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Women in detention

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M. Brouwers
M. Sampiemon

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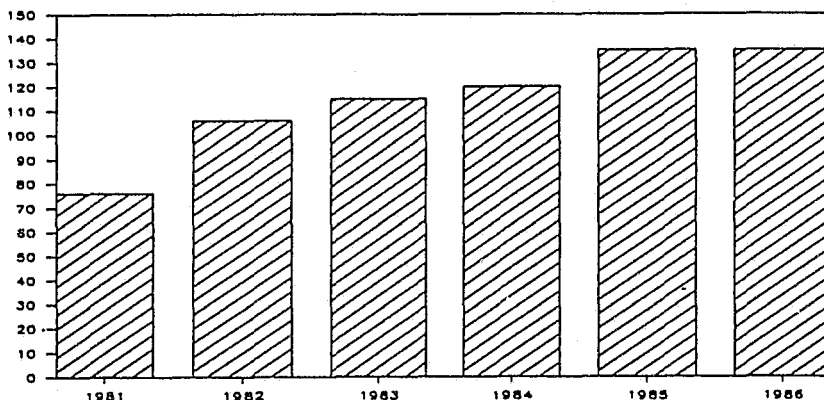
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1 Introduction

In this report we give the results of a research in three penal institutions for women. Up until now women in prison have hardly been the subject of systematic research. The main cause for this neglect is probably because women make up just a small part of the whole prison population: at the close of 1986 there were 4478 men in prison and only 135 women. Although the share of women throughout the years hardly changed, their absolute number has gone up during the past years.

Figure 1: Number of women in detention in the years 1981/1986, at the end of each year



Source: CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics, The Netherlands)

As for men there is a shortage of cells for women, because of which women get sent home from pre-trial detention. Also self-reporters have to wait a long time, sometimes even years, before they can serve their time (self-reporters have been sentenced and wait in freedom until they are summoned to report themselves at a prison to serve their time). There is a great variety of institutions for male prisoners. For women for a long time there was only one institution and, since 1978, three. Different regimes have to be realized within these institutions so the most closed and most open pavilions exist side by side within the same, heavily secured building. Because in the summer of 1987 two new institutions have been opened not only the shortage was lessened, but also the possibilities for women

prisoners have increased a little. There now is a separate half-open prison and one open prison is part of a larger prison, but is not situated within, but beside the closed section.

1.1 Background and purpose of the surveys

The decision to do an inventory of women prisoners was made after two inventories had been made of male prisoners: one in the prisons for long-term prisoners (Rook, 1982), the other in the half-open prisons for men (Kommer and Brouwers, 1986). Purpose of the inventory is to give insight in the composition of the population and in the nature and size of categories of prisoners who are problematic for the institutions.

For the two inventories of male prisoners no questions were asked of the prisoners themselves. Of women prisoners there are far less data than of male prisoners. Their position in the prison department is different from that of the men, while the possibilities for women are changing. This seemed reason enough to find out from the detained women themselves how they experience their imprisonment, what they think are the good and bad sides of it, what they would want to change and what their ideas for change are. Therefore it was decided to do a survey of their experiences as well.

1.2 Planning and execution

At the start of the first survey, the inventory, at the end of 1986 there were three penitentiary institutions for women: in Groningen (10 places), in Maastricht (37 places) and in Amsterdam (87 places). The survey contains all the women who were detained in one of those places at that time. On the basis of the results of the two surveys named above and talks with members of different disciplines in the three institutions two questionnaires were made: one to be filled in by officers, the other for the medical profession. Of the questionnaires of the officers 18 were not filled in, the medical profession filled in all of them. Also some administrative and judicial data were collected. Judicial data for seven persons are missing.

After all data had been processed, talks were held in the three institutes with directors, prison officers and the medical profession to check whether the results gave a good impression of the average situation there.

The second survey among the women prisoners themselves took place from may to july 1987. During the summer of that year two new institutions for women were opened; this was too late to include them in the survey. All the women who stayed in one of the three institutes concerned received a letter of introduction and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the survey. Those who wanted to participate and had been in the institute for at least two to three weeks, so they had some experience with prison life, were asked to sign a declaration that they participated voluntarily. The questionnaire contained both closed and open questions.

1.3 Participation

In the first survey data were collected for all 133 women who stayed in one of the three institutes at that time. For the second survey 135 women were asked to participate (more than the number of places: a number of women left or entered during the survey). Interviews have been held with 107 women (79%), 57 of which in the dutch language. Five women were interviewed with the help of fellow-prisoners. Of the 28 women who have not been interviewed this was because of language-problems for two, one was missed because she was on transport and 25 did not want to participate. A comparison of administrative data of participants and non-participants showed no important differences between the two groups.

1.4 Report

In the first paragraph of chapter 2 a description is given of the three institutions. Paragraph 2.2 consists of administrative data, some demographic (age, nationality) and some judicial (length of sentence, sort of offense, former offenses).

In chapter 3 to 9 the answers from the interviews with the women in detention and from the questionnaires of officers and medical profession are described per subject. In these chapters there are no tables and percentages and numbers are not mentioned every time. When the description says 'most' or 'the majority' of the women, this means at least 60% of the group discussed, 'many' means more than half of them and 'a group' is always a number of 10-15 persons.

In chapter 3 aspects of the passage through the institutions are described, such as placement on a pavilion, transfers, leave and preparation for the return to society. In chapter 4 the daily program is discussed. Subjects are work, activities, airing and meals. Chapter 5 deals with contacts of prisoners with services and persons within the institution, as far as these don't concern the helping professions, work or activities. Contacts with persons outside the institutions are discussed in chapter 6. Chapter 7 is about the physical and mental health of the women in detention and services and persons concerned. In chapter 8 foreign women are discussed separately, because they are a large group with specific problems. The last chapter contains the answers of the women to the questions what they think is the nicest and what is the worst in their prison life.

2 Some characteristics of the women prisoners

2.1 The institutions

From 1972 onwards all women spent their term of imprisonment in the remand center and prison in Rotterdam. This institute had 50 places. At the beginning of 1978 the whole institute moved to the prison complex in Amsterdam. The number of places was enlarged to 70 places. In the same year the places for women in Maastricht became available, so the total capacity was now 107 places. In 1980 10 cells for women in Groningen were taken into use. With the enlargement of the institute in Amsterdam with 5 open places and a pavilion in a tower for men the total capacity came to 134 places.

During the summer of 1987 two more institutions have been opened: a remand center/prison (44 places) and an open prison (6 places) in Utrecht and a half-open prison in Sevenum (42 places), so the total capacity now is 226 places. In the next paragraphs a description of the three institutions concerned in this survey will be given.

2.1.1 Groningen

The institution for women in Groningen is connected with the remand center for men. It has a capacity of 10 cells, where women can stay for a maximum of three months. In practice they often stay longer than three months.

There is an open regime, in which no distinction is made between those who have been sentenced and those who have not. Except for breakfast all meals are taken together. People can work half-time, possibilities for work are: textile, cleaning and work that can be done in the cell. The activities program consists of creativity, drawing, guitar playing, sewing lessons, sports, education, day-release courses and games.

Every inmate can receive visitors once a week for an hour. At the time of the survey they could make one private telephone call a week, this now is twice a week.

Personnel must see to it that there is no contact between male and female prisoners. Telephone calls or visits with male prisoners may only take place with the directors consent.

2.1.2 Maastricht

The remand center in Maastricht has two separate wings for female prisoners, with a total capacity of 37 cells. During the first survey the institution functioned

as a remand center and a prison. Women under remand enter the institution at pavilion A, which has 24 places and a closed regime. Pavilion B has 13 places and an open regime. During the first survey it had 4 open places and 9 places for self-reporters. Since January 1987 both pavilions are remand center. Self-reporters were always called to report at Maastricht before this date, now they have to report at Sevenum.

Inmates can work half-time, alternating between mornings and afternoons. In a remand center one does not have to work, but those who do not go to work have to stay in their cells during work-hours. The work consists of work in the laundry, assembly shop or kitchen, cleaning and cell-work. The activities program consists of sports, creativity, debating groups, education, day-release courses, body-care and flower arrangement. For the creativity course a small contribution in cost is asked. Incidentally other activities take place, like theatre, films and concerts.

Once a week inmates can get books from the library and also once a week they can buy things in the shop.

