

DUTCH CARIBBEAN POLICE FORCE

**CRIME PICTURE ANALYSIS
CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS
2020 – 2024**

Automatic translation from Dutch original

CRIME PICTURE ANALYSIS

CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS

2020 – 2024

Bonaire, 2024

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Abbreviations

ACTPOL	Business process system
BPZ	Basic police care
BERRY	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius in Saba
CCU	Cyber Crime Unit
CBA	Crime picture analysis
CBS-CN	Statistics Netherlands CIE Criminal Intelligence Unit
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
FINEC	Financial Economic Crime IAB BES BES Establishments and Activities
Decree ICBES	Intelligence Center BES
IGO	Incident-oriented investigation
IGW	Information-driven work
ILT	Human Environment and Transport
Inspectorate JICN	Correctional Institution
Caribbean Netherlands KMar	Royal Netherlands Marechaussee
KPCN	Dutch Caribbean Police Force
KWCARIB	Caribbean Coast Guard
NP	National Police
NRA	National Risk Assessments Money Laundering en Terrorism Financing
TO	Public Prosecution Service
OLB	Public Entity Bonaire
OLE	Public Entity of St. Eustatius
OLS	Public entity Saba
OSLAC	Latin America and Caribbean Operational Strategy PBL Problem-oriented investigation
PMF	Privately made firearms
RCN	Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland
RR	National Criminal Investigation Department
STENAPA	Sint Eustatius National Parks Foundation
STINAPA	National Parks Foundation
TIP	Trafficking in Persons Report
TOC	Transnational Organized Crime
VHB	Safety image
VROM BES	Housing, Spatial Planning and Environmental Management BES Act

CRIME PICTURE ANALYSIS CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS 2020 – 2024

1. Introduction

This crime picture analysis (CBA) for the Caribbean Netherlands over the period 2020 – 2024 is the third CBA since the constitutional changes in 2010 in which Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba became part of the country of the Netherlands as special municipalities. The first safety assessment dates from 2013 (VHB 2013) and provided a detailed overview of crime, rule violations and nuisance on the three islands.¹ The second safety assessment was published in 2018 (VHB 2018) and was mainly aimed at finding practical tools to tackle crime and insecurity.² The 2018 marketing authorisation focused on three themes: foreign nationals and labour, criminal logistical processes and financial economic crime. Unlike the previous images, this CBA was made by the analysts of the Dutch Caribbean Netherlands Corps (KPCN) and the analysis has a slightly narrower scope and is mainly focused on information from KPCN. Information from other organizations, such as the Public Prosecution Service (OM), the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar), the Caribbean Coast Guard (KWCARIB) and the Criminal Investigation Cooperation Team (RST), was used, but it is primarily about visualizing KPCN's figures. In addition, this CBA mainly maps out the local problems. Where possible, regional phenomena are discussed, but the information on this at KPCN is limited. This CBA will be used to identify the areas in which KPCN's information position can be strengthened and what is needed to achieve this.

The main objective of the CBA 2020 – 2024 is to provide a picture of the nature, extent and trends in crime in the Caribbean Netherlands in order to be able to take effective measures to increase safety. Insight into crime is necessary for the development of targeted, evidence-based strategies to influence crime. Insight is also important to be able to identify trends at an early stage and to be able to act proactively to prevent crime problems from becoming too big. With this CBA, KPCN wants to inform government agencies, the business community and the citizens of the Caribbean Netherlands about what is going on on their islands. With the sharing of crime data, KPCN aims to increase transparency and to give an impulse to strengthening the cooperation between all parties involved to work together on trust in law enforcement and a safe Caribbean Netherlands.

1.1 Study design

The underlying goal of this CBA is to be able to make well-founded choices in tackling crime in order to increase safety in the Caribbean Netherlands. To achieve this goal, a number of sub-objectives are distinguished:

1. Creating insight into the development of crime in the period 2020-2024 in the Caribbean Netherlands;
2. To provide a cautious forecast about the development of crime phenomena in the near future;
3. Identifying bottlenecks and formulating recommendations to strengthen the information position;
4. Making substantiated proposals with regard to tackling crime.

Research questions

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, five sub-research questions have been formulated. The first sub-research question is the question of which crime-relevant factors are currently at play in the Caribbean Netherlands. This question is partly answered in section 1.2, which outlines the context in the Caribbean Netherlands. The second question is what the nature and extent of the various crime phenomena in the Caribbean Netherlands are. This research question is addressed in chapters 2 to 12. In answering this research question, a distinction was made between local crime and organised (cross-border) crime. When it comes to local crime, it is often possible to give a numerical picture. That is

¹ Mooij, Tijssens and Van der Mark, 2013.

² Van der Zee & Hoebé, 2018.

different in the case of organised crime. This often involves hidden crime, or dark number crime. This is crime that is not known to the police and the judiciary, partly because of the nature and complexity of such forms of crime.³ In the case of these forms of crime, due to a lack of figures, an in-depth description has been chosen. Sub-research question three is the question of what developments can be expected in the near future in the field of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands. However, in recent years it has become clear that predictions are difficult. Hurricanes and pandemics can disrupt life and influence initiated trends. In chapter 13 an attempt is made to answer question three. Sub-research question four relates to the bottlenecks that arise in tackling local and cross-border crime. This question is answered in chapter 14. And finally, the fifth and final sub-research question: What is needed to effectively combat crime in the Caribbean Netherlands? Chapter 15, in which the conclusions and recommendations are presented, focuses on this final question.

Sub-research questions	
1	Which crime-relevant factors are currently at play in the Caribbean Netherlands?
2	What is the nature and extent of the various crime phenomena in the Caribbean Netherlands?
3	What developments can be expected in the near future in the field of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands?
4	What bottlenecks occur in tackling local and cross-border crime?
5	What is needed to effectively combat crime in the Caribbean Netherlands?

Research methods and implementation

Various research methods were used for this research. The ACTPOL and Summ-

IT, the Criminal Intelligence Unit (CIE) and closed investigations are the main sources of information.

Interviews were then held with internal and external partners.⁴ The findings were made with the help of literature review and desk research in context. This CBA is mainly based on concrete information and knowledge from KPCN and chain partners. This is a different approach from that of the previous safety assessment, which relied heavily on literature and desk research in combination with interviews. Since the information position at KPCN and the partners is still under development, it is not possible to form a complete picture. However, the research does show where the gaps are in the information position and in the approach to crime.

Hyperion

The framework for the research is based on the Hyperion methodology: a data-driven method that maps out how criminal organizations operate and develop. Various criminal intelligence organizations in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom use the Hyperion methodology. This methodology distinguishes between criminal markets, logistics processes and roles, among other things. In the European Netherlands, this method is also used in processing and analyzing information from sources other than that of criminal

³ It may be that there are no direct victims involved in such forms of crime, so that they are not reported. If there are direct victims, they may not report it for fear of reprisals. It can also involve complex, large-scale, international operations such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering and fraud that are difficult to detect and require lengthy investigations. Finally, criminal networks do everything they can to keep their activities hidden from the police and the judiciary, and such activities are also difficult to trace for that reason.

⁴ interviews were conducted with employees of the following departments of KPCN: the Info-desk, Incident Focused Investigation (IGO), Problem Focused Investigation (PGO), the Cybercrime Unit (CCU), the Criminal Intelligence Unit (CIE), the Regional Intelligence Service (RID), the FINEC team, Immigration Supervision (VT), the Barrio teams, the Basic Police Care (BPZ), the Traffic Police, Youth and Vice Affairs (JZZ). Interviews were also conducted with employees of external partners: namely the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar), the Public Prosecution Service (OM), the Guardianship Council, the National Criminal Investigation Department Caribbean Netherlands (RR CN), the Caribbean Coast Guard (KWCARIB) and the Tax and Customs Administration Caribbean Netherlands.

intelligence organizations. In order to connect with the criminal intelligence organizations, elements of the Hyperion methodology are already used in this CBA in the hope that this can provide an impetus for the use of a uniform methodology for analyzing information. If all organizations start working with the same methodology, this can increase the quality of analyses and make it easier to compile a joint, regional picture.

For this CBA, collected information about those involved in drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, human smuggling, human trafficking and financial economic crime was used to provide insight into criminal markets, phases in the logistics process and roles from the Hyperion methodology. These crime phenomena have been chosen because there are sufficient concrete signals and people involved. It was not yet feasible to fully apply the Hyperion methodology to the available data, but the different phases and roles in the criminal processes were examined. Below you can find an explanation of the Hyperion methodology.

Hyperion

The Hyperion methodology is an analysis tool that is made up of three elements, namely taxonomy, *crime-scripting* and social network analysis. These concepts are set out below.

Taxonomy

Taxonomy is a systematic way of describing, dividing, and organizing individuals or objects into groups or categories. Within Hyperion, the term taxonomy refers to the classification of information. Classification takes place on the basis of three questions: who, what and where. Who emerges from the information and what is their underlying relationship? What is their role in the criminal process? And where do the different parts of the process take place? What role and function do these locations have? To answer these questions, a predetermined, exhaustive list of answers is provided used. When answering the 'what' question, for example, you can choose from an exhaustive list of criminal markets. The fact that the lists are exhaustively fixed makes it possible to compare images. At every criminal market should include a list of ten to twenty roles that occur in that market.

Crime scripting

To visualize the roles within the criminal markets, the *crime scripting* method is used. This involves describing and visualising the logistical process that is required to be able to commit a certain criminal offence. This process is divided into a number of main phases. In the following, specific roles are identified for each main phase that are necessary for the execution of the criminal process. The roles require unique knowledge, skills, or access to resources from the individuals who fill the roles. Often, one and the same person fulfils the same crucial role in criminal processes for different criminal networks.

Social network analysis

Social network analysis (SNA) is a method that uses mathematical models and algorithms to map complex relationships in networks. SNA can be helpful in answering the following questions, among others. Which people have the most relationships in a network and are therefore central? Which people connect certain parts of networks? Which form of social bonding contributes to the permanence of criminal partnerships over a certain period of time? SNA can also use simulation to show what happens when you remove certain people from a network. Is the network permanently damaged or can it recover relatively easily? Because all information is classified according to the same taxonomy, this can be applied to specific roles within networks.

Sturingsconcept

Hyperion can be used for analysis purposes, but also for control. As discussed above, taxonomy makes it possible to compare images. However, that is not an end in itself. Taxonomy only becomes really relevant in

combinatie met het Pareto-principe – een economische wetmatigheid die ook bekend staat als de ‘20-80 regel’.⁵ Het Pareto-principe stelt dat twintig procent van de inspanningen van bijvoorbeeld een commercieel bedrijf verantwoordelijk is voor tachtig procent van de opbrengsten. Er wordt wel gesteld dat deze wetmatigheid eveneens voor criminaliteit zou gelden: twintig procent van de criminelen is verantwoordelijk voor tachtig procent van de criminaliteit. Dat betekent dat een aanpak meer resultaat heeft en efficiënter wordt als de aanpak gericht is op de belangrijkste twintig procent van de criminelen. Maar wie is die twintig procent, en hoe selecteer je die? Bij het beantwoorden van deze vragen komt taxonomie om de hoek kijken. Met name de moeilijk te vervangen rollen zijn interessant. De vraag is dan: wie vervult op een criminele markt een rol die cruciaal is voor het goed verlopen van dat criminele proces? Door de aanpak te richten op de moeilijk te vervangen spelers in het criminele milieu is het mogelijk het onderliggende criminele systeem daadwerkelijk effectief te bestrijden.

Demarcation

The research period for this CBA starts on 1 January 2020 and runs until 1 January 2024. It is questionable whether it is a representative picture since this period was largely characterized by the worldwide spread of the disease COVID-19, also known as the Covid pandemic or corona crisis. This period started at the beginning of 2020 and ended at the end of 2022. Of course, the pandemic also had consequences for society and crime in the Caribbean Netherlands.

As far as forms of crime are concerned, the research is not delineated. All forms of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands for which there is information are included. Because of the small scale of the islands, local forms of crime emerge that are unique to the islands. It should be noted, however, that the information mainly relates to Bonaire and that Saba and St Eustatius have a much less varied crime picture. Some forms of crime do not seem to occur on the two smallest islands, but it is also possible that there is no information since the information position on Bonaire is better than that on Saba and St. Eustatius. This is also reflected in the findings.

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1.2 Context of the Caribbean Netherlands

The DESTEP or SEPTED model was used for the analysis of the context of the Caribbean Netherlands. This acronym stands for demographic, economic, socio-cultural, technological, ecological and political. With the help of this model, the factors that can influence the development of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands have been mapped. Many figures in this chapter come from Statistics Netherlands (CBS-CN).⁶

Demographic developments

Since the constitutional change, the population of the Caribbean Netherlands has increased by half. The increase is almost entirely attributable to Bonaire, as can be seen in the table below, which shows demographic developments in the Caribbean Netherlands. The figures only refer to persons who are registered in the population register of the Caribbean Netherlands. There is no insight into people who are staying illegally on the islands. According to Statistics Netherlands, the Caribbean Netherlands had a total of 30,397 inhabitants on January 1, 2024.⁷ In 2023, the population increased by three percent. It concerned almost a thousand new residents. This increase is mainly caused by an increase in migrants on Bonaire. In 2024, just under one-third of residents in the Caribbean Netherlands will be born on the islands themselves.⁸ There are 4,406 European Dutch people living in it

⁵ Pareto prince (managementmodellensite.nl).

⁶ Caribbean Netherlands (cbs.nl).

⁷ Population of the Caribbean Netherlands increased by almost a thousand in 2023 (rijksdienstcn.com).

⁸ Caribbean Netherlands; population, country of birth, nationality (opendata.cbs.nl).

Caribbean Netherlands and 6,124 Caribbean Dutch citizens from the Caribbean countries within the Kingdom. There are also 7,690 people who were born elsewhere in Central and South America. Almost a third of this group was born in the Dominican Republic, almost a fifth comes from Colombia and a sixth from Venezuela. Then there is a group of almost a thousand who were born in North America and a small group of 434 inhabitants come from China.

Overzicht demografische ontwikkelingen Caribisch Nederland ⁹												
Gebied	Caribisch Nederland			Bonaire			Sint Eustatius			Saba		
Year	total	Husban	Wife	total	man	Wife	total	man	Wife	total	man	Wife
2011	21 087	11 231	9 856	15 679	8 320	7 359	3 611	1 965	1 646	1 797	946	851
2019	25 157	12 964	12 193	20 104	10 405	9 699	3 138	1 596	1 542	1 915	963	952
2020	25 987	13 456	12 531	20 915	10 869	10 046	3 139	1 607	1 532	1 933	980	953
2021	26 805	13 823	12 982	21 745	11 285	10 460	3 142	1 578	1 564	1 918	960	958
2022	27 726	14 300	13 426	22 573	11 693	10 880	3 242	1 636	1 606	1 911	971	940
2023	29 418	15 195	14 223	24 090	12 509	11 581	3 293	1 655	1 638	2 035	1 031	1 004
2024	30 397	15 735	14 662	25 133	13 085	12 048	3 204	1 621	1 583	2 060	1 029	1 031

As of January 1, 2024, 25,133 inhabitants were registered on Bonaire. This is 4 percent more than one year previously. More men (15,735) than women (14,662) live on the island. Two-thirds of the population was not born in the Caribbean Netherlands. Of the 6,195 inhabitants born in other countries in Central and South America, the largest group comes from the Dominican Republic, followed by Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Suriname. In Bonaire, 4,145 European Dutch live, 4891 from Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten and 7770 Caribbean Dutch.

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The number of inhabitants on St Eustatius has decreased slightly since 2011. On January 1, 2024, the island will have 3,204 inhabitants. That is 3 percent less than at the beginning of 2023. There is a surplus of emigration, which means that more people have left the island than have entered. The emigrants often do not come from the Caribbean Netherlands, but from the European Netherlands, the United States and the Dominican Republic. There are also 'part-time' migrants from the Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts, Sint Maarten and Curaçao who stay on St. Eustatius during the week and return to their home country at the weekend.¹⁰ More men (1,621) than women (1,583) live on the island. One third of the inhabitants of St Eustatius were born on the island. Just under a third come from other countries in Central and South America. For St Eustatius, too, the largest group of residents from these countries came from the Dominican Republic, followed by people from Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname. There are 163 European Dutch people living on St. Eustatius, 740 from Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten and 1082 Caribbean Dutch. It is also home to 70 people from North America and 63 people from China.

On Saba, there are few changes in the size of the population in the period 2020 to 1 January 2024. On 1 January 2024, 2,060 people were living on Saba, 1 percent (25 people) more than in 2023. More people from Central and South America came to live on Saba. Less than a quarter of the population was born on Saba. The share of Sabans has decreased since 2011. The largest group of inhabitants is formed by people from other countries in Central and South America. The largest group of them is formed by people from the

⁹ Caribbean Netherlands; population; gender, age, marital status (opendata.cbs.nl).

¹⁰ CBA Interview with BPZ Sint Eustatius.

Dominican Republic, closely followed by people from Colombia. People from Jamaica, Dominica and Haiti also live on Saba. In addition, 405 people from Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten live on the island and 241 people from North America. There is a small group of almost 100 European Dutch and 478 from the Caribbean Netherlands. The increase in migrants from the Philippines is striking: from 12 in 2011 to 88 in 2024. The number of men (1,029) and women (1,031) on Saba is about the same.

Socio-economic developments

Research by Statistics Netherlands-CN shows that Bonaire's economy has grown in recent years (8.4 percent growth in 2020, 11.7 percent growth in 2021).¹¹ The growth was mainly in the tourism sector, which has recovered well after the Covid pandemic. The number of tourists visiting Bonaire by air increased from 66,000 in 2020 to 111,300 in 2021. Sectors such as culture, sports, recreation and construction also benefited from the increased number of tourists. On St Eustatius, the economy grew substantially, by 21.1 percent. This economic growth is mainly due to a few large companies on the island. The production of these companies is mainly export-oriented and depends on the demand for oil in the region. Although these companies have a major influence on the gross domestic product of St Eustatius, their influence on national income is limited. The profits of these companies are not included in the national income, because these companies are fully owned by foreign shareholders. They mainly contribute to labour income on the island.¹² On Saba, the economy grew by 3 percent. Just like on Bonaire, this increase was related to an increase in tourism. The number of tourists visiting Saba by air increased from 2,700 in 2020 to 4,000 in 2021.

In the years after Covid, inflation on Bonaire was high. In 2022, the average price level was 9.7 percent higher than in 2021. In 2022, prices on St Eustatius were 7.7 percent higher than in 2021 and on Saba 8.6 percent. The increased costs mainly concern food, transport, housing, water and energy. Due to subsidies on energy costs, inflation decreased on the three islands in 2023.

Participation

Figures from Statistics Netherlands on labour participation show the following picture.¹³ During Covid, the employment rate among local residents of Bonaire decreased. Among foreign workers, on the other hand, it increased. In 2022, the opposite was seen and the labor participation rate among Bonaireans increased the most. The majority of Bonaireans work in public administration, education and construction. Among migrants who do not come from the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, the labour participation rate increased mainly among Colombians, Dominicans and Venezuelans. They mainly work in construction and hospitality.

Just as on Bonaire, the labour participation rate on St Eustatius increased among foreign workers, and in 2022 the labour participation rate among residents born on St Eustatius increased the most. More than 40 percent of workers in 2022 will be Statiaan. In education in particular, the number of Statians has doubled in the last two years. In second place are workers born in the Dominican Republic (12 percent). Compared to 2020, the number of employed people in this group grew by 36 percent. They mainly work in the hospitality industry.

On Saba, around 31 percent of the employed labour force was born on Saba in 2022. This was the largest group of all employed people on Saba. Sabans mainly work in public administration. In second place are working people born on Sint Maarten (10 percent). The decrease in the number of employed people on Saba mainly concerns residents who were not born on the island.

¹¹ Caribbean Netherlands; gross domestic product (opendata.cbs.nl).

¹² Economy Bonaire grew by almost 12 percent in 2021 (cbs.nl).

¹³ Number of employed Caribbean Netherlands further increased in 2022 (cbs.nl).

