

Annual Report 2018

nsCr

Netherlands Institute for the Study
of Crime and Law Enforcement



Introduction

This is the 2018 annual report of the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR). In 2018, NSCR joined the Institutes Organisation of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), and became part of the larger group of NWO institutes that conduct research on topics mostly different from crime and law enforcement, but at times overlapping (such as cybersecurity).

Also this year we were nicely busy organizing meetings and workshops, applying for grants and receiving numerous visitors. We moved our offices to a pleasant, safe and light location on the third floor of the Initium building. Our support staff and management worked extremely hard to make sure we were GDPR compliant before the new privacy laws came into effect – which they managed.

This annual report showcases a sample of research we conducted on our overarching questions: into perpetrators, the crimes they commit, and the manner in which we as society respond to this. In studying these questions, we focus on a variety of crimes -from terrorism to cybercrime- and employ a variety of methods -from web scraping to observational methods grounded in the study of animal behaviour.

In addition to this brief look into our research, this annual report also highlights the important figures of 2018, related to our output in terms of publications, as well as information on staff, budget, and organisational structure. More information can be found on our [website](#) and in our regular newsletters.

I thank all our scientific and support staff, as well as all our collaborators, from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, other Dutch partner universities and European and international research institutes, for helping with keeping this institute such a lively and exciting place. A special word of thanks goes to our scientific advisory committee, whose members have advised us over the course of many years, and continue to be our sounding board.

Catrien Bijleveld
Director

Who commits crime?

NSCR has a long-standing tradition in the study of perpetrators' criminal careers. In several projects we have described criminal careers: at what point in life offenders start offending, and when and how their criminal careers escalate. We did so for crime in general and for particular violent crimes such as homicide and sex offenses. We increasingly focused on the explanation of these patterns: what factors influence starting, escalating and desisting from crime?

Factors that decrease offending may be criminal justice interventions or the kicking of a drug habit, but may also be more mundane: finding a job, housing, or an intimate partner. We also found that being born in a criminal family substantially elevates children's risk to become offenders themselves: the mechanisms behind this finding are an ongoing topic of study. Unravelling these patterns is no easy methodological feat as many associations are reciprocal or may be spurious.

We recently focused on the criminal careers of those who commit 'new' crimes, such as cybercrime or terrorism. In general, we found substantial overlap in the factors that influence traditional and 'new' offenders' criminal careers: below, we give an example on the study of terrorism suspects' criminal careers. Next, we zoom in on our research on family influences on offending, and women on the road to desistance.

Extremism/Terrorism Cluster

Intergenerational Cluster

Life-course Cluster

Spatial and Temporal Crime Patterns Cluster

Criminal Events Cluster

Empirical Legal Studies Cluster

Cybercrime Cluster

Sanctions Cluster

Extremism/ Terrorism Cluster

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Terrorist suspect is very similar to ‘normal’ suspect

A large-scale study by NSCR has revealed that terrorist suspects in the Netherlands often have a criminal record and nearly always occupy a low socioeconomic position. With respect to their background, terrorist suspects are surprisingly similar to average suspects of crime. Available register data therefore do not show a specific risk profile for terrorists.

As the investigation and prosecution of terrorist acts are high on the agenda, the demand for greater insight into the perpetrators of such criminal acts is increasing. For example, it is important to know whether there are certain triggers – events that elicit the radicalisation process or accelerate it – that could lead to a terrorist act. Commissioned by *Politie & Wetenschap*, NSCR investigated the entire population of terrorist suspects in the Netherlands, a first-time study since the implementation of the Crimes of Terrorism Act in 2004. For the study, the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and involvement in other or previous forms of crime of all 279 terrorism suspects were investigated. Data were compiled by anonymous keyed linkage of the list of terrorist suspects compiled by the Public Prosecution Service with register data from Statistics Netherlands.

Male, 30 years old, poorly educated and often in trouble with the police

Based on the research results, the researchers concluded that terrorism suspects in the Netherlands are usually male (87.5%), with an average age of 30 years and relatively poorly educated. The majority of suspects have an immigrant background. Furthermore, the suspects are slightly more often unemployed than the average Dutch citizen. About two-thirds of the suspects have previous police contacts, often for relatively common offences. In these respects, terrorism suspects largely resemble average Dutch suspects.

The risk factors also concur with risk factors for conventional crime, although the researchers uncovered differences between subgroups of terrorist offenders concerning age, migrant status, work situation and criminal history. For example, it was found that after the emergence of the Islamic State, terrorist suspects were on average younger and more frequently had a criminal record than before Islamic State.

Which factors were triggers?

