

SUMMARY

During the discussion of the PwC report "Investigation of Criminal Law Chain" in the Dutch House of Representatives, Mr Van den Berge (GroenLinks party) noted that the effects of crime prevention are not reflected in the figures on law enforcement and crime fighting. He asked whether the actual effects of prevention could be made transparent. The Minister of Security and Justice has promised to investigate the subject "The effects of prevention" by means of available and relatively recent (five to ten years old) national and international research.

Research and advice bureau Breuer&Intraval has performed a literature review into the effects of crime prevention. This review is commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. The aim of this literature review is to use key publications and review articles to outline what is known about the effects of crime prevention on core themes.

Problem Definition

We have formulated the following problem definition for this research:

What conclusions can be drawn about the effects of crime prevention on the basis of existing (national and international) review articles and key publications? In addition to this problem definition, it was examined whether it is possible to provide insight into the financial costs and benefits of crime prevention.

Research Approach

The literature review was carried out in three phases. The first phase comprised of a search in three databases for international meta-analyses and systematic reviews, and discussions with key informants. In order to carry out this research within the set time, we limited our search for scientific (international) publications to publications between 2010-2020 and limited the keywords to *crime* in combination with *systematic review* or *meta-analysis* and the key words *prevention* or *reduction*. After filtering out duplicates this resulted in 259 articles. The second phase comprised of a search for Dutch literature. The search for crime prevention (and effects) in three databases yielded 65 articles after applying the inclusion criteria. The snowball method resulted in an additional 55 articles, bringing the total number of Dutch articles to 110.

Phase 3 comprised of a research of Dutch prevention policy. We looked at the expenditure on crime prevention in the Netherlands, the themes that the Ministry of Security and Justice, the Centre for Crime Prevention and Safety (CCV), and the Dutch universities with a criminology department focus on. This resulted in the following themes:

- High Impact Crimes (especially: domestic burglaries and robberies);
- Safety and care;
- Liveability/nuisance in residential areas (involving citizens in prevention);
- Vandalism/destruction in public spaces;
- Violence and aggression (in particular: domestic violence and violence in cafés and clubs);
- Cyber crime;
- Reducing recidivism;
- Organised crime.

The result is a total of 379 international and Dutch sources to base the research on. However, given the broad subject matter and the short turnaround time, consultation with

the supervisory committee resulted in the selection of four themes for the in-depth phase of this research. 89 articles apply to these four themes.

Findings of Four Themes

For four themes we translated the results of the international studies we found, into the Dutch policy context. These four themes are: domestic burglaries, involving citizens in prevention (including: youth crime), violence in cafés and clubs, and organised crime.

Domestic Burglaries

The last few decades, the number of (domestic) burglaries has started to decline, particularly in industrialised countries. In the Netherlands and England this decline seems to be moving faster than in some other European countries. In the Netherlands, great efforts are made to deploy burglary-resistant measures for homes, but also to improve the safety of the design of the environment by, for example, closing alleys and firebreaks. Meta-analyses show that these measures are effective in preventing domestic burglaries (Grove, 2011; Sidebottom et al., 2018). The official police certification 'Politiekeurmerk Veilig Wonen', which focuses on extra security in and around the home, results in a decrease in burglaries of up to 78% compared to homes without this certification (Nauta, 2004).

In addition, there are offender-oriented programmes that contribute to the reduction of crime, including committing burglaries. The frequent offender approach, such as the Top600 approach in Amsterdam, in which individuals are intensively monitored and coached to prevent recidivism, results in a decrease of 7% to 45% in the number of burglaries by this group (Actiecentrum Veiligheid en Zorg, 2018). The measure 'Placement in an institution for systematic offenders' (ISD measure) for highly active frequent offenders also appears to have a small to medium effect on the prevention of recidivism (Tollenaar and Van der Laan, 2012).

Involving Citizens in Prevention

It is not always possible to establish a causal relationship between neighbourhood prevention and a decrease in crime. Crime sometimes decreases temporarily after the use of neighbourhood prevention (Lub, 2016). According to Lub (2016), neighbourhood participation can work well if it provides the police with useful information.

The findings of Braga et al. (2015) and Gill et al. (2014) suggest, on the basis of systematic literature reviews, that police, policy and government should deploy interventions aimed at a wider community in crime prevention, rather than opting for zero-tolerance models which mainly focus on public order disturbances by, among others, drunk people, rowdy young people and vagrants who are kept off the streets by repressive measures such as arrests, subpoenas and other law enforcement strategies.

Young people are said to be responsible for a (substantial) part of the nuisance and crime in residential areas, especially destructions and vandalism. In recent years, the nuisance caused by young people and crimes committed by young people have declined significantly. Various studies indicate that integrated and system-oriented programmes appear to be effective in the prevention of juvenile crime (Manuel and Jorgenson, 2013; De Vries et al., 2015). The system-oriented interventions appear to be especially effective when it has a longer duration (of at least four to six months) (Manuel and Jorgenson, 2013). Dutch research shows that the police and youth workers often focus on creating a bond of trust with young people through the deployment of youth workers or beat officers (Stokkom,

2007; Noorda and Veenbaas, 2006; De Vries, 2015). Only a few international studies have been found on such an approach.