Live

In addition to rising costs of living, Bonaire is also facing a housing shortage. As mentioned earlier, the population on Bonaire is increasing rapidly, resulting in a shortage of housing and a sharp rise in house prices. The latter is mainly due to the increase in European Dutch people who can buy houses on Bonaire with their own capital or have an above-average income. These houses are later often rented out to tourists or interns.¹⁴ As a result, both owner-occupied and rental homes have become too expensive for Bonaireans. In addition, there are insufficient social housing units for residents who are in need of housing or do not earn enough to make ends meet. According to the social housing association Fundashon Cas Bonairiano, there is a long waiting list of more than 1,000 people for people who need social housing.¹⁵ In order to combat the housing shortage, a pilot is being carried out with a rental allowance for landlords in the private rental sector in order to keep prices manageable, especially for the less wealthy. In collaboration with the local government and the national government, the social housing organization will accelerate the construction of 500 houses. That is a doubling of the current number. On Saba and St Eustatius, it is common for several generations with a low income to live together in one house to keep the cost of living and fixed costs lower.

Poverty

Like many countries and islands in the Caribbean region, the Caribbean Netherlands is struggling with poverty and income inequality. The table below shows the development of the minimum wage. The minimum wage on Bonaire increased by 77 percent between 2010 and 2023.¹⁶ Although this is a sharp increase in percentage terms, households with a minimum income will not be able to make ends meet in 2023 either. This is evident from calculations made by Nibud on behalf of the Committee on the Social Minimum Caribbean Netherlands.¹⁷ For example, a single person living in a subsidized rental home needs at least \$1,517 to make ends meet on Bonaire, which means that he is about \$200 short per month. According to the CBS-CN, 23 percent of the population of Bonaire lives below the poverty line.¹⁸ On Saba and St Eustatius, the percentages are 20 and 28 percent respectively.

Ontwikkeling minimumloon en onderstand						
Jaar	Bonaire		Sint Eustatius		Saba	
	Minimumloon	Onderstand	Minimumloon	Onderstand	Minimumloon	Onderstand
2020	\$951	\$175	\$1.150	\$212	\$1.113	\$209
2021	\$951	\$175	\$1.150	\$212	\$1.113	\$209
2022	\$1.046	\$193	\$1.265	\$233	\$1.247	\$230
2023	\$1.236	\$216	\$1.446	\$254	\$1.434	\$252

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The energy costs and cost of living on Bonaire are high and continue to rise over the years. A study by Statistics Netherlands-CN has shown that inflation on Bonaire has increased from -3.2 percent in the first quarter of 2021 to 9.2 percent in the first quarter of 2022.¹⁹ In the third quarter of 2023, consumer goods and services on Bonaire were almost two percent more expensive than in the same month last year. In the second quarter, inflation is 4.6 percent. This is reported by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) on the basis of the consumer price index Caribbean Netherlands.²⁰ This

¹⁴ Sharp rise in house prices on Bonaire: 'with average income no own home' (caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl).

¹⁵ Minimum existence in holiday paradise (binnenlandsbestuur.nl).

¹⁶ A secure existence - Towards a future-proof system of the social minimum (overheid.nl).

¹⁷ Committee on the Social Minimum of the Caribbean Netherlands, 2023.

¹⁸ First survey of well-being in the Caribbean Netherlands shows a mixed picture | CBS.

¹⁹ The Caribbean Netherlands in numbers 2022 (longreads.cbs.nl).

²⁰ Inflation lower on Bonaire (bonaire.nu).

increase is partly caused by the cost of transport. The prices of petrol and diesel, clothing and footwear and food have also risen in the recent period.

Poverty is less visible on St Eustatius than on Bonaire. As can be read in the table above, the minimum wage on St. Eustatius rose from \$1,150 in the years 2020 and 2021 to \$1,265 in 2022. The amount of social assistance on St. Eustatius was \$212 in the years 2020 and 2021 and in 2022 it was \$233.²¹ According to Nibud, the minimum wage on St. Eustatius is often inadequate. For example, a single working woman with two children is quickly more than \$1,200 a month short. The minimum wage on Saba was \$1,113 in the years 2020 and 2021 and in 2022 the minimum wage has increased just like on the other islands. On Saba, it was \$1,247. The social assistance amount on Saba was \$209 in the years 2020 and 2021 and \$230 in 2022. Nibud's calculations show that on Saba, too, only households with three or more working adults who earn the minimum wage can make ends meet.

Research by CBS-CN among residents aged 15 and older from 2021 showed that one in five residents of Bonaire say they have difficulty making ends meet. The question of whether there is sufficient income depends, among other things, on the level of education. Nearly 29 percent of low-educated people do not make ends meet, compared with 10 percent of medium- and high-educated people.²² On St Eustatius, 30 percent of the population has difficulty making ends meet on their monthly income.²³ low-educated people were twice as likely to have difficulty making ends meet as those with a higher level of education. On Saba, 23 percent of the population cannot make ends meet on their monthly income. In contrast to Bonaire and St Eustatius, there is no difference between low-educated and higher-educated people on Saba. The share of highly educated people among the younger generations is larger on Saba than among older generations. This is related to the presence of the Saba University School of Medicine, which is responsible for the fact that 30 percent of highly educated people indicate that they are still in education. Nearly half (47 percent) of highly educated people work in the education sector, including the university. Incidentally, the highly educated on Saba mainly have the American or Canadian nationality and were not born on the island, and that certainly applies to those who are in education.²⁴

In 2021, an inventory was made of the financial constraints experienced by people in the Caribbean Netherlands.²⁵ The study shows that about half of the inhabitants of the Caribbean Netherlands do not have enough money to replace worn-out furniture. Also, just under half of the population does not manage to go on holiday every year. On all islands, almost three-quarters of the population does not have enough money for at least one of the aforementioned expenditures. Given the figures, it is not surprising that some of the Caribbean Dutch have to deal with debts. Often these are informal loans. They borrow money from others, for example by opening an account at the supermarket to buy groceries. For many people, it turns out to be difficult to repay the debts and so they get stuck in a vicious circle of debts. Because informal loans are widely used, official bodies have insufficient insight into the extent of these problems, Nibud concluded in 2023 in a study of debt problems in the Caribbean Netherlands.²⁶

Across the board, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line is decreasing, partly due to government support. An example of this is an initiative to strengthen local services on St. Eustatius.²⁷ There will be a budget for training programmes for two employees of the public entity

²¹ A secure existence - Towards a future-proof system of the social minimum (overheid.nl).

²² Low-educated level of education refers to the level of low-education/primary education, VMBO, the first 3 years of HAVO/VWO and MBO1.

²³ Omnibus survey | CBS.

²⁴ CBS: 1 in 3 residents of Saba highly educated (rijksdienstcn.com).

²⁵ 1 in 5 residents of Bonaire say they find it difficult to make ends meet (cbs.nl).

²⁶ Nibud, 2023.

²⁷ Minister Schouten invests in sheltered workshop and services St. Eustatius (rijksdienstcn.com).

for professional guidance of people living in poverty. The population on Saba also receives support from the government, for example in the form of food packages.

Income inequality

The most recent figures on income inequality from CBS-CN are from 2021. This shows that the differences in the Caribbean Netherlands are relatively large. The 20 percent of households with the highest incomes earn 7 to 11 times as much (depending on the island) as the 20 percent of households with the lowest incomes (the so-called '80/20 ratio'). By comparison, in the European Netherlands, the highest incomes had 4.5 times as much as the lowest incomes. As described earlier, the number of European Dutch people has increased considerably in recent years, especially on Bonaire. This is accompanied by the risk that income inequality will increase further. As also described in the 2018 VHB, there is increasing evidence for a relationship between income inequality and crime.

Socio-cultural developments

Since 10 October 2010, Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius have been public entities (also known as special municipalities) of the Netherlands. With this constitutional change, the hope was that welfare on the islands would reach the same level as in the European Netherlands. However, there is still inequality between the European part of the Netherlands and the Caribbean part, for example when it comes to the social safety net and the minimum wage. Dissatisfaction with this among the population seems to be increasing. In 2022 and 2023, peaceful protests against poverty and inequality took place on Bonaire.²⁸ On St. Eustatius, residents protested in 2022 against inadequate health care after a resident died of medical complications of corona and for whom medical evacuation to St. Maarten came too late.²⁹ Research by Statistics Netherlands from 2021 does show that satisfaction with life on the three islands is high.³⁰ On St Eustatius, 93.1 percent of the respondents gave life a score of 7 or higher. More people are also satisfied with life on Saba (88.4 percent) and Bonaire (87.5 percent) than in the European Netherlands (83.6 percent). Satisfaction has increased on St Eustatius since 2017, on the other islands satisfaction remained almost the same.

Technological developments

In the Caribbean Netherlands, the development of digitisation has been slower in both government and society than in the European Netherlands. A study by Amsterdam Bureau for Economics from October 2023 shows that good steps have been made in the digital infrastructure on the BES, but that challenges remain due to the limited scale and geographical conditions.³¹ Both fixed and mobile internet is relatively slow (especially on Saba and St. Eustatius) and expensive. Much is still arranged on paper and at physical counters. In recent years, the Dutch government has started working on the transition to a digital society in the Caribbean Netherlands.³² In 2023, for example, the bill for the introduction of the Citizen Service Number (BSN) and login means of the digital government in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba was approved. The corona pandemic has also accelerated digitization in education. Research by Kennisnet from 2022 shows that most schools have ICT resources, but that there are too few devices available for the number of children and teachers.³³

Figures from CBS-CN show that more than 97 percent of all respondents in the Caribbean Netherlands use the internet (almost) daily. Internet banking has also increased in recent years.³⁴ This increase in the use of technology also entails risks, including in the field of cybercrime. The limited digital

²⁸ Poverty on Bonaire: Another large protest against The Hague (caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl).

²⁹ Stadians hold Silent March to protest Suboptimal Health Care and untimely death (bes-reporter.com).

³⁰ High satisfaction despite low material well-being in the Caribbean Netherlands (cbs.nl).

³¹ Economics Bureau Amsterdam, 2023.

³² Strengthening the digital society in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom (digitaleoverheid.nl).

³³ Digitization of education in the Caribbean Netherlands (kennisnet.nl).

³⁴ Caribbean Netherlands; ICT use of persons (cbs.nl).

The Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) specifically identifies the resilience of the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom as a potential threat in its recent report on hybridthreats.³⁵ According to the report, closer cooperation with the islands is needed to improve resilience.

Ecological developments

Climate change could significantly change life in the Caribbean Netherlands if no action is taken. It is getting drier and warmer on the islands. The State of Nature of the Caribbean Netherlands 2017 report states that the biodiversity of the Caribbean Netherlands is in a moderate to very unfavourable state.³⁶ According to the KNMI, higher sea levels will lead to flooding, salt water intrusion further inland and coastal erosion on Bonaire.³⁷ In November 2022, the island already experienced significant flooding after heavy rainfall. Some parts of the islands may become uninhabitable in the future and beaches are gradually disappearing into the sea. This will have consequences for tourism. A 2022 research report on the possible impact of climate change on Bonaire shows that Lac Bay and Klein Bonaire will be flooded as early as 2050.³⁸ The economic effects will be substantial, with an estimated flood damage of \$317 million by 2050. The loss of coral reefs will cause a decrease in tourism. Climate change will also leave its mark socio-culturally, for example through the disappearance of cultural heritage and increasing health problems as a result of the heat.

On May 1, 2023, STINAPA had the north side of Bonaire closed to the divers due to a very deadly coral disease. It is *Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease* (SCTLD). The disease SCTLD affects more than 30 species of hard coral, including many important reef builders. Once infected, more than 70 percent of the corals on the reef die. Preliminary research, conducted on July 22 and 23, 2022, confirmed that the disease is present and spreading at the dive site Karpata. The dive site was therefore closed until September 30, 2023. Because there are few pesticides against this disease, the main focus is on preventing the spread. For example, fishermen are urged to scrupulously follow the recommended protocols for the decontamination of fishing gear.³⁹

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On Bonaire, there are concerns among residents and the island council about landfills. Residents living near the Landfill Lagun experience nuisance from the waste incinerators and the smoke that comes from them.⁴⁰ It is unclear whether the filtering of the smoke is sufficient and the buildings are probably too close to the oven. The landfill is directly next to a nature reserve and connected to the open sea via a lagoon, resulting in visible pollution of the surrounding area. In recent years, several investments have already been made in waste processing on the island. The Public Entity of Bonaire has set itself the goal of no longer having to dump waste by 2030 and to make wastewater fully reusable.⁴¹

St. Eustatius has a wide variety of tropical habitats: from cloud forests around the top of the Quill volcano to versatile coral reefs in the sea around the island that were considered pristine until recently. However, the State of Nature from 2017 paints a gloomy picture of the current state. If nothing is done, important ecological functions such as erosion control and storm protection will be lost, with disastrous consequences for the economy. Nature on St. Eustatius and Saba has suffered greatly from hurricanes Irma and Maria that ravaged the islands in 2017. The KNMI expects that these islands will be affected more often by heavier hurricanes

³⁵ Advisory Council on International Affairs, 2024.

³⁶ Wageningen Marine en Environmental Research Wageningen, 2018.

³⁷ Sea level rises slightly faster in the Caribbean Netherlands (knmi.nl).

³⁸ IVM Institute for Environmental Studies, 2022.

³⁹ Alarm on Bonaire. Deadly coral disease found on reefs! (duikersgids.n).

⁴⁰ Concerns about health problems landfill Bonaire (antilliaansdagblad.com).

⁴¹ Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire: Afval (bonairegov.com).

. St. Eustatius has to deal with the washing away of fertile soil during heavy rainfall.⁴² In recent years, these rocky islands have also increasingly suffered from falling boulders due to erosion. On St. Eustatius, a large boulder fell on the roof of energy company Stuco in 2022, causing the power on the island to fail. An additional problem is formed by the sargassum seaweed pests that all three islands have regularly suffered from since 2011. The main threats to St. Eustatius are overfishing, stray cattle and invasive alien species.

In addition to the island, Saba also consists of a large underwater mountain, also called an undersea atoll. The Saba Bank is the largest protected nature reserve in the Netherlands. No matter how small Saba is, the island, like St. Eustatius, has a rich biodiversity ranging from tropical rainforest, cloud forests and dry forests to rich coral reefs and seagrass and seaweed fields, but many of these areas are declining and have been given the so-called conservation status 'very unfavorable'. There are therefore concerns about the state of nature on Saba. Due to overgrazing by stray cattle, especially goats, the forests have hardly been able to recover from the hurricanes in 2017. Just like on Bonaire and St. Eustatius, overgrazing by stray goats, donkeys, cows and pigs is seen as the greatest threat to terrestrial ecosystems. This also has direct consequences for marine life through sedimentation. Another major threat is invasive species, both on land and in the sea.

Climate change not only has negative consequences for nature, but also for the Caribbean Dutch population and in particular the youth. According to UNICEF, children are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.⁴³ Schools close more often due to the heat, but also due to severe storms and hurricanes, which means that children receive less education. Sports and playing are also becoming increasingly difficult due to increased heat. The consequences of climate change also cause mental stress in children. UNICEF advises on contingency plans for schools and provided training to professionals on St. Eustatius in 2023 to provide psychosocial support to children after an impactful event. In recent years, however, there seems to be increasing attention for the climate effects in the Caribbean Netherlands. For example, a Climate Atlas has been developed in which information about climate change on the islands has been brought together.⁴⁴ There are also several projects underway to 13 coral reef. On Saba, for example, sea urchins are used, which eat blue-green algae so that new coral can grow.⁴⁵ But at the beginning of 2024, a climate plan had still not been drawn up to protect the population of the Caribbean Netherlands from rising sea levels. Together with residents of Bonaire, Greenpeace started a case against the Dutch state for climate justice in January 2024.⁴⁶ It is established that the Netherlands State has an obligation to adequately protect Bonaire and its population against the effects of climate change by taking adaptation measures. A precondition for this is that the great poverty must be combated and people's resilience must be increased. The plans and measures must be made together with people from Bonaire and based on science. Greenpeace calls the lack of effective climate policy for Bonaire a violation of human rights.

In closing

The DESTEP analysis reveals a number of factors that could influence the development of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands in the coming years:

- The size of the population has risen sharply on Bonaire in particular. The fact that there are more people could also mean more crime, but that depends on the characteristics of the new Caribbean Dutch. Many migrants come to the Caribbean Netherlands because they want to live there in their old age

⁴² Climate change: 9 reasons why more action is needed on the Caribbean islands (caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl).

⁴³ Children vulnerable to climate change, including in the Caribbean (unicef.nl).

⁴⁴ Climate Impact Atlas BES (bes.climateimpactatlas.com).

⁴⁵ Saba intensifies collaboration to achieve coral restoration (bes-reporter.com).

⁴⁶ Justice for Bonaire (greenpeace.org).

or because they have work ahead of them there. As long as the labor market continues to develop favorably, it is unlikely that these migrants will end up in crime. It is possible that some of the migrants end up in exploitative situations. The increase in the population can lead to more violent crime as these forms of crime occur in all layers of the population.

- The economy has grown on all islands in recent years. Unemployment is relatively low, but a large part of the local population does not earn much more than the minimum wage and there is still a lot of poverty. The amounts for the minimum wage and social assistance have increased. Yet many locals struggle to make ends meet. The cost of living is high. There is a shortage of housing and the prices of owner-occupied and rental homes are unaffordable for the local population. If there is no substantial improvement in the financial position of the local population, it is not inconceivable that this will eventually lead to more crime, for example property crime and violent crime.
- In the Caribbean Netherlands, income inequality is relatively high. The influx of wealthy European Dutch and other wealthy migrants can increase the difference even further. Given the relationship between income inequality and crime, this can have consequences for crime. In addition, there is dissatisfaction among the population about the inequality between the European part of the Netherlands and the Caribbean part. It is quite possible that this will lead to unrest and protests, at least in Bonaire.
- Digitization in the Caribbean Netherlands has started. This entails risks for cybercrime. Because awareness among the population still has to grow.
- The consequences of climate change are starting to emerge in the Caribbean Netherlands. Although research into the relationship between climate change and crime is still in its infancy, there are indications that climate change has direct and indirect consequences for criminal behaviour, both in terms of violent crime, property crime and organised crime.^{A 47}

⁴⁷ <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/socsci/events/esrc-festival-2021/events/climate-change-and-criminality>.

PART I CRIME PICTURE

LOCAL CRIMINALITY

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Part 1 – Crime picture of local crime

This first part paints a picture of local crime in the Caribbean Netherlands. After a definition of the form of crime, a picture follows on the basis of the available figures and interviews with relevant partners.

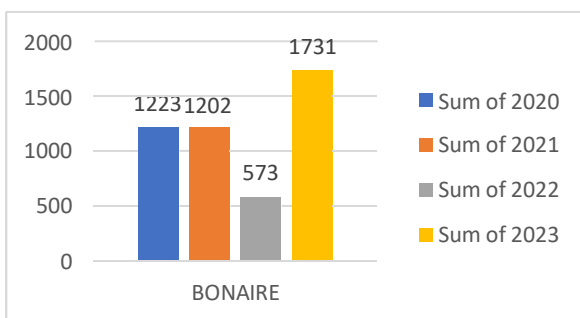
2. Traffic crime

Verkeerscriminaliteit

Met verkeerscriminaliteit worden overtredingen en misdrijven bedoeld die verband houden met het verkeer en het gebruik van voertuigen op de openbare weg. Er kan een onderscheid gemaakt worden tussen lichte en zware verkeersdelicten. Lichte verkeersdelicten worden meestal afgedaan met een boete. Een paar voorbeelden zijn: snelheidsovertredingen, gebruik van de telefoon achter het stuur, zonder gordel of zonder rijbewijs rijden en geen geldige autopapieren. Bij zware verkeersdelicten zijn in de regel ook andere sancties mogelijk. Te denken valt aan rijden onder de invloed, roekeloos rijgedrag en doodslag in het verkeer.

There are traffic problems on all islands of the Caribbean Netherlands, which are partly related to the condition of the roads and the increased traffic, and partly to do with the behaviour of road users. The latter includes the use of alcohol in traffic and reckless driving. The graphs below show the number of traffic fines issued per island. The graphs show that the number of fines on the islands has increased. This may mean that the number of traffic offences has increased, but also that there is better enforcement. Presumably it is a combination of both.

