

## Accountability RTL Nieuws Underworld Map

A drug lab in a residential area, a sugar daddy with criminal money acts as the main sponsor of the football association, a telephone shop where no one ever goes in, care companies that are on the back of vulnerable clients get rich from public money and young people who are already in school being recruited for criminal work. They are all signals or outgrowths of subversive crime: where the criminal practices of underworld become intertwined with the 'ordinary' upper world.

Various reports point to the danger of criminal subversion and talk about increased attention in recent years to the way the underworld sometimes has a stranglehold on people and organizations in the upper world<sup>1</sup>. The subject gets much attention from policy makers. That's why minister Dylan Yesilgoz-Zegerius (Justice and Security) released extra money in the spring of 2022 to combat criminal subversion in neighborhoods<sup>2</sup>.

Municipalities are often looked at for this approach. But how vulnerable are municipalities to criminal undermining? That's the main question the research editors of RTL Nieuws want to answer with this research. The result is the Underworld map, on which each municipality gives an indication of the vulnerability to subversion is displayed. The map is emphatically not a representation of registered crime, but a combination of registered subversive crime and characteristics that indicate potential vulnerabilities.

In the document below we explain how we proceeded.

### Definition

Subversion is a term that has become much more common in recent decades policy documents, but there is no clear definition. This is how Van Dale describes subversion as undercutting or weakening. This study focuses on how the quality of life, democracy and the rule of law are undermined or weakened by criminals taking advantage of companies and individuals in the upper world.

The national government defines the concept of subversion as follows: "Criminals make advances illegal activities use of legitimate businesses and services. As a result, norms and standards are fading the feeling of safety and quality of life decreases. This effect is also known as subversion."<sup>3</sup>

The broad definition of subversion makes it difficult to concretise the phenomenon. Subversion can take place in many ways and, moreover, there are many potential ones signals that may indicate criminal subversion. The research editors of RTL Nieuws define criminal subversion in this study as the negative social effects of organized crime. Based on that definition, indicators are collected.

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<sup>1</sup> I.e. Lam, J. et al (2018). Sluipend gif, een onderzoek naar ondermijnende criminaliteit. Boom Criminologie. <https://www.politieacademie.nl/actueel/Documents/sluipend%20gif.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/04/26/extra-geld-voor-aanpak-jonge-aanwascriminaliteit-in-15-gemeenten>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ondermijning>

## Selection of indicators

Conditions for an indicator are that data is available at the municipal level, that they are publicly accessible and not stigmatizing. An attempt was made for a mix in the selection of performance and predictive indicators. With performance-oriented indicators, the results of, for example, detection, such as the number convicted drug offenders, the number of suspicious transactions found or the registered number of human trafficking cases. Because these static indicators are possible the result of extra or no local attention or approach is also sought indicators that are more dynamic and less dependent on performance. This one predictive indicators are, for example, the proportion of vulnerable young people, real estate with an increased risk or the presence of companies from high-risk industries.

In addition, indicators have been sought from various clusters to obtain as broad a picture as possible range of potential indicators. It concerns the following clusters:

- suspected and convicted
- real estate and suspicious transactions
- dubious companies
- drugs, weapons, and human trafficking
- socio-economic factors

This list of potential indicators has been submitted to experts in the field and updated where necessary adapted and supplemented on the basis of input from the experts. Finally 32 indicators were further tested, a number of which were dropped because they were too limited availability and datedness. Fifteen indicators are missing a number of (very small) municipalities values in the raw data, because according to Statistics Netherlands there is a risk of disclosure. In these cases, an estimate of the value was made for each indicator. In a number of cases that means a value of 0 has been included or the average value of the Regional Information and Expertise Center (RIEC<sup>4</sup>) is brought.

Since the data sets that have been used relate to different years, this also plays a role the problem of municipal reorganizations. The indicators are where possible converted to the existing municipalities in 2021. That means, for example, that part of the data of the municipality of Eemsdelta, which was established in 2021, in proportion to the number inhabitants are calculated on the basis of the data of the former municipalities Appingedam, Delfzijl and Loppersum. The results of the study indicate that the municipalities concerned show that the results are partly based on this estimates.

In the end, a dataset with 20 indicators remained.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.riec.nl/>

## Explanation of indicators

### 1. Proportion of suspects of a subversive offense (2015-2019)

Per municipality, the percentage of residents who were suspected in the said period was included was of committing a subversive crime. Subversive offenses include i.e. money laundering, fraud, property crime, human trafficking, weapon an drug crime.

The data originates from the platform Zicht op Ondermining<sup>5</sup>, which transmits the data using data from the Central Bureau of Statistics. That data is below others from the police and the Public Prosecution Service. The indicator provides insight into the extent to which residents may be involved in committing subversive acts crime.

