

Summary

Domestic violence and country of origin

A preliminary study into the incidence of domestic violence and perpetrators and victims of foreign origin

Summary and conclusions

Beginning in January 2006, the police regions of Twente and Zuid-Holland Zuid carried out a pilot study lasting six months, during which they recorded the country of birth of the (grand)parents of suspects, perpetrators¹ and victims in a temporary register for all recorded cases of domestic violence. The result of the pilot study was an anonymised file, containing distinguishing characteristics of the perpetrators and victims, which was analysed by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) and is discussed in this report.

This study is intended to contribute to the discussion on whether the registration of country of birth of (grand)parents of perpetrators and victims of domestic violence is necessary. The registration of such data can be necessary in order for the police to carry out their duties, as a more direct approach to domestic violence can be achieved on the basis of these registration data.

Before the results are presented, important observations have been made that predominantly relate to the *external validity* of the results. What is meant by this is the extent to which the results can be applied to the entire population of the Netherlands. This report always refers to the nature and scale of incidents of domestic violence that have been *recorded by the police* in two police regions. This is different from the nature and scale of domestic violence in the Netherlands as a whole. It is also reported that for reasons of privacy, multiple occurrences of perpetrators or victims cannot be determined within the registration period on the basis of the analysis file that was made available to the WODC. Because of this limitation, no judgements can be made as to the prevalence of recorded domestic violence. In the results, multiple offenders count as several individuals, rather than as perpetrators who are suspected of committing acts of domestic violence several times over a relatively short period. This shortcoming means, for example, that it is not possible to relate the perpetrator population to the population distributions of both regions.

The research questions below have been answered on the basis of the results of the analyses.

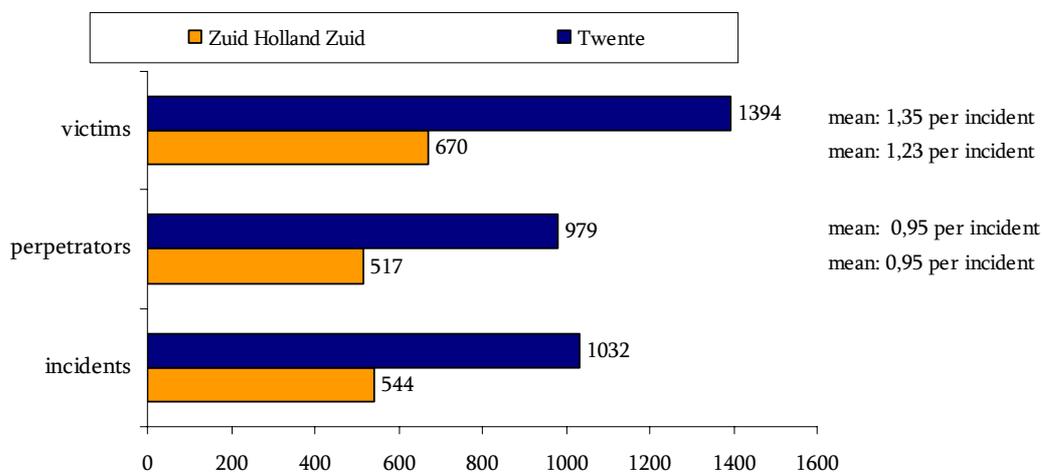
¹ In this report, we talk about perpetrators of domestic violence, where we mean possible suspects, suspects and perpetrators.

Question 1: How many incidents of domestic violence have been recorded in both regions during the registration period and how many native Dutch and first generation perpetrators and victims of foreign origin are linked to these incidents?

Question 2: How many second and third generation perpetrators and victims of foreign origin can we identify if we know the country of birth of their parents and grandparents?

Question 3: Under which other characteristics do perpetrators and victims of domestic violence differ?

Figure S1 Number of incidents, perpetrators and victims of domestic violence in two regions



In the Twente region, considerably more incidents were recorded than in the Zuid-Holland Zuid region. Twente included the incidents from the first six months of 2006, whereas Zuid-Holland Zuid provided data on incidents from January up to the end of April 2006. It took both regions a great deal of time and effort to compile the various files. For example, it was not possible to produce an automatic link with the municipal personal records database, and that meant that the country of birth of the (grand)parents of the perpetrators and victims almost had to be searched for and recorded manually. The processing of information from BPS into unambiguous and analysable variables also turned out to be unexpectedly labour-intensive. All in all, 1,576 incidents were analysed with data on 1,496 perpetrators and 2,064 victims.