On August 1, 2019, the Road Traffic Ordinance came into force on Bonaire. This makes it mandatory to wear a seat belt. It is forbidden to make phone calls behind the wheel and enforcement of driving under the influence has become possible. The number of accidents on Bonaire has increased (slightly) in recent years. This applies to all accidents; both for accidents with or without injury and for fatal accidents. In 2020, not a single fatal traffic accident took place. In 2022 there were three and in 2023 two. The recent victims were traveling on a bicycle or a motor vehicle. A fatal accident has a lot of impact on society. Due to the small scale of the island, people often know directly or indirectly the victim, the suspect or their families. Alcohol consumption on the island causes a significant proportion of accidents. It is striking that it is mainly male residents who cause accidents. At the sneks in Nikiboko and Antriol and at the



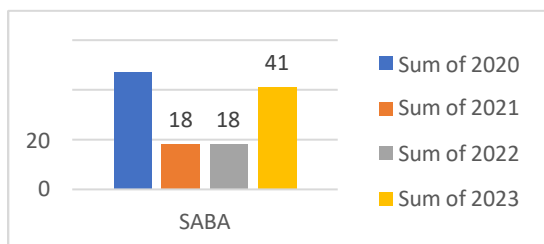
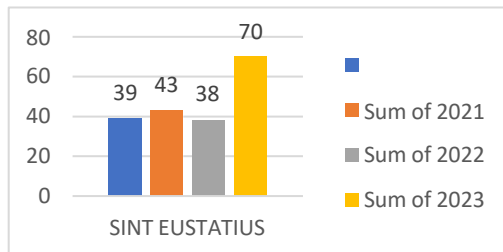
catering in Playa most accidents take place in which alcohol is involved. However, relatively little is checked for driving under the influence of the sneks. In addition to the accidents, a well-known phenomenon on Bonaire is the so-called feveren or street races on public roads. The figures show that the intensity of these activities varies over the years. Although a fever platform has been set up, fever and racing are still taking place at fixed locations, such as the road between Belnem and Sorobon.

On St. Eustatius, the new Road Traffic Ordinance came into effect on September 27, 2022 and the number of traffic fines also increased there in 2023. The most frequent fines were issued for not giving way. What also causes a lot of nuisance in traffic on St. Eustatius are the scooters. The drivers of the scooters often do not pay attention to traffic, do not wear helmets, and usually do not have a valid driver's license with them. These are usually male Statians between 17 and 25 years old. Regularly scheduled

traffic checks carried out. The police try to do this every two months. Planned patrols are also carried out to check whether people have valid papers with them.

During the research period, it was noticeable that more collisions and accidents took place. This is probably due to various causes for both Bonaire and St. Eustatius. For example, the population has increased

. The infrastructure is insufficiently designed for this increase. The roads are narrow, poorly maintained and often without a bicycle or footpath. In addition, there is no public transport available. As a result, there is a lot of traffic at rush hour from home to school and work. During events and on weekends, people drive home with alcohol, this is tolerated from a social point of view.



2022. Only since a year have checks and enforcement been carried out on traffic violations such as driving under the influence, driving without valid documents and driving without a seatbelt. Little is known about the characteristics of the suspects of traffic offenses. Collisions occur regularly on Saba. This is largely due to the

infrastructure. There are no clear middle lines on the roads, making it difficult for people to tell if they are driving on their own side of the road. Just like on Bonaire, traffic checks are held on Saba, usually 2 to 3 times a year in January, March, and July.

In closing

- The number of fines has increased on all islands. This is partly due to the entry into force of the new traffic ordinance.
- The number of traffic accidents has increased partly as a result of an outdated road network and an increase in road users. Bonaire is experiencing the strongest increase.
- Alcohol in traffic is a problem on all islands.
- On Bonaire, people are still fevering and racing despite the fever platform

3. Youth crime

Jeugdcriminaliteit

Jeugdcriminaliteit is strafbaar gedrag gepleegd door jongeren tot en met 24 jaar oud. Het omvat een breed scala aan vergrijpen, variërend van vandalisme en eenvoudige diefstal tot aan ernstige geweldsmisdrijven. Jongeren zijn fysiek en psychisch vaak nog volop in ontwikkeling als ze een strafbaar feit plegen. Daardoor vraagt jeugdcriminaliteit een andere aanpak dan criminaliteit van volwassenen.⁴⁸

In 2020, juvenile criminal law was introduced in the BES Criminal Code.⁴⁹ This made it possible to apply juvenile detention and gave the extrajudicial settlement a legal basis. With the introduction of juvenile criminal law, the intended criminal behaviour of young people is addressed in a more appropriate way

⁴⁸ Juvenile delinquency (nji.nl)

⁴⁹ Decree of 16 July 2020 determining the date of entry into force of parts of the Adaptation Act on Public Entities Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba and the Decree on the Implementation of Juvenile Criminal Law BES (zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl).

. The Council for Law Enforcement calls the introduction of juvenile criminal law a milestone because it offers the possibility of providing tailor-made solutions in the event of violations of the law by minors, with more attention to pedagogical aspects.⁵⁰ The influx of juvenile cases at the Public Prosecution Service does not seem to have increased in the period 2020 – 2024, but the extent of crime among young people is not well understood. With a peak upwards in 2021, the total number of cases seems to remain more or less the same. As can be seen in the table below.

Influx Youth OM ⁵¹				
Island	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bonaire	50	71	40	45
Sint Eustatius	6	16	9	4
Saba	0	1	3	1
Total	56	88	52	50

According to the Public Prosecution Service, the majority of juvenile crime consists of theft and violent crimes. In the summer of 2023, for example, a 17-year-old man was arrested for assault with a baseball bat.⁵² According to one of the respondents, most of the juveniles involved in juvenile delinquency on Bonaire were involved in the use and sale of narcotics, carrying a weapon or in sexual offenses. One of the interviews on St. Eustatius showed that most of the juveniles there were involved in property crimes, such as theft and fraud. Furthermore, the Guardianship Council of St. Eustatius notes that the number of violent crimes is increasing. These young people are often between the ages of 14 and 17. They most often had Dominican and Guyanese nationality. In 2020, a minor suspect was arrested for attempted manslaughter with a weapon. In this incident, not only the victim was injured, but also the perpetrator.

This

The latter lost a finger that was probably chopped off by a third party with a machete.⁵³ In 2021, a 16-year-old was arrested for threatening a high school teacher with a knife.⁵⁴ According to the Guardianship Council On Saba, young people are most often involved in violent crimes and are usually local young people.

Interviews showed that most young people who come into contact with crime come from single-parent families where the father is not present or from families where both parents are absent and the children live with grandparents. Some parents, especially single parents, often have one or more part-time jobs in addition to their normal job to make endsmeet.⁵⁵ As a result, children are often alone at home. Because of this lack of parental supervision, these children roam the streets and get into trouble. On Saba, there are known cases of older men who give credit to girls in exchange for sex. During the interviews, it also emerged that young people who grew up in a home situation with domestic violence also come into contact with crime. Youth Care Bonaire indicates that they mainly encounter a lot of alcohol and drug abuse.⁵⁶ Young people with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable and impressionable and are therefore more likely to come into contact with crime. Other factors that increase the risk of committing crimes are not finishing school – the so-called 'drop-outs' – and drug use. Reports by the Antilliaans Dagblad show that there is bullying in schools on Saba.⁵⁷ Bullying is not punishable in itself, but it can escalate into punishable behaviour. According to the coordinator of domestic violence and child abuse on Saba, the underlying cause of bullying lies in the

⁵⁰ Law Enforcement Council, 2023b.

⁵¹ These figures are taken from the annual reports of the Public Prosecution Service.

⁵² Suspects arrested after a series of violent incidents and weapons and drug offences (bonaire.nu).

⁵³ In Statia: Stabbing with two injured (721news.com).

⁵⁴ Youngster on Statia arrested for threatening with Weapon (bes-reporter.com).

⁵⁵ National Ombudsman, 2022.

⁵⁶ More young people in youth prison on Bonaire: 'All places are full' (caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl).

⁵⁷ Saba is working on a solution to bullying behaviour (antilliaansdagblad.com).

closedness of society and different parenting styles, with parents shouting a lot or using physical correction methods.

The BES Safety Assessment 2018 showed that juvenile crime in the Caribbean Netherlands was undergoing worrying developments. The image then was that young people started committing more serious crimes earlier and earlier. According to an article by the Caribbean Network, the number of young people in youth detention on Bonaire is rising, and it is mainly young people who are committing the crime for the second time.⁵⁸ According to Youth Care, the increase in the influx of young people into juvenile detention may have to do with the introduction of juvenile criminal law.⁵⁹ This coincided with the outbreak of the coronavirus, which was a difficult time for many young people. In addition, the number of minors in the Caribbean municipalities increased. This is all likely to have an effect on the number of youth cases. That does not alter the fact that the current influx among young people is worrying. The population on St. Eustatius is concerned about young people who have a criminal record.⁶⁰ Often these young people are unemployed when they get out of prison and it is difficult for them to make a new start. Due to the small scale of the island, people from outside the family often know that the young person has a criminal record and therefore they have no chance of getting a job. This means that these young people are financially dependent on their parents and grandparents and it is difficult for them to build their own future.

In closing

- There is no clear insight into the extent of juvenile crime in the Caribbean Netherlands.
- Although the influx of cases at the Public Prosecution Service does not seem to have increased, the number of young people in youth detention on Bonaire has increased. This may be related to the introduction of juvenile criminal law.
- Agencies that deal with young people have signaled an increase in violent crime.
- Many young people who are guilty of crime come from a problematic family situation.

4. Violent crime

Geweldscriminaliteit

Geweldscriminaliteit betreft alle misdrijven waarbij fysiek geweld of dreiging met geweld wordt gebruikt. Het kan gaan om levensdelicten, zoals moord en doodslag of lichamelijk letsel door schuld, bedreiging, mishandeling, diefstal met geweld en afpersing. Het kan ook gaan om huiselijk of relationeel geweld of om seksuele misdrijven, waaronder verkrachting, aanranding en ontucht.

In the Caribbean Netherlands, violence is concentrated in the domestic sphere and in the nightlife. Serious violent incidents are not common. A firearm is also rarely used. It mainly concerns violence with the bare fist, with machetes or objects. Violent incidents have a major impact on the small communities. Every incident is discussed in the local media and commented on social media. On Bonaire, no major changes can be seen in most categories of violence, except when it comes to assault with or without a weapon. If we look at the total number of violent crimes, there has been an increase in the last two years. St Eustatius saw a decrease in the number of violent crimes in 2022. The total number in 2023 does not differ much from that in 2020 and 2021. The numbers in the different categories fluctuate and are too small to make meaningful statements about them. This also applies to Saba. The total numbers for Saba do not make much difference each year. Below are tables with figures for the most common violent crimes on the three islands.

⁵⁸ More young people in youth prison on Bonaire: 'All places are full' (caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl).

⁵⁹ In the Caribbean Netherlands, juvenile criminal law was only introduced in 2020.

⁶⁰ CBA Interview with the Guardianship Council of St. Eustatius.

Overview of most common violent crimes in Bonaire

Type of violent crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Threat	52	47	37	48
Threat (with death)	48	36	37	36
Threat (with weapon)	25	24	25	30
Relational violence	67	70	61	69
Child abuse	7	5	10	11
Mistreatment	51	49	63	80
Assault with a weapon	7	9	23	27
Total	257	240	256	301

Overview of most common violent crimes in St Eustatius

Type of violent crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Threat	18	15	10	10
Threat (with death)	2	4	3	10
Threat (with weapon)	7	6	6	6
Relational violence	12	7	4	13
Child abuse	1	0	0	0
Mistreatment	10	20	9	16
Assault with a weapon	6	7	3	6
Total	56	59	37	61

Overzicht meest voorkomende geweldsmisdrijven in Saba

Type geweldsdelict	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bedreiging	3	5	8	9
Bedreiging (met de dood)	2	1	6	4
Bedreiging (met wapen)	5	2	3	2
Relationeel geweld	8	9	3	5
Kindermishandeling	1	4	0	0
Mishandeling	13	7	2	12
Mishandeling met een wapen	3	2	4	1
Totaal	35	30	26	33

4.1 Homicide

Levensdelicten

Onder levensdelicten worden verstaan moord en doodslag of een poging daartoe en dood door schuld. Het gaat om de misdrijven die strafbaar zijn gesteld in Titel XIX (misdrijven tegen het leven gericht) van het Wetboek van Strafrecht BES.⁶¹

⁶¹ BES Criminal Code (wetten.overheid.nl).

Figures (attempted) murder or manslaughter				
Bonaire	2020	2021	2022	2023
Murder/manslaughter	1	0	0	1
Attempted manslaughter	2	3	8	8
Sint Eustatius	2020	2021	2022	2023
Murder/manslaughter	0	0	0	0
Attempted manslaughter	0	0	5	4
Saba	2020	2021	2022	2023
Murder/manslaughter	0	0	0	0
Attempted manslaughter	1	1	1	1

As the table above shows, murder and manslaughter occur only sporadically on Bonaire. In 2020, a woman killed her ex-partner with a knife. The last case of murder on Bonaire was on December 26, 2023. It was a man who was stabbed to death with a knife. Since 2020, there has been an increase in the number of attempted manslaughter or murder, from two in 2020 to eight in 2022. In 2023, two men were convicted of attempted manslaughter and public violence.⁶² The reason for this verdict was a fight in 2022. Everyone involved had drunk a lot of alcohol. A fight ensued in which the victim was kicked several times in the head.

Murder and manslaughter are even less common on St. Eustatius than on Bonaire. In the years 2020 – 2024, not a single murder or manslaughter was registered on St. Eustatius. In 2022, two people were stabbed to death with a knife during a brawl on an oil tanker. Since St. Eustatius is the nearest port, the oil tanker is sent to

St. Eustatius, but there is no further relationship between the murder and St. Eustatius. Furthermore, in the **years 21** 2020 and 2021 no attempted murder or manslaughter were recorded. In 2022, five attempted murder or manslaughter and four attempts in 2023.

On Saba, as on St Eustatius , no murders or manslaughters were registered in the period 2020 – 2024. However, one attempted murder or manslaughter has been registered every year. These are usually attempts at manslaughter. Attempts to run over someone with a car occur occasionally on all three islands. An example of attempted manslaughter on Saba: in 2022, a man tried to take his ex-girlfriend's life by hitting her with a cleaver.⁶³ The man was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and damages of 20.000 US dollars.

4.2 Nightlife violence

Uitgaansgeweld

Uitgaansgeweld is niet gelegitimeerd, expressief geweld - niet zijnde relationeel geweld - in een uitgaansgebied of op de wegen naar dit gebied, bestaande uit een verbale, fysieke en/of seksuele handeling gericht tegen personen.⁶⁴ Te denken valt aan gewelddadige incidenten die zich voordoen tijdens het uitgaan, meestal in uitgaansgebieden op de eilanden zoals restaurants, bars, sneks en clubs. Uitgaansgeweld vindt voornamelijk plaats in het weekend omdat er dan gelegenheid is om uit te gaan.

⁶² <https://www.openbaarministerie.org/twee-mannen-veroordeeld-voor-poging-doodslag>.

⁶³ Annual Report OM 2022.

⁶⁴ DSP group, 2014.

A lot of violence in the Caribbean Netherlands is related to going out. It mainly concerns young people and young adults who come into conflict with each other under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This usually involves several male suspects. It often concerns the same perpetrator groups. Because of the small scale of the islands, the perpetrators are known in a negative way in the community. They do not want to report to the police because they are considered a traitor. The view of such incidents is therefore not complete.

On Bonaire, incidents mainly take place at the sneks in Antriol and Nikiboko and at catering establishments in Playa. During the Covid period, the violent incidents moved to Te Amo Beach, because the catering industry was closed. The nightlife violence usually takes place between different groups, and mainly on weekends after the sneks or bars close or when the parties are over. There is fighting, with or without stabbing weapons or other objects. In the summer of 2023, for example, a 23-year-old man was arrested for allegedly hitting someone with a beer bottle while going out.⁶⁵ Occasionally, threats were made with a firearm. Larger events are also risky. These attract a lot of nightlife crowds from Bonaire, but also from Curaçao. There are several signs of firearm possession during these events, including among Curaçaoans. The corps does not have sufficient capacity to be continuously ready for large events or to act if such a party gets out of hand. Violence against police increased during the Covid period and this trend continued even after Covid. During the enforcement of the corona measures, there have been several incidents in which police officers have been threatened or attacked. Fights also regularly take place during events on Saba. For example, on the so-called Saba Day in early December 2023, a large brawl ensued in which the police had to act. Images of this event were recorded and posted on social media.

4.3 Relational violence

Relationeel geweld

Relationeel geweld of huiselijk geweld wordt door het OM omschreven als geweld gepleegd in amoureuze relaties en familierechtelijke relaties tot in de derde graad.⁶⁶ Het omvat geweldsmisdrijven gepleegd door een persoon uit de huiselijke of familiekring van het slachtoffer, waaronder (ex-)partners, maar ook ouders, broers, zussen of (huis)vrienden. Het kan zowel om fysiek geweld gaan als om emotionele mishandeling of verwaarlozing. Bij dit type geweld is vaak sprake van een bepaalde machtsverhouding in de relatie tussen slachtoffer en dader.

Figures Relational violence

Island	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bonaire	67	70	61	69
Sint Eustatius	12	7	4	13
Saba	8	9	3	5
Total	87	86	69	87

Relational violence, often referred to as domestic violence, is identified in international reports on the Caribbean as a serious, but largely hidden form of violence. OM BES writes about relational violence on its website: 'This form of criminal behaviour is characterised by the circumstance that perpetrator and victim – sometimes out of necessity – remain part of each other's lives, with the result that the violence can take on a systematic character and the risk of recurrence can be high. Because of this relationship of dependency, some of the victims do not report it. They fear that filing a report will rather lead to a worsening of their situation and not to a solution. Another reason for not filing a tax return may be that the

⁶⁵ Suspects arrested after a series of violent incidents and weapons and drug offences (bonaire.nu).

⁶⁶ <https://www.openbaarministerie.org/relatieeel-geweld-0>.

The victim wants the violence to stop, but not for the perpetrator to be punished. It is precisely to protect this vulnerable group of victims and still invite them to report it, that the Public Prosecution Service has made relational violence a priority.⁶⁷ In order to achieve uniformity in the investigation and prosecution, prevention of recidivism and cooperation in domestic or relational violence, the Attorney General (PG) of Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba issued the 'Instruction on Relational Violence' in 2017.⁶⁸ The term 'domestic violence' was replaced in the instruction by the term 'relational violence' in order to indicate that it is not violence that takes place literally within a home, but violence by a person with whom there is a family relationship or an amorous relationship, that is to say, a partner or ex-partner.

In the Caribbean Netherlands, too, a large proportion of violent crimes take place in the relational sphere. Violence includes kicking and hitting or violence with the use of objects. Vandalism also takes place. Relational violence in the form of threats is also common. The age of suspects of relational violence varies greatly. Most suspects are men, but women also occur. The victims are mostly women. Men sometimes do report, but they are less likely to report it. Both suspects and victims often grew up in households where violence took place. The suspects resolve conflicts according to the example they saw in their youth. Victims also end up in the same pattern, making them vulnerable to renewed victimization. In these families, alcohol and drug addiction and poverty often play a role. Suspects and victims are sometimes psychologically and financially dependent on each other, making it difficult to break out of the pattern of violence. The majority of relational violence cases take place in Caribbean families. In recent years, however, there have also been more reports from European-Dutch and Latin American families. Within the small communities of the islands, shame and taboo still play a major role in relational violence. There is a culture of problems being kept in-house.⁶⁹

During the lockdown in 2020 during the Covid period, an increase in relational violence could be seen. This is a phenomenon that also occurred during the lockdown in the European Netherlands. People were at home on each other's lips and Financial problems increased due to reduced labour participation.⁷⁰ Since then, the number of reports of domestic violence without a clear cause has fluctuated. Bonaire has the most cases of relational violence, but that is of course also due to the larger size of the population compared to Saba and St. Eustatius. In 2020, the Guiami hotline was established on Bonaire: an advice and reporting center for relational violence and child abuse. The low threshold ensures that reporters are better prepared to file their report and go directly to KPCN's specialized investigation team. Relational violence is also becoming more common on St. Eustatius, although the numbers are objectively small. Er was een Women's Desk for women who have been abused, but that has now been changed to the Gender Desk.⁷¹ The Guardianship Council does not offer assistance, but help is provided in the background. Since last year, a coordinator has been appointed, among other things to provide more information. Although Victim Support cannot offer many facilities, the population has made use of Victim Support.

