



What can we learn about domestic burglary prevention?

Summary

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Background and goal

The number of domestic burglaries in the Netherlands has fallen sharply in recent years. In 2012, about 92,000 burglaries were reported; in 2019, there were 40,000. At the time of Corona, this number dropped to 30,000 in 2020. The impact of domestic burglaries is high, and the costs are considerable. Experience shows that an increase sometimes follows a decrease in domestic burglaries in the long run. In addition, the number of domestic burglaries is decreasing nationally, but that decrease is lagging behind in certain situations. Therefore there are still worrying concentrations. Against this background, the Crime Phenomena Approach team of the Youth, Family and Crime Phenomena Directorate (DJFC) of the Ministry of Justice has requested a literature study to map out what lessons we can learn from abroad about the prevention of domestic burglary.

Three research questions are central to this literature review:

- 1 What developments are there in the field of domestic burglary to determine where and for whom preventive measures are useful?
- 2 Are preventive measures used abroad that we are not yet aware of in the Netherlands?
- 3 Based on foreign literature, what can we improve when deploying preventive measures against domestic burglary in the Netherlands?

Commissioned by the WODC, DSP-groep conducted literature research between May 2021 and November 2021 to answer these questions.

Roadmap

To answer the three research questions, we took the following steps:

- ① **Trend analysis of developments in the field of domestic burglary.**
- ② **Analyse overview studies of preventive measures in the Netherlands.**
- ③ **Collect potentially relevant foreign publications and shortlist publications.**
- ④ **Assess relevant foreign publications based on the assessment framework.**
- ⑤ **Draft a memorandum for - and hold - an expert meeting.**
- ⑥ **Report: What can we learn about domestic burglary prevention?**

It is important to consider some limitations when interpreting the study. For example, we cannot rule out that preventive measures (for example, for a broader target group and domestic burglars) have been missed due to the chosen broad, exploratory approach. We focused on the effectiveness of reducing and preventing domestic burglaries. As a result, more general approaches, such as those aimed at offenders of high-impact crimes, may have been missed. The research also puts a reasonable emphasis on Safe Design and Management/Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) due to the composition of

our international network. The trend analysis, we mainly based on police data. An important disadvantage is the over-representation in the data of young people with a non-Western origin, partly due to a higher probability of suspicion for non-Western young people than expected. We used the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (MSMS) in the assessment framework. The MSMS has the disadvantage of often looking at households or houses but at entire neighbourhoods, which makes randomization difficult. Also, the MSMS does not specifically require multiple measurements (longitudinal study). Finally, looking at the effectiveness of measures abroad has the limitation that the context can deviate from the Dutch context.

Domestic burglaries in perspective

European level

The Netherlands is doing slightly worse than average compared to other European countries at a European level. In the Fundamental Rights Survey, 11% of Dutch respondents indicated that they had been a victim of domestic burglary between 2014 and 2018, while the average in the EU is 8%. It also appears that people who claim to belong to an ethnic minority are more often victims than non-ethnic minorities.

National level

In the Netherlands, we see a slight increase in domestic burglaries between 2007 and 2012. The number dropped sharply between 2012 and 2019. In 2012, about 92,000 burglaries were reported, while in 2019, that halved to 40,000. The level in 2019 has fallen below the level of the 1970s. In the first year of the Coronavirus, the number in 2020 eventually decreased further to 30,000 domestic burglaries.

Provincial and Municipal level

The number of domestic burglaries has fallen in all provinces. In the sparsely populated provinces (Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, Flevoland, Zeeland) - where the number of domestic burglaries is generally low - the decrease is small. At the municipal level, the municipalities where the decrease is the smallest, or even where an increase is visible, are mainly rural municipalities and municipalities around (medium) large cities or sub-urban municipalities.

Urban and neighbourhood level

The further we zoom in, the more nuanced the image that emerges. We looked at the distribution of domestic burglaries in the two largest cities in the Netherlands: Rotterdam and Amsterdam. We looked at the top 10 neighbourhoods within these cities with the most burglaries in absolute numbers. These neighbourhoods were generally characterized by a low socio-economic status (SES). In Amsterdam, we also saw that the percentage of residents with a migration background is higher than in other neighbourhoods in the city and that social cohesion was low on average. Many social rental homes also characterize these neighbourhoods. In Rotterdam, the neighbourhoods also experienced a lot of nuisance

from rubbish and street waste and poor maintenance. In the two major cities, it is mainly the more vulnerable neighbourhoods that are most frequently burglarized.

