



The well-being of incarcerated mothers in the Netherlands

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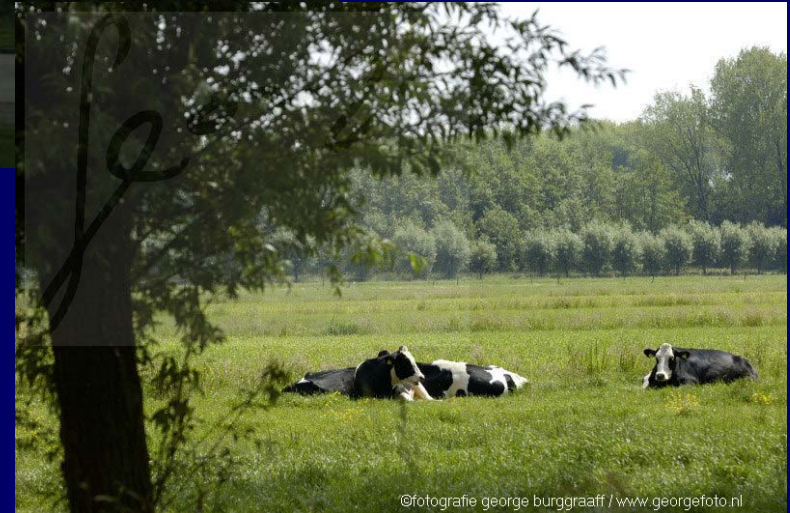


Prison studies

- In debate about punishment two aspects hardly mentioned:
 - Experiences of those confronted with criminal justice system
 - Few studies about women's experiences

Dallas county jail for women









Differences between imprisoned men and women

- Women more often sexually abused
- More drug use
- Lower educated
- **More suicide attempts**
- **More psychological and physical health complaints**
- **Parenting**

Incarcerated mothers

- Few opportunities for contact with children
 - Lost their parenting role
 - No control about parenting process
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- Anxiety, depression, less self-confidence



Research question

What are the effects of motherhood on the psychological well-being of incarcerated mothers?



Research methods

- Survey “International Study on Women’s Imprisonment” (ISWI)
 - 114 questions
 - e.g. accommodation, (mental) health, work/education, relations with the outside
- Interview

Characteristics sample	Percentages (N=251)
Nationality	
Dutch	76%
Other	24%
Age	
< 25	19%
25-34	35%
35-45	27%
>45	19%
Marital status	
Married/living together	24%
Divorced	20%
Single	53%
Children	65%
Children < 18	53%

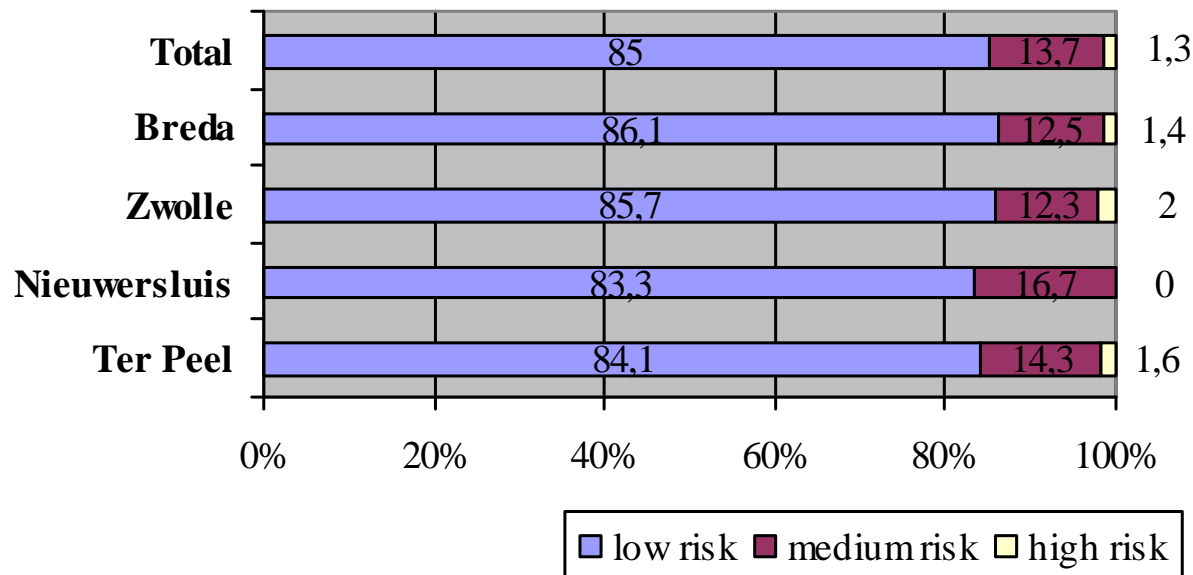


Characteristics sample	Percentages (N=251)
Educational level	
Low	53%
Medium	32%
High	15%
Job before detention	76%
Imprisoned before	35%
Crime	
Violent	20%
Property	29%
Drugs	31%
Other	20%
Other	68%
Sentenced	68%
Sentence length	
< 7 months	24%
7-24 months	38%
25-48 months	19%
≥ 49 months	20%