### 2. Proportion of residents convicted of drug offenses (2019)

A suspect is not yet a convict, which is why it was also examined in addition to suspects percentage of residents convicted of common subversive crimes. In this case concerns people who have been convicted of a drug offence. From scientific research shows that people who have been convicted before are more often involved in new subversive crimes.

The data used comes from the platform Zicht op Ondernijning.

### 3. Proportion of residents convicted of property crime (2019)

A suspect is not yet a convict, which is why it was also examined in addition to suspects percentage of residents convicted of common subversive crimes. In this case concerns people who have been convicted of a crime against property. Scientific research shows that people who have been convicted before are more often involved in new subversive crimes.

The data used comes from the platform Zicht op Ondernijning.

### 4. Percentage of residential objects owned by owner convicted in the last 10 years (2020)

Research shows that buildings of previously convicted owners are used more often for criminal purposes. For example, think of a drug lab or cannabis farm. It share of homes and other accommodation objects owned by previously convicted persons persons and legal entities is therefore a risk indicator. Of course an earlier conviction does not mean that people are still criminally active. We chose to include only convictions less than 10 years old.

The data used comes from the platform Zicht op Ondernijning.

### 5. Percentage of homes at increased risk of cannabis cultivation (2018)

1 in 1187 homes is a (cleared) cannabis farm. But what makes a home vulnerable to a cannabis farm? The platform Zicht op Ondernijning tried to provide insight. Their analysis shows that some characteristics increase the chance of make a (future) cannabis farm much higher. For example when a house is owned by a previously convicted owner, if a resident is in debt or if the house is remote. A model has been developed based on 85 of these

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<sup>5</sup> [www.zichtopondermijning.nl](http://www.zichtopondermijning.nl)

characteristics that per municipality the proportion of homes with a high risk of the presence of a hemp farm (1 in 128 homes) estimated.

The data on which the model is based comes, among others, from the Central Bureau for Statistics, the National Dismantling Facility (LFO), Domains for Movable Affairs (DRZ) and municipalities.

#### 6. Percentage of vacant properties of which the owner has suspected a family member subversive offense (2020)

A long-term vacant property can be an attractive location for criminals for example a drug lab or cannabis farm. Zicht op Ondermijning viewed from all vacant properties how often these are owned by persons with family members who are suspicious of subversive crimes, such as drug crimes, money laundering, extortion and currency crimes. According to the platform, family networks are a risk indicator for subversion.

For example, between 2012 and 2020, 36 percent of the 25,870 drug suspects in the Netherlands had a family member who was also suspected of a drug offense. This is relatively common partners, siblings, children and parents. But also uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents of drug suspects are relatively more often suspected of drug offenses themselves than in non-drug suspects.

#### 7. Suspicious transactions per 10,000 inhabitants (2011-2016)

Bankers, notaries, lawyers, jewelers and car dealers. They are all required to report any unusual payments they come across to the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU)<sup>6</sup>. Consider, for example, the payment of an expensive sports car of 20,000 euros in cash or depositing or withdrawing a substantial amount of cash in a time. Also bribes, large transfers between banks at home and abroad and customs transactions may be included.

The Financial Intelligence Unit reviews all incoming reports of notable transactions and marks them as suspicious where appropriate. Those as suspicious designated transactions are then passed on to the investigative services. The data used for the model comes from the Financial Intelligence Unit and is edited by CBS and Zicht op Ondermijning. The location is assumed to be the place of notification. It is not necessarily the case that the transaction also took place here. For example, a car dealer from Amsterdam may have sold a car elsewhere in the country for cash. It is also possible that reports are made from a head office, while the transaction took place at a branch.

#### 8. Convicted owner, director or company (share of all companies, 2020)

Recidivism is a major risk indicator for subversive crime. Who earlier has gone wrong has a greater chance of going off the right path again. That also applies for companies or owners and directors thereof.

The data used comes from the platform Zicht op Ondermijning and map how many companies, directors and owners have previously been convicted of previous offenses.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fiu-nederland.nl/nl/melden/ben-ik-meldplichtig>

9. Number of hair care establishments per 10,000 inhabitants
10. Number of car trade and repair establishments per 10,000 inhabitants
11. Number of beauty care establishments per 10,000 inhabitants

Various industries are attractive to criminals to launder money and are therefore vulnerable to subversion<sup>7</sup>. This concerns, for example, industries where a lot of cash, such as hairdressers and beauty salons. The products supplied his services and payments are often made in cash. It makes it difficult to check whether the services on paper have actually been provided. Besides, anyone can start a barber shop or beauty salon, no specific training is required. In other high-risk industries, the value of products is difficult to determine objectively. This concerns, for example, the trade in cars, precious metals and jewellery. Also telephone shops are regarded by Regional Information and Expertise Centers as sensitive to subversion.

