



Ministry of Security and Justice

**DUTCH  
TOUCH**

## **The Dutch Touch: How Holland Managed to Cut Crime**

**Presentation for the Alberta  
Community Crime Prevention  
Association Virtual Conference, 12  
May 2021**

The Hague: Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, Jaap  
de Waard

[j.de.waard@minvenj.nl](mailto:j.de.waard@minvenj.nl)

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jaap\\_De\\_Waard/publications](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jaap_De_Waard/publications)

12 May 2021



## What are we going to do during this presentation?



- Personal introduction and background
- The Netherlands in a nutshell
- Crime trends in The Netherlands
- How did Holland managed to cut crime?
- Effective situational crime prevention: what works in NL?
- Effective policing: what works in NL?
- Effective rehabilitative interventions: what works in NL?
- Conclusions: safeguarding sustainable crime prevention: lessons for (Canadian) crime prevention policies



# Personal introduction and background



- Information analyst at the Research and Documentation Centre, Dutch Ministry of Justice
- Policy advisor at the Strategy Unit, Dutch Ministry of Justice
- Head of the Secretariat of the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN), European Commission, Brussels
- Senior policy advisor at the Unit for Organised Crime Policies, Dutch Ministry of Justice & Security
- Personal ambition to stimulate the utilisation of evidence based scientific insights into the policy making process



