



Cahier 2022-10

Woon- en pleegbuurten van geregistreeerde jeugdcriminaliteit

*De samenhang met buurtkenmerken en de
veranderingen die zich daarin voordoen over
de tijd*

Summary

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Cahier

De reeks Cahier omvat de rapporten van onderzoek dat door en in opdracht van het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum is verricht. Opname in de reeks betekent niet dat de inhoud van de rapporten het standpunt van de Minister van Justitie en Veiligheid weergeeft.

Summary

Neighbourhoods where juvenile crime occurs and juvenile suspects reside

Juveniles aged 12 to 23 years are overrepresented in crime statistics in the Netherlands. Nationwide, the number of recorded crimes involving a juvenile suspect decreased by a quarter in six years. In 2014, there were more than 70,200 police records nationwide of one or more crimes involving a juvenile. In 2019, this number had fallen to 53,200. The number of juvenile suspects also decreased from 62,800 in 2014 to 46,200 in 2019. This nationwide downward trend is not always reflected by developments at the local level. For example, in some neighbourhoods, there was no decrease in the number of police-recorded crimes involving a juvenile suspect, and in some neighbourhoods there was even a significant increase.

This study examined the following at the neighbourhood level: (i) whether police-recorded juvenile crime is concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, and if so, which; (ii) what changes occur over time; and (iii) which neighbourhood characteristics are associated with such a concentration. This concerns both the neighbourhoods where juveniles commit crimes ('crime scene neighbourhoods') and the neighbourhoods where juvenile suspects reside ('residential neighbourhoods'). Neighbourhood-level research closely resembles what is known in criminology as hotspot analysis.

This study specifically focused on the neighbourhoods in the Netherlands where recorded juvenile delinquency occurs most often, namely the top 1% of neighbourhoods where juvenile delinquency is concentrated. It also examined which neighbourhood characteristics are associated with differences between neighbourhoods in terms of both recorded juvenile delinquency rates and the number of juvenile suspects that live there. We also examined the relationship with changes in neighbourhood characteristics over time.

This study focused on 12- to 23-year-olds. Juvenile criminal law can apply to this age group (regularly to minors aged 12 up to 18, and under certain conditions to young adults aged 18 up to 23 pursuant to Section 77c of the Dutch Criminal Code). In criminological research into the geographical distribution of (youth) crime, various explanations are given for the concentration of crime in residential neighbourhoods and crime scene neighbourhoods. Explanations for why more juvenile suspects live in certain neighbourhoods focus on structural characteristics of the neighbourhood arising, among other things, from characteristics of the population composition or changes that occur in it. Explanations for why more juvenile crime is committed in certain neighbourhoods focus on characteristics of the occasions or situations where offenders meet under reduced supervision. This concerns, for example, nightlife venues, shopping areas, but also squares or other locations with little or no supervision. According to this latter explanation, the neighbourhood can be seen as a context for committing crimes and the characteristics of neighbourhoods can contribute to a greater likelihood of (youth) crime. These explanations are known as the social disorganisation theory and the routine activity or situational approach, respectively. In the part of the study in which we discuss correlations, we examine both theoretical perspectives, to the extent that sufficient data was available.

Method

We used national crime statistics available from Statistics Netherlands to examine the police-recorded youth crime in crime scene neighbourhoods and residential neighbourhoods, and to determine the background characteristics of crime scene neighbourhoods. To this end, we used the police records of incidents and suspects. We also linked this to demographic data on suspects and neighbourhood characteristics from the system of Social Statistical Datasets and the so-called key statistics for districts and neighbourhoods from Statistics Netherlands, respectively.

The findings relate to all juvenile crime recorded in the Netherlands by the police in crime scene neighbourhoods, and to juvenile suspects in their residential neighbourhoods for the years 2014 to 2019. The neighbourhood characteristics concern the percentage of households below the 'social minimum' (the Dutch poverty line), the migration background of residents, (social) rented housing, degree of urbanisation, average distance to school and the number of business establishments (catering, shops, etc.), as well as the number of young residents in a neighbourhood. This concerns data that were available at nationwide level over a period of several years. The fact that this analysis was performed at population level, over several years and with multiple background characteristics makes this study unique in its kind.

To study the concentration of juvenile crime, we used Lorenz curves for the period 2014-2019 to show the disproportionate distribution of juvenile delinquency across neighbourhoods. This was done both for the numbers of police-recorded juvenile offences in crime scene neighbourhoods, as well as for the numbers of juvenile suspects living in residential neighbourhoods, and per type of offence.

To determine a top 1% of neighbourhoods with the most juvenile suspects, we used several different methods. This is also important for criminal policy, because it shows that the applied method strongly determines which individual neighbourhoods are considered to be in the top 1%. We examined the absolute number of suspects of juvenile crime and we related the numbers of juvenile suspects to the population size in the respective neighbourhoods. We also examined both the top 1% for each of the years and the top 1% for the entire 2016-2019 period. The latter provides a picture of the neighbourhoods that were stable over time in terms of juvenile delinquency.

