

CRIME AND SECURITY IN THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION

Observatory *Annual Report*
2024 DATA

SELECTED
TRENDS AND
KEY INSIGHTS



INTRODUCTION

Crime is a complex and evolving social phenomenon, difficult to apprehend in its full scope. Security, in turn, is a multifaceted concept encompassing both objective and subjective dimensions. Addressing these issues requires both caution and methodological rigour, drawing on a wide range of data from diverse sources, as well as the development of complementary quantitative and qualitative data. This is necessary to refine our understanding of the phenomena and grasp the underlying causes, and to go beyond mere developments in the figures. These elements lie at the heart of the work carried out by the Security Image Unit of the safe.brussels Observatory.

Each year, the Observatory compiles a panel of data from multiple sources relating to the themes covered by safe.brussels in its “Annual Report on Crime and Security in the Brussels-Capital Region” (BCR). The data are not analysed in detail – which would go beyond the scope of such a report¹ – nor are they exhaustive, as not all existing data can be compiled in a single document. It does, however, shed new light on crime in the Brussels-Capital Region, allowing us to identify variations over time and space, as well as certain trends.

For the second consecutive year, the safe.brussels Observatory presents a synthesis note aimed at identifying and contextualising selected security challenges in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2024, in order to support the readers in their use of the “Annual Report”. To this end, the figures presented in the report were screened based on three criteria: firstly, their quantitative scope in absolute figures, secondly, their evolution over the short and medium/long term, and thirdly, their over- or under-representation in the Brussels-Capital Region compared with the country as a whole. Each of these criteria has its own methodological biases and limitations². Nevertheless, this approach (applied here to the figures for 2024), makes it possible to identify phenomena, locations and populations that are particularly exposed to certain forms of crime, which deserve specific attention. They are presented here without hierarchy and in random order.

For further information, please see the “Annual Report” concerning 2024³, which presents the data that the Observatory has collected for that year.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is one of the three **most frequently reported** offenses among respondents to the 2024 Regional Security Survey (hereafter RSS)⁴: 14% of Brussels residents said they had experienced discrimination in the 12 months preceding the survey (19% in the 2022 RSS), as did 15% of commuters. Only attempted scams (28%) and street harassment (16%) were experienced by more residents in 2024.

1 Alongside its annual report, the Observatory publishes in-depth analyses of various phenomena in its other collections: Brochures, Focus or Flash papers, available on the safe.brussels website.

2 Cf. Observatory, *Guide méthodologique. Analyse et l'image des phénomènes*, 2nd edition, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2023. Available at: <https://www.safe.brussels/fr/publications>. Available in Dutch and French.

3 Observatory, *Criminalité et sécurité en Région bruxelloise. Rapport annuel de l'Observatoire. Données 2024*, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2025. Available in Dutch and French.

4 Observatory, *Résultats de l'Enquête Régionale de Sécurité 2024 – Personnes physiques. Cahier de l'Observatoire* forthcoming, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2026. Available in Dutch and French.

In police crime statistics⁵, however, discrimination remains quantitatively marginal (322 offences recorded in 2024 in the BCR). Nevertheless, it is characteristic of the Brussels-Capital Region, which accounts for 20% of all such offences registered in the country as a whole, even though only 10.6% of Belgians live there. The **over-representation of discrimination in the BCR** is also confirmed by Unia's data: 27% of discrimination cases opened by this organisation in 2024 concerned the BCR⁶.

Although they remain limited in number, the offences related to discrimination recorded by the police have **increased** in recent years (+10% between 2015 and 2024). An increase in recorded figures does not necessarily indicate a rise in the underlying phenomenon, but may reflect improved recording practices, increased public awareness and enhanced police training during the period concerned. The figures for 2024 are nevertheless lower than those for 2023 (-17%). In 2024, a reform⁷ was introduced that, among other things, concerned the registration of discrimination offences. This reform is expected to improve data quality and judicial follow-up in the long term but may partly account for this short-term variation. The evolution of these figures in the future will therefore be closely monitored.

Historically, the majority of recorded discrimination cases in the BCR relate to the so-called **racial criterion**. Police figures for 2024 are incomplete in this regard given the reform of the encoding system, but 53% of respondents who reported discrimination in the 2024 RSS mentioned this criterion. It also featured in 30% of the cases opened by Unia in 2024 in the BCR. Religious and philosophical beliefs (23%) and gender (22%) complete the top three discrimination criteria in the 2024 RSS. In Unia's cases, disability (26%) comes ahead of philosophical or religious beliefs (10%).

Discrimination occurs mainly in the context of **employment/work** (43% of Unia's cases; in the 2024 RSS, 23% of reported discrimination occurred at work and 20% when looking for a job). While the BCR Regional Employment Inspection has been handling an increasing number of "discrimination in recruitment" cases since 2020, the figures remain very low (27 cases handled in 2024).

For discrimination, the dark number therefore remains substantial, highlighting the need for victimisation surveys and data collection mechanisms that complement official statistics.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The dark number is also substantial for sexual and gender-based violence. Variations in the figures primarily reflect changes in reporting rates rather than changes in the underlying phenomena.

Sexual violence has received increased attention in the wake of the #MeToo movement, resulting in a greater (albeit still limited) willingness to speak out on the issue, as well as the

5 All police statistics presented here come from the Federal Police – DGR/DRI/BIPOL (2025). *Police crime statistics*. Closing date: 25/04/2025. Available at: <https://www.police.be/statistiques/fr/criminalite/statistiques-de-criminalite>.

6 <https://www.unia.be/fr/connaissances-recommandations/chiffres-unia>. Unia is an independent, inter-federal public institution that fights discrimination and promotes equality.