For the indicators mentioned, all companies that fall under the sectors hair care (SBI code 96021), trade and repair cars (SBI codes 4511, 45191, 45912, 45913 and 452) and beauty care (SBI code 96022) have been looked at. Sources: Zicht op Ondernijning, Chamber of Commerce and CompanyInfo.

12. Share of business establishments with notable features (2020)

Based on input from experts a list of industries with an increased risk of subversive crime was created. Based on this list, business information specialist Graydon has per municipality looked at how many companies in these industries have striking features. In example, companies that do not file annual accounts, directors who have recent registered bankruptcies or companies with unusual relocation behaviour<sup>8</sup>.

The data for this indicator come from Statistics Netherlands and Zicht op Ondernijning, which have received data from Graydon.

13. Share of high-risk youth (2019)

The platform Zicht op Ondernijning developed a model to investigate to what extent young people are potentially young recruits for drug crime. This has been looked into based on characteristics and circumstances of already registered drug suspects. In total, the model consists of about forty characteristics, such as: Halt punishment at a young age, early school leaving, coming from a single-parent family and poverty in the family.

Young people in the Netherlands were examined to what extent they meet the criteria due to their own characteristics. This results in a risk score. The five percent young people with the highest risk score are included in this indicator as being high-risk youth. For each municipality, this concerns the share of this among all young people.

Data comes from Zicht op Ondernijning.

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<https://www.riec.nl/binaries/riec/documenten/rapporten/2019/10/21/landelijkbeeld/Landelijk+beeld+def.+verzending+Minister+20191003.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://graydon.nl/nl/risk-compliance/graydon-network-incl-xseptions>

14. Family networks (percentage of drug suspects with at least one other drug suspect in the family, 2012-2020)

36 percent of the nearly 26,000 drug suspects in the Netherlands between 2012 and 2020 had a family member who was also suspected of a drug offense, according to an analysis by Zicht op Ondermijning. This relatively often concerns partners, brothers and sisters, children and parents. But also uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents of drug suspects relatively more often themselves suspected of drug offenses than among non-drug suspects.

According to the platform, family networks are therefore a risk indicator for subversive crime. This is underlined by research by Tilburg University<sup>9</sup> into criminal families in North Brabant. As an indicator, we used the share of drug suspects with at least 1 family member who is/was also suspected of a drug offense.

15. Police recorded arms trade cases per 10,000 inhabitants (2019-2021)

Per municipality, the number of registered arms trade cases (possession of and trade in weapons) converted by the police in three years into the number of cases per 10,000 inhabitants. Data source: National Police.

16. Police recorded human trafficking cases per 10,000 inhabitants (2019-2021)

Per municipality the number of human trafficking cases registered by the police in three year is converted to the number of cases per 10,000 inhabitants. It's about human trafficking including illegal prostitution, coercion of criminal activities and labor exploitation. Data source: National Police.

17. Leefbaarometer score nuisance and insecurity (2020)

The Ministry of Internal Affairs publishes a biannual research into the quality of life in municipalities, districts and neighbourhoods. This so-called Leefbaarometer is based on several dimensions<sup>10</sup>. One of them is nuisance and insecurity. This dimension is based on three environmental characteristics: registered crimes, perceived safety and perceived nuisance. This means that the indicator contains both the registered as the experienced problems of residents.

18. Score on social cohesion in Leefbaarometer (2020)

Another independent indicator in the Leefbaarometer is the social cohesion component. According to the compilers of the Leefbaarometer, this plays an important role in the quality of life of an area<sup>11</sup>. A high degree of social cohesion contributes to a sense of community, according to the researchers, neighborly assistance, less anonymity and greater social control and security. The social cohesion indicator is based on five environmental characteristics: (diversity according to) stage of life, social cohesion, rate of mutation, density of inhabitants and population development.

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<sup>9</sup> Moors, H., & Spapens, A. (2017). Criminele families in Noord-Brabant: Over generatie-effecten in de zware criminaliteit. Justitiële verkenningen: Documentatieblad van het Ministerie van Justitie, 43(2), 75-88. <https://doi.org/10.5553/JV/016758502017043002005>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.leefbaarometer.nl/resources/LBM3Instrumentontwikkeling.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.leefbaarometer.nl/resources/LBM3Instrumentontwikkeling.pdf>

### 19. Share of households with problematic debts (October 2021)

Those who are trapped are vulnerable, says criminologist Edward van der Torre<sup>12</sup>. Criminals have according to Van der Torre, excellent feelers for people in trouble. For example, by offering them help in exchange for a favor in return, criminals turn people with debts into crime. That makes households with problematic debts vulnerable to subversion. Data source: Statistics Netherlands.