The researchers analysed to what extent each of the risk factors could have functioned as a trigger factor. This was done by longitudinal analysis of the data and examining specific events in the year prior to the persons arrest. The most important finding was that relatively many terrorist suspects had lost their job in the year preceding arrest, which significantly increased the risk of becoming a terrorist suspect even when taking other risk factors into account. Losing one's job may therefore been seen as a trigger factor.

Results relevant for tactical decisions by the police and judiciary

The research contributes to more insight and expertise concerning this group of suspects, a relatively new type of offender for the Netherlands. The factors that were identified shed some first light on the mechanisms underlying terrorist offenders' motivations. However, it is also clear that the vast majority of people with the identified risk factors do not become involved in terrorist acts. Predicting who will become a terrorist suspect is therefore far from easy. Further qualitative research, using more in-depth data is necessary to establish what pushes some people with certain risk factors in the direction of terrorism. And just as important: what deters other people under comparable circumstances from becoming terrorists?

Publication details and further reading

Thijs, F., Rodermond, E. & Weerman, F. (2018). *Verdachten van terrorisme in beeld: Achtergrondkenmerken, 'triggers' en eerdere politiecontacten*. Politie & Wetenschap, Apeldoorn.

Articles about this research also appeared in the NRC and de Volkskrant newspapers (in Dutch).

A photograph of three young people on a rooftop. One person in a red shirt is sitting on the ground on the left, another in a black jacket is sitting in the middle, and a third in a grey hoodie is standing on the right. They are looking out over a city building with many windows. The rooftop has graffiti on it and a metal railing.

Intergenerational Cluster

Are young people encouraged by their criminal brother or sister?

It is well known that crime clusters in families: children born in a criminal family are at increased risk to become criminal themselves. But what are the mechanisms behind that increased risk? NSCR studied to what extent the delinquent behaviour of boys and girls has an influence on their siblings, investigating whether that influence changes over the course of adolescence and whether boys are influenced more by their brothers and girls more by their sisters. Researchers Veroni Eichelsheim and Frank Weerman provide insight into criminal behaviour during adolescence.

Tell us: *'How do I survive my criminal sibling?'*

'The research did indeed reveal that brothers influence each other's criminal behavior, and likewise for sisters. However, this does not apply for mixed brother/sister pairs: the influence is only within sexes. We also observed a difference between early and late adolescence. In early adolescence, mainly sisters influence each other's delinquent behaviour, but their mutual influence decreases as they become older. The opposite is true for brothers: a significant influence on their delinquent behaviour does not emerge until late adolescence. The influence of delinquent behaviour from the best friend also appears to increase during adolescence.'

What is known about all different influences on teenagers as they mature?

'Young people's lives take place in different social domains, such as family, school and peers. All of these have a considerable influence on young people's behaviour and therefore also on their possible involvement in adolescent delinquency. However, the importance of each of these domains changes over the course of adolescence. According to Terence Thornberry's influential 'Interactional theory', the family has the most influence on young adolescents, while among older youths, the influence of school and peers increases. The theory says little about the role of siblings, even though these are clearly an important factor in the lives of young people. We investigated this now using the data of 600 pupils in secondary education that was taken from the longitudinal [RADAR project](#).'

A sibling is often simultaneously a family member and a peer. What sort of effect does that have?

‘The research threw light on two contradicting expectations about the role of siblings. On the one hand, they are members of the family and the process of becoming independent could lead to a decreasing influence of siblings. On the other hand, siblings can be viewed as contemporaries of each other, and therefore an increasing effect could be expected. For girls and sisters, the first expectation holds more, and the second more for boys and brothers.’

How can this research be used in practice?

‘The outcomes are important for prevention and interventions focused on families of adolescent delinquents. It is advisable that for delinquent boys, the role of their peer brothers should be incorporated. Future research could examine the entire family in greater detail, including all siblings. It would also be valuable to find out more about the underlying mechanisms that lead to siblings exerting influence on each other’s delinquent behaviour.’

Publication details and further reading

Huijsmans, T., Eichelsheim, V., Weerman, F., Branje, S. & Meeus, W. (2018). The Role of Siblings in Adolescent Delinquency Next to Parents, School, and Peers: Do Gender and Age Matter? *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*.

Output 2018

67

peer-reviewed
publications

non peer-reviewed
publications

11

PhD

2

theses

books

7

19

other
(web publications,
Kennislink articles)

publications
aimed at professionals

16

book
chapters

17



Life-course Cluster

Out of prison, out of crime? Women on the road to desistance

About half of all female ex-prisoners commit another crime within seven years, which means that half of these women stay crime free. NSCR/VU Amsterdam criminologist Elanie Rodermond investigated which factors support women in stopping with crime.

