



Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en  
Datacentrum

Cahier 2024-15

# Trends in juvenile crime in the Netherlands 2000 up until 2023

*Syntheses of results from the Juvenile  
Crime Monitor*

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**Cahier**

De reeks Cahier omvat de rapporten van onderzoek dat door en in opdracht van het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum 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

### Trends in juvenile crime in the Netherlands 2000 up until 2023

#### Syntheses of results from the Juvenile Crime Monitor

What are the trends in juvenile crime in the Netherlands from 2000 to 2023? What is the national trend, what differences are there when we look at various (population) groups, types of offenses or settlements? Are juvenile suspects becoming younger, is the juvenile crime becoming more serious? Is youth crime concentrated in specific regions, districts or neighborhoods? To what extent are Dutch juveniles involved in cybercrime? What are the longer-term trends and what are the short term trends (last five years)? An answer to these and other questions is sought in this study of the Juvenile Crime Monitor 2022-2024. Juvenile crime concerns 12 up until 23 year olds, within which we distinguish between minors and young adults.

Data from multiple sources were used. The indicators of juvenile crime concern the numbers of juvenile suspects and juvenile criminal offenders. This last group concerns young people who have been found guilty by the Public Prosecution Service or the judge because they have committed a crime. A significant proportion of crimes committed (estimated at approximately three-quarters of crimes encountered by suspects) and those suspected thereof do not come to the attention of the police. Therefore, self-reported delinquency from a large representative research group of 10 to 23-year-olds, the Youth Delinquency Survey (YDS), is used. Due to a change in method (the CAPI/CASI mode is changed into a CAWI only mode), we only use the year 2023. Only from 2025 will it be possible to study trends again. The trends in this report therefore concern those in registered juvenile crime. In addition, a literature study was conducted on (trends in) youth crime. Contemporary studies that relate to Dutch young people in general and studies that focus on specific groups, types of crimes, municipalities or neighborhoods were selected. Images of professionals working in the security chain and from the media have also been included in the description of the current state of youth crime in the Netherlands.

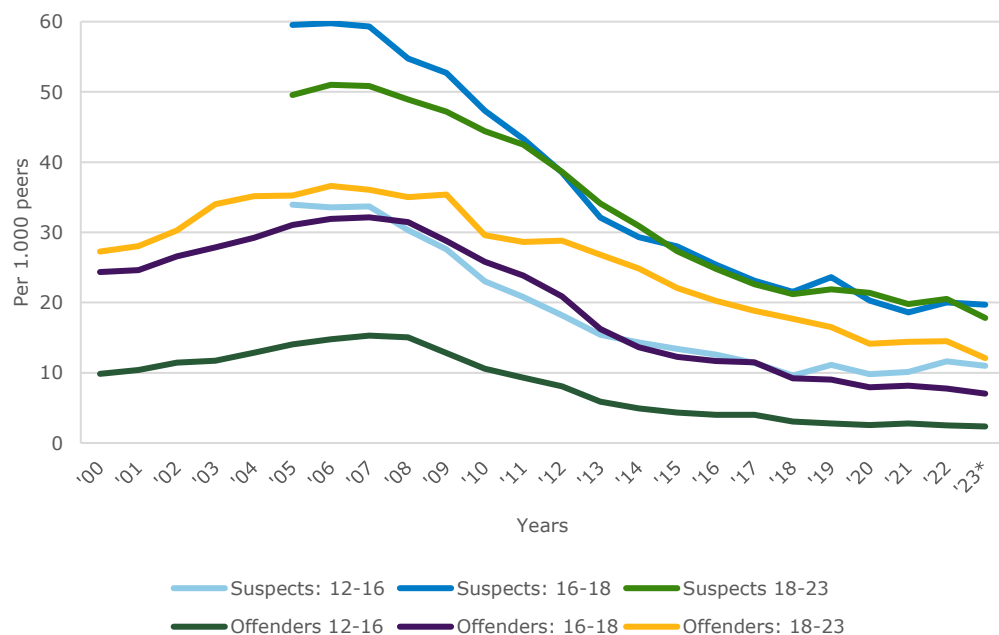
We first describe the overarching conclusion.

#### The overall conclusion

The overarching answer is that registered youth crime in general in the Netherlands has declined sharply in the longer term over the past two decades. Compared to the peak years in 2006-2008, the numbers of juvenile suspects or criminal offenders per 1,000 peers is more than halved in 2023. In the most recent five years, the decline has leveled off and the numbers have stabilized (figure S1). Self-reported delinquency by young people in 2023 is approximately ten times higher than the numbers of suspects registered by the police. In the countries surrounding the Netherlands, there has been a decrease in registered juvenile crime over the past two decades.

There is variation in the annual trends. For example, from 2018 to 2023, there were slight increases and decreases in the numbers of juvenile suspects and criminal offenders each year. There is also variation in the (recent) trends broken down by background characteristics of the young people, type of crime, region or type of settlement. Based on general national trends, we find no indications of younger suspects or offenders over time. There has been a (slight) increase in serious violent crimes from 2018 to 2023, which has leveled off in the most recent years. In addition, there is a constant concentration of juvenile crime registered by the police in a limited number of neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Furthermore, insight into cyber and digitised crime among young people registered by the police and the judiciary at the national level is limited, while this is a common self-reported offense among juveniles.

**Figure Summary 1** Developments in juvenile suspects and criminal offenders per 1,000 peers 2000-2023, by age group



*The view of professionals that suspects or offenders are getting younger is not reflected in the general trends. This does not rule out the possibility that this may occur for specific offenses or at a local level.*

The picture from professionals that people involved in juvenile crime are getting younger is not reflected as a general trend. This does not rule out that different trends occur for specific types of crimes, among specific groups or in specific regions or neighbourhoods.