# The Netherlands in a nutshell

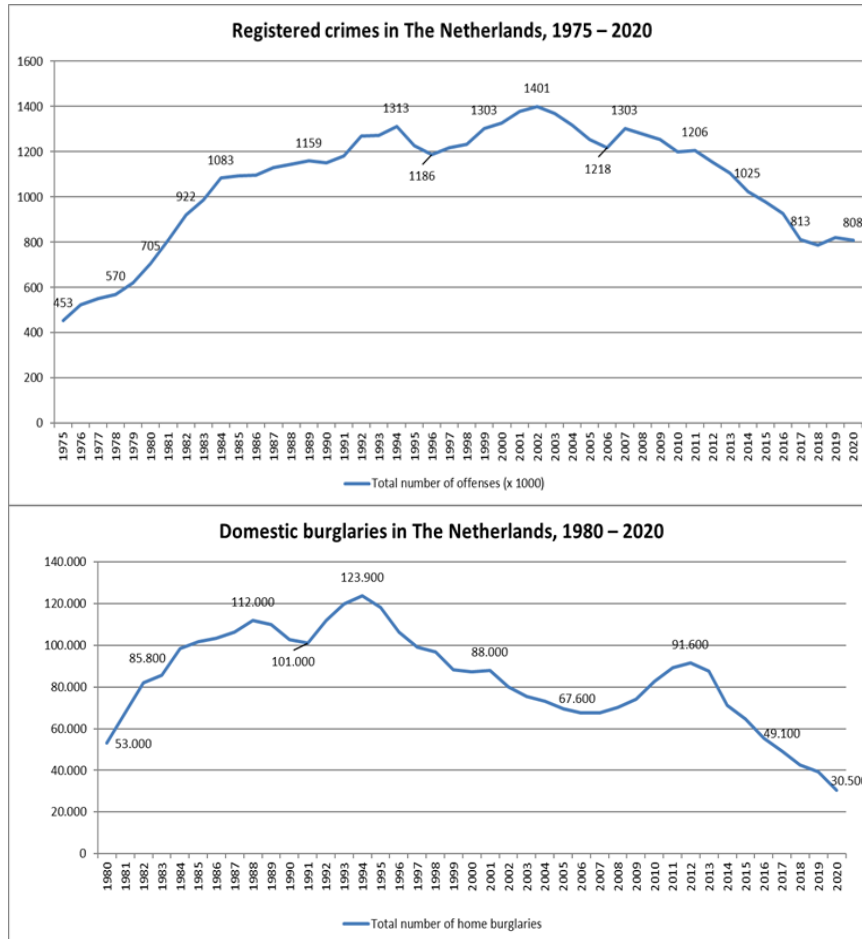


## The Netherlands

- 41,543 sq km
- Coastline: 415 km
- Population: 17.408.000
- Capital: Amsterdam, 872.000
- Urban population: 84%
- Independence: 23 January 1579
- Legal system: based on civil law system incorporating French penal theory
- GDP: € 810.2 billion
- GDP per capita: € 46.500
- Unemployment rate: 4.0%
- Internet users: 16.690 million
- Illicit drugs: major European producer of synthetic drugs, including ecstasy, and cannabis cultivator, important gateway for cocaine, heroin and hashish entering Europe.



## Some recent crime trends in The Netherlands I



- In 2020 the Dutch police registered nearly 810 thousand crimes
- In 2020 the police registered 42 percent fewer crimes as compared to the year 2002
- This decrease is seen in virtually all types of crime
- The sharpest decrease (by half) relative to 2002 in vandalism and public order offenses
- Property offenses in 2020 saw a 41 percent decline compared to the year 2002



## Registered crime and crime victimisation in The Netherlands, 1980 -2017: Index 2002=100





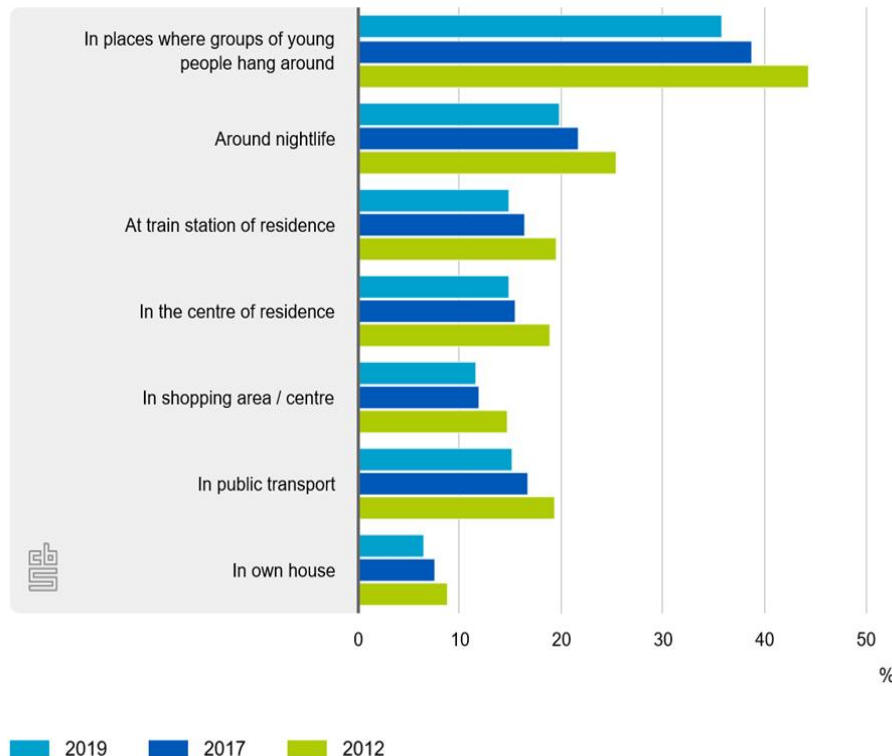
## Murders in The Netherlands, 1996 - 2020