7 Entry into force on 22 April 2024 of the new version of the Circular of the College of Public Prosecutors on judicial anti-discrimination policy (known as COL13/2013).

development of dedicated victim support services, such as the Sexual Assault Centres (SACs)⁸ and, more recently, the EVA - Emergency Victim Assistance units in police zones⁹. Police statistics illustrate an **upward trend over several years**, with a 50% increase in recorded rape offences between 2015 and 2024 in the Brussels-Capital Region. In 2024, the police recorded 654 rape offences in the BCR, i.e. around two per day. In addition, there were 683 violations of sexual integrity and a smaller number of other offences (voyeurism, dissemination of sexual content, etc.), amounting to a total of 1,918 “sexual offences”. This number nevertheless remains low when compared with the 5.7% of women in Brussels who report having been victims of sexual violence outside the family sphere, and the 1.1% reporting victimisation within the family in 2024 (2024 RSS).

Despite this long-term upward trend, police-recorded rape figures have **declined over the past two years**, following a peak in 2022. Similarly, the results of the 2024 RSS seem to indicate a decline in the rate of complaints of sexual violence between 2022 and 2024¹⁰. At the level of the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office¹¹, rape cases stabilised in 2024, with 1,047 incoming cases (almost double the 2015 figure, but -1% compared with 2023). It is therefore essential to monitor developments in these figures over the coming years.

The issue of **domestic violence** gained significant attention during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020¹². In 2024, the police recorded 4,526 offences of domestic violence in the BCR, more than twelve per day. This figure is lower than in 2015 (-4%) and only slightly higher than in 2020 when figures were at their lowest due to the pandemic. Despite growing societal awareness, the figures remain low and domestic violence remains under-reported. Physical violence within couples is the most frequently police-recorded domestic violence offence (2,368 offences in 2024, i.e. more than six every day) but appears to be **declining** in 2023 and 2024 (-2% compared with 2015).

In the 2024 RSS, 4% of Brussels residents report having experienced physical violence within the family in the last 12 months. Both the results of the RSS and those of the Federal Police Security Monitor¹³ seem to indicate a **drop in the rate of complaints** for this offence between 2021/2022 and 2024. This finding warrants in-depth analysis, particularly in light of the establishment of services intended to facilitate reporting for victims of sexual and domestic violence during that same period across the six Brussels police zones.

By contrast, in terms of incoming cases at the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office, there has been an almost continuous increase in cases involving domestic violence since 2015 (with the exception of the pandemic in 2020), rising to approximately 9,142 cases in 2024. **Criminal prosecution**, however, remains **limited** to 6% of cases closed by the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office (8,727 cases in 2024). This percentage corresponds to the average percentage of cases criminally prosecuted by the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office.

8 Sexual Assault Centres (SAC). Admissions to SACs in Brussels have risen steadily between their creation in 2017 and 2022 (except for 2020, due to the health crisis) – more recent figures are not available. Cf. <https://cpvs.belgium.be/fr/retrouvez-toutes-nos-statistiques?>

9 Cf. <https://pouvoirs-locaux.brussels/actualites/violences-intrafamiliales-et-sexuelles>.

10 Cf. Observatory, « Violences à l’égard des femmes. État des lieux de la situation en Région bruxelloise à l’occasion de la journée internationale pour l’élimination de ces violences », *Focus de l’Observatoire* – n°5, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2025. Available in Dutch and French.

11 The data relating to the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office included here were supplied to the safe.brussels Observatory on request by the statistical analysts of the General Prosecutor’s Office at the Brussels Court of Appeal.

12 See the Observatory’s two publications on this subject: www.safe.brussels/fr/publications.

13 Federal Police, DGR – Police Information and ICT: <https://www.police.be/statistiques/fr/moniteur-de-securite/moniteur-de-securite-2024/rapports>.

Domestic and sexual violence display a clear **gendered dimension**. In 2024, the police identified a male suspect in 91% of physical violence offences within couples and in 95% of sexual offences (all categories) for which there was at least one suspect identified. Victims of sexual violence were female in 85% of cases, and in 65% of cases of domestic violence¹⁴. The share of women is reduced by the registration of numerous minors as victims of domestic violence (direct victims or children of a female victim)¹⁵. Among those minors the proportion of male and female individuals is 50/50 in 2024, in the police zones that have provided information at this level of detail.

POLARISATION AND RADICALISATION

Relations between citizens and authorities have received increased attention in the BCR since the Brussels Parliament's 2020 resolution on the matter¹⁶. A form of polarisation between (some) citizens and (some) representatives of public authority is indeed palpable¹⁷, and was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. After a decline in 2023, violence against persons vested with public authority is once again on the **rise** (96 offences in 2024, +13% compared with 2023 and +50% compared with 2015). This type of violence remains clearly **over-represented** in the Brussels-Capital Region. 36% of these offences recorded by the police in Belgium concern the BCR. The same is true at the level of the Public Prosecutor's Office: 28% of the cases of violence against a person with public status entering the Belgian Public Prosecutor's Offices concerned the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office (211 cases in 2024, +2% compared with 2023 and even +72% compared with 2015). In 2024, 19% of such cases closed by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office resulted in **criminal prosecution**, a particularly high rate¹⁸, reflecting the zero-tolerance policy applied to this type of offence¹⁹. Conversely, there is a downward trend in recorded cases of rebellion (429 cases of unarmed rebellion and 54 cases of armed rebellion in 2024) and of contempt of authority (157) in the BCR, which are no longer over-represented at regional level.