Before 2020, there was an increase in reports of relational violence, but during the Covid period, the number of reports decreased while it was suspected that the problem had actually increased. The willingness to report is low. Victims often do not want their partner to have to go to prison. Moreover, in many cases there is mutual financial dependence between perpetrator and victim and there are feelings of shame among victims that prevent them from reporting it. On St. Eustatius, most victims are Dominican women in

⁶⁷ <https://www.openbaarministerie.org/relatieeel-geweld-0>.

⁶⁸ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://cuatro.sim-cdn.nl/openbaarministerie/uploads/aanwijzing_releationeel_geweld_010717.pdf.

⁶⁹ 'Shame on a small island creates a taboo on domestic violence' (caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl).

⁷⁰ Number of employed Caribbean Netherlands further increased in 2022 (cbs.nl).

⁷¹ CBA Interview with the Guardianship Council of St. Eustatius.

the age category of twenty years and older.⁷² These women often do not report it because they are afraid that their legal status on the island can be revoked or that they will get into trouble with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The suspects in this type of case are usually older Statian men. The age difference between the suspects and the victims is often large. Comparison of the figures of relational violence from 2022 with 2023 shows a large increase. In 2022, there were four relational violence cases and in 2023 there were thirteen cases.

There is a relatively high level of relational violence on Saba, although this is not apparent from the police records. Most of the suspects are men and most of the victims are Saban women between the ages of 25 and 35.⁷³ Violence also takes place between parents and children, but it is difficult to say anything about the extent, because often relational violence is not reported. This is clearly visible in the annual figures. In 2022, there were three cases and in 2023 there were five. Although relational violence takes place and the environment often knows about it, almost nothing is done. The police often hear afterwards from local residents that violence has taken place and information is missing, especially if children are involved. The cause is most likely a lack of communication between the chain partners. There was supposed to be information about relational violence and child abuse, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many things have come to a standstill on Saba that were not later picked up again.

The problem of relational violence is recognized on the islands, but it takes a long time before actual action is taken. An administrative agreement has been concluded on the approach to relational violence and child abuse in the Caribbean Netherlands for the period 2021 – 2024.⁷⁴ The following priorities have been identified in the agreement: prevention, the promotion of expertise, strengthening the provision of assistance and cooperation in the chain, ensuring a well-functioning low-threshold reporting structure and a legal framework. The laws on relational violence of the European Netherlands that define child abuse, specify the responsibilities of actors in the chain and regulate the right to report for professionals do not apply in the Caribbean Netherlands.

To fill this gap, a draft decision has been worked on in which the establishment of an advice and reporting point domestic violence and child abuse and establishes an obligation for organisations to draw up a protection code and right to report for professionals.⁷⁵ The target date for entry into force of this

The draft decision was January 1, 2024. In the meantime, steps have been taken on the islands, for example in setting up hotlines and shelters for victims. For the Public Prosecution Service, chain cooperation in tackling relational violence is essential. At the end of 2023, the first steps were taken to reach cooperation agreements in accordance with the Public Prosecution Service's Relational Violence Guideline⁷⁶. The most important partners are the Stichting Reclassering Caribisch Nederland (SRCN), KPCN and the Public Prosecution Service.

Child abuse

Kindermishandeling

Kindermishandeling is een vorm van relationeel geweld. Hierbij moet niet alleen gedacht worden aan lichamelijk geweld, maar ook aan de emotionele mishandeling of verwaarlozing van een kind.

⁷² Interview Bario Régisseur Sint Eustatius.

⁷³ Interview Bario Régisseur Saba.

⁷⁴ Administrative Agreement on Tackling Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in the Caribbean Netherlands, 2021-2024.

⁷⁵ Decree on social support and combating domestic violence and child abuse BES, 2023.

⁷⁶ chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnbpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://cuatro.sim-cdn.nl/openbaar_ministerie/uploads/aanwijzing_releationeel_geweld_010717.pdf.

Child abuse figures				
Island	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bonaire	7	5	10	11
Sint Eustatius	1	0	0	0
Saba	1	4	0	0
Total	9	9	10	11

Child abuse is a problem that occurs on the islands, but is often not reported. If Bonaire is compared with Saba and St Eustatius, it is striking that more is reported on Bonaire than on Saba and St Eustatius, but this can also be explained by the difference in size of the population. In 2022 and in 2023, not a single case of child abuse was reported on Saba and St. Eustatius. The willingness to report from society, for example from family and neighbours, is low, the willingness to report from schools is nil. Witnesses of child abuse are afraid of becoming known, perhaps because of the small scale of the islands.

Many parents on the islands still see it as part of the upbringing to give a child a corrective slap. They have learned this from home and are convinced that it is necessary to raise your child correctly. Violence against children also sometimes takes place at school. On Bonaire, for example, a few reports about a corrective slap at school by teachers have been received by KPCN in recent years. Victims are mostly children between the ages of eight and twelve. Child abuse is a phenomenon that occurs among all socioeconomic classes. However, there does seem to be a change taking place among the younger generation of parents. Research by UNICEF shows that most young parents indicate that they do not use corporal punishment to discipline their children.⁷⁷ On the islands, people say about this new way of parenting: 'they spare the rod, spoil the child.'⁷⁸

Children who are victims of child abuse often have a low IQ. They have a problematic home situation and receive little guidance. These children are sometimes labeled as problematic, while the environment is the problem, according to one of the respondents. The child only shows the symptom. The 'illness' is the home situation and the environment. Another problem is that there are insufficient childcare facilities for children that have to be placed out of the home. In its 2019 situation analysis, UNICEF concludes that a comprehensive legal framework is needed in the Caribbean Netherlands to bring about necessary improvements in the protection of children's rights. This also requires more capacity for professionals and better data collection.⁷⁹

4.5 Sexual crimes

Seksuele misdrijven

Bij seksuele misdrijven gaat het om verschillende seksuele en seksueel getinte misdrijven, zoals verkrachting, aanranding of het verspreiden van beeldmateriaal waarop seksueel misbruik van kinderen is vastgelegd. Deze misdrijven zijn strafbaar gesteld in Titel XIV (misdrijven tegen de zeden) van het Wetboek van Strafrecht BES en worden ook wel zedenmisdrijven genoemd.⁸⁰ Er is in deze CBA voor gekozen om dergelijke misdrijven onder de geweldsdelicten te scharen aangezien vaak sprake is van geweld of andere vormen van dwang. In dat soort gevallen kan worden gesproken van seksueel geweld. Illegale prostitutie wordt verderop bij migratiecriminaliteit besproken.

⁷⁷ UNICEF, 2020

⁷⁸ Literally translated, this means 'they save the rod, spoil the child'.

⁷⁹ UNICEF, 2020.

⁸⁰ BES Criminal Code (wetten.overheid.nl).

Sexual crimes				
Island	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bonaire	11	14	13	28
Sint Eustatius	1	1	3	3
Saba	1	4	2	2
Total	13	19	18	33

The table above shows the number of criminal prosecutions for sexual offences for the years 2020 to 2023. As can be seen, there has been an increase in the number of criminal investigations into sexual crimes on Bonaire: from eleven in 2020 to fifteen in 2021, thirteen in 2022 and more than doubling this number in 2023. In this year, 28 reports were registered. Most reports were of sexual assaults, lewd acts and sexual penetration of a minor under the age of sixteen. These cases mainly involve female victims under the age of sixteen who are abused by men over the age of twenty. What also falls under this are cases of sex between two minors. Occasionally, abuse occurs with a minor under the age of twelve. These forms of abuse take place among various population groups. Young girls are vulnerable and are persuaded to have sex for payment. Mobile phone use and social media also play an increasing role in these matters. Sexting⁸¹ occurs regularly in which photos of the victim are shared with third parties. Sometimes with the aim of impressing others, sometimes out of revenge against the victim. In schools and in families, there is minimal education about sex and sexting. If this does not change, an increase in sexting is to be expected. In recent years, there have been occasional reports of drugging of minors. It is possible that this takes place for the purpose of having sex with the minor in question. However, it was not tested whether it was actually drugging.

On St Eustatius, few criminal investigations have been carried out into sexual offences. In 2020, three suspects arrested on suspicion of sexual abuse of a minor.⁸² In 2020 and 2021, there was only one criminal investigation per year, and in the years 2022 and 2023, the number rose to three. The willingness to report is very low on St. Eustatius. Only when it really gets out of hand and everyone on the island already knows about it, do they go to the police. There have also been few reports of sexual crimes on Saba in recent years. In 2020, there was one criminal investigation into a sexual offence, in 2021 there were four criminal investigations and in 2022 and 2023 there were two. Here too, the willingness to report is very low because of the small scale. Moreover, there is little trust in the police among the population. This is partly due to the many changes within the police and because it often concerns non-Sabans. The one and only Sabaan is the chief of basic police care. The population would like to see more Sabans in the police, or at least more people who are really settled on the island.

If victims report to KPCN for an intake interview, a report is usually made after the reflection period. This mainly concerns parents of a minor victim who file a report. The minor himself does not always support the report because they do not see themselves as victims. In some cases, no report is made due to fear of notoriety or reprisals from the perpetrator. This is not inconceivable in these small societies. Reports of incest, sexual violence against children within one's own family or within the family, are virtually non-existent. There is a taboo on this, which means that it is not reported and therefore it is not possible to indicate the extent to which incest takes place on the islands.

⁸¹ Sexting is having a sexually tinted conversation online. Apps, photos or videos can be sent.

⁸² Third arrest made in case involving abuse of minor on Statia (dutchcaribbeanlegalportal.com).

As with relational violence, the legislation on sexual offences in the Caribbean Netherlands is still lagging behind compared to the European Netherlands.⁸³ Although the central government has been asked to come up with a comprehensive approach to sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence in the Caribbean Netherlands, the implementation of this encounters various problems. The action programme as it is being rolled out in the European Netherlands cannot be applied one-to-one on the islands due to cultural differences. In addition, there is limited implementation capacity.⁸⁴

In closing

- On Saba and St Eustatius, the total number of violent crimes remains fairly stable and no murders were committed on these islands during the study period. Two murders took place on Bonaire and there is an increase in assaults.
- On all islands there is nightlife violence that is accompanied by alcohol consumption. Sometimes violence is also used against the police.
- Domestic and relational violence is widely recognized as a major problem on the islands, but it is not often reported. Work is being done on better regulations and policy. The introduction of this is delayed.
- Sexual crimes occur on the islands, but there also seems to be underreporting. There are relatively many known cases of fornication with minors.

5. Property crime

Vermogensdelicten

Vermogenscriminaliteit omvat alle strafbare feiten die gericht zijn tegen iemands eigendom of bezit. Een paar voorbeelden van deze strafbare feiten zijn: woninginbraak, bedrijfsinbraak, overval, diefstal van erf, diefstal van duikplaats, diefstal uit voertuig, diefstal van dieren, diefstal voertuig, verlies of diefstal kenteken.

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Overview of most common property crimes on Bonaire

Property crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Company burglaries	21	48	28	15
Robbery	7	10	6	6
Theft at dive site vehicle	30	35	15	4
Theft other	150	148	156	187
Theft of goats	16	7	6	5
Burglary tourist accommodation	9	25	26	5
Home burglaries	89	59	52	33
Total	322	332	289	255

Property crime is one of the most common forms of crime on Bonaire. This type of crime therefore requires a lot of capacity from KPCN. These are mainly home burglaries, business burglaries, burglaries at tourist accommodations or thefts at diving sites. Violence is rarely used. Nevertheless, the impact is great, because the victims' sense of safety is affected. It is often the same perpetrators who constantly repeat themselves. However, a large part of the perpetrators remain unknown. These are the blind spots in property crimes. As the tables above show, Bonaire has had fewer than ten robberies annually in recent years. In 2019, this was just under twenty. The decrease after 2019 is probably related to the

⁸³ Aanpassing Wet seksuele misdrijven geldt niet voor BES-eilanden (dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl).

⁸⁴ Voortgangsrapportage Nationaal Actieprogramma Aanpak seksueel grensoverschrijdend gedrag en seksueel geweld, 2024.

corona pandemic. Because of lockdowns and curfews, criminals, like other citizens, were less able to take to the streets. There are a few known cases of robberies under threat with a firearm. *Atrako's*⁸⁵ are a hotly debated topic on the island, but they don't happen often. The phenomenon of criminal groups that, as in other countries in the region, carry out targeted extortions against wealthy people or criminals is a virtually unknown phenomenon on Bonaire.

Burglaries are most common in homes, followed by businesses, tourist accommodations, and vehicles. The peak in the number of burglaries was in 2019. During the Covid period, this has decreased and then the number of burglaries fluctuates. The fluctuations are probably related to the criminal prosecution of a number of (groups of) suspects. For the burglaries, too, a number of (groups of) people are responsible for a large part of the burglaries. In 2020-2021, there was a group responsible for more than ten burglaries. Immediately after the suspects were arrested and detained, the number of home burglaries decreased. Slight destruction or intrusion is often the modus operandi. The hinges and locks of many homes are of insufficient quality or windows and doors are left open. Most home burglaries take place during the summer holidays and in February and usually in the evenings. In May 2021, it was found that a woman walked into tourist accommodations and pretended to work there and had to check the air conditioning of the rooms, but then stole goods from the rooms. Business burglaries take place at offices, shops and at restaurants or bars. The majority of these are owned by European Dutch people. The burglaries mainly take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. and after midnight. Presumably, this often involves tipsters who have a relationship with the company. In 2021, the number of business burglaries was high compared to the previous year. This was partly the work of a group of five young people. A drug addict was also active. After the arrest of the group and the drug addict, the numbers immediately dropped.

Tourists and rental companies of cars and accommodations have the impression that thefts are the order of the day. It often concerns one perpetrator or perpetrator group that focuses on a specific method in a certain period on specific targets. For example, there was a suspect who specialized in thefts from dive sites and from vehicles at dive sites. This suspect has been arrested and is currently in custody. The number of thefts at dive sites was then considerably lower. The thefts mainly take place in the high season from January to March. Most thefts occur at the popular dive sites in Hato and towards Belnem.

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In 2023, it was noticeable that there was a sharp increase in scooter theft, which is why KPCN decided to register the different types of motor vehicles separately. A total of 46 scooters were stolen that year. It is striking that it is sometimes underage boys who steal these scooters. At the end of 2023, the use of electric bicycles has become a trend among the younger generation and so has the theft of such bicycles. A specific group from Rincon was actively involved in the theft of electric bicycles.

Theft of goats is a characteristic phenomenon for Bonaire. The *Sopi-Kabritu*⁸⁶ in *Kabritu Stoba*⁸⁷ are loved and are on the festive menu of every Bonairean. As holidays like Dia de Rincon approach, there is often a peak in goat theft. In recent years, this phenomenon has decreased. The decrease may have to do with the many cancelled events during the Covid period. Nevertheless, goat thief still occurs. For example, in 2023 a report came in about certain people stealing goats. After a chase of the car with the suspects, goat meat was indeed found. The suspects have been arrested. It is also striking that the current generation of perpetrators of property crimes is making way for a new generation. These are mostly young men without a diploma and without work who use marijuana. Theft often involve solo perpetrators.

⁸⁵ An atrako is an armed robbery.

⁸⁶ Local goat meat soup.

⁸⁷ Local goat meat stew.

Burglaries usually take place in groups with varying compositions. Perpetrators often have their own modus operandi and goal.

Overview of most common property crimes on St. Eustatius				
Property crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Company burglaries	20	13	12	6
Home burglaries	8	5	7	1
Theft other	26	23	26	8
Scooter thefts	unknown	unknown	unknown	14
Total	54	41	42	29

Theft is the most common property crime on St. Eustatius. Again, it often concerns one perpetrator (group) that is known to commit property crimes. When this offender (group) is released, this causes the number of property crimes to increase.⁸⁸ As soon as that person is arrested again, the number of crimes immediately decreases. Furthermore, business burglaries, thefts from a yard and thefts from vehicles also occur on St. Eustatius. Most property crimes decreased in 2023. This has to do with the detention of a known repeat offender on St. Eustatius. The only property crime that has increased in 2023 is scooter theft. A total of fourteen reports of scooter theft were made this year, compared to four reports in 2022. Of the scooters stolen in 2023, only two have been recovered. It is unclear whether these scooters will remain on the island or (whether the parts of) these scooters will be sent to, for example, Sint Maarten.

It is difficult to say anything about the locations where the property crimes take place. The island is small so it is not always the exact location of the offence committed is stated in the business process system. The environment is occasionally displayed. At the time of writing, KPCN is in the process of introducing GPS systems in the police cars. Logically, business burglaries happen more often in the city, because most companies in the city be. During the interviews, it was said that government offices were broken into a few times.

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As for the suspects of property crimes on St. Eustatius: these are often low-educated young Statians between 18 and 25 years old. Usually the police find out who committed the theft, not only because of the small scale of the island, but also because almost everything is filmed by someone these days. The recordings are circulating within the community and then the police know immediately.

Overview of most common property crimes on Saba				
Property crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Company burglaries	1	0	3	2
Home burglaries	4	6	11	12
Theft other	0	0	1	3
Scooter thefts	2	2	8	4
Total	7	8	23	21

Property crimes that are most common on Saba are thefts in the category other, business burglaries and (attempted) home burglaries. Victims of theft from cars are mainly European or American tourists, who leave phones in their cars, for example. In addition, theft of money is also common. Interviews showed that this is probably about family members stealing from each other. As far as home burglaries are concerned, there is an increase in 2022 and 2023 compared to 2020 and 2021. This was partly caused by one suspect

⁸⁸ CBA Interview with BPZ Sint Eustatius.

who had committed ten burglaries.⁸⁹ In 2022, eight scooter thefts took place and in 2023 there were four. However, the number of attempted home burglaries has increased from one in 2022 to three in 2023. The interviews have shown that most property crimes take place in the Windwardside district. This is because most suspects live there. The suspects of property crimes are usually Sabans, but also people who only come to the island for work, for example.

In closing

- There seems to be a reasonably good picture of property crimes in the Caribbean Netherlands. These are crimes that are generally reported, at least if the victims are insured.
- Property crime decreased in 2022 and 2023 on Bonaire and St Eustatius. On Saba, on the other hand, there is an increase, although the numbers are small.
- It is often the same perpetrators or perpetrator groups that are responsible for a range of crimes. If they are detained, the numbers will decrease. This may explain the fluctuations in the numbers.
- Hardly any violence is used in property crimes.

6. Drug crime

Drugscriminaliteit

Onder drugscriminaliteit wordt een breed scala van handelingen verstaan met betrekking tot verdovende middelen, zoals het invoeren, uitvoeren, verbouwen, bereiden, vervaardigen en bezitten van verdovende middelen die strafbaar zijn gesteld in de Opiumwet BES.⁹⁰

In the 2018 VHB, it was noted that Bonaire would serve as a transshipment point for drugs. Just like Curaçao and Aruba Bonaire is a transit island for drugs from South America on their way to Europe and other parts of the world. It has been established that in the transit of drugs, but also weapons and people, use was made of the long largely unguarded coastline, but also from the airport and port. The extent of the problem was not well understood at the time, but the view on it seems to be even more limited than it was then. However, it seems unlikely that there is a decrease. For years in a row, all records have been broken when it comes to the smuggling of cocaine. More cocaine is produced every year than ever before, and seizures and demand are also increasing every year. In recent years, the Royal Netherlands Navy has been active in the Caribbean for the benefit of the international fight against drugs. This deployment led to dozens of drug seizures. In 2022, four interceptions took place that were criminally investigated by KPCN. These drug seizures involve very large quantities of marijuana, cocaine and presumably weapons, with a total seizure of more than 4000 kilos in 2022. In 2023, only one interception took place that was investigated by KPCN. During this interception, 601.5 kg of cocaine was seized. The drugs are transported by so-called *go-fasts* - a small, fast type of boat that is often used for smuggling - to other islands in the Caribbean for transit to North America or Europe. The go-fast boats are mainly manned by Colombian and Venezuelan men who are recruited in their country of origin. The smuggling of these large quantities of drugs is organized by various notorious criminal gangs from Colombia and Venezuela.⁹¹ The go-fasts often sail in the international and sometimes territorial waters of the ABC islands only to cross to other Caribbean islands and countries. There are no signs of involvement of Bonaireans in this large-scale smuggling.