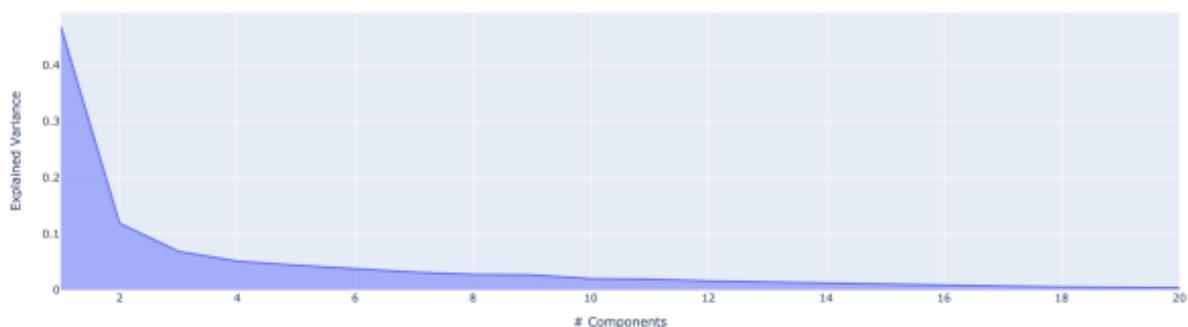
### 20. Reports Meld Misdaad Anoniem about subversive crime (2019-2021, per 10,000 inhabitants)

Meld Misdaad Anoniem, also known as M., annually receives anonymous tips about suspicions of criminal practices and, after review, forward them to investigative services. At the request of RTL Nieuws, M. compiled a dataset of the number anonymous reports of subversive crime per municipality over the past three years.

### Principal Component Analysis

Based on the available data, a principal component analysis (PCA) has been performed to determine which indicators together have the most expressiveness about found differences. There are many different indicators that say something about subversion. The intuition of this approach is the idea that behind these indicators lie factors ahead subversion. These factors would then account for much of the variance in the data set should be able to explain. We can then use those 'subversion factors' to give a score per municipality and in this way to arrive at a ranking of municipalities.

To arrive at this ranking, we did a factor analysis using the PCA method. The goal is to be able to identify the differences across all indicators of a municipality explained with so-called factors, each of which is a weighted combination of these characteristics. These factors are independent of each other and each factor can be part of the explain variance in the data set, with the first factor accounting for most of the variance explains. This method is the standard in the preparation of socio-economic indices.<sup>13</sup> We have chosen to look only at the first two factors. We made this choice from the explained variance. In the graph below you can see per factor how much of the variance is explained. With the second factor you see a 'nod', meaning that the first two factors are significantly more important than the other factors. The explained variance of the first factor is 46 percent and of the second factor is 12 per cent.



<sup>12</sup> <https://www.divosa.nl/doortastende-preventie-slachtoffers-zoeken-en-helpen>

<sup>13</sup> Vyas, S., & Kumaranayake, L. (2006). Constructing socio-economic status indices: how to use principal components analysis. *Health policy and planning*, 21(6), 459-468.

We have also chosen to combine the first two factors for the final score, because we see that each of the two factors has the variance in another dimension of subversion. Despite the fact that the indicators were necessary already adjusted for the number of inhabitants, we still see a clearly different relationship between the first and the second factor with the number of inhabitants. The correlation with the number of inhabitants for the first factor is more than positive at 0.57, while the second factor is one negative correlation of -0.22 with the number of inhabitants.

Based on this and discussions with experts, it is suspected that both factors are measuring another subversion phenomenon. We interpret the first factor accordingly more like the vulnerability of a municipality to metropolitan subversion and the second factor as the vulnerability of a municipality to subversion in more rural areas. The total vulnerability can then be calculated by a weighted sum to take from both. We weight the two factors using the eigenvalue of the eigenvector in the PCA. This eigenvalue says something about how much variance is accounted by the factor and is thus an assumption-free way of comparing the two to each other to weigh.

The data is prepared by scaling each variable to a value between 0 and 1, with a min-max normalization, where we make no assumptions about the underlying distribution. Subsequently, the first two factors of the PCA were calculated. After the weighted combination the explained variance is still 44 percent of the data set. We note that the purpose of this method is not to explain 100 percent of the variance. This score based on of this weighted combination per municipality was then normalized, so that the highest value is 1 and the lowest value is 0, to make it easier to compare the values.

### **Verification**

During the investigation, contact was made with a sounding board of subversion and data science experts, including criminologists and the platform Zicht op Ondermijning, the most prominent source of information for the indicators. Indicators are provided to the experts and the platform. And the ranking that emerges from the methodology has been checked blind with experts in the field for verification.

The results of the research were also submitted for verification to a number of municipalities with a high or low score in the model. This concerns both the overall outcome as scores on individual indicators.

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