

There to Talk, Dare to Listen

Input of the Dutch Youth to the List of Issues of the
UN Children Rights Committee

Dutch National Youth Council



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Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) concerns children and youth, how they should be protected and how they should be prepared for adult life. The Dutch NGO Coalition for Children's Rights (KRC) and the Dutch National Youth Council (NJR) have an interest in representing the voice of those who should be protected by these rights: young people themselves. Youth represent 18.75% of the Dutch population.¹

We have spoken to young people in the Netherlands and collected input regarding problems that they believe deserve attention and solutions. In this report, we will give special attention to the experiences of young people dealing with difficult situations. They are the group depending mostly on proper compliance with the CRC. In preparation for this report, we have looked at ways youth reflect on the daily practice of children's rights, based on their own experiences. This report describes young people's visions of the meaning of children's rights.

The report is composed of contributions of almost 700 youth. First of all, a survey about children's rights was distributed among young people throughout the Netherlands. We asked them to what extent they are familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, which rights they consider important or less important and whether they have ever faced situations in which they had to stand up for their rights. In addition, we have entered into discussions with young people experiencing difficult circumstances. We asked them for their opinions and experiences. Together with these youth, we identified issues where things are going wrong, issues where things could go better and what we need in order to achieve this. The results of the survey and interviews have been worked out in terms of the issues identified by young people.

In this report, we exclusively discuss the issues that emerged from the interviews and survey. Hence, not all rights from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are mentioned. It should be noted that despite the fact that some rights were not addressed by youth, they may still contain issues to be worked on. This report is compiled based on clusters of rights according to the classification of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. For each issue, we start with a description of the situation according to the experiences of young people and we finish with a

¹ Central Agency of Statistics (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek), 17 July 2018. Retrieved from <https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/7461bev/table?dl=1EFBB>

question to the Dutch government; the responsible authority for the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Netherlands. We would like to see these questions answered by the state.

Thanks to all the young people who contributed by sharing their experiences. In addition, we also want to thank their supervisors and other contact persons for collaborating in order to make young people's voices heard.

Method

This youth version of the List of Issues Prior to Reporting consists of a quantitative section and a qualitative section. Regarding the quantitative data, a survey was distributed among youth by the Dutch National Youth Council (NJR) panel. Regarding the qualitative data, interviews were conducted among young people who have, at any time within the reporting period, been exposed to hazardous situations. On the one hand, these data provide a general picture of youth in the Netherlands and, on the other hand, a specific picture of youth in vulnerable situations.

Survey among students

With regard to the quantitative data, a survey was distributed. This survey was plotted through the Dutch National Youth Council (NJR) panel and shared among schools in the Netherlands. A total of 638 youth filled out the survey. This provides a picture of young people's thoughts on and knowledge of children's rights. The average age of the participants is 15 years. The group surveyed consists of 62.5% girls and 37.2% boys, 0.3% identifies as different or did not complete the survey. Of the youth surveyed, 32.4% attend pre-vocational secondary education, 12.8% secondary vocational education, 21.1% senior general secondary education and 33.7% pre-university education.

Interviews with youth in vulnerable situations

A total of 48 young people in vulnerable situations have shared their opinions and contributed ideas about issues regarding children's rights in the Netherlands. The input was retrieved from 10 in-depth interviews in the form of individual, duo and group discussions, four focus groups, and two training sessions. During the interviews, young people were asked about their rights, what rights they consider important and if and where they think their rights have been violated. Different rights were discussed during the focus groups and the opportunity existed for the respondents to reply to each other. The input provided by the youth is available to read in the text. For protection reasons, the names of the people involved have been made anonymous.

Various bodies, projects, and organisations were involved in the process of approaching youth to partake in this research. The young people that contributed to this research are dealing or have had to deal with the following situations and authorities: Youth Care, residential care, youth custodial institutions, lack of permanent residence, chronic disorder, growing up in poverty, a transition of sex,

experience with the Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care, psychological problems, and/or young mothers.

The CRC applies to children up to the age of 18. Contributed to this study have young people who, in the past five years, have been defined as a child. We moreover spoke with youth who by now are 18 years and older. They told us about their past experiences from when they were still minors, and how they prepared for their transition to adulthood. Together, this provides a broad scope of the status of children's rights in the Netherlands, from the perspectives of children to those of young adults.

General Implementation Measures

According to these rights, the government must do everything it can to assert the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children. These rights moreover declare that the government must inform all children and adults about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that it must make reports on this subject publicly available.

Issue 1: Information is insufficient

Standing up for your rights, if others do not do that for you, requires a certain level of awareness among youth about their rights. Young people and their parents have the right to receive information about children's rights. Moreover, the government should ensure everyone knows of the existence of children's rights, and what they entail.² However, the survey shows young people are insufficiently aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Prior to the survey, 66% (see Chart 1) of young people had not heard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

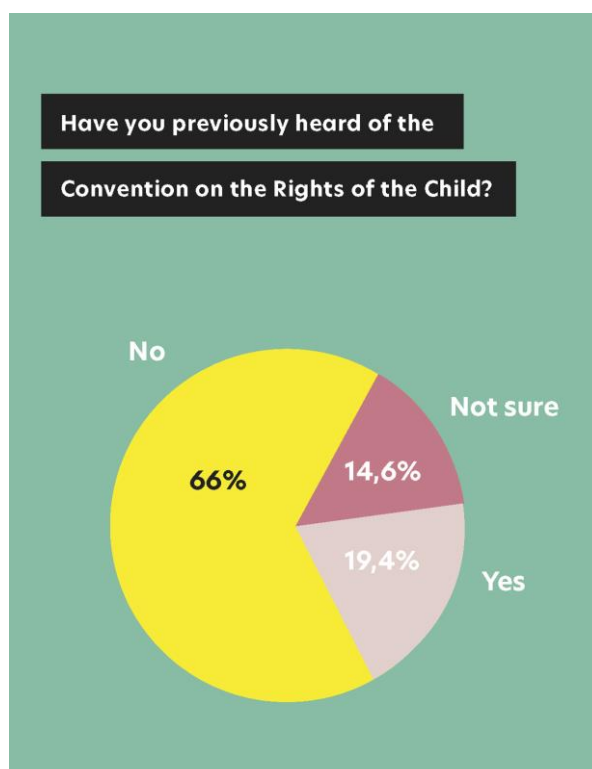


Chart 1: Overview how many youth had previously heard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

² The Dutch NGO Coalition for Children's Rights (KRC). Retrieved from www.kinderrechten.nl

This applies to 80.3% of young people attending pre-vocational secondary education, 68.8% attending secondary vocational education, 63.6% attending senior general secondary education and 53.5% attending pre-university education. The difference between these groups may be related to a difference in age. For example, young people in pre-university education are on average older than those in pre-vocational secondary education. Moreover, the data show that 72.2% of young people between the age of 11 and 14 had not heard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child before partaking in the survey, compared to 34.5% of young people between the age of 18 and 22. Among the young people surveyed, 35.3% would like to receive more education on children’s rights. The older group of young people was specifically more positive about receiving more education on this topic. In addition to rights, they were also asked if they knew about the existence of an Ombudsman for Children (see Chart 2) in the Netherlands. It appears the number of youth who had previously heard of the Ombudsman for Children is higher than the number of youth who had previously heard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: 46.4% as opposed to 34%.