Suspects and perpetrators

The country of birth of suspects and perpetrators of domestic violence was recorded in the police records. Suspects and perpetrators who were born abroad are first generation persons of foreign origin, according to the official definition of Statistics Netherlands, and can be recognised as such. Persons who have at least one parent who was born abroad and who were born in the Netherlands themselves, *cannot* be recognised as being of foreign origin in the second gener-

ation in the police files. If the country of birth of the (grand)parents is known and is included in the definition of origin, then these persons “change” in the records from native Dutch to persons of foreign origin in the second (or third) generation. The following conclusions arise from this process:

- By adding third generation characteristics (country of birth of an individual’s grandfathers and grandmothers), only a small number of third generation suspects or perpetrators of foreign origin can be identified.
- By adding the country of birth of the parents, this enables the identification of a limited number of second generation suspects and perpetrators. The temporary register contains data on the 1,496 suspects and perpetrators (not all of these are single individuals because multiple offenders count several times). Of these persons, 30 suspects and perpetrators belong to the category of 2nd generation persons of Western foreign origin, whilst 88 are persons of non-Western foreign origin in the second generation. The number of first generation non-Western perpetrators is almost four times as high (338).
- Persons of foreign origin in the second generation (who were born in the Netherlands) are suspects or perpetrators of domestic violence considerably less often than first generation foreigners. This applies to all of the different groups in this report. This can partly be explained by the fact that persons of foreign origin in the second generation are considerably younger. Three-quarters (75%) of all persons of non-Western foreign origin in the second generation (including Turks, Moroccans, the Surinamese and Antilleans and Arubans) are younger than 20 years of age, whilst this group constitutes 25 percent of the total population. It is likely that young people under the age of twenty are less likely to have a partner and/or children, which means that the chance of appearing in the police records as a suspected perpetrator is considerably smaller;
- In an absolute sense, there many more suspects and perpetrators of domestic violence of native Dutch heritage than there are of foreign origin;
- Domestic violence is committed predominantly by *men*. Around 85 percent of the perpetrators in both regions are male. The average age of perpetrators is a little over 35 years of age. Antillean, Aruban and Moroccan perpetrators are on average younger, whilst Turkish and Surinamese perpetrators are somewhat older on average;
- In the Zuid-Holland Zuid region, 66 percent of all (therefore both of native Dutch heritage and of foreign origin) registered suspects appear in the police records as (suspected) perpetrators of a criminal offence. In the Twente region, this is almost 50 percent. The percentage of recorded suspects and perpetrators that *were previously recorded as a suspect or perpetrator of domestic violence* is high. Almost three-quarters (72%) of them appear as a suspect on one or more occasions in the police records in Zuid-Holland Zuid during the five years preceding the registration period. This percentage is higher in Twente (79%). The percentage of recorded suspects and perpetrators with *a criminal background* in the five years preceding the registration period is considerable. Over 64 percent of the suspects and perpetrators in Zuid-Holland Zuid appear one or more times in the police records as (suspected) perpetrators of criminal offences such as theft, burglary or illegal weapon possession. This percentage is somewhat lower in Twente, at over 45 percent.

(Probable) victims

- By adding third generation characteristics (country of birth of the grand-father and grandmother), only a small number of third generation victims of foreign origin can be identified.
- By adding second generation characteristics (country of birth of the father and mother), this causes the number of identified victims of the second generation to increase. The number of second generation victims is much greater than the number of second generation *perpetrators* of domestic violence. The temporary register contains data on the 2,064 victims (not unique instances as repeated victims count several times). Of these persons, 69 victims belong to the category of 2nd generation persons of Western foreign origin and 229 are of non-Western foreign origin in the second generation. The number of first generation non-Western victims is 319.
- In an absolute sense, the number of persons of native Dutch heritage that are victims of domestic violence is much greater than the number of victims of foreign origin;
- In Zuid-Holland Zuid , 66 percent of victims are women aged 18 years and above. Eight percent of all victims are women under the age of 18. The average age of the female victims in this region is 31.7 years. Even with male victims, the majority are 18 years and above (16 percent). The average age of male victims in Zuid-Holland Zuid is 30.0 years. In Twente, little over half (55%) of the victims are female aged 18 years and above. Fourteen percent of all victims are female aged under 18. The average age of female victims in Twente is 30.1 years. With the male victims, too, the majority are 18 years of age and above (14%), however, the percentage of male victims younger than 13 years of age comes in close (8%). This can be observed again in the average age of male victims, which, at 24.6 years of age, is considerably lower in the Twente region than in the Zuid-Holland Zuid region.
- A number of interesting insights arise as a result of the addition of the country of birth of the parents of victims. On the basis of solely the country of birth of the victim, it appears that Moroccan, Antillean, Surinamese and Turkish boys and girls up to the age of 18 are not or are rarely involved. On the basis of the data that the police normally have at their disposal (only the country of birth of the victim), people would in the dark where it concerns victimisation of children of foreign origin in the second generation (who are, after all, recorded as foreigners in the records). If the country of birth of the parents is added, then persons of foreign origin in the second generation are recognised as victims after all. If we compare the figures for Zuid-Holland Zuid with Twente, what is noticeable is that children up to the age of 18 in Twente appear in the records more often than in Zuid-Holland Zuid .
- Repeated victimisation in Zuid-Holland Zuid is lower than in Twente (57% as opposed to 70%).
- There are considerable differences between both regions and the question is whether this is caused by registration differences between both regions or by actual differences in the number of victims recorded.