At the time of the survey every prisoner had the right to have visitors for one hour a week and once every month for an additional hour. This now has become two hours a week. Prisoners may use the telephone three times a week for twenty minutes altogether and at their own cost. Officers can listen in on the calls.

2.1.3 Amsterdam

The penitentiary institute for women in Amsterdam is housed in one of the towers of the Penitentiary 'Over Amstel' and has its own directors. The institute for women has 8 pavilions.

- Pavilion 1a and 1b are a remand center with 20 places and a closed regime.
- Pavilion 2 is a prison for long-term prisoners and has 10 places and a closed regime.
- Pavilion 3 is a prison for long-term prisoners. It has 10 places and a half-open regime.
- Pavilion 4 and 5 each have 10 places for long-term prisoners and an open regime.
- Pavilion 6 is the pavilion of entrance. It is a remand center with 10 places and a closed regime.
- Pavilion 7 is an open pavilion for 5 women who have been selected for an open prison (POI).
- Pavilion 8 is a remand center with a half-open regime for 12 women who have been selected for this pavilion. The pavilion has one larger cell which is shared by three women.

In principle the women in Amsterdam work the whole day and in the mornings the work may not be interrupted. Women who have been sentenced have to work, those on remand may choose to do so, but if they do they have to keep to the same rules as the others. The work consists of work in the laundry, laundrette, assembly shop or textile shop or is packing, cleaning or cell-work.

In the afternoons there is time for airing, visits and activities. If one does not partake in one of these, one has to work. The activities are sports, jazz-ballet, yoga, cooking, free expression, textiles, sewing, music, hairdresser, education and

several day-release courses. Every now and then things like theatre, pop-concerts, films, competitions and disco are organized. Once a week the women can go to the library and also once a week to the shop.

Visits can take place during one hour a week. Long-term prisoners have two hours a week and can also use the possibility to receive visitors without supervision. Telephone-calls may be made once a week for 10 minutes.

2.2 Some characteristics of the women in detention

In this paragraph some characteristics of the population will be given. In the description figures from both the first and second survey will be given respectively.

2.2.1 Age

The mean age of the whole population is 31 and 32 years respectively.

Table 1: Age

	first survey	second survey
18-22 years	12 (9%)	8 (6%)
23-29 years	54 (41%)	49 (36%)
30-39 years	46 (35%)	55 (41%)
40 years and over	21 (16%)	23 (17%)
	133 (100%)	135 (100%)

2.2.2 Nationality

The number of foreign women increased during the research period. In the first survey almost three quarters of the prisoners has the Dutch nationality, during the second survey it is 59%. The same happens to land of birth: 47% and 34% respectively has been born in the Netherlands.

Table 2: Nationality

	first survey	second survey
Dutch	95 (71%)	79 (59%)
Surinam	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
West European	6 (5%)	7 (5%)
South European	4 (3%)	5 (4%)
South American	18 (14%)	28 (21%)
North American	1 (1%)	3 (2%)
Asian	6 (5%)	10 (7%)
African	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
	133 (100%)	135 (100%)

Remarkable is the relatively high number of women with a South American nationality: they are half of those with another than the Dutch nationality. Most of them are Columbians.

A quarter and 37% respectively of the women does not live in the Netherlands and 25% or 42% respectively does not speak Dutch.

2.2.3 Title

Of the women who were in the institutions at the time of the research about half has been sentenced to confinement. The decrease in the number of convicted women is due to the fact that during the first six months of 1987 no self-reporters were called.

Table 3: Title

	first survey	second survey
sentenced to confinement	62 (47%)	66 (49%)
self-reporter	11 (8%)	-
alternative custody	2 (2%)	-
pre-trial detention	54 (41%)	67 (50%)
principal custody	-	1 (1%)
expulsion	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
awaiting psychiatric placement	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
	133 (100%)	135 (100%)

2.2.4 Length of confinement

The mean of the length of confinement is three years in the first survey and three years and four months in the second survey.

Table 4: Length of confinement

	first survey	second survey
0-3 months	6 (8%)	2 (3%)
>3-6 months	9 (12%)	2 (3%)
>6 months-1 year	8 (11%)	10 (15%)
>1-2 years	17 (23%)	17 (25%)
>2-4 years	19 (26%)	23 (34%)
>4 years	14 (19%)	13 (19%)
	73 (100%)	67 (100%)

79% and 94% of the convicted women received long sentences. Of this group the mean length of confinement is three and a half years.

During the interviews women remarked that a long sentence has no use at all, but rather the opposite effect: they say that a few months in prison deters, but that the longer you are inside, the more feelings of hate you get. They think it

should be taken into account more, that for many women this is the first time they are in conflict with justice and they say that more often a conditional sentence should be given, so you have the chance to behave yourself and stay out of prison.

2.2.5 Sort of offense

Table 5 shows for which offenses the women have their present confinement. If they are imprisoned for more than one offense the one with the highest sanction has been taken.

Table 5: Offense of present imprisonment

	first survey	second survey
property offense	36 (27%)	28 (21%)
serious violent offense	21 (16%)	17 (13%)
drug offense	68 (52%)	84 (62%)
other	5 (4%)	6 (4%)
	130 (100%)	135 (100%)

More than half of the offenses are drug offenses. In the first survey these offenses are committed in half of the number of cases by foreign women, in the second survey in 64% of the cases. Of the property offenses one third of the number of cases included violence. The category 'other' are less serious violent offenses, sex offenses and traffic offenses.

One woman is in prison for a misdemeanor and two are awaiting expulsion.

2.2.6 Criminal past

Of the women in prison 38% has never had any contacts with the criminal justice system before, as far as is known. 19% has been sentenced before, but not to imprisonment and 15% had contact with the justice system, but was not convicted. 28% has formerly been sentenced to imprisonment. If one leaves out the foreign women these percentages are higher, because the criminal records of only a few of them are documented in the Netherlands. Therefore these women will be left out of the following description.

Table 6: Criminal past of the Dutch women (n=100)

	former contacts	former convictions	former imprisonment
none	21%	40%	66%
1	14%	22%	12%
2-5	24%	26%	15%
>5	41%	12%	7%
	100%	100%	100%

Of the Dutch women 79% committed one or more offenses before the present one, with a mean of 12 (drug addicts have a mean of 16, non-addicts of 2). Most of these offenses were property offenses without violence (82%). In table 7 the four offenses which occur most often are presented together with the percentage of women who committed these offenses at least once before the present offense.

Table 7: Sort of offense and percentage of women who committed them (n=100)

property offense without violence	65%
property offense with violence	19%
violent offense	17%
drug offense	44%

A number of women (34%) were convicted to confinement at least once before the present offense with a mean duration of one year.

Table 8: Age at time of first contact and first conviction (n=100)

age	first contact	first conviction
12-18 years	22%	15%
18-23 years	28%	28%
23-30 years	36%	34%
30-40 years	11%	20%
≥40 years	3%	3%
	100%	100%

The average age at the first contact is 25 years and at the first conviction 26 years.

3 The passage through the institutions

When a woman is arrested she mostly spends some time in a police-cell and from there she is taken to a remand center. If she has only a short sentence to serve she may stay there until release; if she has a longer sentence she will go to a prison after the conviction; up to the summer of 1987 and in this survey this was always pavilion 2 in Amsterdam. Before the conviction women prisoners are mostly transferred once or twice to another pavilion or another institution, in prison they pass through pavilions 2 to 5 and sometimes they spend the last few months in the open prison. From pavilion 5 or the open prison they return to society.

3.1 Entrance in the institution

For most of the women who enter a remand center this is their first encounter with prison. They often are insecure, confused and have no idea what to expect. One woman told us: *'when I came here I was only allowed contact with officers, who kept asking me about my case. I knew of nothing and thought they tried to pump me. Only later did I understand they were just curious and that I didn't need to say anything if I did not want to'*. Another woman described her entrance thus: *'you don't know what happens to you when you get here, there was so much screaming, such a noise, my fellow inmates frightened me to death. At first I did not want to get involved in anything, I sat there sulking and was dead tired all of the time'*. The newly arrived badly need some assurance, but if they get a load of information all at once their confusion only increases. Several women suggest that the daily routine, rules and rights be explained in a number of talks and on paper in a language one can understand. How important it is to know where you are, is made clear by the fact that nearly every woman stressed this point. Also the rules are different from pavilion to pavilion and with every team and if you are not well informed the following things may happen to you: you have been arrested and your worried mother sends you a large parcel full of goodies; after it has arrived it appears that you are not allowed to receive most of the things. Or you have moved to another pavilion and hear that there you may stay away from work if some day you don't feel like it. You gladly take a day off and only then they tell you that you now may not work all week. Examples of such 'learning through experience' are plenty. The subjects on which information is very much wanted are: the daily routine on the pavilion where you live, practical information on what you may and may not do in your cell, what you can receive or rent, what to expect from your trial, how long it can take, information on work, activities and arrangements for visits and telephone.