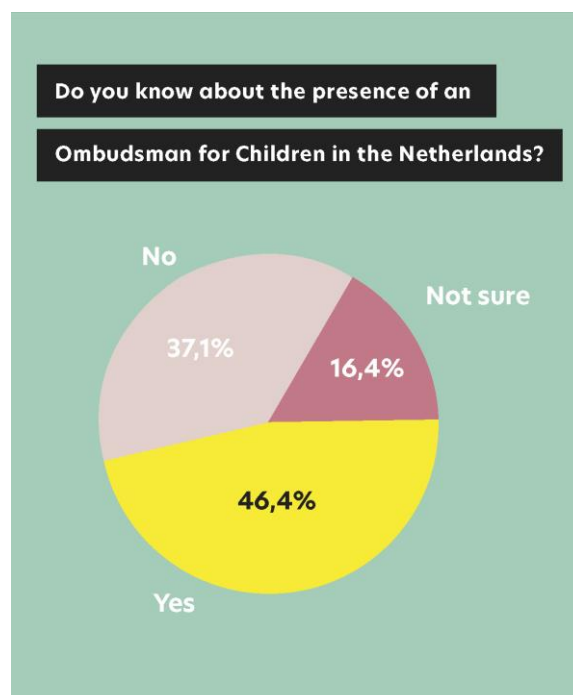


Chart 2: Overview how many youth are aware of the presence of an Ombudsman for Children in the Netherlands

The data show that half of young people have had no education about children’s rights. This does not mean there has never been information provided to them about children’s rights, but it does show that the information they may have received did not last. *“Every high school occasionally sees a gay person, and after all, I found out I was a lesbian when I was 20 years old. It doesn’t mean it immediately makes sense,*

but it contributes to your awareness and a seed has been planted.” (Noah, 23 years old). According to young people, school is a good platform to create awareness, provided that the information is delivered the right way. “I have never received this kind of information before, just information about drugs and alcohol. At school, you can reach most children, but you have to make sure it doesn’t become some sort of educational program. I would make it more interactive. I don’t know if children and young people in the Netherlands know what children’s rights entail. I have never been exposed to violence, but I do know that there are other children who have. Would they always know how to find help? I don’t think so. How to handle youth care or something similar is a very important topic for children.” (Susanne, 23 years old). The data show that when young people have knowledge of children’s rights, this would have most likely been taught to them at school. In fact, 41.2% of young people know about the Convention on the Rights of the Child mainly through school, but it is also addressed on television (29.9%), on the internet and social media (23.5%) and by people in their environment (11.0%) (see Chart 3).