*Serious juvenile crime has dropped over a longer period of time, the increase in recent years is clearly leveling off.*

Serious juvenile crime, measured in terms of the numbers of young people involved in (serious) violent crime, is decreasing in the long term compared to the peak years at the beginning of this century. In the short term, from 2017/2018 onwards, there has

been an increase in the number of young people involved in some forms of serious violence, with a slightly stronger increase among minors than among young adults. These are mainly small numbers (absolutely and per 1,000 peers), but they are impactful facts. The numbers of juvenile suspects of a crime involving (stabbing) weapons have been (slightly) higher since 2019 than in the five previous years. The numbers of juveniles convicted of some serious violent crimes such as serious assault or (attempted) manslaughter have increased between 2017 and 2023. Because the number of criminal perpetrators of violence among young people is generally decreasing, the percentage of offenders of serious violent offenses is increasing within the category of violence. This largely concerns an attempt in which a (stabbing) weapon was recorded more often in 2021 than in 2016. It is not clear whether this trend will continue. The Public Prosecution Service reports some decrease in the inflow for the years 2022-2023 compared to the previous years. The background to these trends is also unknown. There may be a real trend, lag effects after the release of restrictions during the COVID-19 period or the short term trend may be due to a longer lead time before this type of complex cases are sentenced (or a combination). Changes in registration, more stringent labeling of crimes by the Public Prosecutor, or increased attention for this type of offenses may also play a role in the explanation.

*Youth crime registered by the police is concentrated in a limited number of neighborhoods and that concentration is stable over time. Self-report shows less clear differences between municipalities of different sizes.*

Juvenile crime registered by the police is concentrated in specific neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. This concentration is stable over time, both in terms of crimes committed and suspects. In other words, over time, relatively most crimes committed by juveniles are registered in the same neighborhoods and most juvenile suspects live in the same neighborhoods. This mainly concerns neighborhoods with relatively many young men, neighborhoods with households characterized by a low socio-economic situation (SES) and a heterogeneous population composition in terms of migration background. These are often neighborhoods in larger municipalities, but certainly not always: smaller municipalities also have neighborhoods with a relatively high concentration of juvenile crime registered by the police. It is striking that self-report of delinquent behavior in 2023 shows less or no variety across parts of the Netherlands and across municipalities of different degrees of urbanisation, regardless of the type of crime. In other words, self-reported delinquency shows little or no geographical variation or concentration of juvenile delinquency.

There is no clear explanation in the literature for the consistency of the concentration of police-recorded juvenile crime in specific neighborhoods over time in urban areas. On the one hand, there are explanations for the continuous concentration of juvenile crime in neighborhoods that point to structural social and economic disadvantaged characteristics of neighborhoods or their residents, and the interaction between them. Such structural disadvantages can persist for years. On the other hand, the findings may point to an artifact of the data used, namely police data. Targeting by the police on specific types of crimes (violence, weapons, drugs), specific neighbourhoods or locations (hotspots, hot places) or on specific groups and individuals (hot groups) increases the chance that the same facts, neighbourhoods or people living there will occur again.

*At a national level, there is still little insight into trends in juvenile suspects and criminal perpetrators of cybercrime, while self-reported cyber and digitalized delinquency can be counted among the most common self-reported offenses.*

A possible explanation for the (national) decline in youth crime is that young people are committing crimes online. Between 3-7% of young people say they committed an online offense (cyber or digitalised offense) in 2023. The percentages are around those of traditional forms of self-reported delinquency such as violence, property or destruction. This means that cyber and digitalised delinquency can be counted among the common self-reported offenses. On the national level there are no numbers in trends in juveniles suspected of a cybercrime. The number of juveniles convicted of a cyber offense is low (less than 100 in 2022), but appears to be increasing slightly over time. Self-report offers some insight into the involvement of young people in online delinquency, while that information is (still) very limited if at the national level only police and judicial records are used.

### **Some noticeable results**

We briefly mention several other noticeable results.

- In the long term (2000-2023), there is a decrease in the numbers of suspects and criminal offenders among young people, which levels off in the short term (2018-2023), with small increases or decreases alternating.
- Broken down by demographic characteristics, type of crime, region or settlement, predominantly similar developments to the general ones were found. But there are exceptions.
- For most types of offenses among juveniles there has been a decrease in the long term, but not for all types in the short term.
- There are geographical differences in developments in the proportion of juvenile suspects, with the recent increase in serious violence in the G4 being particularly striking.
- The percentage of young people who report one (or more) offense(s) in 2023 over the past year is more than a factor of ten higher than the proportion of suspects or criminal offenders in that year.
- The difference between various groups (e.g. gender, migration background, household income) based on self-reported delinquency in 2023 is much smaller than what appears from the suspect registration.
- Self-reported delinquency in 2023 shows hardly any differences between residential municipalities of different urbanization levels, while this is apparent from registrations of residential and foster locations of juvenile suspects.
- Approximately one percent of young people (12 to 22 years old) reported in 2023 that they have been involved in multiple types of (serious) offenses, such that they can be classified as part of the group of 'serious delinquents'. About nineteen percent of young people are classified as 'mild delinquents'. Almost eighty percent of juveniles did not report any offense in the last twelve months.

Het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum (WODC), Kennisinstituut voor de rechtsstaat, is een onafhankelijk kennisinstituut dat valt onder het ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid. Het WODC draagt bij aan behoud en verbetering van de rechtsstaat via het (laten) uitvoeren van kwalitatief hoog wetenschappelijk onderzoek. En door het aanbieden van gevraagde en ongevraagde kennis, verbeterpunten en (waar mogelijk) denkrichtingen.

Meer informatie:

[www.wodc.nl](http://www.wodc.nl)