Each year, several thousand women leave one of the three female prisons in the Netherlands. Ideally, they stop committing crimes after their release; in other words, they desist. Rodermond demonstrates in her PhD research that solving problems with factors such as housing and addiction is *more* important for successful desistance than family relationships and employment.

Desistance among women further investigated

To date, most scientific research into desistance has focussed on male (ex-)prisoners. However, are the prevailing theories about the desistance directly translatable to women? Rodermond investigated more than 2500 women who were released from prison in 2007. She analysed data on offending, work, family composition and benefits, and she also held interviews with former female prisoners.

Family relationship has no influence

At the moment of release, about two-thirds of the women have children, and a small minority is married. Nevertheless, these family relationships do not influence the chance of new contacts with the criminal justice system. Rodermond showed that having a supportive partner and a good relationship with the children can contribute to the *will* to change, but that problems with housing, finances and drug abuse often hinder prolonged desistance.

Stable housing situation and meaningful job are crucial factors

According to Rodermond, the period after release is characterised by numerous problems for both recidivist women and women who desist. After their release, both groups of women desire a life without criminality, but desisters take more active steps to realise that goal. Women who eventually desist often have a more stable housing situation and a more meaningful job than the recidivists.

More attention for problems concerning housing, finances and trauma

Rodermond concludes that contextual factors and internal subjective factors influence the process of desisting. Other factors, such as family life, mainly seem to be important for supporting a process of desistance that has already started. The government and those working with ex-prisoners must continue to pay more attention to the underlying problems within this group, especially those relating to housing, finances, addiction and trauma. This will enable women to sustain their will to change after their release.

Publication details and further reading

Rodermond, E. (2018). *Out of prison, out of crime? Women on the road to desistance*. NSCR/VU

Collaboration with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Since 2009, NSCR has enjoyed the hospitality of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU). In 2018, we collaborated with the Faculty of Law, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, School of Business and Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences and the Department of Mathematics. We moved to a smaller but pleasant location within the Initium building of the VU, sharing a floor with Criminal Law and Criminology and Private Law. We collaborate in supervising PhD students as well as in numerous research projects.

These collaborations with VU are conducted under the umbrella of the interfaculty research institute A-LAB (Amsterdam Law and Behaviour Institute), that has stimulated numerous other research initiatives over the years. A-LAB was evaluated as *excellent* in 2018.

NSCR also contributes to teaching in the Criminal Law and Criminology department within the Faculty of Law, as well as providing internships and thesis supervision.

Where, when and how is crime committed?

One of the key questions of NSCR research focuses on where and when crimes are committed. Why does crime concentrate in certain locations rather than in others? Is it because these locations have attractive targets, because they are unsupervised? Or because offenders happen to know these locations as they are close to their home, previous school or leisure time activities?

Below, we give an example of a study that investigated how the presence of a football stadium increased the risk of crime in the stadium's neighbourhood. Next, we describe a NSCR study on how crimes are committed and the broader situational context: the extent to which bystanders or guardians are present. One issue that such research has faced traditionally, is that all data on crime events were retrospective, and generally filtered through the memory (and willingness to speak) of offenders, police officers, or victims. NSCR researchers argue that the technical possibilities offered by CCTV footage will be a game changer for the study of crime: researchers can directly observe how crimes unfold.

Extremism/Terrorism
Cluster

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Spatial and Temporal
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Sanctions Cluster

An aerial, high-angle view of a large, modern stadium. The central feature is a vibrant green football pitch with white markings. The pitch is surrounded by multiple tiers of blue seating, which are mostly empty. The stadium's roof is a complex, dark metal structure with a grid-like pattern. In the background, beyond the stadium's perimeter, there are some buildings and a clear sky. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime.

Spatial and Temporal Crime Patterns Cluster

Football stadium permanent safety risk for the neighbourhood

Research by the University of Ghent and NSCR has revealed that the presence of a football stadium increases crime in the neighbourhood. The number of thefts is higher on days without matches.

The closure of the Jules Ottenstadion in Ghent gave criminologists Christophe Vandeviver (University of Ghent, NSCR fellow), Stijn Van Daele (Ghent University Hospital) and Wim Bernasco (NSCR) the chance to determine whether more crime occurs in the vicinity of a football stadium.

43% fewer property crimes on non-match days

The researchers studied the number of burglaries, shop thefts, car thefts and thefts from cars in the direct vicinity of the Jules Ottenstadion, in the period before and the period after the stadium closed. They compared the figures with the same data for the rest of the city of Ghent and only looked at the days on which no matches were played in the stadium. The data showed that after closure of the stadium, property crime dropped strongly in the immediate surroundings of the closed football stadium: on non-match days, a striking 43% fewer crimes were committed in the vicinity of the stadium. In the rest of the city, the number of property crimes also decreased, but only by 8%.