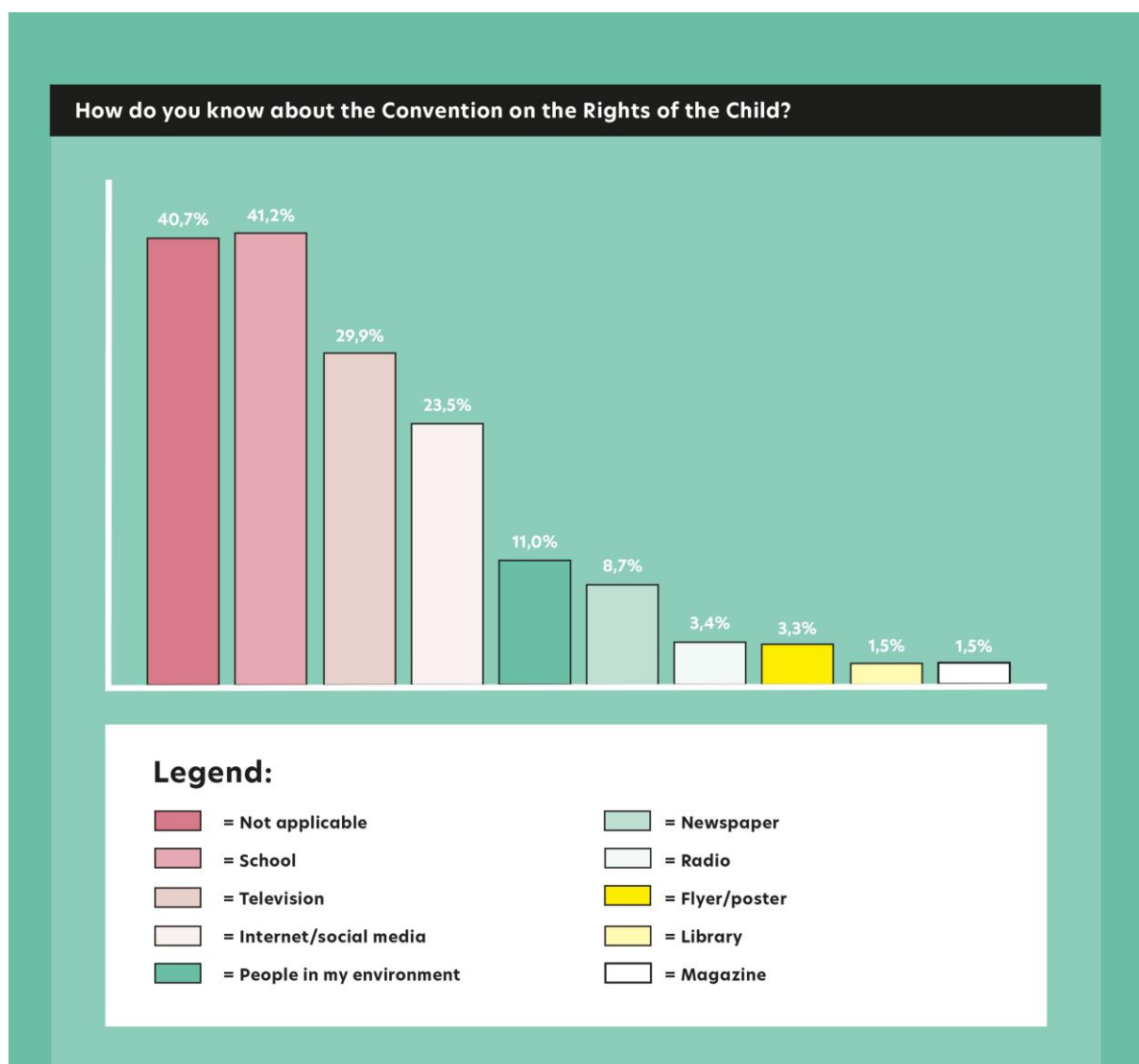


Chart 3: Response of youth how they know about the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Providing young people with information can contribute to awareness of rights, but it is important to also address how to take action in order to claim the rights they are entitled to. Hence, young people should have a place to go to with their questions and problems. Interviews show that many young people have to take own initiative when it comes to contacting and consulting professionals, such as general practitioners, care coordinators, and other care providers. It is illustrative of the situation of young people that being able to exercise their rights is not always obvious, but instead often depends on their own perseverance. A basic set of rights should be easily accessible to all young people in all situations, which is unfortunately not currently the case.

Young people often only seek help after they have been dealing with problems for a longer period of time or after they have come into contact with peers who are in

clearly better situations. *"I also think it is important to make children aware of their rights. Just like I didn't know it was weird to eat mayonnaise with every meal, you don't know that it's weird if get abused at home. Later, when you are an adolescent you might realise it's strange that you don't get any lunch for school while your friend does. But of most basic things you don't know how things are supposed to be."* (Noah, 23 years old). In this quote, she addresses how young people are used to a certain status quo based on their home situation. By providing information, young people can get informed about desirable situations that would arise when their rights and interest as a child are put central. This gives them the opportunity to become aware of their own situations. An example comes from Suzanne, who was not aware of her own depression: *"Information is very important to me because looking back I realise I've been depressed all my life. I just didn't know it was depression, I thought it was supposed to be that way. Nowadays, I am doing a lot better mentally."* (Suzanne, 23 years old). Education about children's rights, for example, the right to information or health, can raise awareness at an early age among young people about the opportunities to take initiative and to raise problems if necessary.

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- ❖ **What steps is the state staking to ensure that from now on all young people are informed about their rights and know where they can seek help when their rights are not being complied with?**
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General Principles

These rights construe that the interest of the child must always be prioritised. Children may not be discriminated against, they have the right to live, and their ideas and opinions must always be taken into account.

Issue 2: Quality of participation opportunities falls short

An overarching issue can be identified when we look at the general principles. Taking young people seriously by listening specifically to what they have to say, stimulating their own opinion-forming, offering opportunities to express these opinions and providing them with feedback, has a positive impact on the development of youth. This can be stimulated at a young age within a household situation, something that applies to the majority of young people surveyed. 90.7% of young people feel taken seriously by their parents (see Chart 4). They are allowed to participate in discussions and decision-making at home, for example when it comes to their choice of clothes and appearance (94.6%), their choice of school (90.9%) and which friends they associate with (87.4%). This is less the case when it comes to spending money, where 47.6% of the young people surveyed are allowed to participate in the decision-making process. Moreover, the survey shows boys are slightly more negative about how much they are allowed to participate in discussions and decision-making at home. Young people attending pre-university education generally seem to be able to talk more about matters at home than other young people. When it comes to watching television, 97% of pre-university education students have the chance to participate as opposed to 68.8% of vocational secondary education students. The older young people get, the more they have to say about what time they should be home in the evening and what part-time job they do, but the less often they feel they can talk to their parents about which friends they associate with.