3.2 Transfer

The inmates say a transfer to another pavilion is a great change for them. They enter a whole new environment with new people and it takes time to get settled and make new friends. Quite a few women like this: *'you stay together too long', 'after a while you get tired and do not get along with some of the others anymore'*. Most women however want to advance to an increasingly more open regime and more freedom, but also would rather be on the same pavilion with the same people for a longer period of time: *'it is important to maintain contacts', 'it is better if you know the people better'*. As things are, one is not consulted before a transfer: if you do not want to go to another pavilion you still have to, you are not told why they transfer you and you get no time to prepare yourself for it. One woman said it is possible for an officer to come to someone and say: *'get your things, you are leaving'*. What else to think but that you are going home? It is a terrible blow when it becomes clear you're only being transferred.

When you have been sentenced but not yet transferred to the prison you cannot have the privileges of the prison-regime. This is thought to be unfair.

About half of the women, who answered the question whether they would like to be transferred to another prison, say they would. They hope to be nearer their home there or to get more freedom and better accommodations: *'if there is a prison that isn't so grey'*.

3.3 Prison leave

Officers were asked which women they thought would be suitable to spend their detention in a half-open prison, with an open regime and the possibility of monthly leave. They think that nearly three quarters of all the women would be suitable, some of them foreigners, although these women are excluded from leave and therefore cannot be selected for a half-open or open prison. In Maastricht the officers say it is hard to estimate whether women from the remand center would really do well in such an institute. Their conduct in the remand center makes them think it would be alright, but you never know how people will react to different circumstances.

According to the officers 28 women went on leave. They kept to the agreements made, with the exception of the very few who came back too late or under the influence.

Particularly foreign women, but also Dutch women in the remand center are hardly aware of the rules concerning leave. Those who know them think it unfair that foreigners can never go on leave, they think it takes too long before you can have leave and say that the possibility to go on leave should not depend on the length of your sentence. They also say: *'if you get a negative advice you can forget about it. You have to play up to people in order to get things done', 'the reason why you cannot go is often obscure'*.

Dutch women as well as foreign women think that everybody should have the chance to go on leave. For foreign women people should be found who will be a guarantee for them. They say: *'I would like to be able to go outside, particularly as I have no visitors either. I have no money, no passport, nor any friends here, so I*

have no choice but to return. For those who have no address they can go to, there should be some sort of "halfway house", where they could also stay for a while after release, if they have not yet found a place to stay'.

It is also suggested that women should get leave sooner, so they will have the opportunity to gradually get used to society again; if leave were to be given after long intervals at first and then gradually more frequently, the transition from the inside to the outside world would take a smoother course.

3.4 Preparation for the return to society

For the last months of their detention some women go to an open prison, where they work outside and manage their own living again. On all the other pavilions you are completely taken care of. Prisoners say that after a while you get so used to this that you forget what a normal life is like: you loose your ability to handle money or cook potatoes, so to speak. They claim it is necessary to take some responsibility for your own well-being, particularly if you have a long sentence. Gradually you should be allowed to do things yourself again, like cooking, washing and shopping. At a certain moment you should be able to handle real money again and occasionally go outside for your shopping. One woman says: *'I am turning into a robot. The outside world frightens me after such a long sheltered time inside'*. The inmates think it also important to get more and more responsibility for your movements and participation inside, without being sent or summoned. This could be realized by giving women a pass at a certain time, with which they can move freely throughout the institution.

Lastly there are some practical things which should be taken care of before release, like housing, social security, a passport, the date of expulsion and contacts with social work. Foreign women often cannot go back home after they've been in jail, they think they should be allowed to stay in Holland if they've behaved well.

3.5 Planning the detention

Most of the women interviewed would like to draw up a plan for the period of their detention together with staff-members. They think it is important to get some idea of what your detention will look like, to know the different phases from the first up to the last, open pavilion with the rights and possibilities you achieve. Such a plan should be drawn up in the beginning and be reviewed regularly. A good moment to review it again would be before a transfer. Staff and inmate could then consult on her behaviour, the reason for transfer and the possibilities on the next pavilion. The woman herself should have a say in these sort of changes.

They also say it is important to pay attention in this plan to the way in which the time in detention can be used. *'You would need to have good relations with the staff. They will ask you: "what are your plans", like getting an education and getting stronger', 'I would like to learn how to get a strong mind to be able not to start using drugs again and get a job-training, something in electronics'*. Support is very important to keep your motivation up throughout the years.

Preparation for the return to society should also be included in the plan. This means the planning of leave, the getting of responsibilities inside the institution and practical matters, like housing and social security, as well as the terms when they are to take place.

4 The daily program

On every pavilion there are set times for unlocking, meals, airing, work, activities and recreation. The daily program is different for each institution. As said before one can work the whole day in Amsterdam, while in Maastricht and Groningen they only work half of the day. Inmates of a remand center do not have to work, if they do not go to work they are locked in their cell during work-hours. Apart from work inmates can do all sorts of activities. They can choose which activities they want to do. The number and sort of activities is not the same in every institution. In this chapter the subjects are work, activities, airing and meals.

4.1 Work

Nearly all of the women go to work, even in the remand center. They work to pass the time, to be out of their cells and to make some money. At work they joke with the personnel and talk about the work and daily things. Every now and then more personal things are discussed. Almost half of the women never talk with the personnel, sometimes because they do not feel a need to or do not like each other, but mostly because of language-problems.

More than half of the women are satisfied with the work they do; they say: *'you go places, you see and hear things'*, *'you have to work hard, so you get a lot of exercise and time goes fast'*, *'you are out of your cell'*. A third of the women is dissatisfied: *'this is work for idiots'*, *'I work like a madman and it is very hard and dirty work'*. This is said most often about the laundry and assembly shop in Amsterdam. The assembly shop is also thought to be small and stuffy, while at the laundry a lot of the women complain about the personnel they have to work with; they do not think highly of them. In Groningen and Maastricht, where the women can only work half-time they very often would like to work more.

The women think the pay is bad considering the work that gets done. You can earn from f 3,80 to f 5,25 a day, which is a maximum of f 26,25 a week (in Amsterdam f 52,00 for a full-time week). The earnings are mostly spent on the rental of a tv-set and cigarettes and food from the prison shop. In Amsterdam quite a few women form groups to cook meals in the evenings in egg-boilers. They say the shop is very expensive; you never make enough money to buy everything you need in that shop, but you are not allowed to import things. The shop is only open once a week and you are hurried to get your things as quickly as possible. Spanish is not spoken there and the lists with articles are only in Dutch.

There were several suggestions made in the interviews for work the women would like to do, like: job-training, administrative work, jobs in the printing trade and designing and making clothes.

4.2 Activities

The activities are very popular; only a few people do not take part in any of them. Sports and education have the highest participation, but the other activities often attract a lot of partakers too. In Amsterdam the so-called social cultural worker, who organizes and sometimes supervises activities, is also someone to whom a lot of women come for a chat or a serious talk.

Two thirds of the women who partake of the activities are satisfied with them. They enjoy them, it takes their mind off things and some were pleasantly surprised to find that there are such a lot of things to do in a prison. The others are less enthusiastic. Although they partake as much as the others they are more critical (those who say they are satisfied also offer critical comments). The following comments on the activities in general are made quite a few times:

- The activities do not last long enough and often time is lost, because you have to wait or-get called too late. Too often you only hear that something is cancelled at the last minute, when you're already on your way.
- There are not enough activities; too often you get bored from just hanging around (Maastricht and Groningen).
- The activities are not taken seriously enough, not professionally enough.

The last may be so, because the motivation for doing an activity can differ a lot: some people want to learn something or have a special interest, so they are very serious, others like to be together and chat while doing something and some just hate work and take every opportunity to get away from it (Amsterdam).