Motivated offender seeks potential targets

As an explanation for the crimes on non-match days, the researchers point to the regularly returning large numbers of visitors around a football stadium. Some visitors are motivated offenders who spot potential targets during their repeated visits to the neighbourhood. During football matches, they are *in* the stadium, and there is police surveillance around the match. These aspects make it difficult to commit crime. Motivated offenders will therefore return at another time.

Permanently increased police surveillance

The conclusion drawn from the research is that increased surveillance in the direct vicinity of a football stadium is advisable on non-match days as well. Increased surveillance will limit the crime victimization risk for local residents. The researchers also advise considering this when locations for new football stadiums are chosen.

Publication details and further reading

Vandeviver, C., Bernasco, W. & Van Daele, S. (2018). Do sports stadiums generate crime on days without matches? A natural experiment on the delayed exploitation of criminal opportunities. *Security Journal*.



Criminal Events Cluster

Crime caught on camera: a game changer for criminology

NSCR researchers Marie Rosenkrantz Lindegaard and Wim Bernasco guest-edited a special issue of the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*. The issue is entirely devoted to state-of-the art empirical research on crime as observed and recorded by surveillance cameras. In the conclusion to this special issue the editors argue that CCTV images are a game changer for the study of crime

Why is that so?

‘Well one of the biggest problems in criminology is that as a researcher you can never witness the event happening. All we have as researchers is basically second-hand information, *after* the fact: we ask burglars why they choose house A and house B, we ask the victims of a fight what happened, who hit whom first. But all that information comes to us as researchers filtered through offenders and victims’ memories, and through what they choose to tell us and what not. Now we have more and more video recordings of such events.’

Can you give an example of what you can study using CCTV images?

‘There are numerous examples (and in fact other disciplines are discovering the possibility of these recordings too). We have extensively studied fights in public spaces and robberies in shops. Other researchers have distilled a crime script for drugs sales using CCTV footage, but the possibilities are in fact endless as so much is recorded these days.’

Is it not a problem that you do not have sound?

‘Yes we first thought that too. It turns out however that if you use very fine-grained methods (we actually adapted them from the study of primate behaviours), where you actually code from second to second how all the actors are interacting and behaving, you can infer quite precisely what is happening. We know this through validation that we did using CCTV images and comparing them to court files.’

You state that these video recordings will be a game changer, is that not a very bold statement?

‘We see studies emerging that are able to objectively code events, and that show – for instance – that the common myth of bystanders not intervening is untrue when it regards public fights: bystanders do intervene, and the risk of victimization for them is actually low. This is at odds with prevailing theories, and this shows that how useful it is to use objective recordings, where the researcher is in a sense a *fly on the wall*.’

Are there also uses of this research for policy or practice?

‘Yes, many studies provide an evidence base for police instructions to bystanders. We found a similar thing when we analyzed robberies using CCTV images: there are clear do’s and don’ts in such situations.’

Publication details and further reading

Rosenkrantz Lindegaard, M. & Bernasco, W. (2018) Lessons Learned from Crime Caught on Camera. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, February 2018, Volume 55, Issue 1.

NSCR Practitioners in Residence

NSCR promotes structural exchange with policy, practice, and the media since 2015 through its *Practitioners in Residence* programme. Each year, a number of stakeholders from various segments of society are invited to visit NSCR, individually or as a group, over several visits. During these visits, Practitioners in Residence meet with research staff, may take part in work meetings, and generally get acquainted with the NSCR *on the job*.

Afterwards, the Practitioners in Residence reflect on their visits and exchanges, and give feedback on the NSCR research programme during a closing session at the end of the year.

In 2018, NSCR welcomed five Practitioners in Residence: Michel Bravo (Directorate Police, Ministry of Justice & Security), Saskia Belleman (Telegraaf newspaper), Wim Borst (Directorate *Keten informatie voorziening*, Ministry of Justice & Security), Anja Frowijn (Council for Child Protection), and Meike Lommers (CCV, Center for Crime Prevention and Security).

How does society respond to crime?

After a crime has been committed, a variety of things may happen. The victim may report the crime to the police (or not), the crime may be linked to a suspect (or not), a suspect may be found guilty (or not), and convicted offenders may end up being incarcerated (or not). NSCR studies all these aspects of the aftermath of crime and our societal response to the crime.

Studies typically focus on police practice and judicial procedure, NSCR studies victims' role in and their perception of the judicial process, and NSCR studies sanctions, ranging from fines to the severest penalty we have: incarceration. We employ a variety of methods and datasets: police practice is often studied through interviews or observation or using experimental methods, we follow convicts through the criminal justice system and look at the impact of sanctions on their lives and likelihood to re-offend.

