

Summary

Juvenile Crime Monitor 2020

Developments in juvenile crime during the first two decades of the 21st century

The Juvenile Crime Monitor 2020 provides a broad, multi-method and multi-source overview of juvenile crime developments in the Netherlands from 2000 up to (and sometimes including) 2020, with an emphasis on 2015 and onward. The Juvenile Crime Monitor 2020 uses police data on juvenile suspects, prosecution and court data on convicted offenders and sanctions, and self-report data from a representative Dutch juvenile sample. By using multiple sources, examined developments are less selective and biased, than when only a single source is used. Furthermore, several age groups are distinguished: children aged 10 to 11, minors aged 12 to 17, and young adults aged 18 to 22; most data concerns ages 12 and older. Besides traditional crime, cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crime is examined as well. Not all sources used are yet able to provide information on 2020, which can be considered a special year due to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with only self-report and police data able to provide general data on this year. The main results from the Juvenile Crime Monitor 2020 are discussed below.

Juvenile crime down for most population groups, crime drop seems to stop in 2018/2019, continues on in 2020

In 2015 up to and including 2019, juvenile crime is down for most age and population groups (e.g., sex, migration background, household characteristics, etc.) compared to pre-2015. However, developments differ for different populations, sources and crime indicators. The number of suspects and convicted offenders overall decreases for all age and population groups, with one exception. In 2019 the number of suspects increases compared to 2018, especially among 12- to 17-year-olds, though it decreases again in 2020. Lastly, self-report data from the first quarter of 2020 suggests that 10- to 12-year-olds and 12- to 17-year-olds report a similar amount of criminal offending compared to 2015, while young adults report less criminal offending. That said, 2020 registered and self-reported juvenile crime rates remain below pre-2015 rates. Given that 2020 is a special year due to COVID-19, it is too early to say whether the registered juvenile crime drop stops, continues or changes into a rise.

Juvenile crime drop differs between municipalities, cities, and also differs internationally

The juvenile crime drop happens in almost every Dutch municipality and in most neighbourhoods; even in neighbourhoods with comparatively high rates of juvenile crime. The magnitude of the drop does differ between different municipalities and neighbourhoods. For instance, the number of suspects decreases more strongly in the four biggest cities (i.e., Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) compared to national rates. Several municipalities also show an increase in the number of suspects in 2019 compared to 2018. Internationally, the Dutch juvenile crime drop is stronger compared to surrounding countries, like Germany and Luxembourg.

Juvenile crime down for most offense types

While juvenile crime is down for most offense types in 2015 up to and including 2019, a couple of exceptions exist. Namely, (self-reported) minor property offenses, and serious violence among 12- to 17-year-olds, show stabilization or a slight increase. Even though serious violence only concerns a small number of juveniles on a yearly basis, this increase is still a concerning development due to the severity of the crimes. Although self-reported possession and use of weapons remains stable from 2015 onward, the number of suspects of weapons offense increases in 2019 and 2020.

Severity of juvenile crime leading to convictions up for minors, stable for young adults

The severity of juvenile crime leading to convictions (based on the average maximum penalty) shows a slight increase from 2017 onward for minors. This is possibly reflected in the increase of short prison sentence rates for this age group. For young adults, crime severity appears stable.

Number of convicted cybercriminals increases, though few in number, self-reported cybercrime is down

Although few in number, the number of convicted juvenile cybercriminals increases from 2015 up to and including 2019. This increase concerns both cyber-dependent crime for all age groups, as well as cyber-enabled crime, but only for minors. Contrastingly, both forms of self-reported cybercrime are down from 2015 going on 2020. When comparing self-report to official registration, the low numbers of convicted cybercriminals contrast starkly against the relatively high rates of self-reported cybercrime.

More intertwinement with traditional crime and more complexity in juvenile cybercrime court cases

Analyses of court verdicts in cybercriminal cases show that separate reporting on traditional and cybercrime obscures intertwinement between the two types of crime. From 2010 up to and including 2020, verdicts of cases show changing crimescripts of juvenile cybercriminals, from more "pure" cybercrimes to intertwinement with traditional crimes. Overall, the complexity of cybercrime seems to increase over time within cybercriminal court cases.

No shift from offline to online crime

There appears to be no shift from traditional crime to cybercrime among Dutch juveniles. However, the increased digitalization of society does provide new avenues for youth to offend and to be victimized. Self-reported offending of hacking decreased from 2015 up to and including 2020, while self-reported victimization of hacking increased among juveniles.

Different developments for different sanctions

From 2015 up to and including 2019 different judicial sanctions show different developments. For instance, the percentage of juvenile suspects with diverted sanctions grows (i.e., sanctioning that does not result in a criminal record; the Halt-punishment), whereas the overall number of sanctions by the public prosecutor or courts decreases. A number of severe sanctions does increase, such as juvenile detention and other forms of incapacitating measures. Furthermore, the percentage of minors with (suspended) juvenile detentions receiving rehabilitation trajectories decreases from 2015 up to and including 2019, whereas similar decreases are not found for those with fines or community service.

Compared to general population, fewer pupils/students among suspect and convicted populations

The percentage of juvenile suspects and convicted offenders that goes to school or goes to college/university is lower compared with the general population, both at the time of offense or conviction, as well as in the years following the offense or conviction. Instead, suspects and convicted offenders are more likely to have an active income (e.g., a job) or to receive government benefits (e.g., unemployment benefits).

Recidivism rates highest among convicted minors

Rates of recidivism as measured by the police (i.e., becoming a suspect for another crime after initial suspicion or conviction) are highest among convicted offenders in the age of 12 to 17, compared to minor suspects and young adult suspects and convicted offenders. Approximately one in three minor suspects is re-registered as a suspect in the following two calendar years due to a crime. These recidivism rates are relatively stable for 2015 up to and including 2019.