Offender and victim level

What we saw at the urban and neighbourhood level is also reflected in the characteristics of offenders and victims. The offenders registered by the police and the victims surveyed by Statistics Netherlands fairly often have a non-Western migration background. And we see that people with a practical education were more often victims in 2019 than people with an HBO or WO education, which is related to a lower SES. As mentioned before, neighbourhoods with a lower SES are particularly vulnerable to domestic burglary. Based on the routine activity theory (in which crime occurs when offenders and victims come together at the same time in the same place, and there is no suitable guardian) and the distance decay function (which implies that burglars have limited mobility and burglary is committed in the vicinity of their own home), it is easy to imagine that offenders and victims often live in the same neighbourhoods. According to our analysis, this mainly concerns the vulnerable suburbs of the city.

Furthermore, at the offender level, we saw that men are more often suspected of domestic burglary than women. In addition, we see that usually, 18 to 25-year-olds are the offenders. This age category is overrepresented among various origins - Dutch, non-Western migration background and Western migration background.

Are there any new measures?

Before we could answer the question of which preventive measures are used abroad that we do not yet know in the Netherlands, we listed the range of measures in the Netherlands. This resulted in the following (non-exhaustive) overview. We describe several of these measures in the report in more detail.

Target group	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Offender-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy control • Education, information • Recreational activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills course • Information & Advice risk groups • Employment project • Positive role models • Digital Buyers Register (DOR) • Stop Dealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement in Systematic Offenders (ISD) institution • Top X approach • (Intensive) probation supervision • Order subject to penalty
Victim-oriented/situational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave light on • Outdoor lighting on a sensor • Locks • Alarm system • Camera Surveillance • Guard dog • Burglary-oriented information (including summer and dark days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood campaign • Informal social control • Neighbourhood Prevention Teams • WhatsApp neighbourhood watch • Redesign neighbourhoods • Street lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual advice • Victim Support • Demolition • Hot spot surveillance • CCTV (cameras)

	offensive) Arrangements with neighbours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Regulations • Police Quality Mark Safe Living (PKVW) • Digital doorbell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential complex supervisor 	
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Because of the great variety of preventive measures that we already know in the Netherlands, we came up with hardly any new insights in our search abroad for new measures. Initially, we selected four measures that we assumed were new, but according to the experts consulted, one of those measures is actually new. This is a measure whereby districts and neighbourhoods were designated as so-called 'No Cold Calling zones'. This means door-to-door sales are not allowed in those neighbourhoods, as it is associated with distraction break-ins. According to the experts, in contrast to England, where the study was conducted, we hardly know any distraction burglaries in the Netherlands, and door-to-door sales are also less common. They, therefore, do not see it as a measure relevant to the Netherlands.

This exploratory literature review clearly shows that we already have many measures in place in the Netherlands. The Dutch palette of measures is broad and diverse, and it was hard to find any new insights in our search abroad for new measures. We can therefore conclude that the Netherlands are up-to-date with all developments in the field of domestic burglary prevention. However, the fact that we are well aware of the developments does not mean that there are no profits to be made and that no lessons can be learned from abroad. The research revealed two profitable opportunities.

Profitable opportunities

Better insight into local causes of domestic burglaries

This opportunity relates to understanding the factors associated with the risk of domestic burglary in hotspots; who is most likely to break in, and who is more likely to be a victim. It is a problem-oriented, focused and intelligence-led approach. This means that instead of opting for large-scale (national) approaches, the approach to domestic burglary is geared to the local context. Various studies make it clear that there is still a long way to go because the police often do not use the available systems to identify the local causes of domestic burglary. The possibilities of a problem-oriented and intelligence-led approach are not fully exploited. In cases where the police do use the available systems to map the local causes, the action and information usually remain within the police. This model – police data in → police action out – should be extended to other (security) partners and made structural. In a problem-oriented and focused approach, the police can play an advisory role towards other parties, such as municipalities, housing corporations, real estate developers, and organizations such as Victim Support Netherlands. The police can inform the other security partners about the locally associated factors with a high domestic burglary risk. In

consultation with the (security) partners, it can then be determined which palette of measures is (possibly) effective. It is important to inform residents about their (increased) risk.