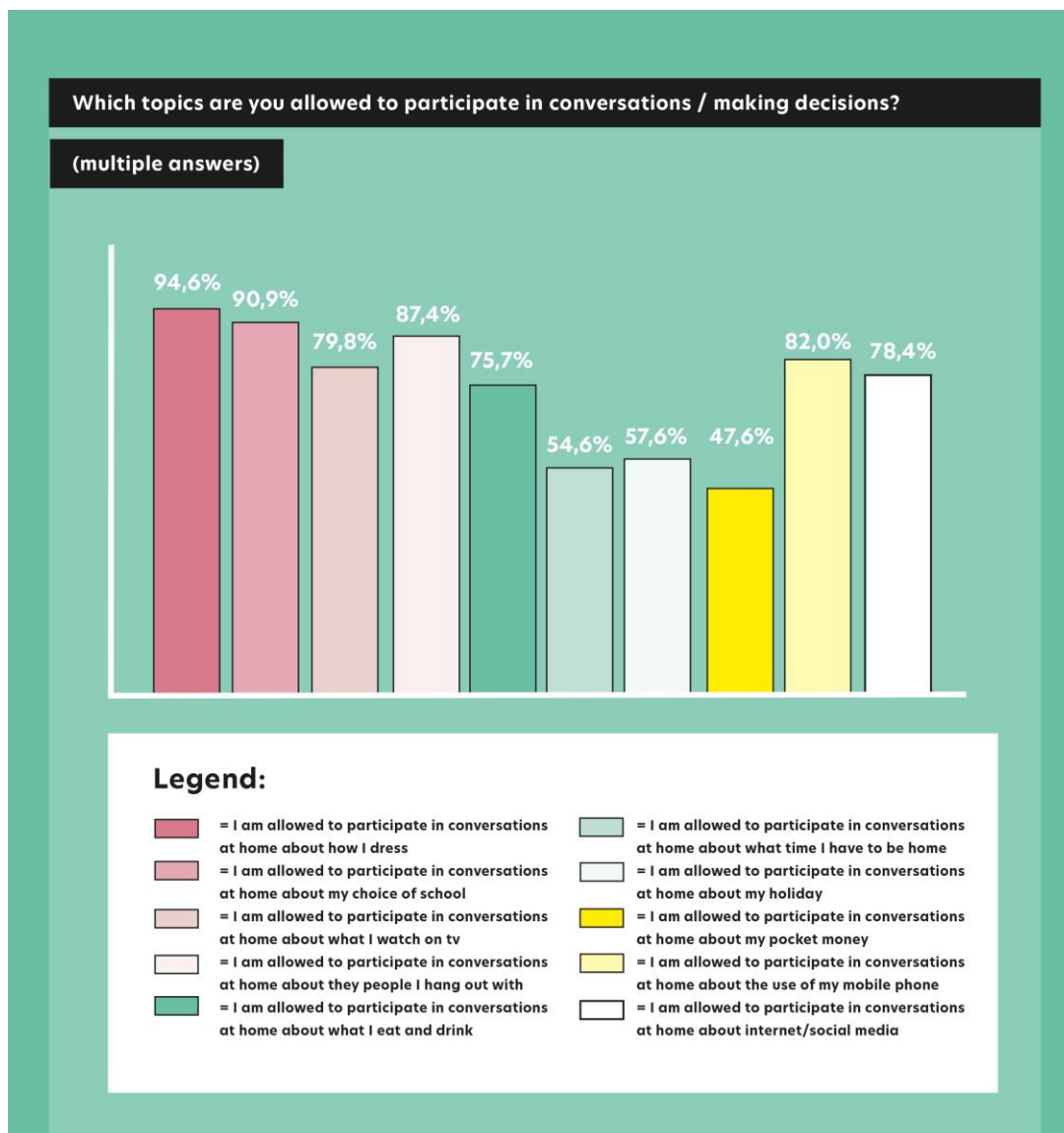


Chart 4: Overview of the topics youth are allowed to participate in conversations and/or decision making.

The data show that most young people feel taken seriously by their parents, followed by a distance by their employers (47.8%), and the police (47.2%). Young people feel the least taken seriously by media and politics. Just under a quarter of the young people (24.9%) express to explicitly feel not being taken seriously by politics. This applies to 21.6% of young people in relation to media. Boys feel less likely to be taken seriously by media and politics than girls. In education, 20.5% of senior general secondary education students do not feel taken seriously by their teachers (see Chart 5). This is clearly the group of students that feel the least taken seriously, as percentages are considerably lower among vocational secondary education students (13%), pre-vocational secondary education students (10.8%) and pre-university education students (10.6%). Approximately half of the young people indicate they are

allowed to participate in various discussions at school (48%) as opposed to 12% who indicate they are not allowed to talk about anything.

Indicate on every line how serious they take you as a young person

		Pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO)	Secondary vocational education (MBO)	Senior general secondary education (HAVO)	Pre-university education (VWO)
TEACHERS	Serious	58,9%	59,4%	50,0%	63,1%
	No opinion	30,3%	27,5%	29,5%	26,3%
	Not serious	10,8%	13,0%	20,5%	10,6%

Chart 5: Indication of youth to what degree they feel taken serious by their teachers.

Ensuring the right to participation at all policy levels remains a major challenge. According to article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to give their opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously. Unfortunately, we see that this is insufficiently done in practice. At the moment, the Dutch legislation hardly guarantees the contribution of children and young people, resulting in no obligation to involve children and young people in policy formation. Therefore, the willingness to involve children and/or young people in the formation of policies differs per director or policymaker, resulting in arbitrariness. The participation of children and young people should not depend on the goodwill of an individual. This applies to policies directly affecting young people, such as in education and youth care, but also, for example, to policies regarding climate in which young people have a major interest.

Moreover, it is essential to have children and young people involved at an earlier stage of the decision-making process. Young people indicate they only have a chance to participate in the process at a late stage. Therefore, they feel like they embody the box that needs to be ticked, with little room left to make any impacting changes. Hence, young people experience their participation in policy-making as a moment of confirmation of the process rather than a chance for them to provide qualitative input.

In order to make participation possible, a child or a young person should receive support. First of all, more attention on how to develop skills to make your voice heard needs to be paid at schools. This could play a major role in citizenship education. Secondly, it is important that children and young people are being facilitated in a broader sense to make their voices heard. The moment young people provide input, they often miss out on the income from a (side) job or time for their education. For example, young people with experience in relation to Youth Care or youth mental health care should receive compensation for sharing their experiences. In secondary education, too, the participation allowance for students often lags behind compared to what parents and teachers receive, while their time investment is the same. Thirdly, the group of young people who work intensively for youth organisations or participation councils is often given far too little financial and practical support. *“Directors say you have to prove yourself first, while we think it should be a fundamental condition. It’s not just about board scholarships, but also about getting the time to hold a meeting. It shouldn’t mean you have to deal with the education inspectorate because you missed a class.”* (Jip, 21 years old).

- ❖ **What measures does the state take in order to anchor article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Dutch law system and thus guarantee the participation of children and young people?**

 - ❖ **What measures does the state take to ensure children and young people can exercise their right to participate in practice, without their participation causing financial or other difficulties?**
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Issue 3: Young people’s requests for help are rejected

Youth experiencing problems and seeking help from a professional have had to overcome a major barrier to do so. Unfortunately, we too often see that while young people are in this vulnerable situation, they are being rejected or not taken seriously. In addition, a high level of assertiveness is currently expected of young people to achieve the care they are entitled to. This often results in young people having to repeatedly reach out for help and, constantly address their problems. Such experiences can have a major impact on the further course of the problems. Many psychological complaints arise or develop during puberty, with approximately 75% of psychological symptoms starting before the age of 25. The earlier children are

provided assistance, the higher the chance of reducing or preventing symptoms. It is therefore of major importance to listen carefully and show presence at crucial moments since a lack of doing so could sincerely harm them.

Saifeddine (19 years old) talks about his experience when he had to ask for help several times at different organisations: *“I was trying to get in touch with a neighbourhood team. I really had to stretch to him that I was at the point of doing it [committing suicide] because I was incredibly depressed. And he told me: ‘Just hold it for a moment, we are speeding things up but we have no room for you here at the moment’. I didn’t get any help at the youth counter either. They told me: ‘We have forgotten, it didn’t show up in the system.’ [...] When I was in a crisis centre they told me to go home, but the entire problem in the first place was that I couldn’t go home. I love my family a lot, but they have an aggressive side too. I made reports to the police and they too told I could go home. It only got worse from there but still, they couldn’t help me. I called every phone number and really went after it. Eventually, there was one institution that would take me. They speeded things up as I seemed so urgent to them they could provide me with a spot [...] I did have to fight for that for a little while. It took three years. I also gave up hope for a while because they constantly told me to go home.”* In his situation, it took three years, from the age of 15 to 18, before he received the care he required, despite the fact he was independently reaching out to various institutions.