Below, we first give an example of a study on the non-verbal cues that make people (and possibly) police officers believe that a suspect is lying. We next give a brief outline of a study on cybercrime reporting: while cybercrime is increasingly prevalent, relatively few people report cyber victimization to the police. After that, we describe a longitudinal study on the impact of incarceration on mental health of prisoners.

Extremism/Terrorism Cluster

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**Empirical
Legal Studies
Cluster**

You cannot see when a suspect is lying

Many people think it is possible to see when a person is lying. This applies to both professionals and lay people. However, research by NSCR has revealed that people tend to pay attention to the wrong details and that non-verbal behaviour is open to a wide range of interpretations. The vast majority of non-verbal behaviours regarded as 'suspicious' are not indicative of lying.

During an interrogation, the police would like to know whether a suspect is lying, and so they take careful note of a suspect's behaviour. People often think that stuttering, looking away and fidgeting are signs that somebody is lying. However, these aspects are not generally connected. Certain other behaviours *can* be indicative of lying, such as a higher pitched voice or making fewer movements with the hands and feet. Yet less attention is paid to this behaviour, or it is interpreted incorrectly.

Nervous behaviour does not mean that a suspect is lying

For this research, the NSCR analysed sound and video recordings of police interrogations and interviews. Analysis revealed that nervous behaviour during an interrogation can be interpreted in various ways. Lay people, in particular, think that a suspect is lying if he or she is nervous. However, everybody would be nervous during an interrogation because interrogation increase stress levels. Therefore, nervous behaviour may as well mean that a suspect is *not* lying. After all, in the context of an interrogation, this is 'normal' behaviour. Professionals less often than lay people think a person exhibiting such behaviour is lying. As behaviour is open to various interpretations, caution should be exercised concerning the conclusions drawn. In general, it is advisable to increase the knowledge about non-verbal behaviour.

Images can mislead viewers

Interrogations are recorded on video footage increasingly often. However, images can also distract from the content of the hearing. This is because viewers mainly pay attention to what they see, what the suspect looks like and how he or she behaves. They pay less attention to what the person *says*. As visible behaviour, in particular, such as looking away and fidgeting can be misleading, images can be especially misleading during criminal proceedings. Images are nevertheless sometimes necessary to employ, for instance to check the interrogation methods used by the police. For example, it may not be clear from a report whether the police exerted pressure on the suspect to obtain a statement, in which case the judge cannot rely solely on the information described in a report. Footage is then required. However, such footage runs the risk of increasing the impression that a suspect may have been lying, because of all the non-verbal cues that are then also present. Against the light of the study's findings, such footage should therefore be interpreted with caution, and professionals must be aware of this risk that footage entails.

Publication details and further reading

Malsch, M., Van Zanten, J. & Elffers, H. (2018). Pinokkio's neus: leugens en het gedrag van de verdachte in een verhoorsituatie. *Delikt & Delinkwent* 6, 462-477.

Malsch, M., Kranendonk, R., De Keijser, J., Elffers, H., Komter, M. & De Boer, M. (2015). Kijken, luisteren, lezen. De invloed van beeld, geluid en schrift op het oordeel over verdachtenverhoren. Apeldoorn: Politie & Wetenschap.

NSCR Staff (in fte) 2018 average

	Employed by NWO-I (tenured)	Employed by NWO-I (temporary)	Employed by VU	External	Total
Director	0,95	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,95
Research staff	12,04	3,61	0,00	0,00	15,65
Fellows	0,00	0,00	1,00	0,00	1,00
PhD's	0,00	5,73	4,00	0,00	9,73
Junior researchers	0,00	3,11	0,00	0,00	3,11
Support staff	2,29	1,72	0,00	1,33	5,34
Total	15,28	14,17	5,00	1,33	35,78



Cybercrime Cluster



Who bothers to report cybercrime?

Despite the considerable rise in the number of victims of cybercrime in recent decades, these offences are rarely reported to the police. NSCR researchers Steve van de Weijer, Rutger Leukfeldt and Wim Bernasco investigated which characteristics of victims predict whether a person will report a cybercrime or not.

The NSCR researchers used data from the *Veiligheidsmonitor* over a period of four years (2012-2015). A total of 127,413 offences were investigated, and it had been assessed whether the victims of the offences reported this to the police. More than 36,000 offences were forms of cybercrime, such as identity theft, consumer fraud or hacking. The remainder were forms of traditional crime, such as theft, vandalism or violence.

