

Summary

Forecasting the demand on the Dutch justice system until 2021

In this report, the forecasts of the 'demand' for services of the police, prosecutors, courts and prisons until the end of 2021 are described. The forecasts were obtained by applying the so-called forecasting model PMJ that is developed for the Dutch criminal justice system and the civil and administrative justice systems. The base year for our forecasts was 2014. Any changes in law or policy later than 2014 could therefore not be incorporated.

PMJ is based on developments in society that fall outside the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Security and Justice. The model assumes that developments in society are the driving forces behind the trends in crime and private disputes. Four groups of factors can be distinguished: demographic structure of the population, economic conditions, social problems and institutional changes. Within each category, a number of background factors are distinguished. The combination of these factors represents certain classes of problems like social inequality, cultural conflicts, social isolation, and economic inequality.

The demographic factors used in the model are: the size of the population, the size of different age groups, the number of non-western immigrants in various age categories, the number of minors (in the four main Dutch cities) and the number of migrant men in various age groups. The economic factors are the number of employed and unemployed in the labour force split along the age group of 15-24 years in particular, average annual income, purchasing power, the number of social benefits (including those for the unemployed), gross value added, tax burden, collective burden, rental costs, the hourly rate of lawyers, the number of motor vehicles and mopeds, and the number of self-employed people. The social factors are the number of immigrants, the number of applications for political asylum, the number of under-age refugees, the number of drug addicts, the yearly number of divorced people, the number of single parent families, the number of families with children, the level of education of children, and the percentage of people connected to a church.

The institutional factors are the number of police officers and the money that people have to pay when applying for subsidized legal aid.

The forecasts of developments within the justice system are based, on its turn, on forecasts of the above-mentioned factors. If there are no changes in policy or legislation, the number of reported crimes is expected to decrease by a little over 5% over the period 2015-2021, and the number of suspects will decrease by the same percentage. This decrease will affect the workflow for all partners in the judicial system. Although the decrease cannot be extrapolated in a straightforward fashion, the inflow of cases into the prosecutorial system will decrease by 3% and the number of summonses are expected to decrease by more than 2,5%.

The decrease in the influx at the prosecution entails a decline of the number of cases brought to court as well. The number of criminal cases in court is expected to fall by 2% during the period between 2015 and 2021. The demand for prison capacity for adults will be 21% lower in 2021 than in 2015. The demand for prison capacity for minors will be halved in this period.

The number of minor offences (misdemeanours) will increase a little. Due to the sudden drop (in 2015) in cases where the prosecution demands incarceration for people not paying their fines for traffic offences, the forecasts of the number of traffic offence appeals at the sub district courts are not very stable.

While the number of new civil cases at the sub district courts with a summons will be almost constant, civil cases with a request will increase by 49% in the period 2015-2021. The number of new civil cases at the district courts with a summons or request will increase by 5% and decrease by 3% respectively.

The number of new administrative cases (excluding tax cases) at the district courts will increase by 9,3% in the period 2015-2021. Tax cases will increase by 3,5%.

The expected developments in the number of applications for subsidized legal aid in criminal, civil, and administrative cases varies a bit, depending on the kind of cases.

We note that the forecasts are based on information available at the moment. Both the PMJ forecasts as well as the forecasts of the factors are surrounded by uncertainty. Due to the recent economic crisis this especially holds for the economic forecasts. Therefore, the forecasts should be seen as a signal of what might happen if nothing changes. Unexpected events and new policy or legislation will probably alter the outcomes.