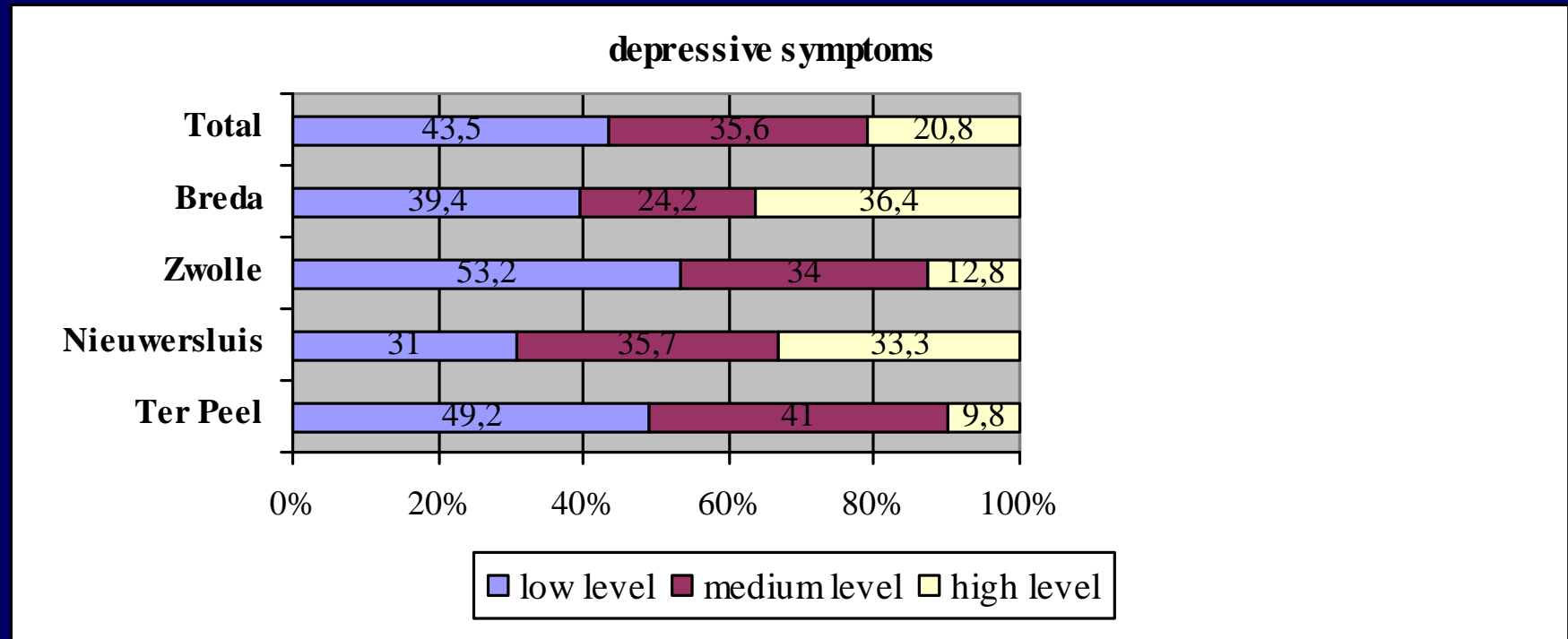


Results

Risk of self-harm



Results



Psychological complaints mothers-non mothers

Psychological complaints	Statement	Mothers		Non-mothers	
		M	SD	M	SD
Depression	I often feel depressed	2.79	1.07	2.68	.84***
	I often feel tensed	2.97	1.06	2.85	.90**
	I worry a lot	3.10	1.08	3.00	.97*
Irritability	I am often so enraged that I could break something	1.87	1.16	1.88	1.03*
Self-harm	I feel as though I cannot bear another day here	2.71	1.12	2.33	1.01**

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$

Backward multiple regression analysis for self harm

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>P</i>
Self harm (<i>n</i> = 200)			17.6		.42	.000
Repressed by staff	.17	.03		2.62		.010
Respected by staff	-.13	.03		-2.06		.041
Problems in prison	.17	.04		2.86		.005
Contact with family	-.13	.08		-2.24		.026
Children < 18	.28	.13		4.62		.000
Previous treatment for mental problems	.17	.28		3.07		.002
Native language	-.13	.33		-2.25		.026
Being in prison before	-.19	.17		-3.19		.002



Mother –child questionnaire (n=129)

Children < 18	91%
Child resides with	
father	29%
grandparents	21%
other relatives	15%
foster care	14%
Contact with child	75%
Child visits mothers	45% (every two weeks)

Relation between psychological wellbeing and contact with child

Statement	Contact with child
I am often so enraged I could break something	.29**
I sometimes consider harming myself	.32**
I have deliberately harmed myself	.32**

$p < .05$. * $p < .01$ **

Relation between psychological wellbeing and number of visits child

Statement	Number of visits child
I sometimes consider harming myself	-.43**
I feel as though the situation has me at its mercy	-.38*

$p < .05$. * $p < .01$ **



Relation between psychological wellbeing and relationship with child

Statement	Relationship with child
I am often so enraged that I could break something	.29*
I am often irritated and angry	.29*

$p < .05$. * $p < .01$ **

Conclusions

- Women a lot of psychological problems
- Mothers more symptoms than non-mothers
 - Due to problems in contact with child
- Mothers very positive about relationship with child –cognitive dissonance