Reporting rate considerably lower for cybercrimes

The results revealed that overall 37.5% of offences were reported to the police but that this percentage was considerably lower for cybercrimes: identity theft (26.3%), consumer fraud (24.0%) and hacking (7.1%). It also emerged that a large proportion of the victims of identity theft (82.3%) did report the offence to another organisation, such as their bank.

Victim characteristics differ between cybercrime and traditional crime

Characteristics of victims who did report an offence were also found to differ between victims of cybercrime and victims of traditional crime. For example, men and people of non-Western ethnicity reported cybercrime more often, whereas women went to the police more often after a traditional offence.

Reporting to consumer organisations

Neighbourhood characteristics were not found to influence the choice of victims of cybercrime to go to the police. This is in contrast to victims of traditional crime who report this more often to the police if they live in a safe neighbourhood with little nuisance. Another striking result is that people who have previously been a victim of cybercrime report the offence more often to consumer organisations and banks, for example, and less often to the police.

Publication details and further reading

Van de Weijer, S.G.A., Leukfeldt, R., Bernasco, W. (2018) Determinants of reporting cybercrime: A comparison between identity theft, consumer fraud, and hacking. *European Journal of Criminology.*

NSCR Sources of income in 2016, 2017 and 2018

Income 2016-2018 in k€	2016	2017	2018
NWO	1.870	2.184	1.973
VU, cash & in-kind contributions	396	468	573
Direct funding	2.266	2.652	2.546
NWO	422	443	403
Other subsidy providers	164	194	164
Research grants	586	637	567
Contract research	224	262	444
Other	188	190	217
Total	3.264	3.741	3.774

Expenditure 2016-2018 in k€	2016	2017	2018
Personnel costs	2.626	3.002	3.123
Other costs	699	661	639
Total	3.325	3.663	3.762



Sanctions Cluster

Psychological problems decrease during detention

Psychological problems are common in prison. Much less is known about how these problems develop during detention. For the [Prison Project](#), NSCR researcher Anja Dirkzwager followed 1,904 detainees over four and a half years and investigated the course of psychological problems during imprisonment.

You found a remarkable outcome from the Prison Project ...

‘Yes, we saw a decrease in the psychological problems of prisoners. Over time, for example, they experienced less anxiety and fewer depressive feelings. We saw this decrease in psychological problems mainly in certain risk groups, such as prisoners with problematic alcohol and drug use prior to their detention and people who already had psychological problems. In detention, the mutual differences between these at-risk groups and other detainees become smaller.’

Why do you think psychological symptoms decrease in detention?

‘That decrease may be related to the availability of health care in prison, the fact that days are structured in detention and that there are fewer opportunities to use alcohol or drugs. Possibly especially the first period in detention is stressful. People are in an unknown and perhaps unsafe situation, and they have to deal with worries. For example, about family members and the future, and this may lead to an increase in psychological problems. If one then becomes more accustomed to the situation, this can lead to a decrease.’

Seems like detention might be beneficial?

‘Despite the decrease in psychological problems, detainees do have more psychological problems than the general population. So the decrease for high-risk groups is a good thing, but compared to the general population prisoners still fare worse. In addition, a detention period can also have undesirable impacts on other domains, such as problems with finding a job and a home, a deterioration of the financial situation and changes in social contacts.’

Unique to this study is the long term and the large group of respondents.

‘It is very special that all prisons in the Netherlands participated, making it a national investigation. We also wanted to repeatedly interview the detainees, so that we could investigate changes over time. We followed the respondents during detention and twenty-six months after their release. In addition, the research is not only about the health of prisoners, but also about a variety of other themes, such as their living and working situation, social contacts, the well-being of family members and criminal behaviour. Unique in the Netherlands and in the rest of the world.’

What can you do with these results?

'I notice that the issue of detention and health is increasingly topical, both in science and in the prison system. Prisoners form a relatively unhealthy population who deserve attention. So we definitely want to create awareness. The many mental health problems among prisoners that we identified show the importance of good interventions. In the future, we want to investigate the effects of the interventions and care offered.'

Publication details and further reading

Dirkzwager, A.J.E. & Nieuwebeerta, P. (2018). Mental health symptoms during imprisonment: A longitudinal study. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 138(4), 300-311.