There are thirty-nine women who cannot go to certain activities, although they would like to. About half of them, in Amsterdam, have enrolled, but never been called, sometimes because there is a waiting-list, but mostly they just never heard of it again. One woman says she has been to yoga once and never been called since. The yoga teacher has asked why she has not come again, but the woman herself cannot find out, because she gets vague and different answers to her questions about it. The other half cannot go because of their bodily condition, because they have no information or because of language-problems.

In Maastricht women ask for a better setup of the creative course: now there is no help and often no materials. Moreover, you are not allowed to take the things you have made with you.

Many women would like to have more sports than they have now. They would also like to have more variation in the program: *'it is too often the same, always ball games'*. Some women say they do not attend sports, because it is too rough and things get fought out there. The following suggestions are made for extra sports: outdoor games, like football and baseball, tennis, fitness training, fighting sports, badminton, swimming, aerobics and games against teams from the outside. Suggestions for extra activities are mostly for classes in expression, like drama, music, song and dance, or for group activities, like having a barbecue, films and games.

Education is thought to be important, which is clear from the high rate of attendance and the many remarks made on the subject. Many women have good contacts with teachers and think their lessons are good. They say: *'I like the lessons very much, you get clear answers to your questions and suggestions are taken'*. There are also a lot of critical comments: there are not enough teachers, the lessons are too short and not often enough (which for some is a reason not to go at all), you do not always get called and very often lessons are cancelled or changed. It is also said that the standard of learning is not very high, some subjects are not mastered and learning equipment is all in Dutch. Lastly some think the lessons should be taken more seriously, those who don't work ought to be thrown out. To improve teaching the following suggestions are made: more possibilities for study and vocational training, selection of pupils into groups with the same level and motivation and more and longer lessons a week.

4.3 Airing

Airing is very important to the women. It is mostly the only time of day they are outside and get some fresh air and they agree that they do not get enough of it. They spend the rest of the day inside and particularly in the cells it is very stuffy. In Amsterdam the air-conditioning is very bad, there is hardly any ventilation, the grating is stopped up most of the time, a lot of women suffer from headaches and you can tell from the condition of eyes, skin and hair that the environment is very unhealthy.

In Maastricht the airing often is at half past eight in the morning, so you are inside for the rest of the day. Airing now often takes place in groups. If you were to put these together all women could be outside longer and it would be more enjoyable as well. Or there could be an extra outing in the evenings, as there is personnel present then.

4.4 Meals

'People outside think it is like a hotel inside, well, this is not true at all, the food is terrible', 'it is dog-food'. There is no dark brown bread, scarcely any variety in things to put on it or in vegetables, supper very often is cold, overcooked or raw and the food is not nearly nutritional enough. For foreign women it is worse, because they are also used to quite different sorts of food. The women would like to get facilities to cook for themselves, particularly the long-term prisoners.

5 Relations within the institution

During the detention there are a lot of people within the institution with whom the inmates communicate. The helping professions (doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, social workers and clergy) are discussed in chapter 7 and personnel concerned with work and activities in chapter 4. This chapter is about contacts with directors, head-officers, the service bureau, officers and fellow-prisoners.

5.1 Life on the pavilion

A large part of their time inmates spend on the pavilion where they live. During the time they are out of their cells they see a lot of their fellow-prisoners and prison officers. Contacts with them greatly determine the atmosphere at the living quarters. On a pavilion there are certain rules and it often depends on the inmates and officers how these rules are interpreted.

About half of all the women like it at their pavilion, foreign women more often than Dutch women. They say this is because the atmosphere is good, they get on well with the officers and fellow-prisoners, because rules and regulations aren't too strict and they feel they have some freedom. Some think that for a prison it is quite nice and a few women say it depends upon yourself how you experience your life there.

A bone of discontention is that you have to spend so much time in your cell and that the door is bolted at all times. *'Particularly during the weekends the mornings are hard to get through'*. Besides there is discontentment about the scarcity of activities and recreation, the dependence upon others to get anything done and rules about transfers. Confusion is caused by the officers who do not all work according to the same set of rules. Language-problems can cause a division between women and some feel they are left out, because they cannot speak Dutch.

The behaviour of fellow inmates can be annoying: *'the stealing and gossip'*, *'there is a lot of jealousy'*, *'there are always fights'*, *'women form groups you cannot join'*. Aggression is a rare thing in all the institutes though, in prison even less than in the remand center. According to the officers half of the women have shown some aggression at one time or another, bodily aggression was directed against an officer once, against fellow-prisoners nine times, but most aggressive behaviour is understandable, an outburst at one moment and no more than that. If someone is considered to be really aggressive personnel can be careful in not turning their back on this woman and not unlock her cell alone. At the pavilion of entrance in Amsterdam it is a rule that unlocking is always done by two officers, because they have to get to know the woman first.

If a woman wants to be alone she can always go to her cell. Others respect this, someone may come and ask her something or look in on her, but only a few women complain that they are not left in peace. Others never have the urge to retreat, they think they spend enough time in their cells as it is. Women in prison seem to have enough privacy in this respect.

A lack of privacy is felt however because you are never allowed to be alone with someone in your cell, because everything that is yours (even your letters) is accessible to others or because some people want to know everything about you.

It is not surprising that most women would not like to share their cell: *'we'll murder one another', 'better keep some privacy', 'I think it is good that you are given a report if you are in somebody else's cell'*. Remarkable is the fact that more than a quarter of them does not immediately reject the possibility of sharing a cell. *'I like talking, when you're alone you often feel sad', 'you can do things together then, get through your detention together'*. A number of conditions must be met, however, before living together could have a chance of being successful: the rooms should be bigger and you must be allowed to choose whether you want to live with someone or not. If you do, you also must be able to choose your roommate, because you have get on well together and must speak one another's language. A number of women in Amsterdam has experience, they lived in the room for three on pavilion 8: sometimes this went wrong, because they got into fights, sometimes it turned out to be fine and it prevented women from getting too lonely.

Most of the women who would care for a roommate were from the remand center. A prison regime apparently gives one more room to fulfill the need of human contact.

5.2 Fellow-prisoners

According to the questionnaires filled out by the officers 22 women were not taken into the group at their pavilion because of language-problems or behaviour. 12 of these women did have a friend, however, so they were not completely isolated. In Groningen it is practically impossible to be isolated, because as soon as you are out off your cell you are with the others and things are done as a group most of the time. If someone does not belong, there are always women who try to get her involved. In Maastricht the inmates are closer to one another since they have group-evaluations. They are more than before prepared to listen to one another and accept the others. If some woman isolates herself in spite of this the officers give her more attention. Although not often, it happens that in Amsterdam a women is not accepted because of her deviant behaviour. It is hard to do something about this, except transfer her, because you cannot easily interfere with a group interaction. But women who are isolated at their pavilion mostly have contacts at work or at the activities.

More than 60% of the women themselves say they get on well with most of the other inmates, the others are friendly with a group of others and only a few have only one friend or none at all. In Groningen and Maastricht most women get on well with most of the others, in Amsterdam people more often get on with a group. With one or a few others most women are more intimate: they can talk

with them about everything and trust them with their problems: *'There are two women I trust, with the others I get on well enough, but with them I can really talk', 'I get along fine with everybody, I have one good friend and a group of five that we go about with', 'everybody has problems, so I don't want to bother them with mine, but if it were necessary there are one or two I could go to'*.

A quarter of all the women says they cannot talk about private matters: *'you can't talk about everything in prison, you must not commit yourself, not talk about private matters, just chat a bit', 'I trust no one, only myself', 'it is dangerous to tell too much. You say something small and because they talk it gets out of proportion'*. A difference in language is a handicap if you want to talk intimately with someone.

Prisoners who are rather avoided by the others are those who show deviant behaviour, particularly aggression. Drug addicts are also named: they talk only about drugs, are not to be trusted and put fellow prisoners under pressure. Some women do not want to associate with those who committed certain crimes or of a certain nationality: *'they have a different mentality'*. A few avoid most others, because they're so different from themselves.

5.3 Officers

Of all the people who work in the prison the officers are the ones the prisoners see most of. Their relation will for a large part be determining the atmosphere on the pavilions. Contacts between prisoners and officers seem to be closer in Groningen and Maastricht than in Amsterdam: they have more talks there and women have the idea that their well-being is considered more. In Amsterdam more negative remarks were made about the relations.