With regard to "**extremism, terrorism and radicalism**", police figures show an overall **downward** trend, following a peak in 2016 in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks committed that year. Although the figures had risen slightly in 2023, they fall again in 2024 (70 offences, -18% compared with 2023 and -73% compared with 2015). Nevertheless, one fifth of the offences recorded in Belgium in 2024 concerned the BCR, where the phenomenon remains **over-represented**. Figures from CUTA²⁰ – the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis – confirm this finding, with 29% of individuals registered in the Common Database (CDB) originating from the BCR.

By far the most prevalent form of extremism remains **Islamism**, accounting for 92% of those registered in the CDB, and even for 100% of those monitored for radicalism by the Brussels municipalities.

14 Brussels police districts, data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory as part of funding for the GSPP (Global Security and Prevention Plan).

15 Cf. e.g. Brussels Prevention and Security (BPS), « Les violences intrafamiliales en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale en période de confinement », *Focus de l'Observatoire* – n°1, Brussels, 2020, p. 10. Available in Dutch and French.

16 Resolution of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region of 18 December 2020 aimed at improving relations between citizens and law enforcement agencies, and vice-versa. Available at: <https://weblex.irisnet.be/data/crb/doc/2020-21/140776/images.pdf>.

17 Cf. e.g.: Observatory, *Violence contre les policiers, pompiers et ambulanciers, gardiens de la paix et gardiens de parcs en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale. Sentiment de sécurité et victimation, Cahier de l'Observatoire* n°5, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2024. Available at: <https://safe.brussels/fr/publications>. Available in Dutch and French.

18 By way of comparison, of all cases closed by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office in 2024, 6% were prosecuted.

19 Cf. <https://www.om-mp.be/fr/article/communiqué-presse-violence-egard-police-ne-peut-pas-etre-toleree>.

20 Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request.

PROPERTY CRIMES

According to police data, property crimes have remained relatively **stable** since 2015, with the exception of a marked decline in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic, and slightly higher levels in 2019 and 2023. In 2024, the police recorded 81,656 property crimes in the Brussels-Capital Region (+3% compared with 2015, –6% compared with 2023). This category of offences remains the most prevalent in police statistics and is clearly **over-represented** in the BCR, where 25% of all such offences committed in Belgium take place. It consists mainly of non-violent thefts (66,496 offences recorded in the BCR in 2024), compared with 5,493 violent thefts.

According to police figures, **pickpocketing** offences in the BCR amounted to 16,726 recorded cases in 2024, i.e. around 46 per day. After several years of increase (+54% compared with 2015), these offences **declined slightly** in 2024 (–4% compared with 2023), while accounting for **66%** of all pickpocketing offences recorded in Belgium. Only a limited number of these cases are referred to the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office, which recorded just 687 incoming pickpocketing cases in 2024, possibly due to the frequent use of simplified police reports in cases where the perpetrator is unknown.

According to police statistics, **bicycle thefts**²¹ increased sharply between 2015 and 2022 (+76%) but have since entered a **downward trend**. In 2024, 4,648 bicycle thefts were recorded in the BCR, accounting for 15% of all such offences recorded in Belgium. As with pickpocketing, only a small proportion of these cases are reported to the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office (201 cases of bicycle or motorcycle theft in 2024).

In 2024, 8,148 acts of **vandalism** were recorded by the police. The figures show a downward trend (–18% compared with 2015). However, vandalism is the form of property crime most frequently reported by Brussels residents in the 2024 RSS (11%, compared with 5% for bicycle theft, for example). Even without having been direct victims, four out of ten Brussels residents report being confronted with vandalism in public spaces **"often" or "always"**, a proportion that has increased compared with 2022, when three out of ten residents reported such exposure. This issue therefore continues to merit particular attention in the Brussels-Capital Region.

Residential burglaries, numbering 5,902 offences in 2024, have been on a **downward trend** over the past two years in the BCR. Between 2016 and 2019, figures were relatively stable at around 7,500 offences per year, a level that has never been reached again since the COVID-19 pandemic. The geographical distribution of residential burglaries across the Region differs from that observed for other types of offences (e.g. concentrated in the centre or around railway stations). In this case, peripheral and sometimes more affluent districts account for the highest number of offences, notably Brugmann Lepoutre, Chaussée de Wavre-Saint Julien and Machtens.

Lastly, police-recorded **armed robberies have risen** steadily since 2020, reaching an unprecedented level of 1,117 offences recorded in the BCR in 2024 (+7% compared with 2015 and +17% compared with 2023). This represents 41% of all armed robberies recorded in Belgium.

²¹ On this subject, cf. Observatory, *Vols de vélo en Région bruxelloise, Focus de l'Observatoire* – n°4, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2024. Available at: <https://safe.brussels/fr/publications>. Available in Dutch and French.

CYBERCRIME

Cybercrime is playing an increasingly significant role in security issues. The latest self-reported victimisation surveys²² show that cybercrime is now the **type of crime most frequently reported** by citizens. According to the 2024 RSS, 28% of Brussels residents report having experienced attempted internet scams (42% in 2022) and 13% report having been victim of actual internet scams in the twelve months preceding the survey (12% in 2022). Data from the 2024 Security Monitor show similar patterns: 46% of Brussels residents report phishing attempts, 23% internet scams and 9% successful phishing²³. These figures are broadly comparable to those observed at national level and are therefore not specific to the Brussels-Capital Region.

According to police statistics, 4,542 offences of “internet fraud” and 8,581 offences of “computer fraud” were recorded in the BCR in 2024. While these offences have increased sharply since 2015 (+359% and +174% respectively), they have recently shown a downward trend, with internet fraud declining since 2022 and computer fraud since 2023. Furthermore, cyber-related offences are not among the most frequently recorded crimes in police statistics, in contrast with what emerges from victimisation surveys. Internet scams therefore appear to have a particularly high **dark number**²⁴, illustrating the importance of victimisation surveys in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the phenomenon and to refocus attention on citizens’ lived experiences.