NSCR Organisation

Staff	Iris Becx MSc	PhD candidate
	Dr Lidewyde Berckmoes	Postdoc
	Prof. Wim Bernasco	Senior researcher
	Prof. Catrien Bijleveld	Director
	Prof. Arjan Blokland	Senior researcher
	Agnes van den Broek	Financial project officer
	Mieke Bruggeman MSc	Junior researcher
	Gabriele Chlevickaite MSc	PhD candidate
	Sjoukje van Deuren MSc	PhD candidate
	Merel Dirkse MSc	Junior researcher
	Dr Anja Dirkszager	Senior researcher
	Nick van Doormaal MSc	PhD candidate
	Meintje van Dijk MSc	PhD candidate
	Lisa van Eekelen	Senior secretary
	Dr Veroni Eichelsheim	Senior researcher
	Peter Ejbye-Ernst MSc	PhD candidate
	Dr Nieke Elbers	Postdoc
	Prof. Henk Elffers	Guest researcher
	Dr Charlotte Gerritsen	Postdoc
	Marleen Gorissen MSc	Junior researcher
	Koosje Heurter	Communications officer
	Dr Barbora Holá	Senior researcher
	Leontien Hulleman MSc	Personnel advisor
	Soemintra Jaghai-Nejal	Financial officer
	Dr Martha Komter	Guest researcher
	Robert Klarenberg	Controller
	Aad van der Klaauw	Data protection officer
	Robin Kranendonk MSc	PhD candidate (A-LAB)
	Martina Kristen MSc	Junior researcher
	Janique Kroese MSc	PhD candidate (A-LAB)
	Lucile de Kruijff MSc	Junior researcher
	Camiel van der Laan MSc	PhD candidate (A-LAB)
	Prof. Peter van der Laan	Senior researcher
	Dr Marre Lammers	Postdoc
	Marco Last MSc	Grant advisor
	Dr Andrew Lemieux	Researcher
	Dr Rutger Leukfeldt	Senior researcher
	Dr Marie Lindegaard	Senior researcher
	Claudia van der Linde	Senior secretary
	Renushka Madarie MSc	PhD candidate
	Dr Marijke Malsch	Senior researcher
	Dr Barbara Menting	Postdoc
	Karin Monster MSc	Junior researcher
	Lukas Norbutas MSc	PhD candidate
	Raoul Notté MSc	Junior researcher

Marieke Polhout	Data manager
Martine Rietman MSc	Junior researcher
Elanie Rodermond MSc	PhD candidate
Rieneke Roorda LLM MSc	PhD candidate (A-Lab)
Prof. Stijn Ruiters	Senior researcher
Sabine van Sleuwen MSc	PhD candidate
Anne Smit MSc	PhD candidate (A-LAB)
Dr Wouter Steenbeek	Researcher
Marigo Teeuwen MSc	Researcher
Fabienne Thijs MSc	Junior researcher
Prof. Frank Weerman	Senior researcher
Dr Steve van de Weijer	Postdoc
Machiel van der Werff	IT Assistant
Ho Young Wisselink	Datamanager
Ilka van de Werve MSc	PhD candidate
Sophie van Zegveld	Junior secretary

(Inter)national fellows

Dr Mikko Aaltonen	University of Helsinki
Dr Camilla Bank Friis	University of Copenhagen
Dr Lidewyde Berckmoes	African Studies Centre Leiden
Dr Tamar Berenblum	Hebrew University
Dr Tibor Bosse	Radboud University
Dr Kees Camphuysen	NIOZ
Dr Susan Dennison	Griffith University
Prof. Jean-Louis van Gelder	Twente University
Dr Evelien Hoeben	University at Albany
Prof. Thomas Holt	Michigan State University
Dr Janine Janssen	Avans Hogeschool
Prof. Stuart Kinner	Griffith University, University of Melbourne
Dr Vere van Koppen	VU Amsterdam
Prof. Mark Levine	Exeter University
Dr Lasse Liebst	University of Copenhagen
Prof. David Maimon	University of Maryland
Dr Nick Malleson	University of Leeds
Dr William Moreto	University of Central Florida
Prof. Lieven Pauwels	Ghent University
Richard Philpot MSc	University of Exeter
Dr Robert Pickles	University of Trent/Panthera
Dr Melvin Soudijn	KLPD
Prof. Michael Tonry	University of Minnesota
Dr Christophe Vandeviver	Ghent University
Dr Janna Verbruggen	Cardiff University
Dr Don Weenink	University of Amsterdam
Dr Johan van Wilsem	WODC

VU-fellows

Prof. Arno Akkermans
Prof. Masha Antokolskaia
Dr Victor van der Geest
Dr Jan-Willem van Prooijen
Dr Marleen Weulen Kranenbarg