Perpetrators and victims

- By relating suspects and perpetrators to victims, it can be determined to what extent domestic violence is committed predominantly within the victim's own group of origin. Solely based on the country of birth of the victim, it seems as though this is not relevant here. Of the incidents committed by perpetrators of foreign origin, half to three-quarters of the victims are of native Dutch heritage. If the country of birth of the parents is then added to the definition, (first and second generation), then this percentage drops considerably. The percentage of violence within the victim's own group of origin increases dramatically. There are considerable differences between both regions. In Zuid-Holland Zuid, domestic violence within the victim's own group of origin is more prominent than in Twente.

Question 4: Do second and third generation suspects, perpetrators and victims of domestic violence and of foreign origin form a group that is of such a size or so specific that specifying the approach to domestic violence is necessary on this point?

If we consider insights into suspects and perpetrators of domestic violence, the recording of the country of birth of the parents would not be necessary on the basis of the study results. The number of suspects and perpetrators of foreign origin in the second generation that is identified after adding the country of birth of the parents is relatively small. What should also be taken into account in this consideration is that the average age of the persons of non-Western foreign origin in the second generation is low (14 years of age). Three-quarters of this group are under the age of 20 and a large proportion presumably does not have a partner or any children. It is possible that the difference observed between the first and second generations will no longer exist in 5 to 10 years' time, but in order to test this theory, this study must be carried out again within a few years.

If we consider insights into victims of domestic violence, it would no longer be necessary to record the country of birth of the parents. First of all, the number of victims of foreign origin in the second generation that was identified once the country of birth of the parents had been added is greater than the number of suspects and perpetrators of foreign origin in the second generation. Secondly, it seems that once this characteristic has been added, children of foreign origin in the second generation are also recognised as victims of domestic violence. Finally, the availability of the country of birth of the parents makes it clear that domestic violence frequently takes place within the victim's own group of origin. On the basis of the data that is currently available from the police, not all of these insights can be generated.

We can surmise that the insights that have been generated by means of these pilot studies may be useful with regard to making the approach to domestic violence more precise. It seems to make more sense, however, to repeat this study periodically, rather than to permanently record the country of birth of the (grand)parents on a national basis. We will come back to this in the concluding paragraph.

Question 5: Do the extra insights that have been obtained make up for the costs that have come about in order to link the origin of the (grand)parent?

The question is whether the efforts that have been made to bring the pilot studies to a satisfactory conclusion weigh up against the knowledge that has been generated. We must conclude that the setting up of the temporary register and connecting the country of birth of the (grand)parents has been labour-intensive. The production of temporary records resulted in extra personnel costs, but the number of processed incidents of domestic violence remained lower than expected. Therefore in the Zuid-Holland Zuid police region, it has not been possible to process the incidents from a six-month period, despite the fact that many more efforts have been made than have been observed, starting with the pilot studies. It is also likely that the national and permanent searching for country of birth of the (grand)parents for all recorded cases of domestic violence will result in high costs and additional administrative tasks for the police.

Question 6: Is additional research necessary in order to explain the results found?

Additional research is necessary for several reasons. Firstly, because this study has uncovered a number of weaknesses. If this study is repeated, it is essential that the double registration of suspects, perpetrators and victims that appear several times are eliminated the police (or by the researchers). Only then can the prevalence of registered domestic violence be determined. This should be soundly established, in advance, in the privacy regulations.

Furthermore, in this report another interesting question has come to light that requires additional research. In chapter 3, it was concluded that 17 percent of all suspects and perpetrators that are included in the temporary records cannot be found in the police records (first offender, at least according to the records). The remainder (83%) was known to the police in some form or other in the five years preceding the registration period. Over 59 percent of the perpetrators of domestic violence are suspected of committing acts of violence or of other criminal offences (generalists). The percentage of perpetrators that repeatedly commit acts of domestic violence but further have a clean record is 24 percent (specialists).