Providing care for youth with mental issues can become challenging when the child is too young to be diagnosed with certain disorders. Nevertheless, this does not mean the issues do not exist and that they do still need professional help. As mentioned earlier, 75% of mental issues start before the age of 25. More than 1 in 5 children have already had serious psychological symptoms, such as depression or anxiety disorder, by the age of 19.³

“Below the age of 18, you are in the stage of puberty and you are too young to be diagnosed with a personality disorder because you are still in the stage of developing your personality. But during that period I did have serious problems for which I didn’t receive help.” (Suzanne, 23 years old). Suzanne looks back at the first time she reached out to a professional for help: *“At one point, I gathered courage and asked for help. I went to the care coordinator at my high school. I was told it was part of puberty and that I was just feeling insecure. They told me there are worse things that could*

³ Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care (GGZ totaal), 25 May 2016. Retrieved from https://www.ggztaaal.nl/nw-29166-7-3623450/nieuws/young_mind_academy_signaleert_psychische_problemen_bij_jongeren.html

happen, like losing a parent. I had previously told my general practitioner that I was experiencing problems, but was rejected there too. It resulted in me feeling very ashamed of my problems for a long time. It is only since this summer that I dare to talk about my problems. You become incredibly good at hiding them.”

Reaching out for contact, often initiated by the young person itself, comes hand in hand with a great deal of uncertainty and can be a defining moment. Rejection of a complaint entails major risks in terms of self-confidence of the child, belief in oneself and the fear of having to take the same step again when complaints persist. It could lead to the stagnation of a positive development of the problem.

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- ❖ **How does the state guarantee the accessibility of professional assistance for young people who require help? Particularly the first moment of contact can be definable here; how does the state guarantee young people are offered appropriate help from the first moment?**
 - ❖ **In what ways will the state prevent the aggravation of existing problems as a result of postponing/failing to provide help for the young person in question?**
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Family Situation and Alternative Care

These rights construe how children must be treated within family situations and, what happens when parents get a divorce. These rights moreover construe how children must be treated when it is no longer possible for them to live at home.

Issue 4: Young people in vulnerable positions are not sufficiently supported towards adulthood

"I find it weird that you become an adult at 18, why at 18 and not at 20? As soon as you turn 18, Youth Care treats you as an adult and just don't care anymore. For example, when your parents are divorced, it's more difficult to receive help when you are 18 or older. You get way more help when you are younger than 18 and it makes no sense that you can't get the same help when you are 20. Because, when do you really become an adult?" (Zoë, 15 years old). This question, asked by a 15-year-old, shows the concerns existing among young people in vulnerable situations regarding the moment they become adults, which in their view is not bound to a specific age limit. Young people indicate this varies greatly per context and per person. To a certain degree, young people in this life stage can remain very dependent on help from their immediate environment. Young people in difficult situations seek support (see Chart 6) from parents (86.4%), friends (67.5%) and other family members (48.5%). In addition, they also reach out to confidential counsellors (34.4%), teachers (35.3%), or the Child Helpline (23.6%). There are also situations in which young people do not seek help at all. This is the case with 4.1% of the respondents, meaning they are left on their own.

The transition from youth to adulthood is not only a matter of finding different contact persons but requires a lot more from young people relying on care institutions. To the extent that this has not yet been done, an appeal is made to someone's responsibility, independence, and assertiveness. These are skills that are in constant development during this life stage and, which are being imposed too much pressure when the transition is not properly guided. Hence, it is of great importance to assist young people in order to give them the chance to further develop, instead of getting lost in the care system. The latter would ultimately create more problems within their current situation as well as in their future.

"For example, young people with a chronic disorder have a high risk of dropping out. Guidance of this group of young people often happens fragmented, with a

pediatrician responsible for medical reference to an adult doctor, the school as the responsible figure for education and the government only stepping in once you are unemployed.” (Nora, 23 years old). In such a situation, young people are expected to coordinate different contact persons while also having to deal with other major decisions distinctive for the life stage in which they find themselves. An example from a custodial institution for youth shows us how a young person, who at the time indicated to turn 18 in the next four months, is experiencing major concerns about not yet been approached by anyone about arranging allowances, insurance, and care (Raul, 17 years old). This situation especially requires proper supervision, due to the fact that this person within his situation is unable to undertake further research himself. He depends on support within his institution and failure of this support could have major impacts.

- ❖ **How does the state guarantee the rights of minors who find themselves in positions depending on others in order to ensure they are well prepared for a proper transition towards adulthood and, that these minors receive adequate, appropriate support?**
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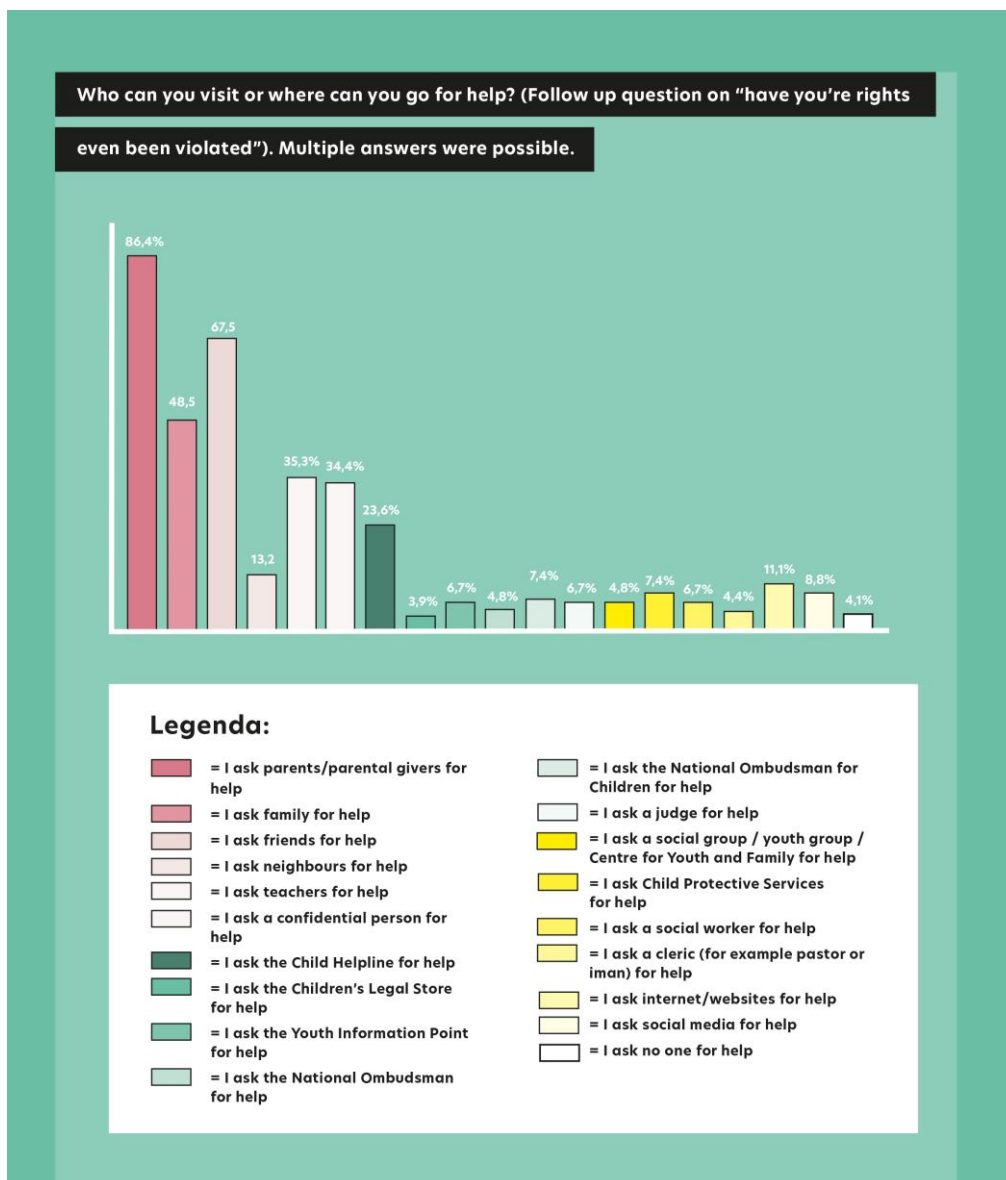