## Occasionally feeling unsafe in place of residence: The Netherlands, 2012-2019

Occasionally feeling unsafe in place of residence

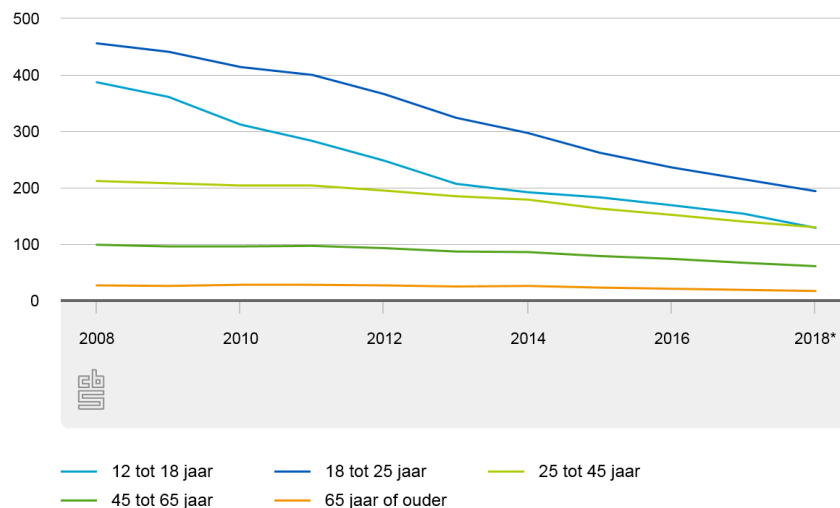


- Feelings of unsafety in the place of residence are strongest in places with loitering young people
- People feel least unsafe in their own house. This was reported by 6 percent
- Relative to two years previously, in most locations within the place of residence a smaller share reported feeling unsafe in 2019
- Compared to 2012, feelings of unsafety have become less prevalent in all locations



## Development in the number of crime suspects by age group per 10.000 inhabitants in The Netherlands: 2008 -2018

Verdachten naar leeftijd per 10 000 inwoners\*



\* De cijfers uit 2017 en 2018 zijn voorlopige cijfers.

- In 2018 a total of 160 thousand Dutch inhabitants were crime suspects. In 2008 this total number was 309 thousand. Between 2008 and 2018 the total number of crime suspects declined by 49 percent
- Between 2008 and 2018 the number of crime suspects between the ages of 12 - 18 declined by 67 percent; between the ages of 18 - 25 years declined 57 percent; 25 - 45 years declined 39 percent; 45 - 65 years declined 38%; and 65 years and older declined by 37 percent
- **Conclusion:** The younger, the sharper the decline in crime suspects



## How did Holland managed to cut crime? and what explanations can be given?

*Why Crime Is Dropping*



- Only recently evidence based (inter)national criminological research has come available to explain the crime drop;
- There are many possible explanations available, from a strong economy, policing strategies, gun control laws, imprisonment to improved security;
- There is no *magic bullet* explanation for the Dutch and international drop in crime;
- Many explanations are country specific and do not apply to a number of other different countries;
- For the Netherlands four major related explanations can be given: (1) improved security; (2) restoring the capacity and authority of the criminal law; (3) demography and a declining heroin market (4) a strong active and stimulating role from central government;
- Since the crime drop has occurred at different times in different countries in relation to different crime types we will look for explanations that we can apply in many countries.



## The Security Hypothesis explained



- On the basis of our current knowledge and evidence the *security hypothesis* is the most important and solid explanation for the drop in crime in The Netherlands;
- There is a general (international) increase in improvement of preventive behaviour, the quality of and financial investment in crime prevention by individuals, governmental organisations, the business world and producers. The private security industry has been an outstanding growth market;
- The security hypothesis especially applies when to explaining the drop in property crime (especially vehicle theft, shoplifting and domestic burglary). It is less clear how it applies to violent crime, such as certain types of (sexual) violence and assault.