Most women say they get on reasonably well with the officers: *'they generally are reasonable people, some are great, some a bit less so, but that is normal', 'if you behave yourself and treat one another with respect, it's fine', 'most of them are very nice'*. The fact that they get on well with one another does not mean there is closeness or intimacy: *'they are nice but you don't see much of them and you can't talk to them', 'most of them treat us humanely, but we are not friends', 'I get on with most of them, we talk, but at a distance'*.

A quarter of the women never talks with officers. Some of them have problems with the language, they get the feeling officers rather see Dutch women, the others think them too uninterested, *'they are always sitting in their den'*, or are not interested themselves. Those last ones only ask for things they need. One woman said she tried to be as inconspicuous as possible, *'a low profile is your best defense'*, it makes the chances of making mistakes and being punished smallest. Another said: *'I don't relate to bus- or cabdrivers either'*.

Three quarters of the women talk with officers about daily things and news. A lot of them also discuss personal things with the ones they like and trust. Others explicitly do not, because too much gets passed on and they don't want the whole institution to know.

If the officers take trouble it is appreciated a lot: *'I have had a lot of talks with them recently, which helped me very much', 'they will write for you, explain things and if you cry they don't get angry but comfort you', 'they're great, always have a*

listening ear and keep an eye on you to see you don't get a down', 'they play games with us, try to have some contact in spite of the language barrier' and 'they are no longer in uniform, you feel less like a prisoner, more like friends (Groningen)'.

If they treat the inmates unjustly or badly the reactions are very strong: 'Officers? Dallas is nothing compared to them! Among themselves they talk about us as "rabble" and "riff-raff"', 'some treat us like animals', 'you have to behave very childishly, as if you have no brains', 'I don't trust them, there is too much gossip. They want to know all of your troubles, but everything gets passed on. I don't want to be mothered by them, you get landed with their frustrations' and 'the young ones put themselves above you, they look down their nose'.

When asked whether they prefer either male or female officers about half of the women says it makes no difference to them. Others think it important that both sexes are represented in equal numbers. Of the rest of them women in Amsterdam more often prefer male officers and in Maastricht female officers.

A group of women would prefer it if male and female officers had different tasks. They would rather see only females at moments when they are undressed or in nightdress and rather ask them for sanitary towels. Men are important to have when there is an emergency, like a fight.

The following differences between men and women were named most often: it is easier to talk with women, it is more intimate and they understand you better. Women are also called more severe, nosier and more interfering and they were often blamed for just sitting and drinking coffee, while the men more often engaged prisoners in a game. Hardly any woman said she could more easily talk to a man, but they are thought to be friendlier and more easy-going than women. They will sooner make a joke, the atmosphere is more relaxed when there are men around.

5.4 Intimacies

Intimacies between personnel and prisoners or between prisoners themselves form a difficult topic. There are special rules to avoid them, like the rule that two people may not be in the same cell together. It seems however that this sort of relation is not easily discussed, while the attitude of people towards the subject varies widely. A description of the, often slight, remarks made on the subject may give some insight.

A number of women comments on the fact that there are visible relations within the institution: *'a lot of hugging and kissing in public, you learn bad things inside, it is no life'* and *'the ministry should do something about it, we need contacts with men'*. For some this is a reason why they would never want to share their room: *'it won't work, I had a proposal already'*. Others complain about the restrictions placed upon them: *'you are not allowed to see anyone in the privacy of your room, if you ask after someone you haven't seen for a while they immediately think something of it'*. Some report that women who have a relationship with one another often are transferred or that, if their friend lives on another pavilion, contacts between them are made impossible. The separation is felt to be worse because not all relations are treated in the same way and because there is no sympathy for the grief they feel. Also it is mostly denied that having this relation

is the reason for the measures taken, while the women concerned are sure this is so. This makes talking about it impossible, which is very frustrating.

Officers say that a relation causes problems if one of the two is not interested or if the couple behaves in such a way that others are annoyed by it: *'if they are on top of each other all the time; I don't like that from any-one'*. It depends on the attitude of the members of the personnel themselves how they react: some don't mind at all, others do. In the questionnaires lesbian relations are not often mentioned as being a problem, but in later talks it is said that it is often annoying: *'you have to part them all the time and it happens a lot'*.

Many women say they have been approached by a fellow inmate, but a simple 'no' usually suffices, so they are rather laconic about it. A few women really were harassed: one of them had to have a big fight before she was left in peace, another still feels unsafe in the showers because nothing had been done in her case.

Sometimes the attitude of inmates towards male personnel gives problems. Three inmates themselves say they have been harassed by personnel. They could talk about their bad experience with friends or other members of the personnel. A wanted relation between inmate and personnel also occurred. Both from the side of the prisoners and of the personnel this is regarded to be a bad thing, because they think that the inequality of the partners turns it into misuse of the woman. A woman who has fallen in love with an officer has a hard time of it, she says: *'I need a man, I nearly explode. This being in love is both the nicest and worst thing at the moment; it is very frustrating, one discovers one's weaknesses like the need for attention and at the same time you can do nothing about it'*.

5.5 Directors, head-officers and the service bureau

As often as prisoners see the officers so little do they see the directors. Most inmates never see them at all and often they do not even know who they are. Many inmates think this is a very bad situation: *'they never show themselves; they ought to see everyone at least once, in this way they never get to know us'*, *'getting a report is your only chance of ever seeing them'*. Personnel can give prisoners a report for breaking the rules, like refusing work or an order from an officer, possession of forbidden substances or aggression. These reports are dealt with by a director, who hears the prisoner and determines the punishment. Mostly the punishment is one or more days in one's own cell, or in severe cases a special cell. In Amsterdam about 11 reports a month are given, in Maastricht about 6 and in Groningen seldomly. Requests for a talk often are not replied to, so the only way to get to speak to a director indeed seems to be a report. Yet some inmates have seen the director under special circumstances or when there were specific problems. A few even have regular talks, much to their satisfaction. Most cases however are handled by head-officers: *'I once asked for a talk. A head-officer then came to see me, that was not what I wanted! I had asked for the director'*. If there is something the matter you can always go to a head-officer; they talk to you and see what they can do. There are not a lot of women who say they have made use of them, however.

Less than half the women has had anything to do with the service bureau. Foreign women hardly ever make use of this service probably because one of its

main tasks is the arranging of leave for which they never qualify. Opinions on this service differ. A complaint often heard is that they do not have enough time to spare (particularly in Amsterdam) and that you have to wait far too long for an answer, if anything gets done at all: *'I rather do everything myself, if you ask them it'll take till next year'*. Other women are happy about the service bureau. They say they have good relations and always are helped very quickly.

6 Contacts with people outside the institutions

Prisoners can have contacts with people outside the institution by visits, telephone and letters. They can try to maintain relations they already had before the imprisonment, although this often is very hard and entails a good many problems. Sometimes they acquire new relations, for instance with male prisoners or volunteers who visit. Also a lot of women see a lawyer or probation officer.

What these people have in common and which is very important, is the fact that they do not belong to the small prison world. They are not involved with this life, where everybody, more than in life outside, must weigh her words and actions against their possible consequences. The contacts with those people therefore are essentially different.

6.1 Home situation

Before their incarceration one third of the women lived alone, about half of them with their partners and the rest with relations. More than half of them will return to the same situation after release. More foreign than Dutch women gave this answer. Some women don't know yet where they will go.

For the others their home situation most certainly will be different. Most of them do not know exactly how: they have nowhere to go, have lost their house or do not want to go back to the same situation. Some of them do not want to go back to the same partner or will live with a new partner. Others will leave the neighborhood and will start a new life somewhere else. Women who do not possess the Dutch nationality can be expelled.

6.2 Visits, telephone and letters

Apart from those women who are excluded from any contacts with others, all women have contacts with their family, relations or friends. More than a third of them have no visitors: 7 Dutch and 28 foreign women. It is not surprising that the contacts of foreign women mostly are by telephone or letter. For those who come from far away countries it is often far too expensive to telephone, though.

Three foreigners have volunteers visiting them, others would like this too. Most women detest the constant control on every form of contact they have with the outside world: they feel badly hampered in the only contacts they consider to be private. During visits officers *'sit on top of you, they watch you all the time'*, and *'sometimes even join in the conversation'*. So, apart from more or longer

visits, the women badly want some more privacy or the possibility to have private visits from more people than is possible now.