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⁸⁹ CBA Interview met BPZ Saba.

⁹⁰ Opium Act 1960 BES (wetten.overheid.nl).

⁹¹ InSight Crime, 2019.

After an interception, the suspects and the drugs are handed over to KPCN. The criminal investigation, court hearing and detention all take place on Bonaire. Despite the fact that these large-scale smuggling practices have little to do with Bonaire, the interceptions make the island part of this international fight against drugs. This entails great risks for the force and the residents of Bonaire. The suspects are detained together with the local drug dealers and coalitions for the future can be forged in detention. The presence of large drug seizures and detainees and the physical proximity to mainland Venezuela pose a conceivable risk of interference by the criminal gangs from Colombia and Venezuela. These interceptions show how much the Caribbean part of the Kingdom is on the front line of the drug trade. However, the many thousands of kilos of drugs that have been seized also give a distorted picture of Bonaire on the international drug market, as these kilos are often not destined for Bonaire.

Local drug crime

Although the picture of international drug crime around the Caribbean Netherlands is limited, an attempt is made below to paint a more picture of local drug crime. Attention is mainly focused on cocaine and cannabis. There are some signals about the presence of, for example, synthetic drugs and crack on the islands, but this is so small that it has been decided to leave these types of drugs out of consideration. However, there was someone who indicated in 2023 that he had used crystal meth. This may be an indication that this drug is also present on the island. However, there is no indication that it is made on the island itself. Presumably it is imported. The table below shows an overview of the types of drugs that are detected on the islands.

Signalen van de aanwezigheid van drugs			
Type drugs	Bonaire	Sint Eustatius	Saba
Marihuana	x	x	x
Cocaine	x	x	x
Synthetische drug MMA	x	-	x
Synthetische drug Ecstasy	x	x	x
Synthetische drug Fentanyl	-	x	-
Crack	x	-	-

Cannabis

Cannabis or marijuana is the most common drug on the Caribbean islands. It is relatively affordable and people can grow it themselves. Unlike in the European Netherlands, cannabis is not tolerated in the Caribbean Netherlands. KPCN has seized marijuana on all three islands a number of times in recent years. These are small, local nurseries, which are mainly focused on the grower's own use. The production from these farms is insufficient for the demand. On Bonaire, marijuana is combined, whether or not combined with cocaine, imported via Curaçao or directly from Colombia and Venezuela by boat. Imports also take place by plane from Colombia or Curaçao. This involves small quantities - ranging from one ounce to several kilos - for local use. Imports of small quantities of hashish and marijuana take place from the European Netherlands by plane. The majority of marijuana on St. Eustatius and Saba is imported through the port. It happens that residents of both islands go to Saint Kitts or other islands to buy seafood or other food items and also take drugs with them. Due to understaffing at customs, there is almost no control over what is imported. This problem has now attracted the attention of the national government and local authorities.

Cocaine

Bonaire is a small-scale destination and transit island for cocaine. For the import, it is probably a few blocks of cocaine at a time. On the international stage and for the European Netherlands, this amount is

negligible. The cocaine is produced in source country Colombia and is smuggled to Bonaire via Colombia or Venezuela. The exact import method of cocaine is a blind spot. There are strong suspicions that cocaine is picked up by local boats or fishermen from the sea, and/or from Curaçao or the Aves Islands. Boats can easily moor on the entire west coast and around Lac Cai. The possibilities for supervision by authorities are limited. However, since 2023, the KMar and KPCN have had a joint boat for border control tasks.

Part of the transit via Bonaire is by air to the European Netherlands. It is important to note that exports to the Netherlands also take place via the post that goes to the Netherlands by air freight. Every few months, a *Bun licking* or *Ball pusher*⁹² from Bonaire at Schiphol. These are mainly residents of the Netherlands with European, Dutch or Caribbean background who fly back and forth with drugs. Whether the introduction of the drugs takes place on Bonaire or on Curaçao cannot be determined with certainty. In 2018, a batch of 60 kilos of cocaine was intercepted in the cargo of a KLM flight from Bonaire to the Netherlands. To date, the export of such quantities from Bonaire has not been found. There are signs of larger quantities being exported by container or plane, but actual drug seizures and convictions are not yet there. In October 2023, a batch of more than twenty kilos of cocaine was found and seized by customs in three moving boxes. The intention was to transport the drugs to the Netherlands with a sea freight carrier. It concerned two Curaçaoans who had traveled to Bonaire on a fishing boat. The carrier is located in Curaçao and customs there also found drugs in a cargo of this carrier in 2023. This case shows that Bonaire is sometimes used as a hub by Curaçaoans. Another example of this is that in October 2023, drugs were found in a postal package at the DHL office on Bonaire. It was a small amount of cocaine in a shoebox with the Netherlands as its final destination. In this case, too, it was also someone who lived in Curaçao and had traveled back and forth to Bonaire on the day of shipment. In December 2023, another 26 kilos of cocaine were found by customs at the post office. The drugs were delivered to the post office in a box with the Netherlands as destination. Given the number of incidents and the amount of drugs, it is not unlikely that drugs are stored on Bonaire, but the police has no insight into where that happens.

The use and trafficking of cocaine is very small-scale on St Eustatius and Saba. Cocaine is most commonly used by a number of islanders and foreigners. The import of the cocaine probably takes place by ferry 'Makana'. The drugs are hidden in goods and usually brought to the islands via the ferry and fishing boats. Women in particular are used as couriers to transport the drugs. As far as the large-scale transport of cocaine is concerned, it is known that the international waters of Saba are used. At the Saba Bank⁹³ rendezvous take place between boats where drugs are transferred. However, there are no signs that residents of Saba or St. Eustatius are involved in this. Saba airport is also used for drug smuggling.

Suspects

The organization of the local drug trade in cocaine and marijuana on Bonaire is in the hands of a few larger local traffickers, mainly men but also some women. They organize the import together with their direct contacts from Curaçao in particular, but also Venezuela and Colombia. They manage smaller traders. In addition, there are also many small traders who purchase independently from larger local traders. They probably all know each other and also get drugs from each other when they have nothing left themselves. The cooperation between the various traders is mentioned in interviews, but has not yet been concretely investigated. In addition, there are also some older Caribbean traders who manifest themselves as brokers between Venezuela or Colombia and traders on Bonaire. The suspicion is that these brokers arrange larger quantities for both the local market and for transit to Europe. Bonaireans who are active in the drug market are multilingual and have a wide network on Bonaire and in the Caribbean. On paper, for example, they are fishermen, self-employed or unemployed. Local drug traffickers are presumably spending the acquired criminal assets on a

⁹² Ball swallower or ball pusher is a drug courier who smuggles drugs through orally, rectally or vaginally inserted capsules.

⁹³ The Saba Bank is an undersea elevation, three to six kilometers south (west) of Saba.

luxury lifestyle, such as purchasing or renting cars, boats, watches, clothing and booking VIP tables at events. In recent years, it has also become visible that local traders are investing their money in the construction of apartments, barbershops, boats and rental cars. In this way, they launder their criminal money. So far, however, it has remained only signals. Concrete investigations and convictions are still pending.

Storage locations for daily trade are at the dealers' homes. Kilos are rarely found. The trade takes place in entertainment venues, from the homes of dealers and people drive around in cars and scooters. The more densely populated residential areas of Antriol and Nort-Saliña have to deal with homes from which drugs are traded. This leads to deterioration of the neighborhood, due to a lot of traffic and drug addicts in the street. The young people see how normal the use of drugs is and see the profits that dealers make. In this way, dealers in residential areas provide a breeding ground for new growth in drug crime.

Little is known about the role of European Dutch in import, local trade and transit. However, there are several European Dutch people on Bonaire who have a history in the large-scale drug trade in the European Netherlands. Whether they continue their trade on or from the island is not known. It is well known that these notorious European Dutch invest in Bonaire. Whether it really concerns criminal money has not yet been determined. In the covid years 2020-2022, relatively few drug investigations took place, although responses were made to incidents. Recidivism among drug dealers is high. Those convicted of drug trafficking seem to continue in the drug trade, both from their detention situation and when they are released.

Traders on Saba and St. Eustatius are difficult to get a picture of. A number of places where local dealing takes place are known, for example at a Chinese supermarket in the The Bottom district on Saba. The most common suspects on Saba and St. Eustatius are local men around 30 years old. These suspects use young people in schools to resell their drugs. On Saba, a number of female suspects also come to in advance. On St. Eustatius, drug money is laundered by, among other things, starting up car rental companies.

Users

On Bonaire, the use of marijuana and cocaine is widespread and seems to have almost normalized. The signals recorded from the business process systems give the impression that it is mainly Dutch people with a Caribbean background who use marijuana. However, this seems to give a distorted picture of the total group of users who are likely to have more diversity. Marijuana can be smelled from a few meters and the users are often already known to the Basic Police Care. Marijuana use mainly takes place in Antriol, Nort-Saliña and Playa. Although this is not confirmed by the police registrations, all interviews show that cocaine is used among all population groups on Bonaire. It is widespread throughout the island. Criminal investigations reveal buyers from all kinds of different backgrounds working in a variety of sectors. Among cocaine users, European Dutch are number one. Especially among the interns and young European Dutch who live and work on the island for a few months, there is a lot of partying and a lot of cocaine use. The use takes place during private use and parties or at the larger parties in which many European Dutch people participate. These parties attract a large audience. For years there have been concrete incidents of drug use in secondary schools on Bonaire. The extent of the use among minors is unknown. The interviews have shown that most marijuana users are local Sabans or Statians. Marijuana use is very popular among young people. There are also premises among cocaine users.

Corruption and drugs

Corruption and the international trade in drugs seem to be inextricably linked. In the Caribbean Netherlands, however, there is little insight into this. The suspicion is that corruption in imports via boats and the airport is not necessary. The coastline offers many opportunities to 'land' unseen and when arriving at the airport there is not always intensive checking.

Corruption could play a role in the export of drugs, for example among immigration officials, baggage handlers, security and customs officers at the port and airport. On what scale it occurs is unclear. Since most investigations in recent years have focused on the drug courier or the local dealer, signals of corrupt border staff have hardly been recognized or investigated. In recent years, only one customs employee has been convicted of corruption.

The Correctional Institution Caribbean Netherlands (JICN) also has to deal with official corruption and drug trafficking. The inmates appear to be able to get drugs within the walls of the prison. Detained drug dealers also manage to continue their trade inside and outside the prison walls. Corruption also takes place among the staff of the JICN. For example, during the investigation period, a JICN custodian was convicted of corruption.

In closing

- The extent of international drug crime around the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands is not well understood. Seizures suggest that it is a significant problem.
- The partly unguarded coastlines and the lack of control in the ports and airports make it relatively easy to smuggle drugs in. Bonaire in particular is used as a transit port. This mainly concerns marijuana and cocaine.
- All islands have a local drug market with local traffickers and local users. Here too, it is mainly marijuana and cocaine.
- The use of drugs seems to have become normalized in the Caribbean Netherlands, also among young people.

7. Firearm crime

Vuurwapencriminaliteit

Onder vuurwapencriminaliteit wordt verstaan: bezit en gebruik van vuurwapens en de handel en invoer van vuurwapens.

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The availability of firearms is a major and growing threat in the Caribbean region. From *The Caribbean Firearms Study* shows that many firearms in the region originate from the United States and are brought in by any means.⁹⁴ Although the main method of transport varies from country to country, maritime freight services are often used. The impression is that firearms are also relatively easy to obtain in the Caribbean Netherlands. Most firearms in the Caribbean Netherlands are small arms, including semi-automatic firearms originating from Latin America, especially from Venezuela. The interviews show that there are probably automatic firearms on the island. A new trend is the so-called *privately made firearms* (PMFs). Such weapons are also called *ghost guns* or homemade firearms. They are made using parts or with special kits or 3D printers. They usually do not have a serial number, which makes them difficult to trace. As far as is known, converted firearms or parts of firearms are virtually non-existent on the islands.

Smuggling and sale of firearms

KPCN and chain partners have an image of firearms trafficking and possession that cannot be dismissed as gossip. Because of the small scale of the island and the position of the police within society, this information can be considered reliable. The islands are small-scale destination islands for firearms, with some importers being able to get a small firearm on the island and deliver it to 'order'. Firearms are regularly found on Bonaire that were probably smuggled to Bonaire together with other goods by boat from Curaçao, Colombia or from the Aves Islands

⁹⁴ CARICOM IMPACS & Small Arms Survey, 2023.

of Venezuela. The ammunition also comes from Venezuela. In 2023, for example, a boat was spotted near Sorobon that had just come from the Aves Islands and was docking. Next to that boat was a man known to the police who behaved suspiciously. Exotic birds were found in his boat and confiscated. Later, a bag was found near the boat that was tied to an anchor. This bag contained firearms.

The smuggling and sale of firearms on Bonaire is organized by a few people. These are people who are also active in the import and local trade of drugs and who are involved in the firearms trade. Local fishermen may be used to smuggle the goods. For example, in 2023, a diving instructor found two boxes of American Eagle 50 rifle brand ammunition and then handed it over to the patrol. The weapons on the island pass from hand to hand. People temporarily take over the firearms from each other or buy it from each other or a dealer. Depending on the type of firearm and whether it is *dirty* or *clean*⁹⁵, including or excluding ammunition, a firearm costs \$400 to \$700. Apart from the above-mentioned import and possession, there is little information about the import of firearms from America and the transit to the European Netherlands.

On St. Eustatius and Saba, the firearms are mainly smuggled to the islands by post or ferry from St. Maarten and St. Kitts. It is known that the ferry does not carry out any checks and weapons can easily be smuggled along. Usually the weapon is smuggled into parts and assembled there. In 2023, a package from a flight from Sint Maarten was seized at St. Eustatius Airport. During a customs check, various parts of firearms were found and seized.

Possession and use of firearms

As far as the possession of firearms on Bonaire is concerned, two groups can be identified. First of all, there are young male Bonaireans who own firearms as a status symbol. They take the firearms with them when they go out and show it to other young people. These firearms often rotate between the young men. In addition, there is a group of men with firearms who are known to the police in connection with drug trafficking or robberies. It's about here, as far as is known, often Venezuelans and Curaçaoans, but also Bonaireans.

Concrete information about firearm crime on Bonaire is scarce. Bonaire has rarely had to deal with a shooting incident in the period 2020-2023. There have been a number of robberies in which threats were made with a firearm, a so-called *atrako* or robbery. It also happens that reports are made of threats with firearms, but firearms are not often seized. Very occasionally a weapon is found during a house search and it has also happened that a firearm has been found in a collision. After the research period, in 2024, there will be a sharp increase in shooting incidents. At the time of writing this CBA, these matters are still under investigation at KPCN.

There are few known cases of firearm crime on St. Eustatius. There were a number of residents who committed threats and robberies with a firearm, but they have left the island. Young people between see firearms as a status symbol and use them to frighten people. In May 2023, a robbery with a firearm took place at the deposit box of a bank on St. Eustatius. One of the suspects hit the victim's head with the firearm. This example makes it clear that there are firearms on the islands and that they can be used to commit certain crimes. This incident has had an impact on the population; Since then, people have been paying more attention to the time when they deposit money or when they walk the streets.

During the investigation period, no reports were received on Saba about the use of firearms on the island. Again, this does not mean that there are no firearms in circulation on Saba. For example, more than six firearms were found and seized during house searches. There are no known shooting incidents on Saba, but there have been

⁹⁵ Het gaat hier om de vraag of het vuurwapen al gebruikt is tijdens schietpartijen.

heard a shot. During New Year's Eve 2023, an incident occurred in which a KPCN police officer drew his service firearm.⁹⁶ This caused a lot of commotion on the island. The officer was dismissed after an internal disciplinary investigation for serious neglect of duty.⁹⁷

In closing

- The islands are small-scale destination islands, especially for small arms. It would be fairly easy to smuggle firearms to the islands due to a lack of control.
- There is a reasonable picture of the course of this smuggling and the traffickers, although firearms are not often found.
- Two groups of firearms owners can be distinguished on Bonaire. The first group consists of young men who see a firearm as a status symbol. The second group consists of people who are involved in the criminal environment.
- The use of firearms is becoming more and more common on the islands.

⁹⁶ Public Prosecution Service starts investigation into violent incident on New Year's Eve on Saba (bonaire.nu).

⁹⁷ Police fire officer for improper use of service weapon (bonaire.nu).

PART II

FLOOR ON SOME THEMES

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Part 2 – Deepening a number of themes

In this second part, a number of crime phenomena are discussed in more detail. There are often little or no figures available for these forms of crime. These are phenomena with a high dark number, i.e. such crimes do not come to the attention of law enforcement authorities because they are often not reported, either because there are no direct victims or because victims do not dare to go to the police. Because of their relevance to the islands, a picture of these phenomena and their possible impact on the Caribbean Netherlands is sketched on the basis of sources other than the business process systems.

8. Migration crime

Migratiecriminaliteit
Met migratiecriminaliteit worden alle vormen van criminaliteit bedoeld die gekoppeld zijn aan vreemdelingen en illegale grensoverschrijding of verblijf, zoals mensensmokkel, mensenhandel of het vervalsen of frauduleus verkrijgen van reis- en identiteitsdocumenten. ⁹⁸
Mensenhandel
Bij mensenhandel gaat het om het werven, vervoeren of opnemen en huisvesten van mensen met gebruik van dwang met uitbuiting als doel. Grensoverschrijding is niet noodzakelijk. Ook binnenlandse uitbuiting komt voor. Soms loopt mensensmokkel uit op mensenhandel, bijvoorbeeld als migranten de overtocht niet kunnen betalen. Bij mensenhandel zijn er directe slachtoffers.
Mensensmokkel
Mensensmokkel is een misdrijf tegen de staat en draait om het bieden van hulp en transport aan mensen met als doel illegale grensoverschrijding. Smokkelaars maken gebruik van de nood waarin migranten verkeren, maar mensen die worden gesmokkeld, zijn in strafrechtelijke zin geen slachtoffer.

The *Trafficking in Persons report* (TIP report) of the United States Department of States notes that the approach to human trafficking in the Caribbean Netherlands leaves much to be desired. There are concerns that trafficking in human beings is insufficiently recognized and therefore not properly reported.⁹⁹ In 2022, no investigation, prosecution or conviction for human trafficking took place. In 2021, an investigation was started on Bonaire that led to a conviction and in 2023 an investigation was also started into human trafficking and human smuggling that led to a prosecution. On Saba and St. Eustatius, there have been no investigations, prosecutions or convictions of human traffickers for five years. The Law Enforcement Council also noted in 2019 that there is no insight into the nature and extent of human trafficking and human smuggling in the Caribbean Netherlands and in 2023 the Council must conclude that there is still no picture.¹⁰⁰ Implementation of the 2019 Council recommendations has largely been lacking. For example, the recommendation to implement a theme register¹⁰¹ at KPCN has only been partially followed. In addition to the fact that the signalling must improve, attention must be paid to the (chain-wide) interpretation, analysis and pick-up of signals. According to the Council, there is still a lack of awareness within KPCN, as a result of which signals of human trafficking are not recognized and therefore not registered. In 2023, KPCN invested in this and was therefore able to start a number of human trafficking investigations. The information position and the criminal approach to human smuggling has improved.

⁹⁸ Cooperation extended of Joint Team against migration crimes Central Mediterranean Route (prosecutionservice.nl).

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Law Enforcement Council 2019 and 2023.

¹⁰¹ A thematic register is used to categorise and manage information on a particular subject and ensures that analysis and detection can take place more efficiently and effectively.

