

Police Monitor population 2003; national report

B&A Group/Intomart

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Summary

Introduction

The Police Monitor Population is the largest survey in the Netherlands carried out in the field of public safety. This survey contains a large number of questions about different aspects of public safety and the functioning of the police that have been presented to well over 90.000 Dutch citizens. In earlier surveys in 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001 great numbers of respondents were questioned too, yet in 2003 the number of respondents was larger than in all preceding years. The Police Monitor Population offers the possibility to point out trends over the years and amongst the police regions. Sometimes developments at the national level seem to be stable over the years. In a great number of cases a varied pattern of regional fluctuations lies hidden under the apparent continuity on the national scale. For the sake of brevity, this summary reports the main developments at the national level.

Neighbourhood problems, fear of crime and victimisation

Neighbourhood problems

The Police Monitor measures objective as well as subjective fear of crime. The objective side is established by questions about actual victimisation of the respondent. The subjective side is established by survey questions about the perceived crime level and nuisance in the neighbourhood and about the degree to which people do not feel safe.

The extend to which Dutch citizens believe to perceive crime against property in their neighbourhood, has decreased significantly during the preceding years. This trend continues in 2003, yet to a lesser extend. In 2003, crimes against property in general in the neighbourhood are perceived to occur considerably less frequently than in 2001.

Compared to preceding years, burglaries into homes are perceived much less as a neighbourhood problem. In comparison to 2001, theft from cars is seen more often. In 2003, the inhabitants of the Netherlands consider traffic nuisance much less as a problem in the neighbourhood than in the preceding years. The decreasing trend has continued since 1997. Especially aggressive road behaviour and collisions play a less prominent role in 2003.

Threatening behaviour is perceived in 2003 as a neighbourhood problem in about the same extend as in 2001.

Nuisance related to drugs is being pointed out by a larger number of inhabitants compared to 2001.

In 2003, general degeneration is perceived as a neighbourhood problem as often as in 2001. Within the different forms of degeneration several developments can be detected. Dog shit on the street and graffiti are perceived significantly less frequently as a neighbourhood problem than in 2001. Junk on the street, on the other hand, is seen more often by Dutch citizens than in 2001.

Fear of crime

More than a fourth (28%) of the Dutch citizens sometimes does not feel safe, whereas five percent of the Dutch citizens often do not feel safe. Both percentages are considerably lower than in 2001. The percentages of inhabitants who sometimes or often do not feel safe are even lower than ever measured before in the Police Monitor Population. This appears again in different forms of avoidance behaviour. Compared to 2001, respondents less often avoid certain spots considered not safe, less often make a detour when walking or driving in order to avoid a spot considered not safe and in 2003 parents less often forbid their children to visit certain spots than in 2001.

Victimisation

Out of every 100 cars in the Netherlands, 24 are deliberately vandalised. Theft from cars (7 per 100) and theft of cars (1 per 100) happens comparatively less. Of each 100 bicycles in the Netherlands five get stolen in 2003. In three percent of the homes there is a burglary attempt, whereas in two percent of the homes a burglary has actually occurred.

Compared to 2001, victimisation from bicycle theft and attempt of burglary is significantly lower than in 2003. The occurrence of victimisation of the various forms of car criminality has not essentially changed since 2001. In 2003 car accidents without hit-and-run are the most common form of person-based victimisation, nearly one out of eleven (9%) Dutch citizens indicates to have been a victim of this sort of accident.

Other forms of individual victimisation happen much less often. Compared to 2001 car accidents without hit-and-run, assaults, other theft and other forms of vandalism happen less often.

Police and citizens

Willingness to inform and to report

The average willingness to inform as well as the average willingness to report criminal offences in 2003 can be compared with 2001¹. In 79 percent of all reports made by victims a report has been signed too. The contentment about the intervention of the police when reporting a crime is significantly lower than in 2001 (55% in 2003 as to 59% in 2001) and in all preceding years.

Contact with the police

More than one third (35%) of the citizens has been in contact with the police. This does not significantly deviate from the percentage of the citizens who were in contact with the police in 2001.

Compared to 2001, Dutch citizens were more often in contact with the police as a result of a patrol, to report a suspicious situation, as witnesses of an offence, to visit a open day and less often to inform or report a criminal offence or for "other" reasons.

Citizens who were in contact with the police in 2003 are generally less content about this contact than they were in 2001. Especially the citizens who where in contact with the police for informing or reporting are less content about the acting of the police during this contact than in preceding years.

Availability en visibility

With regards to the availability, the opinion of the citizen in 2003 is comparable to that of 2001. More so than in 2001, the citizens in 2003 are of the opinion that the police does not come fast enough when called for, that the police is not sufficiently approachable and that they do not leave their car enough. In opposition to this, the Dutch citizens are in 2003 less often of the opinion than in 2001 that one does not see the police enough in the neighbourhood. This last item links up with the opinion about the visibility. Nearly two third of the Dutch citizens see the police passing through their street less than once a week. This is a significant improvement of the visibility compared with the percentage of 2001.

Functioning and acting

As to the functioning of the police, in 2003 four aspects are judged less positively than in the preceding years and one aspect is judged more positively. In 2003 a smaller proportion of the citizens takes the view that the police acts efficiently, does its best, reacts to problems and offers protection. However, the respondents more often take the view that police is in contact with the residents.

As to the acting of the police, the judgement in 2003 has not changed regarding 2001. Yet respondents more often take the view that the police do not intervene and do not act with sufficient vigour. On the other hand a smaller part of the citizens than in 2001 take the view that the police does not give enough fines.

Prevention of burglary

In 2003 burglary prevention is carried out about as often as in 2001. Compared to 2001, burglar alarms are installed in the residences significantly more often. The percentage of residences where the light stays on when nobody is at home is significantly lower than in the preceding years.