



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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More prisoners in the nineties

The Dutch prison population rose from less than 7 thousand to nearly 12 thousand between 1990 and 1998, according to figures just released by Statistics Netherlands. The number of people in prison rose up to 1995, but has been falling slightly since then. About 5% of prisoners are women. The development in the number of female prisoners was quite remarkable, from 1990 to 1993 the number grew, then it fell until 1997, and in 1998 it rose back to the level of 1993. Less than half of prisoners have the Dutch nationality. For every detainee, there was one member of staff in 1998.

More prison capacity

At the end of 1998 some 11,800 people were in prison. With the total number of available cells at 12,500, the cell occupancy rate was 94%. The observed growth in the number of female prisoners from 1997 to 1998 was probably partly caused by the increase cell capacity for women.

Prison population in the course of the year

In 1998 over 40 thousand people were held in prison for a period of time, up from 31 thousand people in 1990. About 4 to 5% of detainees are women.

Together prisoners spent a total 4.3 million days behind bars, compared with 2.5 million in 1990 (+78%). The average length of stay in prison grew fitfully: between 1990 and 1993 prisoners spent an average 75 days in prisons, in 1994 this rose to just under 100, and since then it has risen to 108 in 1998. The lengthening of prison sentences has put increasing pressure on cell capacity.

Country of birth

Just under half of prisoners were born in the Netherlands. In 1998 53% were born elsewhere: 10% in Suriname, 8% in Morocco, 6% in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, 5% in Turkey, 3% in Algeria and 2% in former Yugoslavia. The proportions of these nationalities have remained relatively stable in the last five years. Relatively many female prisoners come from the Antilles and Aruba (9%), while relatively few were born in Morocco (1%) and Turkey (2%).

Prison staff

In 1998 there was one member of staff for every detainee. In 1990 this was 1.2. In 1998 12,100 people were employed by the prison services, 41% more than in 1990 (8,200).

For further information, please call C. Wang, tel. +31 70 337 56 73; e-mail: cwng@cbs.nl.

Statistics Netherlands
Press Office

P.O. Box 4000
2270 JM Voorburg
The Netherlands
tel. +31 70 337 58 16
fax +31 70 337 59 71
e-mail:
persdienst@cbs.nl

Statistics Netherlands
is a department of
the Ministry of
Economic Affairs