For the benefit of this CBA, signals of human smuggling and human trafficking were examined. This provides an interesting, if incomplete, picture. During the Covid pandemic, the borders were closed, so there was a decrease in signals of human smuggling at the border. During that period, there was a tolerance policy when overstaying the visa period. Over time, repatriation flights have been used to bring people to their countries of origin. Whether this tolerance policy has led to more illegal migrants in the long term is questionable. What does emerge from the analysis is that human smuggling seems to be an essential part of the human trafficking problem (labor exploitation) on Bonaire. It is possible to paint a picture of the recruitment, transport and employment of victims. However, insight into the organization of human smuggling is limited. There is also no view of housing on Bonaire. Information about migration crime on St Eustatius and Saba is even more limited. It is suspected that the extreme small scale of these islands makes it virtually impossible to commit these types of crimes unseen. Due to the small scale of the islands and the shortage of personnel, government services have insufficient capacity to properly focus on the phenomenon of human trafficking. It is known that a number of foreign nationals live and work on the islands without having the proper papers. Since these strangers come in trickle-by-drop, they are not immediately noticeable. Once they are inside and work at one of the countless construction companies, they often do not stand out either. If a foreign national enters with a permit to work at a specific company, but then goes to work for another company and is exploited there, this often remains out of sight of the police or their chain partners. Due to a lack of staff, checks are not often carried out. There is often reactive action. Only when there is concrete information are checks carried out.

Human smuggling occurs on Bonaire with the aim of getting migrants to perform illegal labor. In these kinds of situations, there are signs of human trafficking. Various modus operandi to land, live and work illegally on Bonaire are recognized. For example, residents of Bonaire who come from South America and other Caribbean countries recruit new migrants in their country of origin for work on Bonaire through their network. In such cases, it concerns, for example, family, acquaintances or fellow locals. The countries of origin seem to be
2018 marketing authorisation, it is still in question for Venezuela, Peru, Dominican Republic, 39
Haïtianen en Colombia.

With regard to the proportion of Venezuelans, the 2018 VHB referred to a *silent invasion* of Venezuelan refugees who come to Bonaire by boat and live there underground. The number of undocumented Venezuelans would increase and they would live more underground on Bonaire than on Curaçao and Aruba. This problem would not yet be recognized or acknowledged by everyone on Bonaire. However, professionals who have to deal with this problem professionally all indicated that the problem has existed for some time. At the time, research was carried out on Bonaire by a Venezuelan sociologist for the 2018 VHB. The current state of the Venezuelan population is unclear. From 2019 to May 2023, the border with Venezuela was closed to cargo and air traffic. It has also become more difficult for Venezuelans to obtain a visa on Bonaire. This does not seem to have led to more smuggling of people by boat. Whether this has led to an increase in human smuggling by air is difficult to determine on the basis of current figures. However, it is suspected that Venezuelans apply for a residence permit on Bonaire on the basis of a Colombian passport.

Another group that stands out are the originally Chinese migrants from Latin America. These settled migrants have a crucial role in the organisation of human smuggling for labour where there are signs of labour exploitation. They are so-called 'bridge heads' and organizers in one. These are mostly people with a registered company. They have contacts with someone in the country of origin who arranges the recruitment and they have contacts on Bonaire who provide them with work and a home. In addition, they advise or assist in fraudulently obtaining a residence permit. Involvement of criminal groups or gangs from countries of origin is conceivable, but this cannot be confirmed on the basis of the limited signals.

Modus operandi

Different working methods are distinguished. Some migrants come to Bonaire (reasonably) well prepared by plane. In addition to human smuggling by plane, incidents of smuggling by sea on boats from Curaçao or Venezuela are known. This concerns small numbers of Latin Americans or Curaçaoans who come ashore without reporting to immigration and then stay and work on Bonaire for some time. An example of this is the smuggling of Dominican women who have married Curaçaoans in Curaçao and are smuggled to Bonaire in connection with exploitation in prostitution. Another method is that migrants come to the island on the basis of a tourist visa. This often involves fraud with the necessary documents for the tourist visa. Think of fraud with the available capital, a sham booking from a hotel or a pick-up company who is known as an employer of migrant workers. Some of these migrant workers are recognized and refused by the KMar at the airport of Bonaire. In recent years, for example, several refusals have taken place every week, especially of people with Venezuelan, Colombian, Dominican or Haitian nationality, but also people from countries in Latin America or with Dutch nationality. Some of these migrants are not recognized. They are likely to go to work and at some point exceed the term of their tourist visa. This phenomenon is called *overstay*. These migrants are both illegally on the island and working illegally.

Another way of organizing is that an established migrant on Bonaire applies for a work permit for a new migrant. There is a shortage of various professionals on Bonaire, such as cooks, carpenters or car mechanics. For eighteen scarce professions, employers can apply for work permits n.102 Fraud is regularly committed with these applications. For example, migrants are employed as carpenters but then put to work in security. In recent years, fraud has also been committed with the help of setting up their own company. A migrant sets up his own business with the help of an established migrant, which includes fraud with his own assets. The migrant is then able to travel to Bonaire and appoint employees himself, continuing the smuggling of new migrants. For the Amounts of around \$3,000 are paid for setting up the business structure.

The detection of human trafficking is complicated by the difficulty of proving coercive elements. There is little tangible evidence to be found and victims are often afraid to testify. The suspicion is that in many cases it is economic coercion in which the victims have built up a debt, for example due to the high costs of the crossing to Bonaire. Psychological coercion is also conceivable. The family in the country of origin can be vulnerable. One of the most dangerous Venezuelan gangs, Tren de Aragua, is known to exploit Venezuelan migrants abroad.

Victims

The above-mentioned TIP report notes that human traffickers in the Caribbean Netherlands mainly exploit foreign victims, especially Venezuelan women in prostitution. This problem is mainly on Bonaire and less so on Saba and St Eustatius. Interviews show that illegal prostitution in the Caribbean Netherlands mainly takes place in sneks in certain neighborhoods. In addition, an increase in Haitians has been noticed and there are signs of exploitation in Chinese supermarkets. Exploitation also occurs in domestic services, agriculture, retail trade and construction.

On Bonaire, human smuggling is regularly accompanied by signs of human trafficking, including labour exploitation and sexual exploitation. Signs of exploitation are recognized in construction, beauty salons, supermarkets and in prostitution. This includes both male and female victims from mainly Venezuela, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. In the case of labour exploitation, migrants in their country of origin are sometimes presented with a different profession than they actually get. Victims sometimes build up a debt with the employer

¹⁰² Policy rule RCN unit SZW application of labour market test Wav BES Bonaire (wetten.overheid.nl).

for arranging transport to Bonaire, obtaining permits, transport on Bonaire and accommodation. They work more hours than are legally allowed and receive less than the minimum wage. In some cases, it is known that they also had to hand in passports. Many migrant workers probably live in the Antriol and Nort Saliña districts. Where exactly the migrant workers live is often unknown. The suspicion is that they often live in poorly maintained rooms or outbuildings in yards in the neighborhood or on one of the many *kunukus* that Bonaire has to offer. Migrants are dependent on the employer for work, housing and residence permits and often do not know their right to minimum wage and working and rest periods. They also do not know their rights as a possible victim of human trafficking. Because the working and living conditions are often better than in their country of origin, the migrants often do not see themselves as victims and identification of victimhood by chain partners often does not take place. From the country of origin, they have had bad experiences with the police, which makes it difficult for them to file a report. In addition, the closedness of a number of cultural communities on Bonaire, such as the Chinese community, plays a role, making it very difficult to uncover signs of human trafficking.

Signs of sexual exploitation often involve women from Curaçao, Venezuela, Colombia or the Dominican Republic who travel around the Caribbean and offer sexual services. The sex workers recruit customers via sneks, whatsapp and via their social network. The transport, the recruitment of customers and the sex locations seem to be organized by an organizer. Even in this modus operandi, the actual coercive element is often difficult to determine.

Signs of human trafficking with local victims are not known. Research by the Social Affairs and Employment Inspectorate shows that 'signs of labour exploitation or serious disadvantage are most common in groups that have to deal with an accumulation of risk factors'.¹⁰³ Risk factors include the personal circumstances and the residence status (whether or not documented) of the employee. The language barrier also played a role in the position of the employee. The lack of a social network and the lack of knowledge of local laws and regulations can make an employee vulnerable. In view of these factors, it seems that 41 It is not obvious that Caribbean Dutch or European Dutch are vulnerable to labor exploitation, but it cannot be ruled out. Sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation among young people and young adults is conceivable. There are no signs of this. This also applies to criminal exploitation of migrants.

Situation Venezuela

Finally, because of the proximity of Venezuela and its consequences on the Leeward Islands, recent developments in this country are discussed. As also mentioned in the 2018 marketing authorisation, the political, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela is still a cause for concern. Maduro has strengthened ties with Russia and China, and the influence of these countries is increasing in the region.¹⁰⁴ In 2019, the economic situation in Venezuela reached a low point with an inflation rate of 344,509 percent.¹⁰⁵ The United Nations Fact-Finding Mission found serious human rights violations in the country in its 2023 investigation.¹⁰⁶ The situation seemed to stabilize somewhat. In Caracas and a number of other large cities, living conditions improved somewhat, but the rest of the country is lagging behind. The recent developments following the presidential elections in July 2024 are worrying. Maduro has declared himself the winner, but it seems that fraud has been committed on a large scale. In any case, the international community has strong doubts about the result. Protests were held for days throughout the country. What the future will bring for Venezuela is extremely uncertain.

¹⁰³ Inspectorate SZW, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Russian influence in Venezuela 'possible source of destabilization' (bonaire.nu).

¹⁰⁵ Venezuela Inflation Rate (tradingeconomics.com).

¹⁰⁶ Venezuela: UN Fact-finding Mission says attacks on civic and democratic space have intensified, urges new security force – DAET - be monitored to protect rights (ohchr.org).

The dire conditions have caused more than 7.7 million Venezuelans to flee the country.¹⁰⁷ Bonaire, with its relatively healthy economic situation and location only 80 kilometers away from Venezuela, is an attractive destination for legal and illegal migrants. Migration does seem to be taking place at a slower pace and different patterns than in recent years.¹⁰⁸ Also, slightly more people are coming back than leaving. Migration to the Leeward Islands seems to have decreased or the islands are being visited en route to Spain and the United States (US). These countries are currently important destination countries for Venezuelan migrants. This also applies to Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile and Argentina. If Venezuelan migrants come to the Leeward Islands, it is mainly in the context of family reunification. This is confirmed by the fact that children are more often found as part of the cargo of boats. In recent years, the borders with the Leeward Islands and Venezuela have been closed. In July 2023, the first boat with fruit and vegetables from Venezuela arrived back in Bonaire. Air travel is also possible again, but there is a visa requirement for Venezuelans and a tourist tax of 75 dollars must now be paid to enter Bonaire. The visa requirement makes it more difficult for Venezuelans to come to the island legally. Although migration from Venezuela seems to be levelling off somewhat, the AIV report of June 2024 specifically mentions the risk that migration could be used as a political instrument of power and strategic leverage by Venezuela in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. So this remains a topic of attention.

Crime is still widespread in Venezuela: illegal gold mining, extortion, money laundering, human trafficking, human smuggling and drug trafficking. Boats with people, drugs and weapons are still coming to the Leeward Islands, but probably not as frequently as at the end of the last decade. In the past period, the Venezuelan authorities have invested in stopping shipments of drugs to the Caribbean and a large number of consignments of drugs have been seized in Venezuela. It is difficult to say how large the share of Venezuelan criminal networks is in crime on the Leeward Islands. What is clear is that the networks are still spreading their wings. Recently, the American news channel CNN reported that the Venezuelan transnational gang Tren de Aragua, which originated in the Tocoron prison in Venezuela, is now also operating in the US.¹⁰⁹ This gang is called the most powerful 'homegrown' of Venezuelacalled d.110 Tren de Aragua has grown from a 'prison gang' to a transnational threat with an extensive criminal portfolio. In Falcon – the state of Venezuela located near the Leeward Islands – the Los Lobos prison gang is active. This gang would deal with the transport and trade of drugs and people from Falcon.

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In closing

- Migration crime in the Caribbean Netherlands is not well documented in terms of figures, although the information position on human smuggling has improved.
- Various studies have shown that the approach to human trafficking in the Caribbean Netherlands can be improved.
- There are signs of human smuggling networks that are active on Bonaire. Human smuggling and human trafficking seem to go hand in hand on Bonaire to some extent. Smuggled migrants end up in situations of labour exploitation and sexual exploitation.
- There is no up-to-date view of the group of Venezuelan refugees. The situation in Venezuela is still worrying.

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ This information comes from a senior policy advisor of the Dutch embassy in Venezuela during a webinar op 14 mei 2024 getiteld 'Insights into Venezuela: current situation and its relationship with the Caribbean Region'.

¹⁰⁹ This is the dangerous Venezuelan gang infiltrating the US that you probably know nothing about but should (edition.cnn.com)

¹¹⁰ Tren de Aragua (insightcrime.org).

9. Financial and economic crime

Financieel-economische criminaliteit

Financieel-economische criminaliteit is een verzamelterm voor misdrijven waarbij financiële middelen en economische structuren worden misbruikt voor geldelijk gewin. Te denken valt aan allerlei vormen van fraude, handel met voorkennis, corruptie en witwassen. Witwassen is het verbergen en/of een schijnbaar legale status geven aan een voorwerp (meestal geld of goederen) dat afkomstig is uit een misdrijf, zodat het besteed en geïnvesteerd kan worden in de bovenwereld.¹¹¹

Financial and economic crime has received more attention from the police and the Public Prosecution Service in recent years. This has resulted in various criminal investigations and an improved information position. Despite the fact that many risk factors for the islands have been identified in the literature, it can be stated on the basis of concrete signals that have been identified and analysed that the scale on which financial and economic crime occurs in the Caribbean Netherlands cannot yet be determined. There are signals, for example of the laundering of (foreign) criminal assets in real estate, or underground banking for the purpose of criminal activities, but it is often difficult to collect sufficient evidence to proceed with criminal prosecution. Improved identification by and information sharing with the chain partners and the business community is essential.

Whereas the 2018 VHB concluded that the increased attention to money laundering in the Caribbean Netherlands was not yet reflected in the number of reports to the FIU, this now seems to have changed. For example, the number of unusual transactions reported by obliged bodies was 858 in 2020, rising to 2021

2,257 and in 2022 to 7,456. Authorities are reporting more and more often, which may indicate more awareness of money laundering among reporters. The total number of suspicious transactions in 2020 in the Caribbean Netherlands was 107 with a value of approximately 31 million euros. In 2021, there were 209 suspicious transactions with a value of approximately 38 million

euro. In 2022, there were 728 suspicious transactions with an unknown total value.¹¹² There is also a clear increase in this.

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Oprichting FINEC-team KPCN

The FINEC team was established at the end of 2022. It is a specialist team within KPCN that focuses on strengthening the intelligence position and tackling financial economic crime in the Caribbean Netherlands. Already at the start of the team, there were concrete signals on the basis of which criminal investigations were started. At the same time, an intel image FINEC was drawn up, in which all available signals were interpreted and analyzed. The various risk factors that emerge in recent studies and the various predicate offences and phases in the money laundering process were examined. The intel image serves as a steering document for gathering new signals, interpreting case histories and steering the (criminal) approach to financial economic crime. This chapter is therefore mainly based on the FINEC intel image 2023.

Recent studies

The state of the recent scientific trend picture of financial and economic crime in the Caribbean Netherlands focuses mainly on the offence of money laundering. The money laundering picture is mainly based on three reports: The National Risk Assessments Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba of 2018 and 2021, and the VHB BES 2018.¹¹³ The reports are very similar in their analysis and conclusion. The conclusion is that money laundering is a significant risk in the Caribbean Netherlands. An important pillar for substantiating this money laundering risk is the context analysis of the Caribbean Netherlands. The elements that recur are bundled into various factors:

¹¹¹ Money laundering explained (amlc.nl).

¹¹² Annual Reviews (fiu-nederland.nl).

¹¹³ Van der Veen & Heuts, 2018 and 2021; Van der Zee & Hoebe, 2019.

- Geographical/demographic: vulnerable region, small scale, distance from the European Netherlands, significant group of inhabitants from Central or South America;
- Socio-cultural: us-knows-us culture, culture of silence/fear, culture of interests with patronage, nepotism and clientelism;
- Economic: cash-based economy, informal lending culture, informal trade flows, the dollar as a currency;
- Forms of crime: drug and human trafficking.

The findings from the studies mentioned above could not be substantiated with concrete signals, facts or cases. To fill this gap, the KPCN FINEC intel image has been developed that serves as a tool to steer and structure intel activities.

KPCN FINEC-intelbeeld

Currently, KPCN's intel position consists of about seventeen intel cases. These are active criminal investigations, active intel cases, and non-active intel cases that turned out to be well-founded, but for which no follow-up was deemed necessary. However, the number of signals has been many times higher in recent years, especially the suspicious transactions of FIU-the Netherlands.

What emerges from the KPCN FINEC intel image is that there are actual signals of investments in real estate from a suspicious source of financing. These are Russians who have ties to organized Russian crime, but also Dutch suspects who are associated with large-scale drug trafficking and major fraud cases in the European Netherlands. There are differences in the modus operandi in these cases. For example, the place of the case in the money laundering process differs. The different phases of the money laundering process are shown schematically below.



In one case, the real estate transaction is part of the obfuscation and integration/justification phase, in other cases it is only about the integration – investment/spending phase. Due to this diversity and the relatively limited number of cases, no corresponding modus operandi are yet visible within the real estate sector.

In addition, there are cases involving regular financial crime, such as fraud, embezzlement in employment, fraudulent withdrawals, forgery and money laundering, and individual cases within the other sectors. Another crime that is being reported is the smuggling of dollars. Migrant workers often receive their wages in cash and often do not have a bank account. Since the departure of the money transfer companies on Bonaire, it has been difficult for migrant workers to get money to their home country legally. Large sums of cash are regularly found in migrants' luggage or on the body at the airport. These are amounts of just under, but also above \$10,000. Amounts above this must be reported to customs. There is also a known case of underground banking. An established migrant collected the money, deposited it in a Bonairean account and transferred money to his own account in the country of origin. The money was then forwarded from there or cash collected.

Most money laundering cases that have been picked up in recent years are the so-called confiscation cases. These are local suspects of drug offenses who spend their criminal earnings on cars or luxury watches. The confiscation cases are an attempt not only to take away the earnings, but also to dent the status of the suspect. Furthermore, the analysis supports the view that money laundering signals often do not arrive directly at KPCN. The direct reports concern other FINEC offences such as fraud. The main sources of money laundering signals are FIU-NL and criminal investigations of partners.

In closing

- The 2018 marketing authorisation showed that the information position in the field of financial economic crime is limited. With the establishment of the FINEC team, this seems to be improving.
- Various cases have come to light relating to fraud, embezzlement in employment, fraudulent withdrawals, forgery of documents, money laundering and smuggling of dollars.
- Although the problem is not well understood, it is suspected that the real estate sector on Bonaire is used for money laundering.
- The awareness of money laundering among obliged bodies seems to have increased.

10. Corruption

Corruptie

Corruptie wordt onder meer omschreven als misbruik maken van toegekende bevoegdheden of macht voor persoonlijk gewin, zoals actieve (omkopen) en passieve (omgekocht worden) omkoping afpersing en verduistering. Er kan onderscheid worden gemaakt tussen ambtelijke en niet-ambtelijke corruptie. Vaak gaat corruptie gepaard met één of meerdere financieel-economische delicten, zoals witwassen, fraude, oplichting en valsheid in geschrifte.

The stories about corruption in the Caribbean can be found in abundance in the media. Specifically, a customs officer and a prison guard were recently convicted of corruption on Bonaire. On St. Eustatius, a police officer has also been convicted of corruption. In public administration, there are regular suspicions of conflicts of interest in the granting of building permits and the enforcement of laws and regulations. Because of the small scale of the islands, relationships between administrators and entrepreneurs have often existed for a long time. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether corruption is involved in many cases. The permanent presence of the National Criminal Investigation Department (RR) and the approach to

risk factors for corruption, it is to be expected that signals of corruption in the Caribbean Netherlands will initially be 45 corruption, but that corruption will decrease in the long term.

be 45

Image and small scale

In recent years, the local and European Dutch media have paid attention to possible corruption in the Caribbean Netherlands d.114 These are local administrators who are suspected of acting for their own gain or to benefit their environment. These forms of corruption are not unique to the Caribbean Netherlands, but the small scale ensures increased visibility and additional vulnerabilities. Small scale means that there is little distance between administrators and officials on the one hand and citizens and businesses on the other. The three islands are characterized by small communities in which people know each other well. The small communities make it difficult to report abuses (anonymously). Close-knit communities and political patronage can lead to nepotism, conflicts of interest, favouring acquaintances in decision-making, for example by awarding government contracts or awarding contracts. The interest in this phenomenon has resulted in all kinds of scientific studies and reports from agencies such as the Law Enforcement Council that provide a good picture of the factors that play a role.¹¹⁵

Size

In 2022-2023, policy research agency DSP-groep was commissioned by the Scientific Research and Data Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice and Security (JenV) to conduct research into the nature and

¹¹⁴ Island Governor of Bonaire appointed by The Hague has the coast illegally built up - Follow the Money - Platform for investigative journalism (ftm.nl).