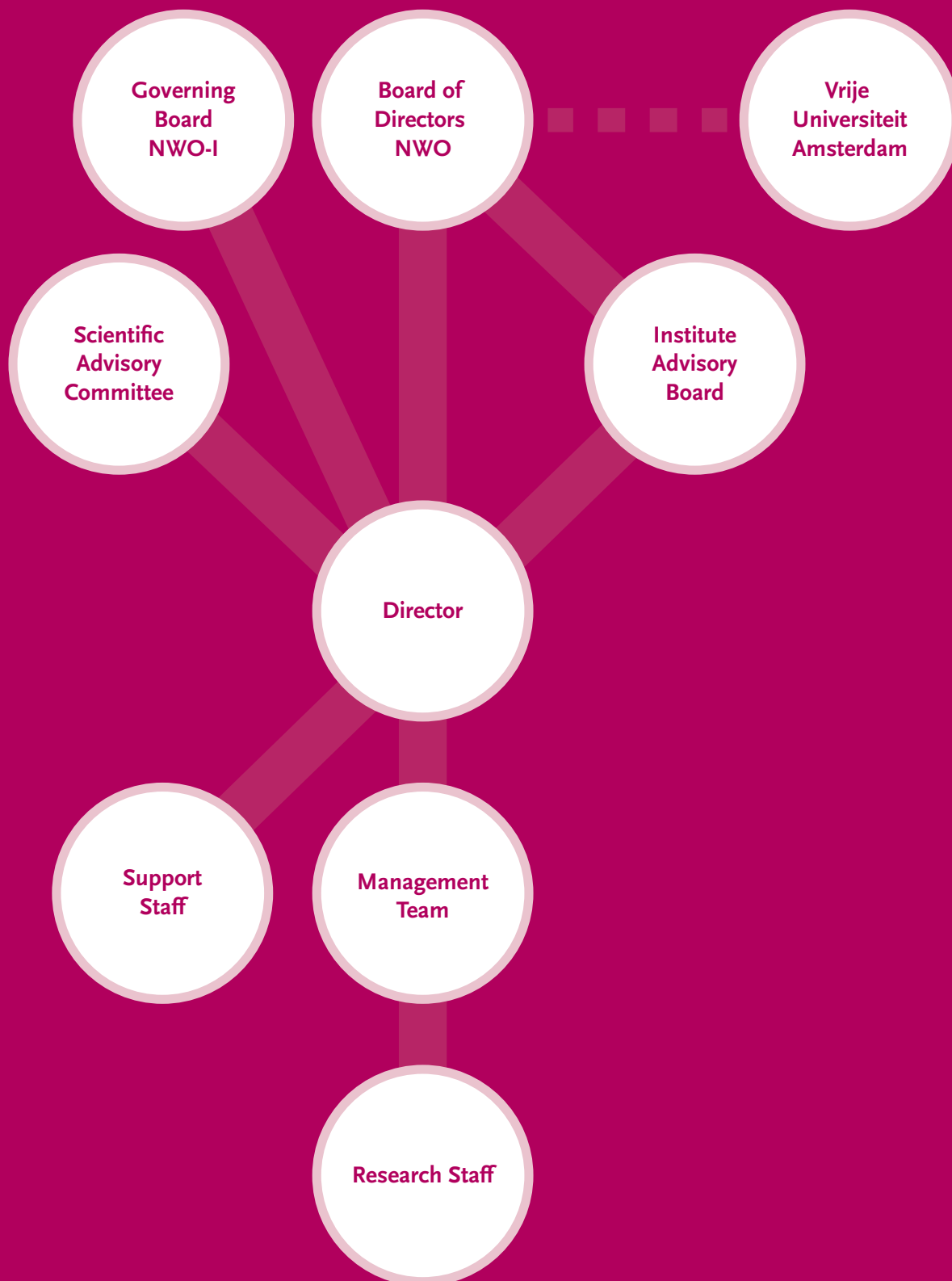
**PhD degrees
awarded**

Anneke Menger
Elanie Rodermond

**NSCR Scientific
Advisory
Committee
(SAC)**

Prof. Marcelo Aebi	University of Lausanne, Switzerland (chair)
Prof. Judith van Erp	Utrecht University, The Netherlands
Prof. Felipe Estrada	Stockholm University, Sweden
Prof. Candace Kruttschnitt	University of Toronto, Canada
Prof. Friedrich Lösel	University of Cambridge, UK/Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany
Dr Almir Maljevic	University of Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina
Prof. Daniel Nagin	Carnegie Mellon University, USA
Dr Diettrich Oberwittler	Max Planck Institut Freiburg, Germany
Prof. Clifford Shearing	Griffith University, Australia/University of Cape Town, South Africa
Prof. Terence Thornberry	University of Maryland, USA
Prof. David Weisburd	Hebrew University, Israël

Formal structure NSCR





Netherlands Institute for the Study
of Crime and Law Enforcement

Visiting address

De Boelelaan 1077
1081 HV Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Postal address

PO Box 71304
1008 BH Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Tel: +31 20 59 85 239
E-mail: nscr@nscr.nl
Website: www.nscr.nl

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