for implementing measures aimed at preventing repeat offending by (transnational) sexual offenders. Risk assessment instruments can also play a role in the monitoring and prioritization of sexual offenders by the police. In the case of TCSO, the police sometimes refer to so-called “TCSO subjects”: these are persons of interest who do not yet have legal status as suspects. As explained in governmental plans to combat the problem (Ministry of Security and Justice, 2016), TCSO subjects are generally individuals who have been previously convicted of sexual offenses against children, or persons about whom reports of potential TCSO have been received. Risk assessment can assist the police in prioritizing the monitoring of these subjects, scaling up supervision, or determining when monitoring may be discontinued. The two purposes for which risk assessment is used thus differ between the front end and back end of the criminal justice process, each with its own challenges.

At the beginning of the criminal justice process, various bottlenecks are encountered in the practical implementation of risk assessment for the purpose of monitoring TCSO subjects. In line with what Wolsink and colleagues already established in 2021 based on their interviews with professionals, we must conclude that risk assessment for TCSO subjects is often not carried out, not carried out in time, and/or not conducted by properly trained experts. Several factors explain why the task of monitoring TCSO subjects frequently shifts to the background in daily practice. The first reason is that TCSO investigations are often subordinate to investigative efforts targeting online child sexual abuse material. A core conclusion of Wolsink and colleagues (2021, p. 287) was: “Police capacity in the Netherlands

is limited and, given the nature and scope of the issue, is more frequently allocated to combating online child abuse than to tackling transnational child sex offending.” The nature of TCSO cases makes them particularly complex, labor-intensive, and time-consuming to investigate—especially in comparison to online child sexual abuse material cases, which typically begin with direct evidence of the offense.

A second reason why the monitoring task is often deprioritized is the challenge of allocating time to monitor potential sexual offense subjects. While police vice detectives are accustomed to case-based and reactive work, subject monitoring is typically a person-centered (and even preventive) task. Although vice teams possess substantive expertise on the topic, developing a profile of an individual may be more closely aligned with the core competencies of other police departments better equipped for such tasks. Moreover, several criminal justice professionals noted that monitoring is carried out as an ancillary task alongside other responsibilities. A more robust institutionalization and embedding of this task within each organization in the chain—along with the recognition or establishment of the necessary specializations and capacity—is a logical recommendation.

A third reason is that the execution of the monitoring task is hampered both by legal issues and by dissatisfaction or ambiguity concerning which risk assessment instrument(s) should be used. Several police units have ceased using scientifically validated instruments due to dissatisfaction with what they perceive as poor applicability to TCSOs. Uncertainty about what the monitoring task actually entails also hinders its implementation. There is no clear answer to questions such as: “What am I allowed or not allowed to do?” and “How often should this be done?”. Finally, organizations struggle with the sense that they lack the ‘right expertise’ to carry out this task. According to them, risk assessment for TCSOs is made more difficult by the fact that it is not always conducted by organizations or individuals sufficiently equipped for it (Wolsink et al., 2021).

In addition, both at the beginning and end of the criminal justice process, risk assessment is hindered by a lack of available and reliable information. Challenges are identified at various levels. First and foremost, there is a significant dark figure associated with this type of crime, and it is expected that much of the offending behavior takes place outside the view of authorities. TCSOs only rarely come to the attention of probation services, treatment providers, and forensic assessors – this is true in particular when perpetrators have been convicted abroad. The Dutch government’s policy, which emphasizes prosecution and sentencing in the country where the abuse occurred (i.e. abroad), inadvertently contributes to this blind spot. When Dutch nationals return to the Netherlands after serving their sentence abroad, there is no legal framework for post-release supervision or aftercare, such as monitoring or special conditions.

Even when TCSOs are on the radar, risk assessment remains difficult due to limited access to relevant information. To conduct their monitoring, police officers often only have access to Dutch police systems and open sources, while crucial information from foreign agencies or other regions is either unavailable or not shared. More information is generally

available at the back end of the criminal justice system, since treatment providers and supervisors have direct contact with the individuals involved. However, probation services lack access to police information, which hinders the completion of risk assessment instruments.

Recommendations

Based on the main conclusions presented, several recommendations can be made regarding the content and implementation of risk assessment for Dutch perpetrators of transnational child sex offending (TCSO), and more broadly, for the approach to this issue. We begin with a general recommendation for addressing TCSO, before reflecting on recommendations aimed at improving 1) risk assessment for these offenders, and 2) the execution of the police's monitoring task concerning TCSO subjects.

General policy recommendation to combat TCSO

Increase the detection rate of TCSOs by structurally investing in improving intelligence of police and partners.