## Policy based evidence







# Effective situational crime prevention: what works?

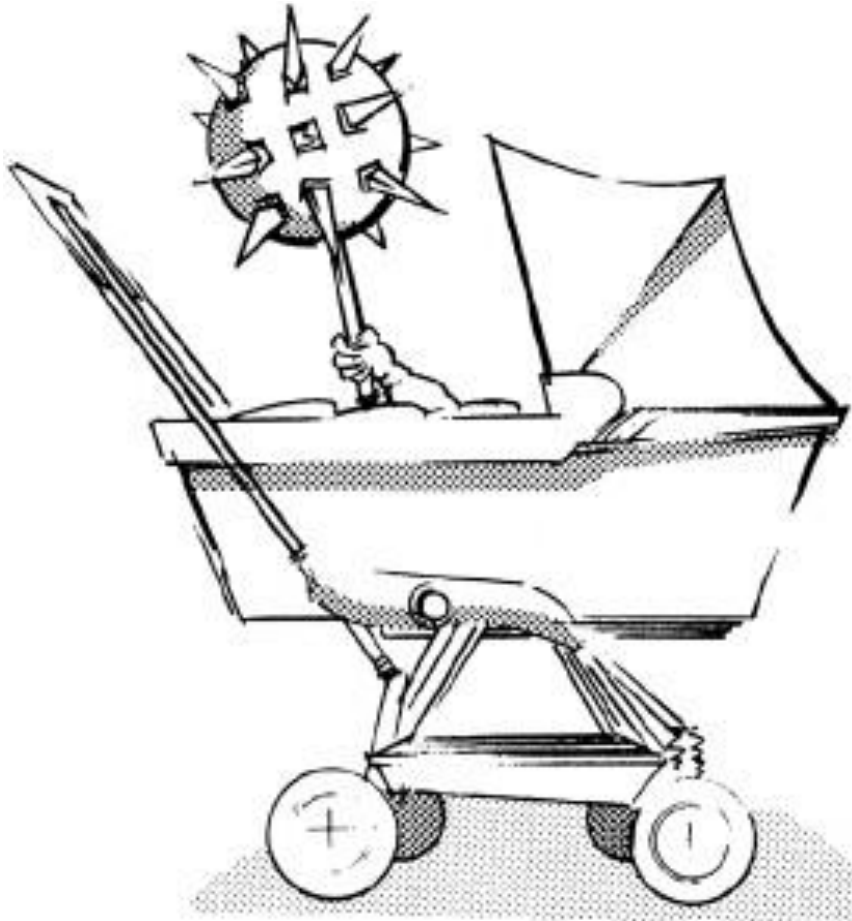


*It is easier to change places than people  
Opportunity makes the thief*

- The raising of lighting levels in (semi) public spaces
- The use of CCTV in certain locations, aimed at specific crime categories
- The use of the Secured by Design instrument
- The raising of the general security level and the restructuring of residential areas
- The obligatory inbuilt of standard security measures during the production phase of consumer goods (cars, cameras, bicycles, mobile telephones)
- Limitation of the availability of alcohol / requirements to the set-up of catering industry / responsible serving
- The deployment of supervisors / informal-social control in housing complexes, public transport and public space



## Proven effective in The Netherlands: Decline in the risk of household burglaries by taking simple crime prevention measures



- Crime prevention measures can be relative simply and very effective
- E.g. the combination of the following five preventive measures:
  - (1) leave a light on when going out
  - (2) fitted extra locks on doors and windows
  - (3) extra outside lighting
  - (4) dog
  - (5) burglar alarm

Effect: the risk of becoming a victim of a successful household burglary is **decreased by factor 16**



## Proven effective in The Netherlands: The prevention of repeat victimization



Louise E. Grove, Graham Farrell, David P. Farrington and  
Shana D. Johnson

### Preventing Repeat Victimization: A Systematic Review



- The chance of repeated victimization is four to five times larger as the national average
- Risk is most voluminous within six weeks after first victimization
- Repeated victimization occurs among: domestic violence, racial violence, child abuse, domestic burglary, extortion, vandalism, shoplifting, business burglary, officials with a public task
- A targeted approach results in a decrease of 16 - 22 percent in victimization
- Provides protection to the most vulnerable groups