Chart 6: Overview of support of youth when they need help.

Issue 5: A proper place to live is not guaranteed

An assured place to live is indispensable to young people in vulnerable situations. It gives them the necessary support in a period in their life often dominated by uncertainty. A sense of safety and certainty are necessary for these children in order to foster further development, to build confidence, and to think about and work towards their futures.

Uncertainty about a place to live, due to becoming homeless, admission to a care institution or other reasons that make living at home impossible, can provoke major

concerns amongst young people. This is the case with 10,700 young people in the Netherlands.⁴ A place to live, a roof above your head, is a primary necessity of life and necessary in order to safely grow up. Uncertainty about the duration of a place to live and unclear follow-up opportunities can result in the causation of stress and anxiety. Saifeddine, 19 years old, says: *“You have a place to live now, but the fear of having to leave and starting all over again remains. I have not been taken seriously so many times, but this time I have. Imagine what happens if I lose this too, who is going to take me seriously? This feels like my last chance.”* Joey, 23 years old, joins in: *“I know what I have, where I stand. I try to hold on to this for as long as possible, because what will happen after won’t be positive.”*

Clarity about a place to live is highly desired. An example of this comes from Yara, 19 years old. She lived in residential care from the age of 13 to 18, a place where you can live if you, due to various reasons, can no longer live with your parents or family. *“The plan was that I would move to another group after a year and a half. I didn’t want that and my counsellor picked up on that. She made sure I could stay for as long as it would benefit me. Living within one residential care group for five years was pretty special at the time. Fortunately, I was allowed to live there until I turned 18. When I turned 18, I was in the middle of my final exams of high school and the moment you turn 18, financing and indication from the government cease. You are officially no longer under-age and the support stops. That was a problem. My counsellor argued that I could stay until after my final exams, and it worked.”* This situation shows the importance of tailored treatment, wherein this case it was in the interest of the young person to ensure the certainty of her living situation.

In order to make a (temporarily) tailored living situation possible, alternative measures should be taken into consideration. Young people indicate that it’s always the child that is first placed out of home, without taking into account the option of placing the parent(s) out of home as a way of giving them a time-out. It indicates how young people think about uncommon opportunities, which could have the potential to protect the development of the interest of the child in urgent situations. The interviews show that young people require safety, peace, and clarity. They can find this within a living group, residential care, a family home, or at home, as long as it provides a safe environment in which they can feel at home and continue to develop themselves.

⁴ Government of the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid Nederland), 14 March 2019. ‘Actieprogramma Dak- en Thuisloze Jongeren 2019-2021’

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- ❖ How does the state guarantee a safe living situation for all young people, in particular, those identified as homeless?
 - ❖ What alternative solutions is the state willing to consider in order to guarantee access to safe, peaceful and evident places to live for young people?
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Civil Rights and Opportunities

These rights construe the right to identity, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the freedom to gather in public spaces, freedom to privacy and the right to not to be mistreated.

Issue 6: Privacy should protect young people instead of causing them more concerns

The right to privacy is a right that affects young people directly and indirectly in various ways. Despite the great importance of this right in the lives of young people, the results of the survey show that young people do not necessarily consider this the most important right. Only 2.5% of young people experience the right to privacy to be the most important children's right, followed by 5.1% of young people regarding it the second most important right (see Chart 7). In contrast, a percentage of 4% indicates to find the right to privacy the least important right. This could mean that young people are not aware of the importance of privacy, or that they are not the ones experiencing direct consequences of privacy violation.

This is not the case when we look at young people facing difficult circumstances. The interviews show that in their case privacy is of great importance to them. Mentioned in various conversations are issues relating to privacy. Privacy is specially mentioned within the context of compiling and reporting information about the young person in question. Young people indicate to especially experience an unequal relation when it comes to compiling and reporting private information to Youth Care. Youth Care employers, the young people say, have access to all sensitive information, while they themselves do not know who uses this information.

The intention of a personal file is to compile sensitive information about a minor in order to provide help, and should not lead to the causation of further damage to the child. A certain level of trust is expected and partly forced upon young people, who have no say in the way their file is kept. This becomes painfully clear when mistakes are made in or regarding a file. An example comes from Tom, 21 years old, who has experience with Youth Care. *"They supposedly lose files and then you have to tell them everything again, which makes it impossible to make any progress"*.