I. Increase the detection rate for TCSOs.

- Preventing repeat offending by known sexual offenders or conducting risk assessments is not possible if TCSOs are not, first and foremost, apprehended. Prevalence rates from the survey among Dutch men underscore the scale of TCSO perpetration and the necessity of increasing the detection rate of these offenders. A higher detection rate will enable better prevention of repeat offending by known sexual offenders and reduce the risk of new victimization.
- For an effective approach to TCSO, measures targeting known sexual offenders must be embedded within a broader policy framework that also aims to identify offenders who currently fly under the radar. Attention must also be paid to prevention efforts, for example among the group of TCSOs who indicated that they had considered seeking professional help for their sexual feelings or behavior toward minors.
- For investigative efforts to be effective it is crucial to improve and increase the information available to Dutch law enforcement regarding TCSO. How can we shine light on the 'blind spot' of undetected TCSOs? How can the detection rate be increased? A logical recommendation is to examine whether it is desirable and feasible to expand the possibilities for gathering information on this group. Reconsidering the current policy of prosecuting TCSOs abroad may also be part of this discussion.

The task of monitoring TCSO subjects, and the use of risk assessment in that context, must be clearly assigned to a specific organization that is sufficiently equipped to carry it out.

II. Establish clarity regarding the roles, tasks, and responsibilities *between* and *within* different organizations in the criminal justice system.

- There is a perception both within the police and probation services that they are either not the appropriate parties for monitoring and risk assessment of sexual offenders, or that they are insufficiently equipped for this task. The decision to assign this responsibility to the TBKK (Specialized Vice Crime Teams within the police) made sense substantively, but the execution of this task is hindered by limited experience with risk assessment, a low sense of urgency for preventive tasks (as investigations are prioritized), and limited resources. It is therefore essential that the national government provides **clarity regarding the roles, tasks, and responsibilities of the various agencies with respect to the monitoring of TCSO subjects**.
- **Promote collaboration and information-sharing among the involved organizations.** In some regions, regularly scheduled coordination meetings between police, the Public Prosecution Service, and probation services—during which subject lists are reviewed and key information is exchanged— are already best practices. However, such initiatives often rely on the voluntary participation and the commitment of individual professionals, which leads to regional disparities and fluctuations over time.

III. Adequately equip agencies to effectively carry out the monitoring task for sex offenders, and TCSO subjects in particular.

- Once it has been determined which agency is responsible for the monitoring of TCSO subjects, and that this task must be carried out on the basis of risk assessment, it is essential that these organizations are **sufficiently equipped** to do so. The police and probation services appear to be logical actors for this responsibility, but both would require additional support in its execution. The nature of this support depends on the tasks, authorities, information systems, and institutional backgrounds of the respective organization. Should the police retain responsibility for monitoring TCSO subjects, additional **psychological expertise and training** in the use of risk assessment instruments will be necessary, along with a **designated point of contact** who can serve as a resource for questions, and **clear guidelines** outlining which powers may (and may not) be exercised in the course of this task. While the probation service does possess the relevant psychological expertise, assigning the task to this agency is complicated by

the fact that—once judicial supervision has ended—there is no legal framework enabling probation officers to monitor or support these ‘subjects’.

- **Allocate dedicated capacity for the monitoring task**, both within the police and the probation service. Performing the monitoring of TCSO subjects as an additional duty—as is currently often the case—cannot reasonably be expected of TCSO officers. This aligns with the recommendation made by Wolsink and others (2021, p. 296), who stated that addressing TCSO “requires a significant increase in staffing capacity.”

IV. Support and institutionalize regional processes at the national level.

- The monitoring of TCSO subjects is not only hindered by time and/or capacity constraints, but also by a lack of clarity regarding the monitoring task itself. A fourth recommendation is therefore to **develop national-level guidelines that define *how, by whom, how often, and for how long* the monitoring of TCSO subjects should be carried out**. To the extent such guidelines already or still exist (e.g., Rijkssen, 2017), how can their (re)implementation be ensured effectively across all regions? Further development of such national standards could not only improve the effectiveness of applied measures, but careful and uniform execution is also essential given the potential impact of certain measures on citizen’s lives.
- In line with the previous recommendation, we reiterate an earlier proposal by Rijkssen (2017; cited in Wolsink et al., 2021, p. 116) regarding police monitoring: “Ensure the establishment of a national helpdesk to oversee a uniform approach to assessing recidivism risk and the appropriate follow-up.” A centralized national point of contact could address inquiries from regional units and provide support where necessary.
- **Centralize information on TCSO subjects**. Within the police, information about TCSO subjects is currently fragmented across various teams and IT systems. Due to this lack of coordination, critical information may be lost—for instance, when an individual relocates to another region—and connections between cases, victims, or offenders may be overlooked. The currently figurative “subject list” should become a concrete, centrally managed list. In addition, a systematic, standardized method for recording information on TCSO subjects and their monitoring should be implemented to facilitate system searches, improve situational awareness, and ultimately enhance monitoring efforts. Transitioning to the development of subject-based case files for this task could be another strategy to overcome the current lack of oversight.