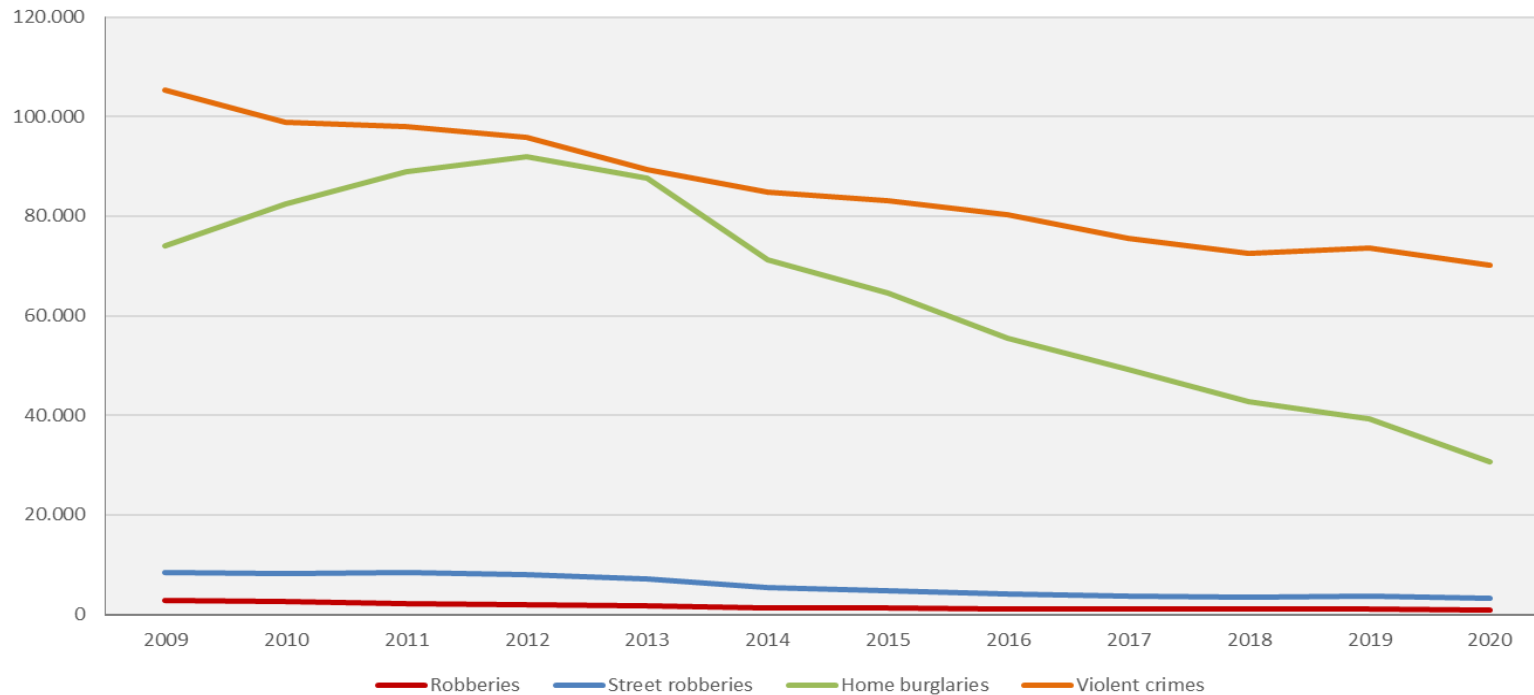




## Good Practice: Dutch policies on 'High Impact Crime' in The Netherlands, 2009-2020

**Robberies: – 69% Street robberies: – 62%**  
**Burglary: – 49% Violent crime: -33 %**

Registered High Impact Crimes in The Netherlands 2009-2020





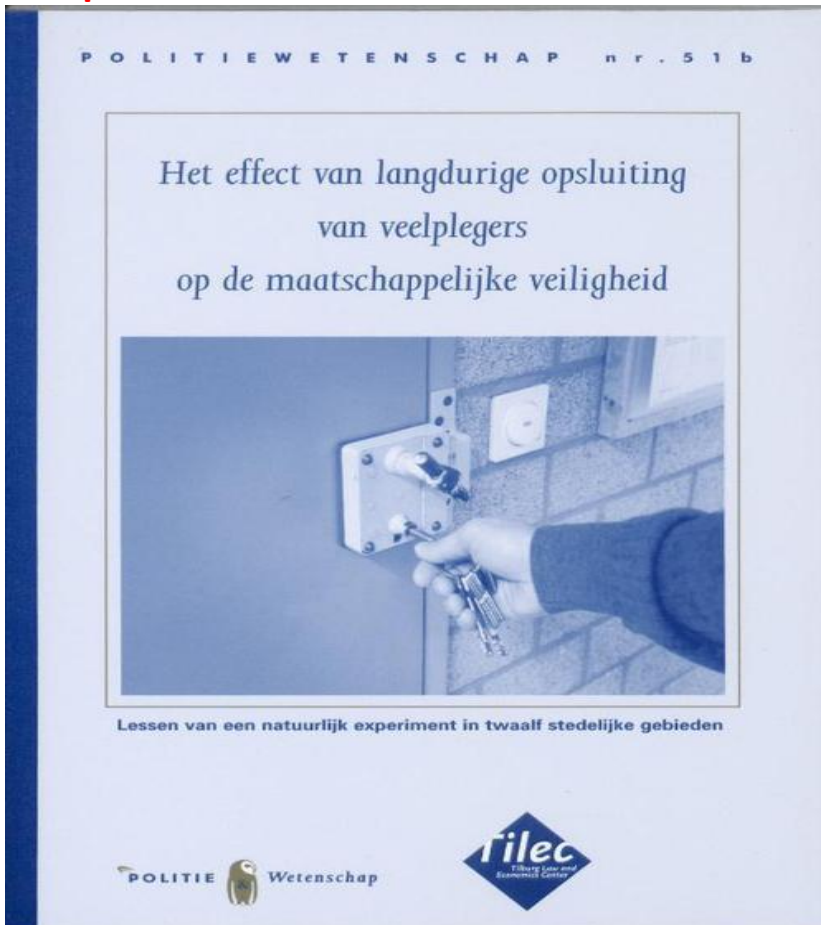
## Proven effective in The Netherlands: Targeted surveillance on so-called 'hotspots'



- There is a 'incoherent distribution' of crime (hot spots, hot offenders, hot victims)
- The more targeted surveillance on criminal hot spots and hot times, the less crime in those places and during those time periods
- There is no crime displacement to surrounding areas, even so-called bonus effects can be discerned



## Good practice from The Netherlands: Decline in household burglaries by incapacitating repeat offenders



- On 1 October 2004 the Act introducing the institution for Repeat Offenders Committal Order took effect.
- These serious criminal active repeat offenders are responsible for a substantial percentage of household burglaries
- The effects of incapacitating these repeat offenders are substantial: 40 household burglaries per year for every repeat offender
- The success of this intervention is the decline in the number of household burglaries in the four largest cities in The Netherlands by almost 30%.