With regard to the telephone and letters they made the following suggestions: Why not have pay-phones on the pavilions where you can call whenever and as long as you like? The incoming letters could be opened in your presence to check them for drugs and do not need to be read.

6.3 Family and children

Of 32 women the officers say they have problems regarding their partner or family. They have partner-problems or strained relations, for instance about the addiction of partner or parents or about the care for the children.

A lot of mothers have problems concerning their children and miss them very much, according to the officers. About 60% of the women has children. In most cases the children are with their father or with relations, some are with friends, with foster parents or in a home. One South American mother said that her children, from 3 to 16 years of age, are at home alone, a neighbour drops in every now and then. Another mother has no idea where her child is at the moment. A quarter of the mothers is not in touch with her children (sometimes because they are too small, they are in touch with their caretakers then). Half of the Dutch mothers are visited by their children, the other women phone and particularly foreign women write to them. At the time of this investigation three mothers had their children with them in jail.

All women were asked how they would like it if children were allowed to stay with their mothers in prison up to the school-going age. More than half of them did not think this a good idea: they think the living conditions very bad, without room to move and with a hard and tense atmosphere, where too many people would interfere with the child. They suggest to improve the existing regulations by organizing afternoons for children more often, by allowing visits to the pavilion and by giving the mothers the chance to visit their children. Nearly half of the women embraced the idea: *'the most important thing for children is not the environment, but the presence of their mother'*. Some think it would only benefit the child up to a certain age (2, 3 years). The surroundings would need to be adjusted to the presence of children, in such a way that they have more freedom, that they can be outside and can play with other children. One woman names a prison in Spain as an example, where there is a separate pavilion for mothers and children with baby-care, an outdoor playground and a school.

6.4 Contacts with male prisoners

40% of the women tries to get in touch with male prisoners. In Amsterdam this happens least, which is probably because of the housing situation. In nearly every case contacts consist of waving and signalling from the airing-place or letters. Sometimes letters get smuggled across, personnel has no control on those. Personnel does not consider these contacts to be problematic. Sometimes they would rather not see such relations, because there are many examples where they went wrong, but you can't stop them. It often happens that women, as soon as

they can see the men's quarters and can signal to them, get totally absorbed and are no longer open to any suggestion: nothing else exists for them then. Such behaviour causes the officers a lot of irritation.

6.5 Probation and lawyer

Eighty women see a probation officer. They talk with them about their case, about arrangements for after their release, their family and children, the situation in prison and problems with addiction. Together with them reports are made for the trial, suspension, leave and pardon. Most of the women are satisfied with the help they get, they feel it does them some good. A quarter of them is not satisfied. They feel nothing is being done for them or they feel pushed in a direction they do not want to go: *'he just blabs, takes no action at all and wants to send me to some sort of center I absolutely refuse to go to'*. Half of those women who are not in touch with a probation officer would like to be, some have already undertaken actions to get one.

Most women are also satisfied about their lawyers. Some suspend judgement till after trial and 14 are dissatisfied: *'he isn't interested, I never hear from him, I have no idea what's going on'*, *'she doesn't stand up against the judge'*, *'my sentence is much too high'*. Most contacts concern the trial, but after that a lot of things are dealt with by the lawyers: *'he talks with me a lot, is always prepared to do something'*, *'we write each other about the psychiatrist, suspension, probation and relations with my mother'*, *'tries to get me a pardon now'*.

7 Health

7.1 Helping professions within the institution

Eleven women say they have never been to the doctor after their intake interview. The other women saw the doctor with a varying frequency; some went once or twice, others twice a week. The reasons for needing medical attention were mostly physical complaints.

More than a quarter of the women is satisfied with the medical care, because they think they receive the right treatment and they feel they are taken seriously and meet with understanding and interest.

Negative remarks were made by 63 women. They say they think the doctor is not competent and therefore do not trust him, or they feel they are not taken seriously: when you have a complaint, nothing is done about it, you don't get medication and what you suffer from is called 'normal'. They also criticize the fact that their complaints too often are put down to tensions and nerves.

Two thirds of the women in Groningen and Maastricht and half of those in Amsterdam say they see or have seen a social worker. In Groningen all of them are content with their social worker, in Maastricht and Amsterdam about half of them: *'If I had not had that contact, I would have been nowhere, I would not have been able to get things straightened out by myself'*. The women who are not content think too little is done for them and too little time spared: *'she often has only five minutes to spare, she rather takes coffee breaks and it is much faster to organize things yourself'*. Women who do not speak Dutch or English mostly cannot make use of a social worker. In Amsterdam there was no social work at all at the time of the interviews: *'she suddenly didn't show up anymore and I have never seen her again'*. The women were very indignant, both at the fact that they were not informed about the departure of the social workers and at the fact that they were not replaced for such a long time: *'it is outrageous, a whole tower without social work'*, *'I don't know how I must organize things at the moment, I don't even know where all my documents are'*.

Also two thirds of the women see someone of the clergy and most of them are very content with them. Particularly the father in Amsterdam is thought to be fantastic, you can talk with him about everything, he is always ready and willing to help. To many he is a sort of social worker.

Seven women have (had) a good contact with the psychiatrist and (only in Amsterdam) nine with the psychologist. The others do not think they need them or do not know them, a few think they are not able. A group of women criticises the psychiatrist in Amsterdam, because they think she does not function well.

7.2 Alcohol and drugs

7.2.1 Addiction

According to the medical services five women had an alcohol addiction and 49 women used drugs before the detention. 45 women were addicted to drugs, only four of them from foreign countries. It is estimated that generally about two thirds of all the women in prison are drug addicts. 34 women were treated for their addiction to drugs, one for alcohol. None of them was put on a methadone maintenance program and 22 had a methadone reduction program. In Amsterdam and Groningen it is possible in certain cases to have methadone maintenance, in Maastricht methadone is never prescribed.

Prison officers estimate the number of addicts higher than the medical profession does. In Amsterdam the difference is not great. In Groningen mostly six out of ten are considered to be addicted, depending on how many foreigners there are (they are less often addicted). Officers in Maastricht estimate the number of addicts at about half the population; they also count people addicted to soft drugs. They say that because they see the inmates every day they can deduce from their behaviour whether they find it hard to live without drugs, even if there are no obvious physical withdrawal symptoms.

If addicts are compared to non-addicts it appears that addicts are younger and have a longer criminal record. Every sort of problem occurs more often with them than with the non-addicts. Within the institution they often form a group where they talk about nothing but drugs.

7.2.2 Use of alcohol and drugs within the institutions

Alcohol is taken sporadically in prison, but it is estimated that about a third of the population takes drugs every now and then. Only four women themselves admit they have had drugs while they were inside. The amount of drugs used inside differs, sometimes it is less, sometimes a lot. In Groningen drug use does not occur very often, probably because the center is so small and social control ever existing. Drugs or attributes are hardly ever found and if there is some inside the personnel very soon is aware of it, because of a change in atmosphere or through the grapevine.

Personnel thinks the use of drugs inside is a big problem and one it is hard to get a grip on. They say that if there are drugs inside this influences the atmosphere enormously, there is a lot more stress and inmates put pressure on one another. The users often know one another from outside and find each other quickly inside. They put up a front against outsiders, do not let out anything or betray others, unless at times someone does not get drugs from the others. The ways in which the drugs get smuggled can be very clever, like when a visitor gets some coffee from the machine and drops in a small parcel, which is then drunk and swallowed by the other. To prevent smuggling there is a close surveillance over every kind of contact with the outside world.

7.2.3 Drug policy

A lot of women think the paranoia about drugs and the ensuing drug policy more than annoying, '*If you are having a good time and laugh a lot you are at once suspected of using drugs*'. Addicts get all the attention, while others have to suffer from the heavy surveillance, which exists because of them. It is also believed that personnel knows very well who are the users and who are not.

Concerning the checking of cell and letters a number of women thinks this should be done while you are present. Others say they might as well stop searches of the body altogether: undressing and knee-bending is humiliating and if you want to hide something they will not find it that way. That they search your body after you've had a visit from your lawyer or have been away with guards or the police is thought by some to be the strangest of all measures.

One woman once proposed to have extra controls by way of tests of her urine in order to have private visits. This was not accepted. Several women ask for separate pavilions for users and nonusers in order to escape the badgering that way.

7.3 Psychic condition

Inmates with psychic problems more often get medication, are more often addicts and have a hard time because of their detention more frequently than those who do not have these problems.