It should also be noted that information and communication technologies (ICT) are increasingly used by security actors, with positive results, as exemplified by the use of the Police-on-web platform. Citizens use **Police-on-web** to report certain offences or to request police assistance, for example for home surveillance while on holiday. The number of reports submitted via Police-on-web increased twelve-fold between 2015 and 2023, rising from 1,110 to 13,130 reports. For the first time, a decline was observed in 2024 with 12,895 reports via Police-on-web, a development that warrants further monitoring.

DRUGS

According to the 2024 RSS, one in three Brussels residents report being “often” or “always” confronted with the use or sale of drugs, and 45% with the consumption of alcohol in public spaces. Data from the 2024 Security Monitor place the BCR in a national perspective: **nuisance** related to the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs is reported by 41% of Brussels residents (compared with 20% of residents in Belgium as a whole), while drug trafficking is perceived as a problem by 35% of Brussels residents (versus 17% nationally). A comparison of the 2018, 2021 and 2024 editions of the Security Monitor shows an increase in the proportion of respondents considering these phenomena to be problematic, both in Brussels and at national level²⁵.

22 2024 Security Monitor by the Federal Police and 2024 Regional Security Survey by safe.brussels.

23 Federal Police, DGR – Information and ICT Business Unit Police Management Accounting, *Moniteur de Sécurité 2024. Rapport de tableaux. Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, p. 78.

24 See also the analysis of the results of the Moniteur de Sécurité 2024 at federal level: «comparing the SPC (official recorded crime) and the results from the Moniteur de Sécurité (self-reported victimisation) for various phenomena, we suspect a very large dark number for Internet scams/fraud, certainly among the largest, if not THE largest» (Federal Police, *Analyse fédérale du Moniteur de sécurité 2024*, p. 37).

25 Federal Police, *Analyse fédérale du Moniteur de sécurité 2024*, p. 21 and Federal Police, DGR – Information and ICT Business Unit Police Management Accounting, *Moniteur de Sécurité 2024. Rapport de tableaux. Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, p. 6, p. 43 and p. 46.

With regard to **drug use**, recorded crime does not provide information, and other sources are therefore required. **Crack cocaine**, for example, is the most commonly used substance among clients of the non-profit organisation Transit, and this share has continued to increase²⁶, reaching 74% in 2024. The number of inhalation pipes distributed by non-profit organisations²⁷ (77,238 in 2024) continues to rise (+22% compared with 2023, and more than 26 times higher than in 2017). This equipment reduces the risks associated with problematic drug use (e.g. transmissible diseases) among highly vulnerable populations (e.g. people experiencing homelessness). Cocaine residues measured in Brussels' wastewater²⁸ increased sharply in 2024 (+98% compared with 2023, a year in which an unexplained decline has been observed).

Police figures relating to drugs primarily reflect police activity and priorities. **Drug possession** remains the most frequently recorded drug-related offence in the BCR (7,030 offences, i.e. 19 per day in 2024). More than three quarters (77%) of such cases closed by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office were handled **without criminal prosecution** for reasons of expediency in 2024, while only 1% resulted in prosecution.

At the same time, the police are recording an **increasing** number of **drug trafficking** offences (2,227 offences in 2024, +99% compared with 2015 and +11% compared with 2023). The BCR stands out in this respect, accounting for 25% of all drug trafficking offences recorded in Belgium. Certain districts in Brussels are particularly affected: drug trafficking offences are most frequently recorded in the North and Brabant districts, as well as Porte de Hal and Cureghem-Bara and around the South Station²⁹. Cases involving drug sales are much more likely to be **prosecuted** than cases of drug possession, with 26% of cases closed in 2024 being prosecuted by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office.

Finally, attention should be drawn to the issue of **nitrous oxide**, which lies at the intersection of drugs, public health and environment concerns due to the waste problems it generates. It has become a significant problem in Brussels' public spaces in recent years³⁰. The Royal Decree of 29 March 2024 banned the misuse of nitrous oxide at national level. Following its entry into force on 8 April 2024, this offence began to appear in police statistics, with 71 offences recorded by the end of 2024. As a result, the number of municipal administrative sanctions (SAC/GAS) cases processed by Brussels municipalities relating to "the ban on the recreational use or possession of laughing gas" declined (577 cases in 2023, compared with 249 in 2024). Police-recorded figures on this issue will require close monitoring in 2025.

WEAPON-RELATED OFFENCES

While illegal possession and illegal carrying/transport of weapons declined in 2024 (-4% and -5% respectively, compared with 2023), the **illegal trade in weapons** has, by contrast, continued to **rise** sharply and has done so consistently since 2020. In 2024, police recorded 52 offences of

26 The non-profit organisation Transit is a non-medical reception centre for adults addicted to psychoactive substances (drugs, alcohol, medication) (cf. Transit asbl: <http://fr.transitasbl.be/qui-sommes-nous/>).

27 As part of the [DAMSI project](#).

28 EMCDDA & SCORE (2024). *Wastewater analysis and drugs – a European multi-city study*. Available at: https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/html/pods/waste-water-analysis_en#sourceData.

29 Source: DCA Brussels. Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request.

30 Cf. Observatory, *Usage récréatif du protoxyde d'azote (gaz hilarant) dans l'espace public en Région Bruxelles Capitale. Une enquête exploratoire auprès des services de prévention, de sécurité et de propreté*, Flash Paper de l'Observatoire – n°3, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2023. Available in Dutch and French at: www.safe.brussels/fr/publications.

illegal weapon trafficking in the BCR (+18% compared with 2015 and +49% compared with 2023). This type of offence is also markedly **over-represented** in the BCR, which accounted for 23% of all such offences recorded in Belgium. In quantitative terms, and considering all types of weapons combined, police recorded in the BCR in 2024 a total of 1,167 offences of illegal possession of weapons, 873 offences of illegal carrying/transport and 52 offences of illegal trade.