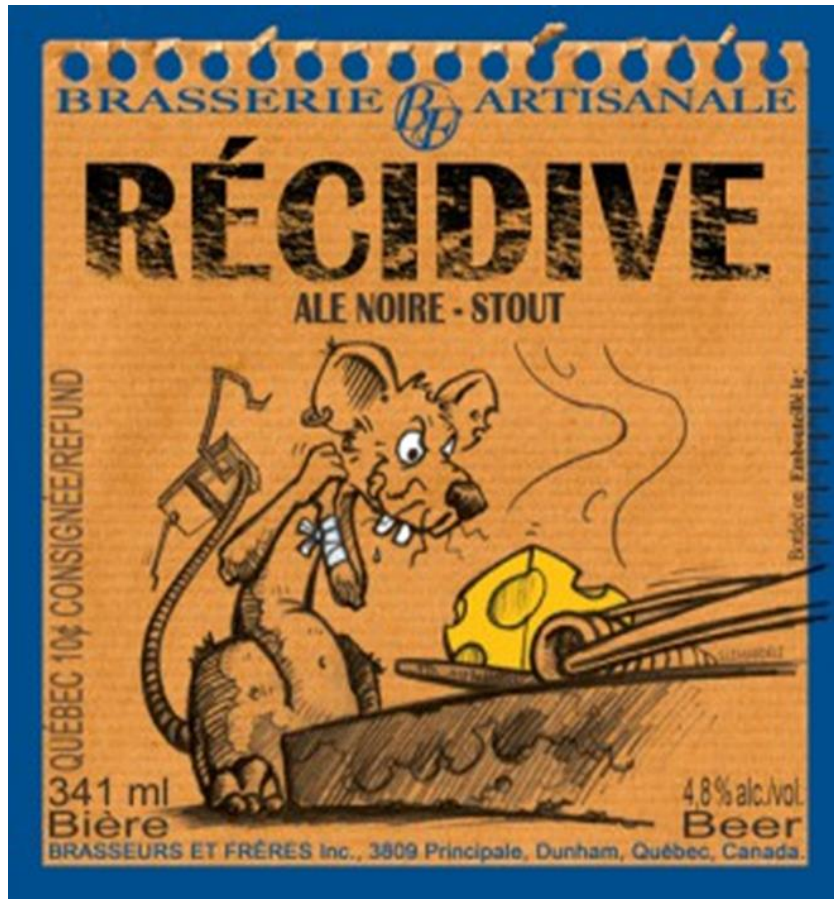
## Proven effective in The Netherlands: Speed with which police responds to criminal offenses



- 'The main factor determining whether an offender is apprehended at the scene is the length of time between the crime being committed and reported. Crimes that are reported in progress and responded to without a delay are associated with much higher chances of detection'
- Between 80 and 90% of accused suspects are caught in the act or within three hours after committing an offense → 60% initiated by citizens



## Effective offender oriented (criminal) justice interventions: what works?



- Community sanctions
- Interpersonal skills training / self control mechanism
- Parental training / early prevention
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Employment / job training
- Mentoring
- Drug / alcohol therapy within prison setting



## Effective criminal justice interventions aimed at juveniles: What works?



- Some criminal justice interventions have **negative** effects. This means more reoffending → **Scared Straight**, **Shock incarceration**, **Boot camps**
- **Effective** interventions include: **Child raising support**, **Cognitive behavioural therapy**, **Employment guidance**, **Parent training**, **Mentoring programmes**, **Community sanctions**, **Interpersonal skills training / self control mechanism**, **Anger management**
- There is evidence that criminal justice interventions can be cost effective
- **Conclusions:** Purely repressive interventions tend to give a negative or poor result. Keep children as long as possible outside of the formal criminal justice system.



## Some cautionary remarks: do no harm!



- No single risk factor is sufficient to explain juvenile delinquency
- Intervention methods must account for the wide range of individual, family, peer, school and community risk factors
- Still many gaps exist in our knowledge base about development and prevention of juvenile delinquency
- Use confinement sparingly and only to respond to serious offending
- Use restitution and community service more often
- Avoid collateral consequences of adjudication, such as public release of juvenile records that reduce opportunities to a prosocial life



## Joined up approach to tackle crime: Dutch partners in security and safety policies



- Citizens and property owners
- Police
- Ministries of Justice and Home Affairs
- Public Prosecuting Office
- Public Housing Corporations
- Insurance world
- Victim assistance
- Probation services
- Local Government
- Private security industry
- Knowledge centers (academia, governmental)

