

Summary

Offence Characteristics of the PIJ-population 1996-2005 Developments and comparison with young offenders in juvenile detention, in pre-trial detention and under supervision

The PIJ-measure (Placement in Institution for Juvenile offenders) is the most severe sanction that can be imposed under juvenile criminal law. This measure can be imposed if a juvenile has committed a very serious offence. The offender must also have a developmental or psychological disorder. If a PIJ-measure is imposed, the young offender concerned will be treated in a juvenile offenders institution (JJI) for at least two years. After that, it will be assessed whether the measure should be extended. This can be done up to a term of four or six years.

The object of this study was to investigate the characteristics of young offenders who received a PIJ-measure in the period from 1995 to 2005. The socio-demographic characteristics, the characteristics of the offence for which the juvenile was convicted and the characteristics of their criminal history were examined. The characteristics of the PIJ-offenders have been compared with the characteristics of young offenders who were staying in a JJI in the same period for other reasons. This concerns young offenders held in juvenile and pre-trial detention and young offenders placed under supervision (OTS). In addition, it was investigated how the examined characteristics developed in the period from 1995 to 2005. For this study, data were used from the Research and Policy Database for Judicial Documentation (OBJD): the anonymised version of the Judicial Documentation System (JDS).

Key Results

- The vast majority (93.5%) of the PIJ- offenders concern boys. The number of girls in the PIJ-group is considerably lower than the number of girls in the OTS-group. Compared to the young offenders held in juvenile detention and those held in pre-trial detention there are no sex differences.
- PIJ-offenders are more often of Dutch descent and less often of Moroccan descent, compared to young offenders in juvenile or pre-trial detention. Compared to OTS-offenders, however, the PIJ-offenders are less often of Dutch descent.
- Compared to young offenders in juvenile or pre-trial detention, the PIJ-offenders are younger.
- The gravity of the offences for which the PIJ-measure was imposed, is more serious than the gravity of the offences for which juvenile detention or pre-trial detention was imposed. The PIJ-measure is imposed relatively more often than juvenile detention or pre-trial detention, if it concerns a sexual offence or homicide.
- On average PIJ-offenders have been convicted less often in the past than young offenders placed in juvenile detention. However, if we compare the type of offence committed by PIJ-offenders with previous convictions to the type of offence committed by PIJ-offenders without previous convictions, it appears that the PIJ-offenders without previous convictions have committed a much more serious offence than PIJ-offenders with previous convictions. However, PIJ-offenders have had more previous convictions for very serious offences, i.e. offences punishable by at least eight years of detention, than young offenders placed in juvenile detention. In other words, PIJ-offenders have a smaller number of previous convictions.

tions than young offenders placed in juvenile detention, but the offences for which they have been convicted are more serious.

- On average PIJ-boys have fewer previous convictions than OTS-boys; and on average PIJ-girls have fewer previous convictions than OTS-girls. As regards the number of very serious previous offences PIJ-boys and PIJ-girls have a more extensive offence history than OTS-boys and OTS-girls.
- The period examined (1995-2005) shows no noticeable downward or upward trends in the characteristics examined.

Conclusions

Based on the results found the PIJ-population can be subdivided roughly in two groups: a group of young offenders without past convictions who have committed a (very) serious offence and a group of young offenders who have been in contact with the law more often. It was found that the group of PIJ-offenders mainly differs from young offenders in juvenile detention and young offenders in pre-trial detention as regards the seriousness of the offence. As in previous studies, it was also found that PIJ-offenders hardly differ from OTS-offenders in terms of their offence history. The PIJ-offenders only compare more negatively with OTS-offenders in terms of the number of previous very serious offences. As regards any changes in the period examined (1996-2005) the gravity of the offences for which PIJ-offenders were convicted remains fairly constant. No indications were found that the PIJ-population is characterised by an increasing gravity or frequency of the offences committed.