With regard specifically to firearms, offences relating to illegal possession (368 in 2024), illegal carrying/transport (73 in 2024) and illegal trade (40 in 2024) have all been rising steadily over the past three years. In 2024, offences of illegal possession and carrying/transport remained below the levels observed in 2015, whereas the illegal trade in firearms reached an unprecedented level since 2015. Moreover, one quarter of all illegal firearm trafficking offences recorded in Belgium concerned the BCR.

It should be noted that these figures reflect offences detected by the police and do not represent the actual circulation of weapons on the ground. Variations may reflect proactive policing on these issues as much as a real increase in the phenomenon. While the absolute figures for weapons trafficking remain low, the circulation of weapons in the BCR is nevertheless a reality, as evidenced by the data, as well as by the previously mentioned steady rise in police-recorded armed robberies in the Region. Illegal possession, carrying and transport of weapons are most frequently recorded by the police in districts around the South Station, the Marolles, and North and Brabant districts.

Regarding “**shootings**”, which have been making the headlines since last year, an official census conducted by police services³¹ shows a clear **increase**, with 56 shootings recorded in 2022, 62 in 2023 and 92 in 2024. This census includes situations where one or more suspects fired multiple shots from a firearm on a public road and/or in a place accessible to the public, as well as situations where a single shot was fired in such locations, resulting in injury or death. In 2024, half of these shootings did not result in injuries (46 out of 92), but eight fatalities were nevertheless recorded (compared with three in 2022 and three in 2023). At the intersection of drug-related issues, violence in public spaces and organised crime, this phenomenon warrants in-depth qualitative analysis.

ORGANISED CRIME

Despite rivalries between criminal groups, reflected in the increasing number of shootings observed in the Brussels-Capital Region, offences recorded by the police for “**criminal organisation**” offences reached their lowest level since 2015, with just 37 incidents recorded in the BCR in 2024 (compared with 56 in 2015).

Other offences may reflect the activities of organised crime groups. This is the case for **money laundering**, which has increased sharply over the past two years, reaching a **peak** of 1,045 offences recorded in the BCR in 2024 (+545% compared with 2015). The number of money laundering cases entering the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office follows the same trend, with 1,793 cases in 2024 (+304% compared with 2015 and +40% compared with 2023).

³¹ Source: DCA Brussels. Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request.

Cases of **handling stolen goods** recorded by the police, which rose sharply in 2022 and 2023, **declined** in 2024 (-24% compared with 2023) and returned close to their 2015 level. They nevertheless remain strongly **over-represented** in the BCR: the 836 offences recorded in 2024 accounted for 36% of all such offences recorded in Belgium. The 942 handling stolen goods cases entering the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office in 2024 represented 31% of all cases of this type handled by Belgian Public Prosecutor's Offices. While these figures stabilised compared with 2023 (+1%), they remain well above 2015 levels (+22%).

While cases involving criminal organisations are relatively often prosecuted by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office (18 out of 33 cases closed in 2024), this is not the case for money laundering and handling stolen goods cases: in 2024, 69% of money laundering cases and even 82% of handling stolen goods cases closed by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office were dealt with without criminal prosecution.

EXPLOITATION OF HUMAN BEINGS

Criminal networks also exploit people and engage in human trafficking in order to carry out their activities. The phenomenon is difficult to detect, and recorded figures are generally low, but it has significant ramifications and therefore requires greater societal attention.

The number of offences relating to **sexual exploitation** in the context of human trafficking³² is relatively low (42 incidents recorded by the police in 2024), but it is clearly **over-represented** in the BCR which accounted for one fifth of all such offences recorded by the police in Belgium. Similarly, one fifth of sexual exploitation cases entering Belgian Public Prosecutor's Offices in 2024 concerned the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office. Of the 48 cases closed by the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office in 2024, 13 resulted in criminal prosecution, which represents a particularly high prosecution rate.

Cases of **economic exploitation** in the context of human trafficking³³ recorded by the police are few in number and may vary considerably from year to year, variations that are difficult to interpret given the small number of offences involved. In 2024, 15 such offences were recorded, following higher figures in the three preceding years. In the same year, the Brussels Labour Prosecutor's Office opened 49 labour exploitation cases (44 in 2023 and 51 in 2022). Other data similarly illustrate the presence of economic exploitation in the Brussels-Capital Region. In 2024, the non-profit organisation Pag-Asa³⁴ assisted 49 new victims of human trafficking, the vast majority of whom were victims of economic exploitation (34 cases). In 2024, inspections carried out by the National Social Security Office (RSZ/ONSS) identified seven presumed victims of economic exploitation in the BCR (compared with eight in 2021, three in 2022, and fourteen in 2023)³⁵.

32 Sexual exploitation is one of the forms of human trafficking, which can refer to forced prostitution, but can also occur "in the pornography industry, massage parlours, champagne bars or in so-called 'loverboy' relationships". It should also be noted that sexual exploitation is not the same as prostitution: not all sex workers are exploited or victims of trafficking (cf. Pag-Asa asbl: <https://pag-asa.be/human-trafficking?lang=true>).

33 Situations where "Victims are forced to work in conditions contrary to human dignity, either without a salary or with very low wages. The economic sectors where the risk is highest are construction, agriculture, hospitality, and domestic work. But victims can be found anywhere: clothes recycling warehouses, (hand) carwashes, football clubs, horse stables, hairdressers, nail salons, bakeries, and many more. No economic sector is immune to this phenomenon." (cf. Pag-Asa asbl: <https://pag-asa.be/human-trafficking?lang=true>).

