

SUMMARY

This study is the sixth in a series of studies on the number of coffee shops and different types of local and national soft drug policies. This is the third survey in which civil servants of all Dutch municipalities are interviewed. The aim of this research is to render insight into the number of officially tolerated coffee shops in the Netherlands. Attention is also paid to changes in the soft drug policies as pursued by Dutch municipalities. The following two research questions are addressed:

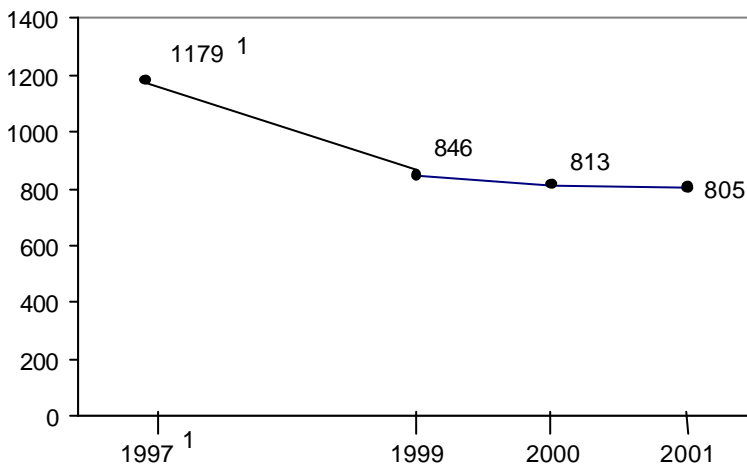
1. How many officially tolerated coffee shops did the Netherlands have at the end of 2001 in comparison with previous years?
2. Which types of coffee shop policies do municipalities pursue and in what respect have these policies changed in comparison with previous years?

In order to answer these questions INTRAVAL – bureau for social-scientific research and consultancy – held a telephone survey among the responsible civil servants of all 504 municipalities in the Netherlands. The study was conducted upon the request of the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Justice. The findings of this study are compared with the results of earlier studies in 2000 and 1999 (Bieleman and Goeree 2001, 2000).

2. Coffee shops

At the end of 2001 the Netherlands had 805 officially tolerated coffee shops distributed over 105 municipalities. In 2000, 103 municipalities had a total of 813 coffee shops. In 2001, therefore, the number of coffee shops decreased by one percent in comparison with 2000 (figure 1). This decrease is smaller than between 1999 and 2000 when it was 4 percent. Compared with 1999 the number of coffee shops in 2001 shows a decrease of 5 percent. Set against the estimation of 1997 the 2001 figure shows a 32 percent decrease.¹

Figure 1. Number of coffee shops in the Netherlands in 1997¹, 1999, 2000 en 2001



¹ This is an estimation. For further explanation see 'Cannabis in Nederland' (Bieleman et al. 1997).

¹ In 1997 the number of coffee shops in the Netherlands was estimated at 1,179 based on a sample of 116 municipalities (Bieleman e.a.1997)

The four major cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) show a 3 percent decrease in the number of coffee shops when comparing 2001 with 2000. Whereas in 2000 they had 426 coffee shops, the number dropped to 413 in 2001. Besides in the four major cities which are located in the urban area in the western part of the Netherlands, high concentrations of coffee shops can be found in the larger towns of North Brabant, in South-east Drenthe, the south of Groningen and the Gooi region and to a lesser extent in Twente, the Achterhoek, the south of Zeeland and the south of Limburg. Compared with 2000 few changes can be observed with respect to the concentration of coffee shops in these regions.

3. Local policy

Of all 504 municipalities in the Netherlands 95 percent have defined policies to regulate the number of coffee shops. The majority of these municipalities have one of the following types of policies:

- *Zero policy* (the zero option): no coffee shops are permitted within the municipality;
- *Maximum system*: the number of coffee shops permitted is restricted to a certain limit;
- *Reduction policy*: the number of coffee shops should be reduced, but the municipality has not yet set a maximum number;
- *Elimination policy*: the number of coffee shops should be drastically reduced, with or without an active policy on the part of the municipality;
- *Discouragement policy*: by setting conditions, the municipality attempts to restrict uncontrolled

establishment of new coffee shops and to reduce the number of existing coffee shops;

- *The Bussum model*: one or more controlled points of cannabis sale are organised in a foundation established for that purpose;
- *Establishment policy*: there is no maximum number of coffee shops, but the coffee shops must comply with strict rules in relation to the location of the coffee shop;
- *Regional policy*: agreements on the soft drug policy are made with other municipalities within the region.

At first sight the number of municipalities with a zero policy in 2001 (namely 370) seems lower than the number of municipalities pursuing this policy in 2000 (being 396). This decrease, however, was brought about by a new division of municipalities which was effected on 1 January 2001. This new division caused the total number of municipalities to drop from 538 to 504. Taking into account this new division, however, hardly any changes took place: 74 percent of all municipalities had a zero policy in 2000 compared to 73 percent in 2001. Also, in 2001 six municipalities had both a zero policy and a coffee shop, which is one more than in 2000.

The maximum policy is the second most common. In 2001, 17 percent of the municipalities had a maximum policy, which is the same percentage as in 2000. The number of municipalities with more coffee shops than permitted decreased, whereas the number of municipalities with the maximum number of coffee shops permitted increased.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study show that few changes have taken place in both the number of coffee shops and the types of policies pursued when comparing 2001 with 2000. Compared with 2000, the number of coffee shops has decreased slightly. This decrease, however, is smaller than the one between 1999 and 2000. As mentioned before, slowly but surely the decrease in the number of coffee shops seems to stabilize (Bieleman en Goeree 2001).

Comparatively speaking hardly any changes have taken place in the type of policy that various municipalities pursue in relation to 2000 and 1999. As in preceding years almost 75 percent of all Dutch municipalities have a zero policy.