¹¹⁵ Council for Law Enforcement (2022) Inspection investigation: Follow-up recommendations to combat corruption on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

extent of official-administrative integrity violations in the Caribbean Netherlands.¹¹⁶ The researchers use the following definition for official-administrative integrity violations: 'The abuse of powers, knowledge and/or power associated with an official or administrative position in return for favours from third parties. In addition to punishable behaviour, it is also about improper use of powers, even if it does not constitute a criminal offence in the direct sense of the word'.

The DSP group has mapped out how many integrity violations have been registered in the Caribbean Netherlands in recent years. Since 2021, a total of nine reports have been handled at the Public Entity Bonaire that had to do with integrity violations. Abuse of position and conflicts of interest are particularly common. On Saba, registration is done in a different way than on Bonaire, which is why it is difficult to make a comparison. In the period between 2017 and May 2023, the researchers recorded 76 registrations. However, only a small part of this can be related to integrity violations according to the definition. It is also unknown how many of these 76 registrations involve actual corruption. No figures were available for St Eustatius.

According to figures from the RR, a total of 29 cases were registered as official integrity violations between 10 October 2010 and May 2023. Five of these investigations have led to a conviction, nine cases have not yet been concluded. It often happens that no conviction follows due to lack of evidence or because it was too minor an offence. Figures from the Public Prosecution Service show that twenty cases in the period mentioned above could be related to integrity violations. Bribery was the most common. The researchers conclude that integrity violations in the form of criminal offences or formal crimes are hardly ever reported and are therefore not registered. The suspicion is that improper use of powers occurs much more often.

Local signs of corruption

For the purpose of this CBA, an attempt was made to paint a picture of corruption in the Caribbean Netherlands and its interconnectedness with other crime phenomena. Since 2020, the RR has temporarily had two detectives on Bonaire and in 2023, the temporary status has become permanent. The physical presence of the RR has greatly improved the information position and the approach to corruption. Nevertheless, the current information position remains limited, the willingness to report, anonymous or otherwise, remains low and thematic processing and analysis of signals of corruption has not yet been introduced in the Caribbean Netherlands. As a result, the view of corruption and its interconnectedness with other forms of crime is limited. There are various signals, but these often do not lead to criminal investigations and convictions because the burden of proof is insufficient. The signs and difficulties in the prosecution are presented below. The WODC report identifies the following areas where integrity violations are likely to occur most often:

- Permits, including building permits, are not always issued according to procedures;
- Enforcement of compliance with laws and regulations is not done or is done incorrectly;
- Sensitive information is shared with private parties;
- Within tenders, contracts are awarded to well-known parties instead of to the most qualified party;
- Donors of local political parties receive preferential treatment, for example in tenders;
- Electoral fraud; voters are rewarded for their vote for a specific party;
- Appointments within the public administration are regularly politically motivated and serve as a reward for electoral or financial support, to maintain the network or as a means of maintaining political influence within an organisation;
- Office bearers perform ancillary activities that are difficult to reconcile with the main activities.

¹¹⁶ WODC, 2023.

Most cases since 2020 have revolved around violations of official secrecy (leaking information) or forgery. This involves a diversity of officials working at customs, police, the public entity Bonaire or departments of the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland. In several cases, criminal investigation turns out to be insufficient evidence for a conviction. Conflicts of interest seem to be present, but demonstrable evidence is often lacking. There is a great deal of mixing between administrators and entrepreneurs. As a result, corruption and financial interest are often not demonstrable. In addition, there is only one provider for various services or goods on the islands, which gives them a monopoly position and makes them susceptible to conflicts of interest and corruption.

According to several interviewees, corruption is often not even necessary in the Caribbean Netherlands. There are several gaps in the legislation that people take advantage of. An example of this is the smuggling of human beings. Obtaining a work permit with fraud is also possible without the involvement of officials. There is also insufficient control and enforcement, which allows illegal practices to take place. An example of this is the import of drugs by sea. The coastal strip is freely accessible and the import of goods is controlled by customs to a limited extent. Think of resorts on the coast that are built without the correct permit, resulting in environmental damage to the coast and the coral.

In closing

- The view of corruption and its interconnectedness with other forms of crime is limited. This also applies to the willingness to report.
- The physical presence of the National Criminal Investigation Department since 2020 has improved the information position and the approach to corruption.
- Most integrity violations in recent years have to do with violations of official secrecy and forgery of documents.
- Collecting sufficient evidence for these kinds of cases appears to be a stumbling block. In addition, corruption is often not because there are several gaps in legislation that people make good use of and control and enforcement does not always take place.

11. Cybercrime

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is een containerbegrip voor criminele activiteiten waarbij gebruik wordt gemaakt van ICT-systemen (computers en/of andere digitale apparaten). Er kan een onderscheid worden gemaakt tussen cybercriminaliteit en gedigitaliseerde criminaliteit.¹¹⁷ Bij cybercrime gaat het om criminele activiteiten waarbij het delict gepleegd wordt met ICT-systemen en ook gericht is op ICT-systemen, zoals bij phishing en ransomware. Bij gedigitaliseerde criminaliteit gaat het om traditionele criminele activiteiten waarbij ICT als middel wordt gebruikt, maar niet het doel is, zoals creditcardfraude en identiteitsdiefstal. Slachtoffers kunnen particulieren, bedrijven en overheidsinstanties zijn.

Until recently, knowledge about cybercrime and cybersecurity in the Caribbean Netherlands was very limited.¹¹⁸ This changed with the establishment of the Cybercrime Unit (CCU) at KPCN in 2021. The information position, the approach and the prevention of cybercrime have improved. Due to the specific local context of the Caribbean Netherlands, the focus of the CCU is primarily on victims and secondarily on perpetrators and misused technical infrastructure. The approach is aimed at prevention and repression. Prevention includes awareness campaigns to prevent cybercrime. Examples include the recurring tip of the month, a campaign about identity fraud and warning companies in the event of data breaches. Repression is aimed at

¹¹⁷ WODC, 2020.

¹¹⁸ Van de Sandt, Martis, Braaf, Senior, & Sint Jago, 2022.

disrupting the cybercrime offense, criminal investigation and, if possible, prosecution. In 2022, 27 signals of cybercrime were received, five of which were criminally investigated and two were investigated in the European Netherlands. Due to the international nature of the offence, there is intensive cooperation with international specialist services. In 2023, there will be an increase in the number of reports of cybercrime. In that year, 45 reports were received, nine of which were criminally investigated and one case was investigated in the European Netherlands.

Cybercrime offences in the Caribbean Netherlands

The crimes of which signals have been collected, analyzed and investigated since the establishment of the CCU are WhatsApp fraud, hacking, invoice fraud, data breaches, identity fraud, ransomware and phishing. In addition, it is emerging internationally that cybercrime goes hand in hand with data collection, hacking and money laundering in crimes such as drug trafficking and child pornography.

A form of phishing that has made victims within the business community on Bonaire is Business Email Compromise (BEC). BEC is a method in which the mail server is taken over by a hacker. As soon as the company sends an invoice to an (international) customer, a false invoice is drawn up, causing the transfer to another account number. Phishing also takes place via WhatsApp, where victims receive messages with a request to transfer money. Money mules are a phenomenon that has also been observed on Bonaire. Victims are recruited to make their bank account available for the purpose of laundering criminal money. There are also several cases of ransomware known to companies, where data from the company falls into the hands of hackers.

Whatsapp and identity fraud often involve civilian casualties. In ransomware and hacking, companies and institutions are victims. The amounts stolen from victims in the Caribbean Netherlands vary between the \$15 and \$1,000,000. The willingness to report has increased on Bonaire in recent years, especially among citizens. Companies are also reporting more and more often, but usually only after the damage has been suffered. The increase in

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reports is due to the establishment and notoriety of the CCU of KPCN. Reputational damage, shame and ignorance are factors that still have an effect on the willingness to report. Awareness campaigns and contact conversations with chain partners on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba are therefore part of the CCU's long-term working method.

The suspects of cybercrime offences are often unknown and reside abroad. This makes prosecution difficult. Nevertheless, there are some cases in which the CCU was able to prosecute a suspect or contribute to this in a foreign investigation. The organisation of cybercrime is often in the hands of internationally operating criminal networks that cause a mixture between cybercrime and other forms of crime.¹¹⁹ A number of bottlenecks are identified in the information position and approach to cybercrime in the Caribbean Netherlands. In 2023, the construction of a data center in the Caribbean Netherlands started. However, the CCU and its partners have no insight into the use and users of the data center.

In closing

- The establishment of the Cybercrime Unit at KPCN in 2021 has improved the information position, approach and prevention of cybercrime.
- It can be cautiously said that there has been an increase in the number of reports of cybercrime since 2022.
- The cybercrime offences that occurred include Whatsapp and identity fraud, ransomware, hacking and phishing.

¹¹⁹ Public Prosecution Service: traditional crime and cybercrime are increasingly merging | News item | Public Prosecutor's Office (om.nl).

- KPCN's attention is now mainly focused on victims of cybercrime and prevention. The international component of cybercrimes makes the prosecution of suspects difficult.

12. Environmental crime

Milieucriminaliteit

Met de term milieucriminaliteit wordt bedoeld op alle overtredingen van milieuwetten die bedoeld zijn om de leefomgeving te beschermen.¹²⁰ Het zijn de wetten die zich richten op het beschermen en voorkomen van vervuiling van lucht, water, grond, en natuur. Milieucriminaliteit wordt vaak gepleegd om geld te verdienen of om kosten te vermijden, bijvoorbeeld door het illegaal dumpen van afval.

Environmental crimes in the Caribbean Netherlands take place during the construction of resorts and hotels, with illegal practices taking place resulting in damage to the beach and coral. Illegal waste dumping, illegal fishing and disturbing the flora and fauna on the island also cause damage to the habitat of people and animals. Tourism also causes damage to the environment. These include the damage to the coral due to water sports activities and remains of sunscreen in the water. These activities have been known for years. In the VHB 2018, the call was therefore made to keep the Caribbean Netherlands literally and figuratively clean. The preservation of the environment and coral in particular is essential for the preservation of tourism. Attention to the environment and tackling environmental crime is necessary in the coming years, according to the VHB 2018.

In 2019, the Council for Law Enforcement published a report entitled Enforcement of nature and environmental legislation in the Caribbean Netherlands: about stray cattle, roaming garbage and other problems for nature on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. One of the Council's findings is that there is no enforcement policy with regard to nature and environmental legislation has been adopted. It is argued that the approach to nature and environmental violations is not a priority for OM BES and KPCN. Administrative enforcement is also insufficient, according to the 49 advice. In the Letter to Parliament on environmental and nature enforcement in the Caribbean Netherlands, the Ministry of Justice and Security indicates that the Council's conclusions are recognized and followed up. In 2020, the Nature and Environmental Policy Plan for the Caribbean Netherlands 2020-2030 was drawn up by the Ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Infrastructure and Water Management, and the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The plans have been elaborated in implementation plans by the public entities and implementation agreements.

It can be observed that environmental crime has received more attention in the Caribbean Netherlands in recent years. This has resulted in new legislation and implementation agreements with an increase in supervision and enforcement. From April 1, 2024, a new system of environmental rules will apply to companies, governments and relevant organizations in Saba, St. Eustatius and Bonaire.¹²¹ The purpose of those rules is to improve the protection of the habitat of the islands and, in particular, of fragile coral ecosystems. These new rules are laid down in the Housing, Spatial Planning and Environmental Management Act BES (Vrom BES) and the Establishments and Activities Decree BES (IAB BES). For new activities in vulnerable nature, rules on environmental impact assessments apply and a distinction is made between rules that apply to companies with a light to moderate impact on nature and companies that have a greater impact on the environment.

In this context, priority has been given to sustainable coastal development, illegal landfill and litter, illegal diabase excavations, implementation of environmental rules for companies and food safety. Most environmental crimes on Bonaire take place in the south, the west coast and around Klein Bonaire. Natural and environmental crimes can

¹²⁰ Environmental crime (om.nl).

¹²¹ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2024/04/03/nieuwe-milieuregels-voor-saba-sint-eustatius-en-bonaire-om-protecting-vulnerable-nature>.

are committed throughout the year, but according to the National Parks Foundation (STINAPA), environmental degradation occurs most often in the tourist ^{season}.¹²² During this season, due to increased demand, many more fish are caught than usual. In addition, more boats are sailing as a result. This affects the corals and the rest of the marine life, among other things. Furthermore, tourists snorkel and dive a lot and walk on reefs and corals. They are not always aware that this will affect Bonaire's nature in the long term.¹²³ Corals are also sometimes affected by the construction of hotels and resorts. In recent years, two coastal development projects have been realized without the required nature and building permit and without the right facilities to protect the coast and the coral. To date, enforcement has not yet led to the undoing of the violations.¹²⁴

The enforcement of nature and environmental legislation on Bonaire is the responsibility of the special police officers working at STINAPA. The most common environmental crime identified by the STINAPA is illegal construction without a valid nature permit. In principle, criminal investigations are taken up by KPCN. The number of warnings and reports drawn up by STINAPA has increased considerably over the years. For example, in 2020 only four official reports were issued, in 2022 there were eighteen and more than two hundred warnings were issued.¹²⁵ In 2022, it was mainly about disturbing the fauna (turtles and flamingos), fishing without a permit, building without a permit and illegal kite surfing.¹²⁶ About 100 warnings were issued in 2021. In 2023, there were 1 takeover seizure of a spear from Customs, 27 incident reports or reports from the port office and 37 written warnings for building on the coast. STINAPA issues more warnings than fines. This has to do with the fact that no prosecution will take place if the fines are not paid. According to the Law Enforcement Board, the Supervision and Enforcement Directorate also did not send an official report to the Public Prosecution Service, assuming that the Public Prosecution Service would not do anything with it anyway.¹²⁷ According to the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate, supervision only takes place on the basis of complaints and incidents and enforcement is inconsistent.¹²⁸

There is no good picture of the Covid period, because enforcement by STINAPA was largely absent. In this 50
There were few tourists on the island, which caused the rates of coral infestations to decrease. What did occur a lot in that period was gatherings on the beaches by young people during illegal parties. STINAPA has tackled this problem in collaboration with KPCN. The parties also caused a lot of dirt to be left behind. This has been addressed with the waste processing company Selibon. STINAPA has patrolled the coasts more during the Covid time because of illegal campfires. Although the other forms of crime decreased in this period, it was seen that fishing among Bonaireans increased, especially in the 'no fishing zones'.

On St. Eustatius, the St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation (STENAPA) is in charge of the management of the national parks. In the aforementioned report from 2019, the Council for Law Enforcement notes that St. Eustatius is now better kept clean and that the regulation that prohibits dumping waste is better monitored. Pressure has been exerted for years, including by the national government, to tackle the goat problem, but there is great resistance to it. According to a recent article in the NRC, St. Eustatius would have 12,000 goats tellen.¹²⁹ On St. Eustatius, compliance with nature permits is not monitored and no enforcement action is taken.¹³⁰ The Saba Conservation Foundation is active on Saba,

¹²² STINAPA interview (2023).

¹²³ STINAPA interview (2023).

¹²⁴ Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate, 2024.

¹²⁵ STINAPA, 2020.

¹²⁶ STINAPA, 2023.

¹²⁷ Law Enforcement Council, 2019b.

¹²⁸ Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate, 2024.

¹²⁹ The battle for the goat (nrc.nl).

¹³⁰ Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport, 2024.

a non-governmental organization that manages the national parks of Saba. The goat nuisance on Saba has been structurally tackled since 2020, including by having goats shot. In the beginning there was a lot of resistance to this, but that tide seems to have turned and the vegetation on the island is returning. On Saba, no supervision is carried out with regard to construction, the environment/nuisance or nature and therefore no enforcement takes place.¹³¹ Although enforcement on the various islands still leaves much to be desired, attention to the environment has increased and awareness that environmental protection is deserved has grown.

In closing

- Nature in the Caribbean Netherlands is suffering greatly from overgrazing, construction activities and tourism.
- Illegal waste dumping, illegal fishing and the construction of resorts and hotels without the required permits are a number of examples of environmental crimes in the Caribbean Netherlands.
- Environmental crime in the Caribbean Netherlands has received more attention in recent years, resulting in new legislation and enforcement instruments.
- On Bonaire, the number of warnings and official reports from STINAPA is increasing. There is hardly any enforcement on St. Eustatius and Saba.

13. Expectations

This chapter answers sub-research question three: what developments can be expected in the near future in the field of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands? It is quite possible that various forms of crime will increase in the coming years. The debt problem, increased house prices and increased cost of living throughout the Caribbean Netherlands makes it difficult for many residents to make ends meet. If 'normal' work does not pay sufficiently, the chance increases that people will look for alternative, illegal sources of income, such as committing property crimes. In addition, the number of wealthy residents is increasing

Bonaire, think of European Dutch and Americans. The gap between them and the local population is getting bigger. Increasing inequality can form a breeding ground for an increase in property crimes. **51**

There is also a relationship between inequality and violent crime, such as domestic and relational violence, violence among juveniles and violent property crime and vandalism.

It is expected that drug crime on Bonaire will increase with the growth of the population, the normalization of drug use and the limited investigative focus. There are fears of interference by Curaçao groups or Venezuelan and Colombian gangs in the management of local trade and transit. If the number of direct scheduled flights and boat services from source countries to destination countries increases, the Caribbean Netherlands will become more attractive as a transit island for the international trade in drugs. These smuggling routes are also used for the smuggling of firearms and people. For St Eustatius, too, drug use and trafficking are expected to increase with population growth. For both Saba and St. Eustatius, the lack of control in the airports and maritime ports is a risk. If smuggling networks have free rein, it is possible that more firearms will be smuggled into the Caribbean Netherlands and this may result in a further increase in firearm crime.

The ongoing political, economic and climate crises in the region are expected to increase the number of vulnerable migrants. The growing population and increasing tourism on Bonaire is causing the construction of new homes and hotels. The demand for labour in sectors such as construction, domestic work, hospitality and garden maintenance is also expected to increase. Human smuggling and human trafficking therefore remain a risk. The increase in construction projects also offers new opportunities for corruption. However, the central government is paying more attention to the integrity of local government and government services. For example, an awareness campaign was launched in 2023. A whistleblower scheme is also being worked on. A

¹³¹ Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport, 2024.

culture change observed, with the new generation of integrity cases appearing to report more often. The expectation for the future is therefore not so much that corruption will increase, but rather the number of reports.

In the Caribbean Netherlands, money laundering through real estate and real estate is the greatest money laundering risk. More foreigners are settling on Bonaire in particular, which means that it is possible that more dubious foreign real estate investments will be made. In addition, local criminals who adjust their spending patterns must be taken into account. It is suspected that local drug traffickers set up construction companies as a cover for money laundering and then invest in the real estate.

If the traffic laws are not enforced more strictly, the number of traffic offences on Bonaire will increase due to the increase in the population. The roads in the Caribbean Netherlands are generally poorly maintained and not equipped for a lot of traffic. This also causes accidents. In addition, driving under the influence is often socially accepted. The development of legislation and enforcement instruments will also increase the number of nature and environmental violations, as more conduct than before is classified as a violation and will probably receive more attention. Cybercrime will also increase, just like in the rest of the world, both in terms of complexity and in terms of the number of victims and suspects.

Finally, it should be noted that many risk factors are present for an increase in violent crime. This is partly due to the simple fact that the population is increasing, partly due to the developments outlined above and a number of other factors. These include the poverty problem and inequality, the fact that many vulnerable young people in the Caribbean Netherlands are in a problematic situation, the normalization of the use of alcohol and drugs while going out and in traffic, and the apparent ease with which firearms can be obtained.