A lot of women are having a hard time or suffer from depressions because they have problems concerning the detention and their home situation. They go to the doctor with complaints about nervousness (17%), depressions (15%), withdrawal (14%), psychosomatic complaints (11%) and sleeping problems (11%).

Before conviction the women more often are having a hard time and suffer more from depressions than after. When they have just entered the institution, they are very worried about their home situation and they have to get used to a completely new sort of life. Until they have been convicted they are uncertain as to what will happen to them. After the conviction they know where they stand, when their release will be, so it is easier to make plans about what they want to do during their detention in a more open regime. This does not mean that those women who are convicted do not have hard times. Worries about home, children or for instance rows at their pavilion can bother them and if they have a long sentence just being locked up for such a long time can make them ill.

Nearly half of the women gets sleeping tablets or tranquilizers at one time or another. In Maastricht it is easy to get medication for the period of about a week. After that it is not so easily given, you only get a small amount and are sent to see a social worker or psychiatrist if possible. In Amsterdam anyone who wishes it can have sleeping pills twice a week. Inmates take them mostly during the weekends, because then they have to stay in their cell until one in the afternoon. The officers are also asked for pain killers more often during the weekend, although this can differ from pavilion to pavilion. Officers say that the

atmosphere is so stuffy that it affects your eyes, head and skin. In Groningen the want of medication differs per group.

Women who are mentally or socially so disturbed that they do not belong in a penitentiary institution form 8% of the population. In Groningen and Maastricht there mostly is at least one woman on each pavilion who should not be there; in Amsterdam mostly only in the remand center, because very often they are women with only a short sentence, who stay in the remand center until their release. The presence of these women is difficult for officers and fellow-inmates. They cannot function in a group and they need a lot of attention, for which there is not time enough. When they cause problems, frequently the only thing that can be done is to isolate them, which is thought to be a bad solution. Even though the prison regime is so ordered and structured that it offers those women some support, everyone is convinced that female prisoners need a special unit with special care, like there are some for male prisoners.

8 Foreign women

In the three institutions concerned in this survey there is a large group of foreign women. They mainly are drug carriers, who get long sentences. In chapter 2 it has been mentioned that the percentage of women with another than the Dutch nationality rose from 29% in the first counting to 41% in the second counting, the percentage of women not living in the Netherlands from 25% to 37%. During the final talks (the end of 1987) it was mentioned that the number of foreign women had become even larger; at that time there were pavilions where there lived only a single Dutch women. For partaking in the prison life not nationality nor place of residence is most important, but the language one speaks, because this determines largely which people can mix with each other, which members of personnel a foreign woman has access to and which activities she can take part in. For personnel the foreign women are in a way easier to get along with; they do not cause many problems and make less demands. On the other hand personnel does not know what is the matter with them or what is going on and the task of the officers turns again from concerning themselves with the well-being of their charge to merely guarding them. In the preceding chapters a mention has been made if there were special problems for foreign women. In this chapter the most important points will be discussed.

8.1 Language

In their questionnaires the officers said that with 25% of the women no Dutch could be spoken. They could speak English or German with 20 of them, Spanish with 8 and the remaining 4 could only communicate with hands and feet. Of the interviews with the imprisoned women 57 took place in Dutch, 15 in English, German or French, 30 in Spanish and 5 with the help of a fellow-inmate who spoke two languages. 48 of the women cannot manage in Dutch, although a few of them understand or speak some words.

8.2 Meaning of the language barrier

All women who do not know the Dutch language are hampered in their contacts with others, though it differs widely to which degree this is so. One can discern roughly three groups: those who speak English or German, the Spanish speaking women and the rest. All of them will have greater difficulty than Dutch women to find out about the daily life, rules, regulations and rights. Many moments they are shut out because they do not understand what's going on. An English

speaking woman says that she can talk with people on her pavilion often enough, but as soon as there is a group most of the conversation escapes her, because she cannot keep on asking to translate. The English or German speaking women can make themselves be understood though. The people who only speak Spanish are dependent on fellow-inmates to translate for them, or on gesture language. There are a few officers who speak Spanish, the father in Amsterdam speaks it and sometimes people find creative solutions like the parson and the doctor who bring their Spanish speaking wives or a social worker who managed to find a Spanish speaking colleague. Yet these people are not always available and fellow-prisoners sometimes get fed up by being imposed upon all the time. To explain a problem or make clear what exactly it is that you want, is nearly impossible without help for these women. With a lot of people they cannot communicate, they make mistakes because they have not understood what is wanted and they often cannot go to directors, social work, certain activities etc. An advantage of the Spanish group over the others is that they are with so many: there are always others they can mix with, talk to, or get help from. The third group does not even have this advantage and these women can be isolated completely, when there is no one who understands them. When there are two women inside who have the same language they are placed on the same pavilion if possible, so they have at least one person they can talk to; if one of them also speaks another language, the isolation of the other may be lessened as well. They are however completely dependent on the other. This is not necessarily a problem and can turn out to work very well, but if this is not so, it can take a long time before anyone finds out.

8.3 The other side of the language barrier

For foreign women there are problems if they cannot make themselves be understood, but the same can happen to Dutch women with respect to their fellow-prisoners: they also can only mix with those people whose language they speak and understand. The larger the number of women with a different language, the sooner there are whole groups of people from which they are shut off. On those pavilions where there are almost only foreign women, Dutch women can get isolated.

It has already been said that the officers cannot do much more than their old duty of guarding with those women they do not understand. Foreign women have as many problems and hard times as the Dutch, but personnel does not find out what is bothering them, because of the difference in language. Some officers have the impression that these women will not easily show that they have problems, that their own group is very important to them and that they cope well enough with them. As far as they know most problems foreign women have concern their children. The internal reports on the behaviour of these women stay rather superficial. For officers it is also true that the larger the group of foreigners, the less they can do.

8.4 Contacts with the outside world

Not only do foreign women have problems with their contacts inside, their contacts with the outside world are difficult too. Because family, children and friends live at a great distance, most of them never or hardly ever have visitors. They have to make do with the telephone and letters, but calling someone is often so expensive that they cannot afford to call regularly.

There is a need for books, papers and magazines in their own language. The libraries have books in several languages, but the women think the variety is small and two women state they are not allowed to receive magazines or papers sent to them from their own country. The television one can rent has only Dutch stations; cable television with foreign stations would be a relief for part of the women.

Dutch women have the chance to go on leave after a certain time, for foreign women this possibility does not exist. Therefore they also never qualify for a half-open or open prison, although the officers think a number of them would be well suited to go there.

8.5 Exchange between countries

The women from another country were asked whether they would rather serve their time in a prison in their own country, if it were possible and if the length of their sentence would stay the same.

About 60% does not want to go to their own country: *'compared to the prisons in my country it is heaven here', 'I had not expected it to be like this; it seems like a vacation'*. Most of them think that the prisons in the Netherlands are better than at home: more free, more activities, possibilities to learn something and a better treatment: *'you are not tortured here'*. A number of women rather stays here because their being in prison casts shame on themselves and on their families. At home people are told that they are here to work or to study.

More than a third of the women would rather be in their own country. Most important to them is to be close to their children, relatives and friends, even though most of them think the prisons at home are worse. Some women say that it is very important to them to be in an environment where their own language is spoken. One woman has been working as a volunteer in a prison at home. She tells the following: *'Women are detained only with those who have committed the same sort of crime, not all mixed together. The prison in X. is very beautiful, it looks like a school building. I would like to be detained there myself.'*

Although many foreign women think they are better off in a Dutch prison than in one in their own country, their possibilities here are clearly a lot less than they are for Dutch women. Both Dutch and foreign women think this is unjust and they are of the opinion that this could easily be changed on a number of points. As things are the detention of foreign women is relatively hard. Some women therefore think that this could be levelled a bit more by shortening their sentences and sending them back home sooner.

9 The best and worst of prison life

At the end of the interviews we asked the women what they thought was the best and what the worst in their prison life.

