



# Forecasting the demand on the Dutch justice system until 2031

## Summary

*Cahier 2026-4*

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**F. ter Braak**

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**Cahier**

De reeks Cahier omvat de rapporten van onderzoek dat door en in opdracht van het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum is verricht. Opname in de reeks betekent niet dat de inhoud van de rapporten het standpunt van de Minister van Justitie en Veiligheid weergeeft.

## Summary

### Forecasting the demand on the Dutch justice system until 2031

In this report, the forecasts of the 'demand' for services of the police, prosecutors, courts and prisons until the end of 2031 are described. The forecasts were obtained by applying the Forecasting Model for the Justice System (FMJS)<sup>10</sup>, which is the forecasting model that is developed for the Dutch criminal justice system and the civil and administrative justice systems. The base year for our forecasts was 2024. Any changes in legislation or policy later than 2024 could therefore not be incorporated.

FMJS is based on developments in society that fall outside the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Justice and Security. 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 other 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 subdivided into different age groups, gender, and marital status, the number of 12 to 17-year-olds (in the four main Dutch cities), the number of (children of) migrants from outside Europe and men in particular in various age groups, the number of immigrants, and the number of applications for political asylum.

The economic factors are the (youth) unemployment rate, the number of (employed and unemployed) people in the total labour force and within the age group of 15-24 years in particular, average annual individual income, the number of social benefits (including unemployment benefits, benefits income support, and disablement benefits), gross value added, social security burden, 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 drug addicts, alcohol consumption, the yearly number of divorced people, the number of children involved in a divorce, the number of single parent families, the number of families with children, the number of people with a low education level, the number of truants, and internet usage (at least once in three months).

The other factors are the number of police officers, resources of the police, the (rental) housing stock, the average property value, and different types of court fees.

The forecasts of developments within the justice system are based on forecasts of the above-mentioned factors. If there are no changes in policy or legislation, the number of reported crimes is expected to increase on average by 0,9% per year in the period 2025-2031, and the number of suspects will increase by less than 1% per year. This will affect the workflow for all partners in the judicial system. Although these forecasts

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<sup>10</sup> In Dutch the abbreviation PMJ is used which stands for Prognosemodel Justitiële Ketens.

cannot be extrapolated in a straightforward fashion, the inflow of cases into the prosecutorial system is expected to increase by less than 1% per year and the number of cases brought to court is also expected to increase by less than 1% per year. The demand for prison capacity for adults is expected to increase on average by 2% per year while the demand for prison capacity for minors is expected to increase by more than 1% per year.

The inflow of minor offences (misdemeanors) into the prosecutorial system is expected to increase on average by 1% per year. The number of traffic offences is expected to increase on average by 2% per year.

While the number of new civil cases at the sub district courts with a request is expected to increase by less than 1% per year, civil cases with a summons is expected to increase by less than 2% per year in the period 2025-2031. The number of new civil cases at the district courts is expected to increase by more than 1% annually. The number of tax cases at the district courts is expected to increase on average by 2% per year while the number of other administrative cases is expected to increase on average by 1% per year.

The expected developments in the number of applications for subsidised legal aid in criminal, civil, and administrative cases vary depending on the type of cases.

The forecasts are based on information available during Fall 2025 and are meant for 2027 and onwards. Both the FMJS forecasts and the forecasts of the factors are surrounded by uncertainty. Unexpected events and new policy or legislation will probably alter the outcomes. Therefore, the forecasts should be seen as a signal of what might happen if nothing changes.



Het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum (WODC), Kennisinstituut voor de rechtsstaat, is een onafhankelijk kennisinstituut dat valt onder het ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid. Het WODC draagt bij aan behoud en verbetering van de rechtsstaat via het (laten) uitvoeren van kwalitatief hoog wetenschappelijk onderzoek. En door het aanbieden van gevraagde en ongevraagde kennis, verbeterpunten en (waar mogelijk) denkrichtingen.

Voor meer informatie, bezoek [www.wodc.nl](http://www.wodc.nl)