Violence in Cafés and Clubs

The international literature shows a number of successful elements in the prevention of violence in cafés and clubs. One of these is to train bar personnel to recognize dangerous situations and show behaviour that prevents escalation in the event of (imminent) violence (Safer Bars programme, Graham et al., 2004; STAD project (Månsdotter and Rydberg, 2007), and Quigg et al., 2017). Together with the prevention of excessive alcohol consumption, these are key factors of interventions (LJMU and WHO, 2009). Rapid and adequate police action in situations that appear to be escalating also prove to be a successful way of preventing and/or limiting the severity of violence in cafés and clubs. For effectiveness it is important that police deployment is specifically targeted at the greatest risks (hotspot policing) (in terms of place, crime and time).

Dutch interventions mainly consist of recording agreements between the municipality, the police, and the hospitality industry in an entertainment covenant. The effectiveness of the covenant as a whole has not been proven, but it does include effective elements such as training of bar personnel and targeted police deployment (Regioplan, 2016).

Organised Crime

The available evaluations do not demonstrate conclusively that there is hard evidence that preventive and repressive measures have actually reduced illegal activities in size and severity. Despite this, concrete results have been achieved, for example in the deprivation of criminal assets, the reduction of drug trafficking types (drug mules), the visible part of drug nuisance and drug-related crime (including drug trafficking) in residential areas, but to what extent organised crime is actually affected by this in its totality, is unclear.

Criminals use the logistical, financial, legal, and digital infrastructure in their illegal activities. Services offered in some sectors can also facilitate criminals. With the approach to tackle organised and undermining crime, the convergence of the underworld with the upper world is receiving increasingly more attention in the Netherlands. The lack of impact assessments is a common problem in assessing what works in reducing organised crime. Although administrative and policy innovations are taking place, there is also an apparent lack of (impact) assessments. In the prevention of organised crime, it is necessary to determine which differences occur between expected and observed developments in crime when interventions and measures are deployed. An absence of these data prevents a necessary knowledge transfer about successful measures to other locations and comparable circumstances. This does not only occur in the Netherlands, it is also a conclusion drawn in a recent (international) systematic review (Calderoni et al. 2019).

Conclusion

This literature review shows that particularly situational prevention measures are effective. This is due to the fact that situational prevention is an accessible, simple and often relatively cheap way to prevent crime. Preventive measures primarily aimed at modelling this opportunity structure, with the purpose of impeding or preventing criminal acts, prove to be the most effective. The basic principle is that circumstances are adjusted in such a way that the chance of committing a crime is significantly reduced or even completely eliminated.

Changing the behaviour of perpetrators in order to prevent recidivism is more challenging, but the systematic reviews also indicate positive developments in that area. The preventive system-oriented programmes for young people, which include other problems young people deal with in addition to crime, appear to have modest but positive effects. This also seems to be the case for the 'repeat offender approach' (the prevention of recidivism among (addicted) repeat offenders) but there are no impact studies that establish a link between the reported decrease in recidivism and this specific measure.

Measurability

Despite the fine examples that do exist, particularly in measuring the effects of situational prevention types, such as domestic burglaries, and perpetrator-oriented prevention programmes, many systematic reviews and meta-evaluations have established that measuring effects is not easy or sometimes even completely impossible. In general, it is difficult to "measure" what - as a result of preventive measures - has not occurred, especially if there is no clear baseline measurement. The problems in the underlying studies are mainly related to the design of the research. Insufficient substantiation, lack of control groups, differences in definitions between studies as a result of which they are not properly comparable, insufficient quality, or even unavailability of figures prohibit the determination of the effects of prevention. In the case of organised crime, its hidden character makes monitoring the effects of preventive measures very challenging. Despite the methodological shortcomings, the many studies into the nature and severity of organised crime provide a systematised and comprehensive qualitative picture. Dutch research is cited relatively often in international studies. The research findings contribute significantly to the knowledge about organised crime that policy makers need to develop interventions that create barriers to criminal markets.

Costs and Benefits

When we look at government expenditure on prevention, investments are mainly made in the prevention of thefts and burglaries. About 80% of all crimes committed in the Netherlands consist of property crimes. Of the total amount of 6.8 billion euros that is spent annually on prevention, more than half (56%) goes to the prevention of property crime, and more than a fifth (22%) to the prevention of destructions and vandalism.

Little or no studies have been found into the costs and benefits of crime prevention. A problem in determining the costs and benefits of prevention in particular, is that there are usually many indirect costs and benefits. In addition, there are benefits such as an increase in feelings of security or a strengthening of social cohesion, which are difficult to quantify in monetary terms.