When the course of your treatment, your health, your access to social services as well as other facets of life are based on personal information kept in a file, you should be

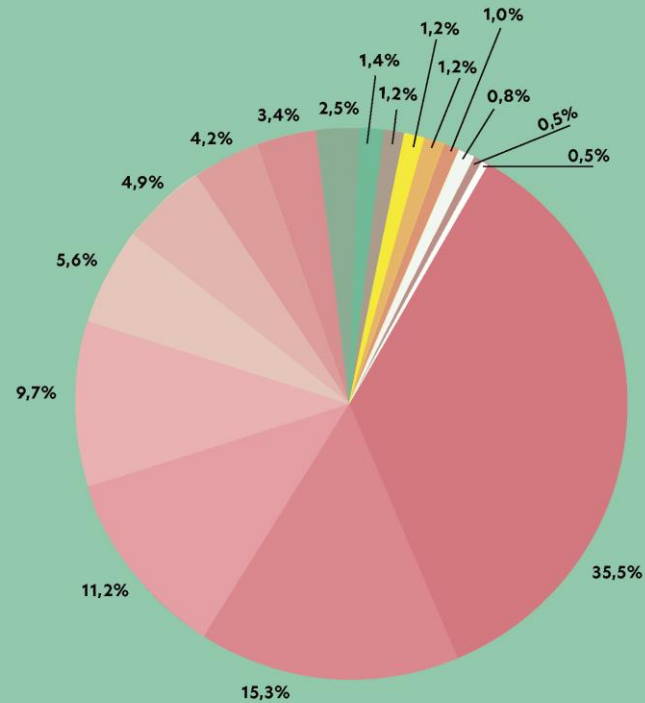
able to gain insight into that file. Unfortunately, this is currently not the case. This results in many young people who do not feel taken seriously and are not actively involved with the content of their files.

In addition, there is an existing ambition for an integrated approach in which domains work together in order to improve the provision of guidance and to identify early problems amongst young people. This could be beneficial if it means that young people no longer have to tell their story to each individual caregiver since he or she could instead get general information through the young person's file. However, unless young people's involvement and control in the files is guaranteed, this integral approach should be questionable on a privacy-technical level. A sense of ownership amongst young people could foster their confidence in the provision of assistance.

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- ❖ **In what ways does the state protect vulnerable young people against privacy violations by support services?**

 - ❖ **How does the state guarantee young people with access to and insight in their files and control over their privacy-sensitive information?**
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Which rights do you find important in the Netherlands?



Legend:


















- | | |
|---|--|
|  = Equal treatment |  = Peace and spare time |
|  = Protection against violence |  = Help for disabled people |
|  = Education |  = Help for refugees |
|  = Care and love |  = Gathering with friends |
|  = Healthy food and drinks |  = Protection against hard labour |
|  = Opinion |  = Belief/religion |
|  = Health care and youth care |  = Help for children in touch with police/prisons |
|  = Protection against war |  = Other |
|  = Own place and privacy | |

Chart 7: Overview which rights youth find most important.

Issue 7: Access to appropriate information offered by the right people is not arranged for

No less than 24.6% of young people consider the right to information the least important children's right (see Chart 8). This could, however, be related to the fact that young people in the Netherlands have such unlimited access to information, which could make it difficult for them to imagine this right to be oppressed. Young people who are often involved with decision-making regarding their health, living situation or future, do acknowledge and emphasize the importance of receiving the correct information. Suzanne tells from experience: *"Because I go to special care now, I am exposed to long waiting times. There is a period of six weeks between your first intake and your treatment. If you are unsure what is wrong with you, you can start searching Google and you will find information that is not necessarily correct. Access to the right information should come from the correct person."*

In order to increase accessibility to information, it is important that the correct people are willing to contribute. Unfamiliarity about this right to information could have negative outcomes for young people. A frequently mentioned problem is not being allowed to view personal files and reports. *"I more often felt like I had no access to information than I felt I had. When you go to the pharmacy to request your medication overview, you have to go through your GP. You are not allowed to read your file with reports on treatments. Even though, these are things you should have a right to. Back then I couldn't really be bothered, just because I didn't want to create even more hassle."* (Noah, 23 years old). Young people depend on others when it comes to accessing information. When the role of gatekeeper or intermediary between a young person and their information is carried out properly, it can make an important contribution to the empowerment of young people. Young people emphasize the importance of knowing where they stand, and what they can and cannot do.

Information about formal procedures, treatments, and legislation is complex. An interview with young advocates and experts working in the field of chronic disorders shows they admit they *"often don't know and have to figure it out"* (Mila, 21 years old). This makes them wonder: *"How is it ever possible for a young person to figure this out on their own? It is a heavy subject because it is your future, your independence and your self-reliance that depends on it"* (Nora, 23 years old). Support, for example, a social worker, a counsellor, a guardian or other professional, can ensure that the appropriate information is transmitted the correct way, according to young people.

❖ How does the state ensure young people have access to the correct information and receive support and guidance from specialised people?