34 A non-profit organisation approved to take care of victims of human trafficking and aggravated human trafficking in the Brussels-Capital Region.

35 According to the checklists (one for each potential victim identified) drawn up in 2024.

Finally, the Brussels unit of the Social Information and Investigation Service (SIRS/SIOD)³⁶ detected 902 offences related to undeclared work during the 1,507 inspections carried out in 2024 (compared with 970 offences detected during 1,729 inspections in 2023), undeclared work potentially concealing certain situations of exploitation.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND CLEANLINESS

Lack of cleanliness is a major concern for people frequenting the BCR. According to the 2024 RSS, half of residents and two out of three commuters report being “often” or “always” exposed to a lack of cleanliness in public spaces in the BCR, a proportion that has remained stable compared with the 2022 RSS. Lack of cleanliness is the second most frequently reported “problematic situation” among Brussels residents, after begging.

In practice, this issue is treated more as a disturbance, subject to **administrative prosecution** where applicable, than as a genuine criminal phenomenon. In 2024, the police recorded only 86 waste-related offences (-32% compared with 2023). By contrast, Bruxelles-Propreté/Net Brussel³⁷ processed 3,727 waste-related reports, mainly concerning waste sorting and illegal dumping or fouling. Of the 365 environment-related reports received by Brussels Environment (Leefmilieu Brussel/Bruelles Environnement)³⁸ in 2024, 146 concerned waste-related issues, primarily failures by companies to sort waste correctly. None of the reports handled by these two regional agencies have resulted in prosecution by the Public Prosecutor’s Office since 2015. In the field of environmental crime, only cases related to animal welfare are occasionally prosecuted under criminal law. For all other cases, the vast majority are dealt with through alternative measures, representing a higher proportion than in other crime categories. It should also be noted that Bruxelles-Propreté/Net Brussel has achieved growing success with the **administrative transaction mechanism**, introduced in June 2023. If the fine is paid within two weeks, criminal or administrative prosecution is avoided. In 2023, the measure applied exclusively to cigarette-butt littering and was used 363 times. In 2024, 769 proposals for administrative transactions were issued. Since September 2024, the scope of this mechanism has been extended to offences relating to waste sorting.

Finally, alongside Bruxelles-Propreté/Net Brussel, municipalities are key actors in the prevention, recording, management and enforcement of public cleanliness offences. After offences relating to stopping and parking and to traffic-restricted zones (see below), the most frequent offences recorded under the **municipal administrative sanctions** (SAC/GAS) system concern non-compliance with household waste collection regulations (6,374 cases across the 19 Brussels municipalities in 2024) and soiling of public spaces (3,682 cases). In the latter category, a large number of cases occur in districts where offences are automatically recorded by cameras, particularly around bottle banks, where illegal dumping frequently takes place. In addition to these municipal administration sanctions, several municipalities also impose **taxes** for soiling public spaces (at least 9,000 cases in the BCR in 2024)³⁹, which may likewise be levied on the basis of camera footage.

36 SIRS (2025). Résultats au 31 décembre 2024 des contrôles des cellules d’arrondissement. Available at: <https://www.siod.belgie.be/fr/publications/statistiques>.

37 Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request.

38 Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request.

39 Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request by sanctioning officers and the cleanliness departments of the 19 Brussels municipalities.

MOBILITY-RELATED OFFENCES

Mobility-related offences have a significant impact on security and residents' feelings of security. According to the 2024 Security Monitor, "**inappropriate behaviour by road users**" is the second most frequently cited reason why Brussels residents feel unsafe, after "disturbances in public spaces". This reason was mentioned by 42% of Brussels respondents in 2024⁴⁰ (compared with 46% in 2022, when it was the primary reason cited⁴¹). The 2024 RSS indicates that 50% of Brussels residents (versus 55% in the 2022 RSS) report being "often" or "always" confronted with disrespectful behaviour by road users. This is the third most frequently encountered problematic situation in the BCR, following begging and lack of cleanliness (see above).

In 2024, the number of **traffic offences**⁴² recorded by the police in the Brussels-Capital Region reached a record level of 840,965. This figure is more than five times higher than the total number of criminal offences recorded in the same year (163,713), illustrating the magnitude of the issue in the Region. These offences have been **rising** steadily in recent years (+61% compared with 2015 and +9% compared with 2023). Most offences relate to speeding (540,627 in 2024, +138% compared with 2015). There has also been an increase in offences involving driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (+41% and +455% respectively compared with 2015), although this trend is largely linked to police proactivity and enforcement activities. In 83% of alcohol-related driving offences recorded by the police, the offender is male. These offences are mainly recorded at night during weekends. While these findings are not new, they are worth reiterating for the purpose of targeted prevention campaigns. It should also be noted that 66% of Brussels respondents in the 2024 RSS stated that speed, alcohol, and drug checks increased their sense of security on the road, suggesting a positive perception of police proactivity in these areas. Finally, traffic light offences (46,115 in 2024) are particularly over-represented in the Brussels-Capital Region, which accounted for 40% of all such offences recorded in Belgium.

With regard to **traffic accidents**⁴³, the number of victims with physical injuries (4,312 in 2024) declined slightly compared with 2023 (-2%) and 2015 (-4%). Vulnerable road users remain a key area of concern: while most victims are drivers (941, or 21.8%), they are closely followed by cyclists (936, or 21.7%) and pedestrians (865, or 20.1%). The number of injured users of scooters rose sharply between 2019 (25) and 2022 (700), before declining again in 2023 (503) and 2024 (531).