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

A second opportunity lies in the design of new neighbourhoods and homes and the maintenance and refurbishment of existing neighbourhoods and homes. Certain factors in the social and physical environment mean that the risk of burglary in certain neighbourhoods is higher than elsewhere and that certain types of housing are more often targeted than others. With *Veilig Ontwerp en Beheer* – usually referred to abroad as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) – factors and measures are taken into account in the design and maintenance of buildings and neighbourhoods that reduce the risk of crime, such as increasing burglary resistance of housing and the attractiveness of a neighbourhood. Nearly 1 million homes will be built in the coming years. Therefore, the principles of CPTED must already be taken into account in the design. These measures have already been processed in the Building Decree and the Police Residential Security Warranty (PKVW). As a result, it is logical to have all new-build homes comply with the PKVW and monitor compliance with the Buildings Decree more rigorously when issuing permits and delivery.

For existing buildings, it is first necessary to gain insight into the causes that make a neighbourhood a hotspot. For instance, take preventive measures in neighbourhoods where the maintenance of the homes is poor, such as improving the burglar resistance of homes or complexes, installing cameras and demarcating private and public land with a hedge or fence. In neighbourhoods with mainly social housing – usually in the more vulnerable neighbourhoods as we saw in the trend analysis – housing associations have an important role in improving the physical environment. For homeowners (or VVEs) in these neighbourhoods who do not have sufficient financial resources to take measures themselves, it is conceivable that the national government or municipality offer subsidy schemes. How this should be designed and what preconditions should be imposed require further elaboration.

At the neighbourhood level, in existing neighbourhoods that are poorly maintained, maintenance can be the first measure. We saw that in the vulnerable suburbs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where burglaries are relatively frequent, people experience a lot of nuisance from street waste and graffiti, among other things. A poorly maintained public space gives the impression that there is little involvement of residents in the neighbourhood and that municipalities and other partners pay little attention to these neighbourhoods. Carrying out maintenance stimulates pro-social behaviour and encourages people to make more use of public space, which increases social control in the neighbourhood. This is a valuable step for vulnerable neighbourhoods where social cohesion and social control is low. More far-reaching options include doing something about empty buildings and vacant lots, turning these into a well-maintained place, such as a park or playground, which encourages social encounters. This also promotes social control and cohesion in the neighbourhood. And suppose a complete redesign of a neighbourhood is chosen. In

that case, it is important - like with new construction - that the principles of CPTED are taken into account to limit the risk of domestic burglary as much as possible.

Tot slot

Finally, it is important to emphasize that in this study, we have tried to learn lessons about preventive measures concerning victimization, preventing someone from becoming an offender and physical and situational measures. We found mainly physical and situational preventive measures and victim-oriented measures to a lesser extent. We have not found many offender-oriented measures, partly due to the approach of the investigation. More focused research into lessons learned from abroad about the prevention of perpetration of domestic burglary crimes – or more generally into offenders of high-impact crimes – is needed to map this element of the crime triangle further. It is important to consider the knowledge from the trend analysis – and any future updates thereof.

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DSP-groep is een onafhankelijk bureau voor onderzoek, advies en management, gevestigd aan de IJ-oever in Amsterdam. Sinds de oprichting van het bureau in 1984 werken wij veelvuldig in opdracht van de overheid (ministeries, provincies en gemeenten), maar ook voor maatschappelijke organisaties op landelijk, regionaal of lokaal niveau. Het bureau bestaat uit 40 medewerkers en een groot aantal freelancers.

Dienstverlening

Onze inzet is vooral gericht op het ondersteunen van opdrachtgevers bij het aanpakken van complexe beleidsvraagstukken binnen de samenleving. We richten ons daarbij met name op de sociale, ruimtelijke of bestuurlijke kanten van zo'n vraagstuk. In dit kader kunnen we bijvoorbeeld een onderzoek doen, een registratie- of monitorsysteem ontwikkelen, een advies uitbrengen, een beleidsvisie voorbereiden, een plan toetsen of (tijdelijk) het management van een project of organisatie voeren.

Expertise

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Meer weten?

Neem vrijblijvend contact met ons op voor meer informatie of om een afspraak te maken. Bezoek onze website www.dsp-groep.nl voor onze projecten, publicaties en opdrachtgevers.