9.1 The best of prison life

Nine women think everything is fine and nothing bad: *'You are well taken care off, you can do a lot of things and if you have problems they get solved'*. More than a quarter of them can think of nothing nice: *'The best??? what an impossible question', 'everything is routine, a rut, every day looks the same', 'nothing stands out in any way, so nothing can be the best'*. Of those who have an answer to this question most name a certain activity (particularly sports) or special activities, like tournaments, a band, *'on feast-days they always have something special, they make a real effort then'*. *'I like activities that are different, that break up the routine'; 'disco and extra things which you do away from the pavilion and where you meet people from outside'; 'I think it is best that here you do activities you had not dreamed of doing outside'; 'that you can study here'; 'that you can work a little and education'; 'when the social cultural worker says: "let's make some fun"'*. One woman says: *'You will probably think this is funny, but the best I like going to the hairdresser, that is really cosy. The only thing that reminds me a bit of outside'*.

A group of women mention their relations with officers: *'I like it best when your door is unlocked and you have good personnel'; 'contacts with female officers'; 'they are interested, human', 'they are very friendly', 'they give you things to do to pass the time' and 'they often come to us, to make us feel less sad and lonely'*.

A number of women names the care and surroundings: *'you have a room to yourself for your own privacy and your own tv', 'the building is nice, you can see outside'; 'the food and drinks are good'; 'you get clean sheets and towels regularly' and 'the hygiene is rather good'*. The rest names different things, like: *'I like to raise hell', 'mess around in the kitchen', 'there is no physical violence', 'the women help each other, that is great'; 'there is no violence'; 'video', 'work is what I enjoy most'*. One woman put it this way: *'things aren't so bad here, it's just that so many things go wrong. They do a lot of things for you and are willing to take trouble, but then things get messed up again and again, which annoys you so you don't take kindly to anyone anymore'*.

9.2 The worst of prison life

Just as there are people who think nothing is bad, there are eleven of them who think everything rotten: *'Prison is prison, nothing is good and nothing ever will be even if they turned it into a top class hotel'*. What women called worst the most often is *'getting thrown back into your cell'* and *'hearing this bolt all the time'*, it makes you go crazy. *'Alone in your cell your reactions get stronger, you have to eat tranquillizers or you'd start screaming'* and *'often I want to smash the window, not because I'm bad, but I'm going to pieces mentally'*. Particularly during the weekend you spend a lot of time locked up, though they wake you at seven in the morning for tea. But also during the week, when you come back from activities and it's only half an hour before supper you still get locked in.

Another group of women hates the complete dependence on others: *'you loose all your willpower'*, *'they treat you like a baby, keep you in a state of tutelage, which is unfair towards grown women'*, *'it gives you a feeling of impotence having to ask for every little thing and never hearing again about things one applied for'*, *'I sometimes think they do it on purpose, punishing you again on top of your sentence'*.

A number of women think their relation with officers the worst thing. They hate things like: *'all this talking about prisoners, you hear everything back, there is no confidentiality'*; *'always those same heads'*; *'that they are badly motivated for this work'*; *'when you're having a good time with the girls some officer always shows up'*, or they think the contacts are not enough: *'even if you act as if you're happy you need some attention'*. One woman tells: *'In the short time that I have been here I have been so angry about the way things are here. Particularly foreigners, they have nothing here and they just let them, no one who helps. And they throw reports around as if it were candy'*.

Some think the working conditions are worst: *'too much hard work, so you are half dead in the evening'*; *'the routine, I wish something would ever happen'*; *'not enough work'* and *'when there is no work, which happens, you go behind the door'*. About the rules it is thought worst that *'you have to fill out notes and then you never hear anything'*, the undressing after visits and that *'some rules are so childish'*.

For the rest lots of different complaints are mentioned, we name some of them: *'no social work in Amsterdam'*, *'nothing but disco all the time'*, *'kissing lesbians'*, *'stupid rules'*, *'doing nothing all the time'*, *'always talk about dope'*.

One woman says: *'there are no advantages in being here, only disadvantages. You ought to be able to become a better person, but you only loose a lot. It learns you nothing, except perhaps somebad things. It all could be so much more cosy here, because the group of women is not so very large. Now you get angrier the longer you are inside'*.

Appendix 1: Some comparisons between female and male prisoners

Table 1: The capacity of the Dutch prison system at two moments in 1987 by gender

	men	women
1-1-1987	4695	134
30-6-1987	5014	184

Source: Balans, no. 8, 1987

Table 2: The population of the penitentiary institutions at the end of 1986 by gender and title

	men		women	
	n	%	n	%
pre-trial detention	1991	44.5	65	48.2
sentenced to confinement	1763	39.4	60	44.4
principal custody	107	2.4	1	0.7
awaiting transfer	559	12.5	7	5.2
(of which awaiting psychiatric placement)	19	0.4	1	0.7
expulsion	58	1.3	2	1.5
total	4478	100	135	100
of which foreigners	842	18.8	27	20.0

Source: CBS

Table 3: The population of the penitentiary institutions at the end of 1986 by gender and age

	men		women	
	n	%	n	%
0-22 years	798	17.8	5	3.7
23 and 24 years	265	5.9	12	8.9
older than 24 years	3415	76.3	118	87.4
total	4478	100	135	100

Source: CBS

Table 4: Total number of unconditional sentences to confinement in 1985 by gender and sort of crime

	men		women	
	n	%	n	%
property offense	8240	52.7	532	74.6
violent offense (without simple manhandling)	788	5.0	23	3.2
drug offense	1336	8.5	92	12.9
else *	5276	33.7	66	9.3
total	15640	100	713	100

* more than half traffic offenses

Source: CBS

Table 5: Total number of unconditional sentences to confinement in 1985 by gender and age

	men		women	
	n	%	n	%
<24 years	5299	34.6	224	31.4
24-29 years	4224	27.6	237	33.2
30-39 years	3913	25.6	178	25.0
>39 years	1873	12.2	74	10.4
total	15309	100	713	100

Source: CBS

Appendix 2: Tables

Table 1: Averages and percentages of drug addicts and non-addicts, who have the characteristics described

	addicted	
	yes	no
average age	28 (45)	34 (75)
average number of former contacts	16 (45)	2 (75)
average number of former convictions	3 (45)	1 (75)
% living in the Netherlands	91 (45)	65 (75)
% drug use within the institution	78 (45)	9 (75)
% thought to be aggressive	21 (43)	6 (62)
% aggressive towards personnel	43 (42)	27 (62)
% aggressive towards fellow prisoners	55 (42)	29 (62)
% having a hard time	41 (41)	27 (59)
% depressions (according to officers)	24 (42)	19 (62)
% psychic problems (according to medical profession)	62 (45)	48 (75)
% tranquilizers/sleeping pills (by medical profession)	66 (44)	24 (75)
% medicinal handouts at the pavilion	49 (43)	26 (62)
% suitable for a half-open institution	53 (19)	93 (29)

Between brackets the numbers upon which the percentages or the averages are based.

Table 2: Averages and percentages of female prisoners who have the characteristics described, split into those who have and those who do not have psychic problems

	psychic problems	
	yes	no
average age	33 (72)	30 (61)
average number of former contacts	7 (72)	8 (61)
average number of former convictions	2 (72)	2 (61)
% living in the Netherlands	75 (72)	75 (61)
% drug addict	47 (64)	30 (56)
% drug use within the institution	36 (72)	26 (61)
% thought to be aggressive	12 (65)	10 (50)
% aggressive towards personnel	36 (64)	30 (50)
% having a hard time	50 (62)	44 (50)
% depressions (according to officers)	25 (64)	20 (50)
% tranquilizers/sleeping pills (by medical profession)	61 (72)	20 (60)
% medicinal handouts at the pavilion	38 (65)	28 (50)
% suitable for a half-open institution	70 (30)	91 (22)

Between brackets the numbers upon which the percentages or the averages are based.

Table 3: Averages and percentages of female prisoners who have the characteristics described, split into those who do and those who do not live in the Netherlands

	living in the Netherlands	
	yes	no
average age	31 (100)	34 (33)
% drug addict	46 (90)	13 (30)
% drug use within the institution	36 (100)	18 (33)
% thought to be aggressive	14 (86)	3 (29)
% aggressive towards personnel	36 (85)	24 (29)
% aggressive towards fellow prisoners	44 (85)	38 (29)
% having a hard time	37 (83)	35 (26)
% depressions (according to officers)	25 (85)	17 (29)
% psychic problems (according to medical profession)	54 (100)	55 (33)
% tranquilizers/sleeping pills (by medical profession)	43 (99)	39 (33)
% medicinal handouts at the pavilion	38 (86)	21 (29)
% suitable for a half-open institution	84 (38)	64 (14)

Between brackets the numbers upon which the percentages or the averages are based.