**Improve access to information of stakeholders
using risk assessment tools for TCSOs**

A reliable estimation of risk cannot be made without the necessary information to complete risk assessment tools. Several of the aforementioned recommendations aimed at improving the overall information position concerning TCSOs—such as enhancing information sharing between organizations and strengthening the police’s broader information capacity—will also benefit the quality of risk assessments. In addition, we highlight the following opportunities:

V. Increase knowledge about TCSOs convicted abroad.

- TCSOs convicted abroad represent a blind spot for Dutch authorities, and there is currently no legal framework available for monitoring this group. The Dutch policy of prosecuting Dutch TCSO offenders primarily in the country where the abuse took place may unintentionally lead to missed signals of reoffending, whether abroad or in the Netherlands. It is recommended to **investigate which options exist to establish a legal framework for these offenders** (e.g., probation supervision or special conditions). Given the unintended consequences of this policy, it may be advisable to reconsider placing greater emphasis on investigation and prosecution by Dutch authorities.
- **Improve information exchange with other countries, particularly with destination countries.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which holds information on (a limited number of) Dutch nationals detained abroad, could play a role in this. Additionally, it is recommended to invest in and maintain a well-functioning network of liaison officers (LOs) stationed abroad. Earlier reports already noted that “the capacity of the Dutch LOs is limited. Their areas of responsibility are too large for the available LOs, who also carry out other tasks besides combating transnational sexual child abuse” (Wolsink et al., 2021, p. 286).

VI. Minimize confusion about the legal powers of criminal justice agencies, particularly regarding the issues of ‘data carrier checks’ and ‘systematic observation’.

- Gathering information for risk assessment of TCSOs is hindered by two problems that go beyond this group alone: uncertainty about what constitutes ‘systematic observation’ and the checks of data carriers (in cases of suspicion or supervision related to child sexual abuse material). How far can a police officer go in monitoring the online behavior of a TCSO subject before it is considered ‘systematic observation’? And how and by whom can the search of data carriers be sustainably and effectively managed without diminishing the effectiveness of investigation and probation supervision (see Drouen et al., 2024)? One recommendation is therefore to **prioritize research, decision-making, and implementation to clarify these issues as soon as possible**. Developing a clear guideline detailing the practical execution of these tasks — including

concrete descriptions of what is permitted and what is not — would help organizations to carry out these tasks more frequently and responsibly.

VII. Increase the expertise of assessors.

- **Encourage specialization in sexual offenses among assessors to build and maintain substantive expertise.** Discussing and reporting on sexuality and sexual crimes is a specialized skill. Nonetheless, probation officers indicate that their vice specialization is not formally recognized or encouraged within their organization. For reporting on TCSOs, it is at minimum advisable that probation officers and assessors have received training on sex offenders or specialize in offenders of child sexual abuse.
- *If it is decided that risk assessment remains part of the TBKK teams within the police for monitoring purposes (see II.), investments must be made in (re)building expertise in this area. **Training police officers in risk assessment**, and/or recruiting staff with this expertise, is necessary to perform this task properly.*
- Across all organizations in the criminal justice system, even among trained professionals, misunderstandings exist about risk assessment instruments. In practice, it is not quite so simple to determine in which cases the STATIC-99R can be responsibly used, or how to score certain items. Therefore, all chain organizations are advised to establish quality standards for refresher training (e.g., frequency, content) and to enable staff to participate. The necessary resources should be made available, even if this requires purchasing new instruments.

VIII. Increase professionals' confidence in risk assessment.

- Both this and earlier research show that professionals—especially within the police and Public Prosecution Service—harbor significant doubts about the content of existing risk assessment tools (Wolsink et al., 2021). A lack of support from (potential) users of risk assessment instruments is “a fundamental problem, because if people don’t want to use them, the instruments are essentially useless” (Smid, 2020, p. 139).
- More research is needed to scientifically validate the STATIC-99R for the population of TCSOs. Scientific validation of instruments could increase professionals’ trust in them. However, this ambition is severely hindered by the high dark figure of transnational child sex offenses: validating existing tools, or developing new ones, is a major methodological challenge when the population is so under-registered and difficult to reach.
- Additionally, professionals’ concerns could possibly be partially alleviated, and the quality of risk assessments improved, if not only static but also dynamic risk factors could be incorporated. As early as 2017, Rijkssen recommended the police “*to deliver tailored assessments and to place the outcome of the STATIC-99R in the context of available information on dynamic risk factors. For this, the Stable-2007 and Acute-2007 instruments are valuable. The police should discuss the results of the risk assessment instrument and the additional dynamic risk factor information with the Public Prosecution Service and probation*” (in Wolsink et al., 2021, p. 116).

- Finally, it is important to have realistic expectations about what risk assessment instruments can and cannot do. Risk assessment tools essentially rely on a statistical reality. The factors included in such instruments have been scientifically proven to predict the risk of reoffending better than chance. However, the factors in the STATIC-99R are not necessarily theoretically motivated (see, for example, Heffernan & Ward, 2020): in other words, they do not inherently help us to explain or understand sexual recidivism. Furthermore, as with any probability calculation or prediction based on group averages, exceptions are always possible. Although validated instruments generally predict recidivism risk better than chance, predictions in individual cases will not always be accurate.

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