It cannot be established on the basis of this study, however, whether the above classification can contribute towards making the approach to domestic violence more precise or whether it must be refined further. Specific research is necessary for this. Perhaps the classification needs to be more precise. We saw plenty of cases where drug-related offences and alcohol abuse are regularly reported in the case descriptions. It is also known that psychological problems play a role in explaining the prevalence of domestic violence.

Conclusions

Is it necessary to record the country of birth of (grand)parents of suspects, perpetrators and victims of domestic violence at a national level in the police registration systems?

On the basis of the results of this study, it is justifiable to suggest that national registration is *not* necessary. The reasons set out below form the basis for this.

1. The necessity of registration with regard to defining trends in nature and scale

The presented insights in themselves are useful. They are also static, however. In other words, the data are merely *aggregated* over a certain period and show how suspects, perpetrators and victims are distributed according to country of birth.

It has become clear in this report that the number of suspects and perpetrators of foreign origin in the second generation that are known by the police is limited. This is explained in part by the average age of this group (i.e. 14 years of age). It is possible that this group will be recorded as a suspect or perpetrator of domestic violence more often in a number of years. As this group gets older and a large proportion has a family, the chance of domestic violence will, of course, become greater. It is therefore necessary to carry out periodical checks on this possible trend. To follow this trend, national registration is however *not* necessary.

In order to monitor the number of suspects and perpetrators of domestic violence of foreign origin in the second generation during this period, it is sufficient to repeat this study periodically. The national registration of the country of birth of the parents of suspects, perpetrators and victims is *not* necessary for this. It is recommended that this study is repeated in 2009.

2. Necessity of registration with regard to making the approach more precise

It is also true that no national registration system is necessary in order to make the approach to domestic violence more precise on the basis of collected data. These data can also be determined by repeating this study (see point 1).

The reasons are different if the second generation characteristic is necessary for the approach to domestic violence at an *individual level*. What is meant by this, for example, is that the origin of the parents is important in order to recognise domestic violence in its early stages or in order to refer the case to a particular perpetrator or victim programme. The police therefore actively refer both the perpetrators and the victims of domestic violence for help. Next year, the *Wet tijdelijk huisverbod* (Temporary Banishment from the Home Act) will probably come into force, which means that the police will have an extra instrument at their disposal that will enable them to impose a ten-day banishment on perpetrators of domestic violence even before they have committed a criminal offence.

The fact that the second generation characteristic is important in order to make the correct choices at perpetrator or victim level has not at all been established in this study. In addition to the limited number of second generation perpetrators that have been identified, there are also major differences between the two regions. This means that new approach to domestic violence that is geared towards the second generation must be determined for each police region and the approach will become highly segmented. In this study, another characteristic has also been detected that may be important to the approach to domestic

violence on an individual level, namely the criminal background of suspects and perpetrators.

3. The criminal background of suspects and perpetrators with regard to making the approach more precise

Previously, it was concluded that 17 percent of all suspects and perpetrators that are included in the temporary records cannot be found in the police records (first offender, at least according to the records). The remainder (83%) were known to the police in some form or other in the five years preceding the registration period.

This knowledge is relevant to the approach to domestic violence at incident level. The knowledge that a suspect is already a known criminal, for example, or a repeat offender, can be used in the early identification of domestic violence, the help given to the perpetrator and the victim, and also in the decision on whether or not to banish the individual from the home. Criminal backgrounds are generally checked in the risk assessment instrument with regard to domestic violence that has developed for use by the police and on the basis of which it can be determined whether a ban from the home must be imposed. However, making the approach to domestic violence on the basis of criminal background more precise is yet to be done, but not in the least because these data are already available in the police records. It must be noted in this regard that it is a good idea to also look at the descriptions of the incidents in the records. In this report we established, after all, that the incident codes that are used with regard to categorising domestic violence only highlight part of the problem or are general in nature.

The reasons above lead to the assumption that a choice must be made between recording the country of origin of parents of perpetrators and victims of domestic violence or further refining of the characteristics relating to criminal background. This is *not* the case. What is meant here is that by further developing instruments on the basis of characteristics that are already known (such as previous criminal conduct), a more uniform approach to domestic violence can be realised. The national registration of second generation characteristics is labour-intensive and expensive and the ability to monitor trends in the field of domestic violence and persons of foreign origin in the second generation can be guaranteed by repeating this study. At the moment, it is *not* necessary to record the country of birth of parents of perpetrators and victims of domestic violence in order to make the approach more precise, but it is important that this study is repeated.