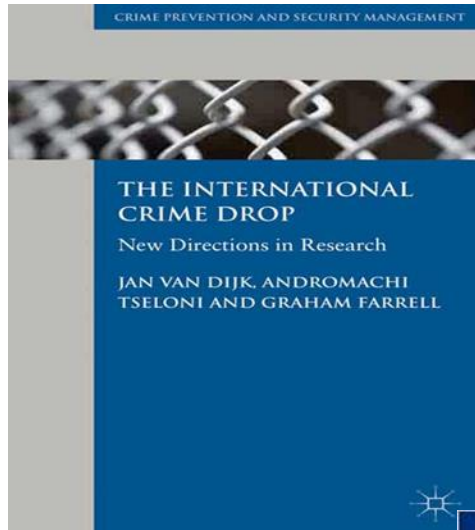


## Special Features of the Dutch Approach to Crime Control and Crime Prevention



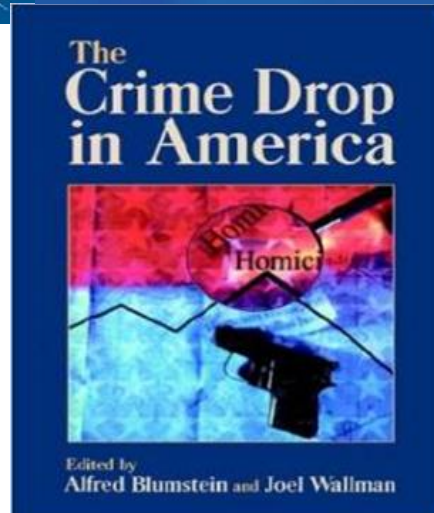
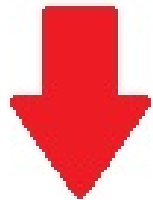
- Strong collaboration between central government and the business world: Dutch National Platform of Crime Control;
- Public and Private Partnerships to promote crime prevention, especially with the Private Security Industry
- Preventing is more desirable than prosecuting → stimulating preventive behaviour
- Using civil remedies and an administrative approach preventing criminal behavior (local organized crime)
- Strong certification schemes for public safety aspects
- Evidence based approach (evidence based crime policies versus policy based evidence)

# Policy implications for sustaining the crime falls



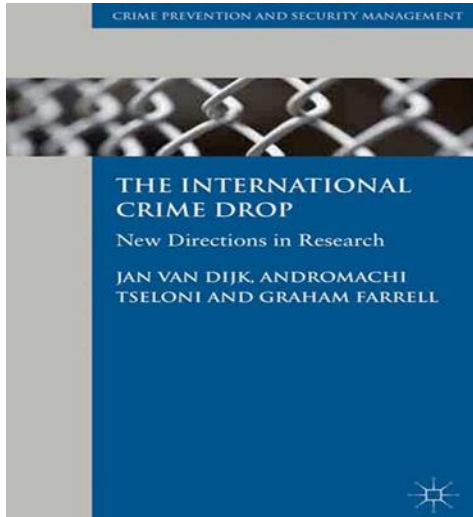
- Promotion of state -of -the-art- security measures, especially among vulnerable groups
- Investing wisely in crime prevention
- Strict gun control
- Reduction alcohol abuse
- Encourage the implementation and sustainability of effective, innovative and efficient crime prevention programs, significantly contributing to reducing crime and making countries safer.

## THE CRIME



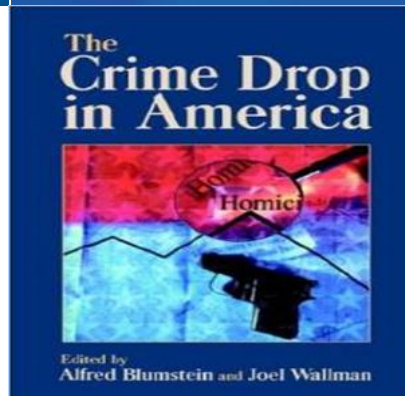


## Policy implications for sustaining the crime falls



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# THE CRIME





## Conclusions: safeguarding sustainable crime prevention: lessons for (Canadian) crime prevention policies



- Dutch evidence shows there is reason for optimism about what works as regards tackling crime and reducing reoffending
- The case of evidence based crime prevention is strong, but not strong enough to ensure the maintenance of dedicated support structures in the long run
- To be prepared for the future governments are advised to keep up knowledge bases on evidence-based crime prevention
- Maintain the institutional capacity to monitor such measures
- Crime prevention is not a soft policy option
- And last, but not least, maintain at the Canadian level the promising initiative of the **Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association**