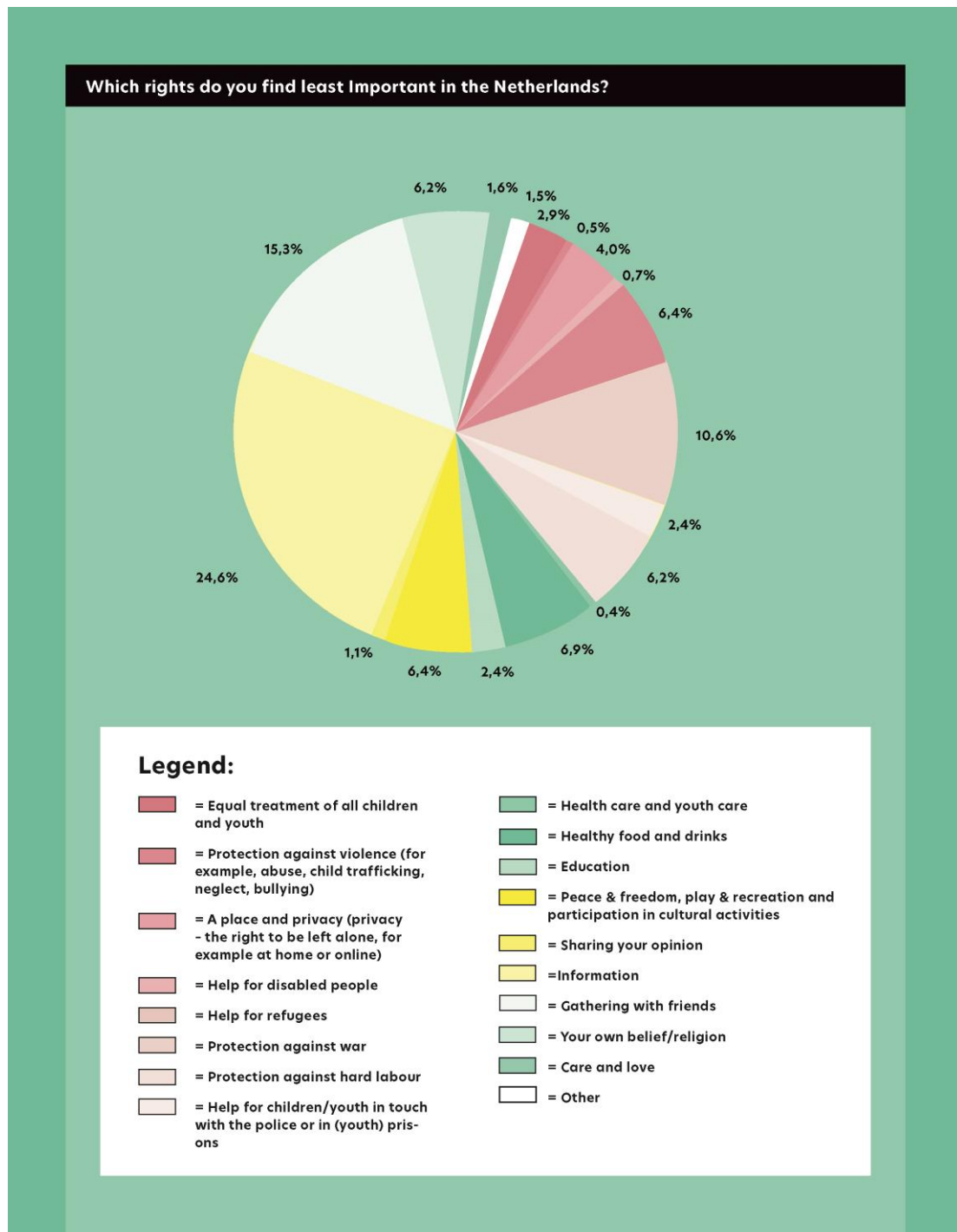


Chart 8: Overview which rights youth find least important

Limitations, Health and Wellbeing

These rights construe health care and the benefits children must receive.

Issue 8: Young people's perspectives are not embedded in treatments

Young people emphasize they want to have the opportunity to object, have access to their personal files, and the possibility to attend a consultation and transfer moments. They clearly express curiosity towards the decision-making process and emphasize the desire to be involved before conclusions and decisions are made in order to provide context. They want to know where they stand. All young people we spoke to, address there is not enough room for them to bring input and that the input they can give is not properly acknowledged. They believe the voice of young people should be represented in all care structures.

In order to systematically organise public participation, it is necessary to facilitate and record public participation at a policy level. Here, experiential expertise can play a major role. Experiential expertise is increasingly being used to improve help and health care. Nevertheless, the structural commitment and integration in policy-making can still be improved. Several youth organisations, youth networks, and youth projects are taking the lead and demonstrate the successful participation of young people on all facets. They play a pioneering position within the health care system and are the ones creating a bottom-up movement. In order to further expand their successes, further governmental support is indispensable.

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- ❖ **How will the state continue to promote the integration of young people's perspective regarding support?**

 - ❖ **How will the state ensure young people can make their voice heard, individually and collectively, within and about the provision of support?**
-

Education, Spare Time and Cultural Activities

These rights construe all children must receive education in order to prosper. In addition, children must also have the opportunity to play and have fun.

Issue 9: Young people in vulnerable positions do not receive the education they are entitled to

When it comes to young people, the right to education turns out to be the most well-known right. 44% of the young people surveyed indicated this as the most well-known children's right to them. In addition, 23.3% of young people (see Chart 7) identify the right to education as one of the most important rights for children. This indicates the importance and familiarity young people experience regarding this right. Interviews show young people view education as the basis for further development. Several conversations show education is experienced as indispensable for current development and proper preparation for the future. It is therefore even more important to focus on youth for who access to education is limited. When the risk of dropping out occurs, or when young people have dropped out for whatever reason, alternative measures are necessary to be taken in order to provide a young person with quality education.

The interviews show that, at this stage, education is not always offered in a way that benefits young people most. When it comes to secure youth care facilities, it turns out the level of education offered may be limited. This could mean a young person cannot attend the level of education that is suitable to him or her. Interviews show young people, therefore, feel their future is not being taken seriously.

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- ❖ How will the state ensure all young people have access to appropriate education? Should young people not fall within the regular education system, how does the state prevent these young people from dropping out of school?
 - ❖ How does the state identify young people who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out of the education system? What kind of data is known about young people who are unable to attend regular education? What alternatives are offered to them?

- ❖ How does the state ensure the education offered matches the level of education young people should be receiving? How does the state guarantee the quality of education in relation to young people's potential is met in cases where the supply of education is limited such as in secure youth care facilities?
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Special Protection Measures

These rights are intended for children in special situations, including young refugees, children who are conflicting with the law and children who have been abused. These rights construe how these children must be treated.

Issue 10: Appropriate care for victims is still insufficient

15.3% of young people who completed the survey (See Chart 7) consider protection against violence the most important children's right. In this issue, we address the care that has been pointed out specifically in article 39 of the CRC: appropriate care for victims of violence. The interviews show young people who do not fit the norm are more likely to be victims of stigma and discrimination, sometimes resulting in violence. Conversations with young people who identify as transgender show they experience much discrimination sometimes leading to violence. They express experiencing difficulties reporting this. *"You get used to it"* (Bobby, 17 years old and Tim, 18 years old). Violence and discrimination should be prevented and when this is not done, there should be adequate aftercare for victims. This is of major importance to LHBTIQ+ youth: research shows suicidal attempts amongst lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are 4.5 times higher compared to heterosexual young people. A sample from the Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) amongst transgender people - including young people aged from 16 to 24 - learns that 21% have previously attempted suicide.⁵ Appropriate care starts with the fact that it should become accessible and clear to young people how and where to report, how a professional can help them, and how to provide feedback.

- ❖ How does the state improve the accessibility and quality of care for young people who have been exposed to violence?
 - ❖ How does the state combat violence aimed at young people in vulnerable positions, such as LHBTIQ+ youth? What measures does the state take in the context of appropriate care for these young people?
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⁵ Movisie, 18 July 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/movisie-aan-slag-suicide-preventie-onder-lhbt-jongeren>