In closing

- Risk factors are present for an increase in property crime, violent crime in cybercrime. **52**
- The international trade in drugs in the Caribbean region is still a major problem and the use of drugs is expected to increase.
- Given the many hotspots in the region, the number of vulnerable migrants will continue to rise.
- The increase in construction projects offers opportunities for money launderers and corruption.

14. Bottlenecks

As shown in the previous chapter, it is expected that various forms of crime in the Caribbean Netherlands will increase. It is therefore important to keep an eye on a number of bottlenecks in tackling crime. These bottlenecks are regularly identified in reports on the Caribbean Netherlands, for example in those of the Council for Law Enforcement. These bottlenecks have also emerged in the previous marketing authorisations. They are partly related to the extreme small scale of the three islands and the special political position of the Caribbean Netherlands. This chapter focuses on sub-research question four: which bottlenecks occur in tackling local and cross-border crime?

Capacity

In the previous MA, it was established that many organisations in the chain are facing a lack of capacity. For example, the strength of KPCN did not keep pace with the growth of the population on Bonaire. Although KPCN has gained more capacity in recent years, there is still a lack of capacity. This puts pressure on the Basic Police Care (BPZ) on all islands and capacity has to be withdrawn from the

information organisation and investigation.¹³² Border control has been strengthened, but control at airports and ports in the Caribbean Netherlands is still insufficient. Especially on Saba and St Eustatius, the understaffing of services such as the KMar, Customs and KPCN is high.

The capacity of the Public Prosecution Service and the judiciary is also limited. The research for this CBA showed that the chain gets stuck due to the handling of minor violations, leaving little room for more serious cases. Many organizations in the care chain also suffer from a lack of capacity and it is difficult to organize a safe shelter for victims of domestic violence or human trafficking on the small islands.

Lack of capacity is not only about capacity in a quantitative sense, but also about capacity in a qualitative sense. The pond to fish out qualified personnel is small. In addition, there is not enough work for certain specialisms to be able to retain them. The lack of policy capacity at KPCN is also acute.¹³³

In the VHB 2018, attention was drawn to the position of St. Eustatius and Saba. It is noted that these two islands seem to be dangling a bit. The headquarters of organizations of, for example, the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland (RCN) are located on Bonaire. Although some organizations do have small branches on the Windward Islands, the occupancy is sometimes minimal and not always continuous, according to the VHB 2018. The lack of capacity at many organizations and the literal and figurative distance from Bonaire is probably to blame for the fact that the situation hardly seems to have improved in 2024.

Information-driven working and information exchange

There are all kinds of bright spots when it comes to cooperation and information sharing. These include the establishment of the Regional Information and Expertise Centre for the Caribbean Netherlands (RIEC CN)¹³⁴, but also the Island Platform for Crime Control and various other initiatives in the field of border control, crisis management and cybercrime. Nevertheless, information sharing still remains a problem that has often been identified in all kinds of reports. This is partly due to the fact that information is still insufficiently recorded in systems and is therefore not easy to share. Also, the mindset is often not yet focused on sharing. And there is a lack of trust that other organizations handle information carefully.

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Information-driven work is hindered on the one hand by the fact that information is still not or not fully entered into the systems and, on the other hand, by the fact that citizens in the Caribbean Netherlands are not quick to go to the police to report or report a crime. With regard to entry into systems, the Law Enforcement Council notes in the State of Law Enforcement 2023 report that 'registration discipline remains a concern'.¹³⁵ The Council writes in this regard: 'One of the causes of this is the lack of internal control and the lack of Dutch language proficiency. But the importance of data registration is also not recognized by all employees. The effect of this is that relevant (investigative) information is insufficiently transparent and there is insufficient insight into the nature and extent of crime. The Council considers this to be a bottleneck and a risk.'

On Saba and St. Eustatius, for example, the willingness to report and report is limited by the high 'turnover rate' of police employees. Constantly new faces that are temporarily placed on the islands cause less confidence in the police among the residents. The use of the Dutch language in the police organization is a major problem for many

¹³² Law Enforcement Council, 2024.

¹³³ Law Enforcement Council, 2024.

¹³⁴ The following work together in RIEC CN: OLB, OLE, OLS, OM BES, KPCN, KMar, Belastingdienst/Douane CN, Sociale Zaken en Werk (SZW), Immigration and Naturalisation Service CN (IND CN), FIU and Coast Guard CARIB (KWCARIB).

¹³⁵ Law Enforcement Council, 2024.

Sabans and Statians, for whom the mother tongue is English, are a barrier to working in the police. In addition, there is still a taboo on relational violence and the willingness of victims and their environment to report is low.

With regard to the exchange of information, the Council for Law Enforcement notes that information sharing between chain partners is a matter of concern, in particular between partners from the justice chain and partners from the care chain n.136 It should also be mentioned that the sharing of information between the Caribbean countries and even with the European part of the Netherlands is problematic. Information sharing with the European Netherlands is complicated by the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and the EU Directive 2016/680, which came into force for the European Netherlands on 25 May 2018.

Enforcement deficit

It was already discussed above that many organizations have a lack of capacity. This is one of the reasons that there is an enforcement deficit in the Caribbean Netherlands, for example around Bonaire's territorial waters is insufficient. The Coast Guard sails maybe once or twice a month and if a suspicious boat is spotted on Curaçao sailing to Bonaire, it may already be too late to intervene. The 2018 VHB addresses the fact that reports of unsafe situations and abuses are not always dealt with. This reinforces the perception among citizens and entrepreneurs that there is an enforcement deficit. This perception seems to be unchanged in 2024.

The previous chapters have already shown several times that in many areas there is insufficient enforcement. Research by the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (ILT) from 2024 shows that 'significant improvements are needed in licensing, supervision and enforcement (VTH) for construction, the environment and nature in the Caribbean Netherlands'.¹³⁷ With regard to enforcement by the OLB, the ILT notes that enforcement in the event of violations is not consistent and that enforcement is not consistently 'continued up to and including the collection of penalty payments, as a result of which violations are not remedied'. It is also noted that illegal situations on Bonaire are regularly 54 Legalized. With regard to enforcement by the Public Entity of St. Eustatius (OLE), the ILT states that 'violations that have been observed continue, the OLE does not take enforcement action'. About the enforcement by the Public Entity of Saba (OLS), the ILT says that 'due to the lack of supervision, no enforcement takes place'.

In closing

- Capacity of law enforcement agencies remains an issue on the small islands. The understaffing of important services is particularly high on Saba and St Eustatius.
- Steps have been taken in the field of information-driven working, but information is still insufficiently recorded and, as this CBA showed, the information position is not strong in some areas.
- Progress has been made in the field of cooperation and information sharing, for example with the establishment of the Regional Information and Expertise Centre for the Caribbean Netherlands (RIEC CN). Nevertheless, information sharing between chain partners is still a concern.
- There is still an enforcement deficit in many areas.

¹³⁶ Law Enforcement Council, 2023b.

¹³⁷ <https://www.ilent.nl/documenten/organisatie/over-de-ilt/onderzoeken-naar-het-vth-stelsel/signaalrapportages/forse-improvements-needed-for-licensing-supervision-and-enforcement-vth-in-caribbean-netherlands>.

15. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter presents the summary, the conclusions and the recommendations and answers sub-research question five: what is needed to effectively combat crime in the Caribbean Netherlands? To answer this question, this chapter will go through the different forms of crime.

Traffic crime

There are unsafe traffic situations on all three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. This is due to the poorly maintained roads, the increasing number of different road users and driving under the influence of alcohol. In addition, there is still the problem of fevers and state races on public roads on Bonaire. The intensity of the activities varies. Enforcement by the police requires a lot of capacity, as does the handling by the Public Prosecution Service. Alcohol in traffic is a problem on all islands and causes many traffic accidents. Since the entry into force of the new Road Traffic Regulations on the islands, enforcement of driving under the influence has been possible. *Given the major social impact of fatal accidents in the Caribbean Netherlands and the role that alcohol plays in nightlife violence, tackling alcohol consumption is a topic that must be given priority in the coming years.*

Youth crime

In 2020, Juvenile Criminal Law was introduced in the BES Criminal Code, making it possible to provide tailor-made solutions for violations and crimes committed by juveniles. The majority of crime committed by young people concerns theft and violent crimes. The situation for many young people who come into contact with crime is often problematic. There is still little to do for young people on the islands and organisations that are responsible for the welfare of young people often lack capacity and opportunities to get young people back on the right path. Although there are concerns about youth on all islands, the

influx of juvenile cases at the Public Prosecution Service has not increased, but in fact the extent of juvenile delinquency has not increased ⁵⁵

well in the picture. However, organisations in the healthcare sector have noticed an increase in violent crimes. *The circumstances under which vulnerable young people in the Caribbean Netherlands grow up require a broad approach by all organizations that have a task in the field of youth.*

Violent crime

Violence in the Caribbean Netherlands mainly concerns domestic or relational violence and nightlife violence. On Bonaire, there is an increase in the total number of violent crimes, which seems to be mainly caused by an increase in the number of assaults with or without weapons. On St Eustatius and Saba, the number of violent crimes remains more or less the same. For the individual categories, the numbers for St. Eustatius and Saba are too small and fluctuate too much to be able to draw meaningful conclusions. Nightlife violence is a problem on all islands in which police officers are also threatened or attacked. Relational violence is probably common on the islands, but this problem is not well understood. Although there does not seem to be a shocking increase in violent crime, there are a few worrying trends. *It is advisable to put tackling violence high on the list of priorities. It is also important to take seriously the introduction of regulations on relational violence.*

Property crime

The number of property crimes in Bonaire decreased sharply in the period 2020 – 2024. The decrease occurred in almost all categories. Property crimes have also decreased on St Eustatius. It was noticeable that many scooters were stolen in 2023. Property crime on Saba increased in 2022 and 2023. This is especially true for home burglaries. However, the numbers are so small that it is difficult to draw conclusions. Property crimes in the Caribbean Netherlands are often committed by the same perpetrators. If it is possible to arrest such a perpetrator or perpetrator group, the number of crimes immediately decreases. Although the numbers are not large, the cost of

property crimes KPCN has a lot of capacity and has an impact on the sense of security of residents and tourists. *For the time being, however, there is no reason to give more priority to tackling property crime.*

Drug crime

Although the scale of the problem is probably not very large, there is trafficking in and use of cannabis and cocaine in the Caribbean Netherlands. What is also a trend on Bonaire is that legal companies are used to export the drugs. An example of this is the post office and companies that ship goods through ports in containers. The export of drugs from Bonaire has become more prominent in recent years. There is still insufficient insight into the import and storage of the drugs on the islands. There are signs that the drugs are imported from Curaçao or Venezuela with the fishing boats. However, it is not yet known which boats these are. Because of its location, Bonaire is an attractive transshipment point for drugs. It regularly happens that large batches of drugs are fished out of the international waters around Bonaire, but often these batches are not destined for Bonaire. Another well-known transshipment point is the Saba Bank, which is located near Saba and St Eustatius, but there are no signs that there are any relationships between these activities and the islands. It is suspected that Curaçaoan, Venezuelan and Colombian criminal networks play a role in the drug market in the Caribbean Netherlands and there are certainly also Bonairean players on the market. However, due to KPCN's limited investigative capacity, there is little insight into the underlying criminal logistics processes and networks. On all three islands, there are concerns about the normalization of drug use, especially among young people. *When it comes to tackling drug-related crime, it is important to get a better picture of the role that the Caribbean Netherlands plays in cross-border drug-related crime in the coming years. On this basis, it should be possible to determine the priority given to these crimes. In order to combat local drug crime, the main focus must be on prevention and assistance.*

Firearm crime

The extent of firearm crime in the Caribbean Netherlands seems to be growing more and more. In the past period the figures of gun crime have risen sharply. Shooting incidents seem to be in the second half of 2024 almost weekly. On Bonaire, it occasionally happens that a firearm is threatened, for example in the event of an atrako or a conflict. Confiscation of firearms occurs every now and then. On St. Eustatius there has also been an increase in firearm incidents in the recent period. For example, two robberies took place in which firearms were used. Firearm parts have also been seized by customs during the import process. As a result, there are concerns about firearms on the islands and about the seemingly relative ease with which firearms can be smuggled onto the islands. *Given the sharp increase in firearm-related violence in the Caribbean region, it is important to keep a close eye on developments in this area and to give priority to tackling firearms.*

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Migration crime

Migration crime in the Caribbean Netherlands is not well documented in terms of figures, although the information position on human smuggling has improved. It is clear that human smuggling and human trafficking occurs in the Caribbean Netherlands. There are signs of smuggling networks that bring migrants from different countries to the Caribbean Netherlands for the purpose of labour exploitation, for example in construction, beauty salons, supermarkets and in prostitution. There are also signs of exploitation in prostitution. Although there is certainly more attention for these offenses, the picture is still too limited. Human smuggling and human trafficking are expected to remain a major problem in the region, also due to the many flashpoints in the region and the developments in Venezuela around the 2024 presidential elections. *It is therefore important that KPCN, together with partners, tries to get a grip on these phenomena in the coming years.*

Financial and economic crime

The 2018 marketing authorisation found that little information was available about financial and economic crime such as fraud, money laundering and underground banking. With the establishment of the KPCN FINEC team, the picture has become sharper and various cases have come to light that relate to fraud, embezzlement in the

employment, fraudulent withdrawals, forgery of documents, money laundering and smuggling of dollars. Among other things, it is suspected that the real estate sector on Bonaire is being used to launder illegal profits. The increase in the number of reports to the FIU shows that money laundering awareness among the reporting authorities has increased. It is expected that in the coming years an even better picture will emerge of, among other things, the modus operandi used and the perpetrators of financial and economic crime. And that is desperately needed as tackling money laundering is high on the international and regional priority lists. *It is therefore recommended to further strengthen the focus on money laundering.*

Corruption

It is difficult to draw conclusions about the extent of corruption in the Caribbean Netherlands. The presence of the National Criminal Investigation Department has strengthened the information position, but there is still a low willingness to report. In recent years, various scientific investigations have been carried out, including into official and administrative integrity violations. The studies show that such crimes are hardly ever identified and registered in the Caribbean Netherlands. Another problem is that corruption is often difficult to establish. However, the appearance of corruption has a major impact on society. It damages confidence in the integrity of the government and the costs of corruption are borne by society as a whole. Like money laundering, corruption is a theme that has been in the spotlight internationally and regionally in recent years. *It is important to prioritise the approach to corruption in the Caribbean Netherlands.*

Cybercrime

The establishment of the Cybercrime Unit (CCU) at KPCN and the awareness campaigns have resulted in an increased attention for cybercrime in the Caribbean Netherlands. The CCU has collected signals of WhatsApp fraud, hacking, invoice fraud, data breaches, identity fraud, ransomware and phishing. The information from the CCU shows that the Caribbean Netherlands is certainly not immune to cybercrime. However, investigating and prosecuting cybercrime is difficult as the suspects are often unknown and reside abroad. The focus of the CCU is

That is why we are also largely focused on prevention. *For the coming years, it will remain important to raise awareness government, business and citizens. The public entities and the central government have a role to play here.*

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Environmental crime

Nature in the Caribbean Netherlands is threatened on all sides. These threats do not always relate to environmental crimes, but some of them do. Environmental crimes in the Caribbean Netherlands occur during the construction of resorts and hotels, where illegal practices lead to damage to beaches and coral reefs. Illegal waste dumping, illegal fishing and disturbance of local flora and fauna also cause considerable damage to the habitat of people and animals. In addition, tourism contributes to environmental damage. Although the enforcement of environmental rules on all islands is still lagging behind, attention to the environment has increased in recent years and a new system of environmental rules has recently been introduced. This gives confidence that the environment will receive the attention it deserves in the coming years. *However, it is important to work on effective enforcement of the rules.*

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Appendix 1 General information

The most common fines in the Caribbean Netherlands are driving without a license, without a valid driver's license, without a seat belt or without a helmet on a scooter or motorcycle.

Fines				
Island	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bonaire	1233	1202	573	1731
Sint Eustatius	39	43	38	70
Saba	47	18	18	41
Total	1319	1263	629	1842

Declarations				
Island	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bonaire	763	831	690	646
Sint Eustatius	131	39	42	45
Saba	54	144	124	93
Total	948	1014	856	784

Aangiften Bonaire				
Type delict	2020	2021	2022	2023
Vermogensdelicten	496	553	435	363
Verkeersdelicten	43	38	60	46
Gewelddelicten	163	174	134	163
Overige aangifte	61	66	61	74
Totaal	763	831	690	646

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Declarations St. Eustatius				
Type of crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Property crime	72	70	75	47
Traffic offences	0	0	3	1
Violent crimes	47	59	33	41
Other tax return	12	15	13	4
Total	131	144	124	93

Declarations Saba				
Type of crime	2020	2021	2022	2023
Property crime	15	17	21	22
Traffic offences	1	1	1	0
Violent crimes	29	16	18	18
Other tax return	9	5	2	5
Total	54	39	42	45

Examine				
Type of research	2020	2021	2022	2023
The cyber message	-	1	27	45
Criminal investigations (FINEC)	-	-	4	6
Criminal investigations (IGO)	129	133	149	113
Criminal investigations (PGO)	9	7	12	27
Digital surveys	-	-	215	129
	138	141	407	320

Annex 2 Resources

Traffic crime:

- KPCN annual results
- Annual figures OM
- Analysis Driving under the influence
- Interview Traffic
- Interview OM

Youth crime:

- Interview JZZ
- Interview Bario's
- Interview Guardianship Council
- Interview Jeugdzorg
- Interview BPZ
- Council for Law Enforcement (2023) Prevention of juvenile delinquency and juvenile criminal law on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius.

Violent crime:

- Annual figures
- Weapons crime lists
- Interview IGO
- Interview INFO
- Interview Bario stage manager
- Interview OM
- Interview JZZ
- Interview Guardianship Council
- Interview Jeugdzorg
- Interview Head of BPZ Sint Eustatius en Saba

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Firearm crime:

- Annual figures – no information in reports about firearm use, trade or seizure. Also full ACTPOL list you also get very little information about seized firearms. In 2021, a number of firearms with code were seized or found, and nothing else.
- Crime lists - hyperion
- Interview CIE
- Interview BPZ
- Interview INFO
- Interview IGO
- Interview PGO
- Interview with the chef Sint Eustatius in Saba.
- Interview Bario stage manager.

Property crimes:

- KPCN annual results
- Annual figures OM
- Crime lists
- Interview IGO
- Interview INFO

Drug crime:

- Annual figures
- Crime lists
- Regional CBA
- Interview Info
- Interview IGO
- Interview PGO
- Interview CIE
- Interview KMAR
- Interview OM
- Interview BPZ
- Interview Bario stage manager
- Interview with Saba chef in Sint Eustatius

Migration crime:

- MHMS crime list
- ACTPOL list denials
- ACTPOL list combi illegality
- Interview KMAR
- Interview VT
- Interview INFO

Financial economic crime:

- Interview FINEC
- Briefings infodesk
- FINEC intel image
 - o FIU message
 - o Signalen KPCN
 - o Literature study

Corruption:

- Interview RR
- Interview KMar
- Interview IGO
- Interview Info-desk
- Interview PGO
- Annual Report RR
- Inspection report of the Legal Protection Council
- Follow The Money: Island Governor of Bonaire appointed by The Hague illegally allows the coast to be built up - Follow the Money - Platform for investigative journalism (ftm.nl)
- WODC: <https://ininw.wodc.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/12/14/ambtelijk-bestuurlijke-integriteit-in-caribisch- The Netherlands-promote>

Cybercrime:

- Presentation CCU
- Interview CCU

Environmental crime:

- ACTPOL assistants

- Interview STINAPA
- Interview Selibon
- Media Releases
- Public Entity Bonaire: Nature & Environment (bonairegov.com)
- Stricter supervision and enforcement of nature and environmental laws in the Caribbean Netherlands (bonaire.nu)
- stinapabonaire.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/STINAPA-Annual-Report-2022_Digital.pdf
- [STINAPA-Annual-Report-2020-2-1.pdf](#) (stinapabonaire.org)
- Public Entity Bonaire: Waste (bonairegov.com)

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