Finally, **illegal stopping and parking** are particularly prevalent in the Brussels-Capital Region. These offences have been punishable by municipal administrative sanctions (SAC/GAS) since 2014⁴⁴. Between then and 2018, their number increased exponentially before **stabilising** at around 180,000 cases per year across the Region between 2018 and 2022 (with the exception of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic). Since then, the figures have declined slightly, with 169,482 "stopping and parking" cases (SAC/GAS) recorded in the BCR in 2024.

40 Federal Police, DGR – Information and ICT Business Unit Police Management Accounting, *Moniteur de Sécurité 2024. Rapport de tableaux. Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, p. 67.

41 Federal Police, DGR – Information and ICT Business Unit Police Management Accounting, *Moniteur de Sécurité 2021. Rapport de tableaux. Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, p. 48.

42 Federal Police – DGR/DRI/BIPOL (2024). Infractions routières. Closing date: 30/04/2024. Available at: <https://www.police.be/statistiques/fr/circulation/infractions-routieres>.

43 Federal Police/DGR/DRI/BIPOL (2024). Données d'accidentologie. Extr. d.d. 04.06.2024. Data provided to safe.brussels Observatory on request.

44 *Law of 24 June 2013* on municipal administrative sanctions, *Belgian Official Gazette* 01/07/2013, entered into force 01/01/2014.

More recently, a new category of offence was added to the SAC/GAS system: non-compliance with **traffic restrictions in limited access zones**⁴⁵. This measure was first introduced in Ixelles (in 2018) and subsequently in the City of Brussels (in 2023). These offences, automatically detected by cameras, have led to a further significant increase in SAC/GAS cases from 2019 onwards. In 2023, 153,811 cases were recorded in the two involved municipalities. In 2024, however, the number of cases of non-compliance with traffic restrictions in limited access zones declined, falling to 128,135 cases.

CRISES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The regional **crisis centre** was activated 71 times in 2024, a relatively **stable** figure (ranging between 71 and 76 since 2021). It is primarily activated to monitor demonstrations, festivities, cultural, sporting, or other events, as well as European summits. In 2024, the incidents recorded by the disciplines and emergency-planning services of the 19 Brussels municipalities⁴⁶ mainly concerned fires, followed by gas leaks or poisoning incidents and risks of collapse or structural instability. Less frequent incidents included bomb threats or suspicious packages (one case in 2024) or hostage-taking (also one case). No crisis management phase - at municipal, provincial or federal level - had to be activated in 2024.

With regard to the **environment**, in 2024, there were **two ozone-alerts phases** in the BCR, but no phase linked to fine particulate matter, extreme heat and ozone peaks⁴⁷. Brussels Environment recorded **six days of flooding** in 2024 (compared with one day in 2023), during which the SIAMU/DBDMH (Brussels Fire & Emergency Medical Service) carried out 159 interventions. Brussels Environment has also issued seven notices restricting access to regional parks due to storm warnings in 2024 (compared with three in 2023).

Finally, as regards **emergency services**, there was a slight **increase** in interventions by the SIAMU/DBDMH in 2024⁴⁸, both for ambulance services (105,325 interventions, +0.7% compared with 2023 and +44% compared with 2015) and for fire department interventions (17,360 interventions in 2024, +3% compared with 2023 and +30% compared with 2015). In addition to SIAMU/DBDMH interventions for urgent medical assistance, 7,707 interventions were carried out by the Red Cross and 1,230 by the military hospital in 2024.

PUBLIC SPACES

Public spaces are areas where violence is disproportionately over-represented in the Brussels-Capital Region.

Violent robberies (armed or unarmed) in public spaces are particularly characteristic of the BCR, which accounts for 47% of all such offences recorded by the police in Belgium. In 2024, this amounted to 4,821 violent unarmed robberies in public spaces and 1,025 armed robberies.

45 Violations of the C3 and F103 signs.

46 Data provided on request to the safe.brussels Observatory by those responsible for municipal emergency planning.

47 Source: Belgian Interregional Environment Agency - CELINE.

48 Data provided to the safe.brussels Observatory on request.

While the number of unarmed robberies declined (-9% compared with 2023 and even -27% compared with 2015), armed robberies rose sharply in 2024 (+22% compared with 2023 and +18% compared with 2015), which may reflect the increased circulation of weapons in the Region, as seen above.

Physical violence in public spaces is the most frequent recorded type of offence in public spaces according to police statistics with 6,710 offences recorded in 2024. It is primarily concentrated along the axis connecting the North and South railway stations, passing through central districts such as Grand-Place, Martyrs, Marolles and Dansaert.

Violent crimes in public spaces also displays a **gendered dimension**. When the police identify at least one suspect, there is at least one male suspect in 93% of violent robbery offences (both unarmed and armed) and in 88% of offences involving physical violence in public spaces.

In **public transport** in particular, violent robberies constitute a problem that is specific to Brussels. In 2024, the 715 offences of violent unarmed robberies recorded in public transport in the BCR accounted for 68% of all such robberies recorded in Belgium, despite a decline in 2024 following a major peak in 2023.

Finally, **street harassment** warrants particular attention. According to the 2024 RSS it is the second most prevalent form of victimisation in the BCR: 16% of residents and even 20% of commuters report having experienced it in the twelve months preceding the survey. Among women, these proportions rise to 20% (residents) and 23% (commuters). Despite these high prevalence levels, reporting remains low: only 16% of victims of street harassment state that they filed a complaint according to the 2024 RSS. It should nevertheless be noted that the offence category "sexism in public spaces" was introduced into police statistics following the revision of COL13/2013 (see above), for which 29 offences were recorded in 2024. Developments in these figures will be monitored in the coming years.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Women warrant particular attention, as they are over-exposed to sexual and domestic violence, as well as to psychological violence (within the family, outside of it and online) and street harassment⁴⁹. Furthermore, the 2024 RSS shows that their sense of security is generally lower than that of men in the BCR⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ Observatory, « Violences à l'égard des femmes. État des lieux de la situation en Région bruxelloise à l'occasion de la journée internationale pour l'élimination de ces violences », *Focus de l'Observatoire* - n°5, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2025. Available in Dutch and French.