Key results

The results can be summarised as follows.

Police-recorded juvenile offences and juvenile suspects are highly concentrated in a limited number of neighbourhoods. This concentration has changed little over the years, but there is variation according to the type of offence.

Based on the comparison of Lorenz curves across all recorded crimes/suspects and broken down by type of offence, the following is apparent about the concentration of juvenile delinquency and juvenile suspects:

- Juvenile crime is concentrated in certain neighbourhoods. Even though overall juvenile delinquency decreased, the degree of concentration did not change much over the 2014-2019 period. Juvenile property crime and suspects were the most concentrated in specific neighbourhoods, while juvenile gun crime and suspects were the least concentrated, i.e. the most evenly spread over different neighbourhoods.
- Almost a quarter of the police-recorded juvenile crime in 2019 was committed in 1% of the 13,600 neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Nearly two-thirds of recorded juvenile crime was committed in 10% of the neighbourhoods.

- In 2019, 14% of all juvenile suspects lived in 1% of the residential neighbourhoods with the most juvenile suspects. More than half of the juvenile suspects lived in the 10% of the residential neighbourhoods with the most suspects.

In absolute numbers, juvenile delinquency is mainly concentrated in the top 1% neighbourhoods in large cities. If the relative number of juveniles living in a neighbourhood was taken into account, many neighbourhoods in sparsely populated areas also belonged to the top 1%.

When we applied the different definitions to determine the top 1% residential neighbourhoods of juvenile suspects, the following stood out:

- The neighbourhoods that belonged to the 1% residential neighbourhoods with the highest absolute numbers of juvenile suspects in 2019 were mostly (86%) neighbourhoods in densely populated areas, the (very) large cities. This is not surprising, as neighbourhoods in the large cities have larger surface areas and more inhabitants than those in smaller municipalities. Therefore, we also took into account the number of suspects per 1,000 juveniles in a neighbourhood.
- The neighbourhoods that belonged to the top 1% residential neighbourhoods with the most juvenile suspects per 1,000 12-23 year olds were partly located in large densely populated areas in large cities, but partly also in low urbanity, less densely populated areas. Of the top 1% neighbourhoods with the most juvenile suspects per 1,000 inhabitants, 32% were large, densely populated neighbourhoods. In addition, 44% were neighbourhoods in a low urbanity area, mostly (but not exclusively) rural areas. The concentration of juvenile suspects is therefore certainly not exclusively a big-city problem.

Concluding remarks

Police-recorded juvenile crime and the associated number of juvenile suspects has decreased over the past decade, but in 2019 there were still neighbourhoods where recorded juvenile crime was concentrated.

These top 1% neighbourhoods with the relatively highest number of juvenile suspects in the 2016-2019 period were located in the same proportion in large cities and in non-urban areas. Over time, changes did occur in which neighbourhoods made up the top 1%. Only in one year in the 2016-2019 period, in 2019, was half of the top 1% neighbourhoods for a year included in the top 1% for the four-year period as a whole. The relatively limited overlap between the top 1% for the respective years and that for the four-year period is due to decreasing juvenile delinquency, possible instability in the number of young residents, and redistricting of neighbourhoods. Both from a scientific point of view and from the point of view of law enforcement, such as hot spot policing, it is desirable to investigate small geographical units such as neighbourhoods and their characteristics. For a more general (preventive) criminal policy approach, however, a focus on larger geographic units such as districts may be preferable, although this does make it less clear where specific problems are concentrated and what the policy approach should focus on.

Furthermore, we examined which neighbourhood characteristics were associated with residential and crime scene neighbourhoods and the changes that occurred in them over the years from 2014 to 2019. This looks at characteristics of neighbourhoods and its residents, and not characteristics of the juvenile suspects. The neighbourhood characteristics appeared to be more related to differences between neighbourhoods, but these relationships were not strong. Changes over time in recorded juvenile crime in neighbourhoods seemed to correlate only to a limited extent with changes occurring in neighbourhood characteristics over time. The findings offer limited support for the

situational approach and the social disorganisation theory as an explanation for which neighbourhood characteristics are associated with recorded juvenile delinquency and juvenile suspects in perpetration and residential neighbourhoods and changes that occur over time.

In accordance with findings of previous research, the neighbourhood is primarily an action context in which specific characteristics of the neighbourhood make it possible to commit crimes and are not so much a 'cause' of juvenile delinquency. It is not primarily about the characteristics of a neighbourhood, but possibly more about characteristics of the juvenile suspect and of their social environment, such as (delinquency by) family or groups of friends.

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