⁵⁰ Observatory, « Enquête Régionale de Sécurité 2024. Enseignements principaux », *Focus de l'Observatoire* - n°6, Brussels: safe.brussels, 2025. Available in Dutch and French.

Minors are also particularly vulnerable, given the trends observed in recent years⁵¹. The number of youth protection cases recorded by the police, which had been relatively stable since 2015 (at around 1,400 cases per year), rose sharply in 2024 in the BCR, reaching a record level of 2,211 cases (+57% compared with 2023).

The number of cases involving “**minors at risk**” entering the Brussels Youth Public Prosecutor’s Office increased by 40% between 2015 and 2024. After two consecutive years of decline in 2022 and 2023, the number rose again in 2024 to 11,691 cases (+9% compared with 2023). The minors concerned are often young: one in four aged under the age of six, and more than half are under the age of twelve. Approximately half of them are girls (48%).

Minors are also particularly vulnerable to **sexual violence**. In 2024, more than a quarter of the victims of all rapes recorded by the police were minors. For violations of sexual integrity and dissemination of sexual content, four out of ten victims were minors. Sexual violence against children in families was virtually non-existent in police statistics (with just two offences recorded in the BCR in 2024). Despite the inclusion of incest in the Criminal Code, this warrants specific studies, given the glaring lack of data on this type of violence, which affects a particularly vulnerable population and the difficulties the police face in detecting it.

In addition, **sexual exploitation** affects minors in a particularly problematic manner. In 2024, the police recorded 84 offences relating to images of sexual abuse of minors and 34 offences relating to the sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution in the BCR (two new categories of offences introduced with the reform of sexual criminal law in June 2022). Among the 14 new victims of sexual exploitation supported by Pag-Asa in 2024, only one was a minor. This proportion is significantly lower than that observed in 2023, when seven minors were among the 20 new victims of sexual exploitation for whom the non-profit organisation Pag-Asa began providing support.

Lastly, minors are also involved as perpetrators in numerous criminal cases, as shown by figures relating to **acts defined as criminal offences** (FQI/MOF cases) at the Brussels Youth Public Prosecutor’s Office. In 2024, for example, 233 cases of illegal carrying or possession of weapons, 333 cases of drug possession (a decrease) and 280 cases of drug trafficking (an increase) were filed with the Brussels Youth Public Prosecutor’s Office. In the area of harassment, minors can be both victims and perpetrators: the Brussels Youth Public Prosecutor’s Office recorded a significant rise in FQI/MOF cases involving harassment, with 275 cases in 2024 (+133% compared with 2015 and +26% compared with 2023). The most common FQI/MOF cases remained intentional assault and battery (1,225 cases, +37% compared with 2015 and +21% compared with 2023), followed by theft with violence or threats (665 cases, a sharp decrease of 53% compared with 2015). This latter offence is strongly over-represented in the BCR, which accounted for 29% of such cases.

51 A problem also highlighted by Public Prosecutor Frédéric Van Leeuw in his [speech at the official opening of the Brussels Court of Appeal](#) on 2 September 2024.

CONCLUSIONS

The Brussels–Capital Region displays a set of characteristics that make it unique: a highly urbanised and densely populated city–region, a national capital and an international metropolis hosting numerous institutions, political, cultural, and social events, as well as an economic and academic hub attracting commuters, students and tourists on a daily basis.

The phenomena described in this report can be partly explained by our Region’s specific features:

- The high population density, coupled with the influx of tourists and commuters, creates a context conducive to certain types of crime, such as pickpocketing, and puts urban spaces under pressure, particularly in terms of stopping and parking. This is evident from the number of vehicles stopped or parked in breach of the law in the municipalities’ SAC/GAS cases. Furthermore, people in the BCR are regularly confronted with a lack of cleanliness, as confirmed by figures from the municipalities (SAC/GAS and taxes) and Bruxelles Propreté/Net Brussel.
- A metropolis also attracts illegal economic activities, as illustrated by the rise in shootings, drug trafficking and money laundering.
- The BCR faces socio-economic challenges that are typical of large cities: poverty, homelessness and the migratory crisis foster exploitation and the consumption of drugs such as crack cocaine.
- The demographic characteristics of Brussels, with a young and highly diverse population, highlight the growing challenges involving minors. They are particularly vulnerable, with a record rise in cases of minors at risk and sexual violence against them. Moreover, discrimination remains over-represented in the BCR, with the majority of offences linked to the so-called racial criterion.
- A busy public transport network also offers opportunities for theft and violence.
- Finally, the growing use of the internet and other technology in all areas of society calls for increased vigilance regarding crime committed through this medium.

Given this reality, short-term measures are important to guarantee local quality of life. However, they must be accompanied by structural reforms in areas such as education, access to employment, urban planning, housing policy and reducing inequality. Without such reforms, public action risks being confined to the local management of symptoms, merely displacing criminal phenomena rather than addressing their root causes.

Security policies must be coherent with all other public policies implemented in the Brussels-Capital Region, and rely on synergies between local authorities, law enforcement agencies, citizens and partners in the prevention and security chain. These synergies provide essential leverage for [safe.brussels](#).

It is crucial to strengthen prevention, continue to innovate and constantly adapt to changes in these phenomena, particularly with regard to cybercrime and organised crime. Combined efforts, a long-term vision and the preservation of the Brussels-Capital Region's specific characteristics are essential conditions for ensuring that Brussels can continue to be lived in, in all its richness, in full security.

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