On the uses of the International Crime Survey; with special reference to the findings of the Netherlands

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1 Background

There has long been a need for comparable information about levels and patterns of criminal victimization in different countries. Researchers have principally wanted to test theories about the social causes of crime by means of cross-national comparisons. Policymakers have principally wanted to understand better their national crime problems by putting these in an international perspective. To date, by far the major effort has been put into analyzing crime rates in different countries on the basis of offences recorded by the police ('police figures').

However, police figures have substantial limitations for comparative purposes. First, reports of crime by victims form the major bulk of incidents that the police have available to record; any differences in the propensity to report to the police in different countries will seriously jeopardise comparisons, and rather little is known about these differences. Second, comparisons of police statistics are severely undermined by differences in legal definitions, and by technical factors to do with how offences are classified and counted.

In many countries recently, an alternative count of crime has been obtained through crime surveys. These ask representative samples of the population about selected offences they have experienced over a given time, whether or not they have reported them to the police. Typically, such surveys also ask respondents' opinions about crime, fear of crime, and so on. However, by no means all countries have conducted such surveys, and those that have done so have used different methods which make their results extremely difficult to use for comparative research.

The climate ripened for a standardized international survey as more was understood about the methodology of crime surveys, and the value of their information. At a meeting in Barcelona of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe at the end of 1987, the author formally aired plans for a standardized survey (Van Dijk et al., 1987). The momentum was continued through a Working Group comprising Jan van Dijk (overall coordinator), Ministry of Justice, the Netherlands; Pat Mayhew, Research and Planning Unit, Home Office, England; and Martin Killias, University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

2 Organization and methods

An invitation to join in the survey was sent to some twenty-odd countries. Fifteen countries eventually took part in a fully co-ordinated survey exercise. The countries were:

- Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology)
- Belgium (Ministry of Justice)
- Canada (Department of Justice, Research and Development)

[1] I want to thank John van Kesteren for his help with the data analysis.

- England and Wales (Home Office)
- Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeskriminalamt, Max-Planck Institut)
- Finland (National Research Institute for Legal Policy)
- France (Ministry of Justice)
- Japan (National Research Institute of Police Science; Japan Urban Security Research Institute)
- The Netherlands (Ministry of Justice)
- Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office)
- Norway (Ministry of Justice)
- Scotland (Scottish Home and Health Department)
- Spain (Ministry of Justice)
- Switzerland (l'Office Federal de la Justice)
- USA (US Department of Justice)

In addition, local surveys using the same questionnaire were conducted in *Poland* (Ministry of Justice), *Indonesia* (Guru Besar Kriminologi, Penologi, Victimologi dan Hukum Pidana, Surabaja).

In the majority of countries 2,000 of respondents were interviewed by telephone, using the new technology of computer assisted telephone interviewing. Respondents were asked about eleven main forms of victimization. Those who had been victimized were asked short questions about the place where the offence occurred; its material consequences; whether the police were involved (and if not why not); satisfaction with the police response; and any victim assistance given. In addition, some basic socio-demographic and lifestyle data were collected. Some other questions were asked about: fear of crime; satisfaction with local policing; crime prevention behaviour; and the preferred sentence for a 21-year old recidivist burglar.

3 Results

In the figures 1 and 2 we present the key findings of the survey.

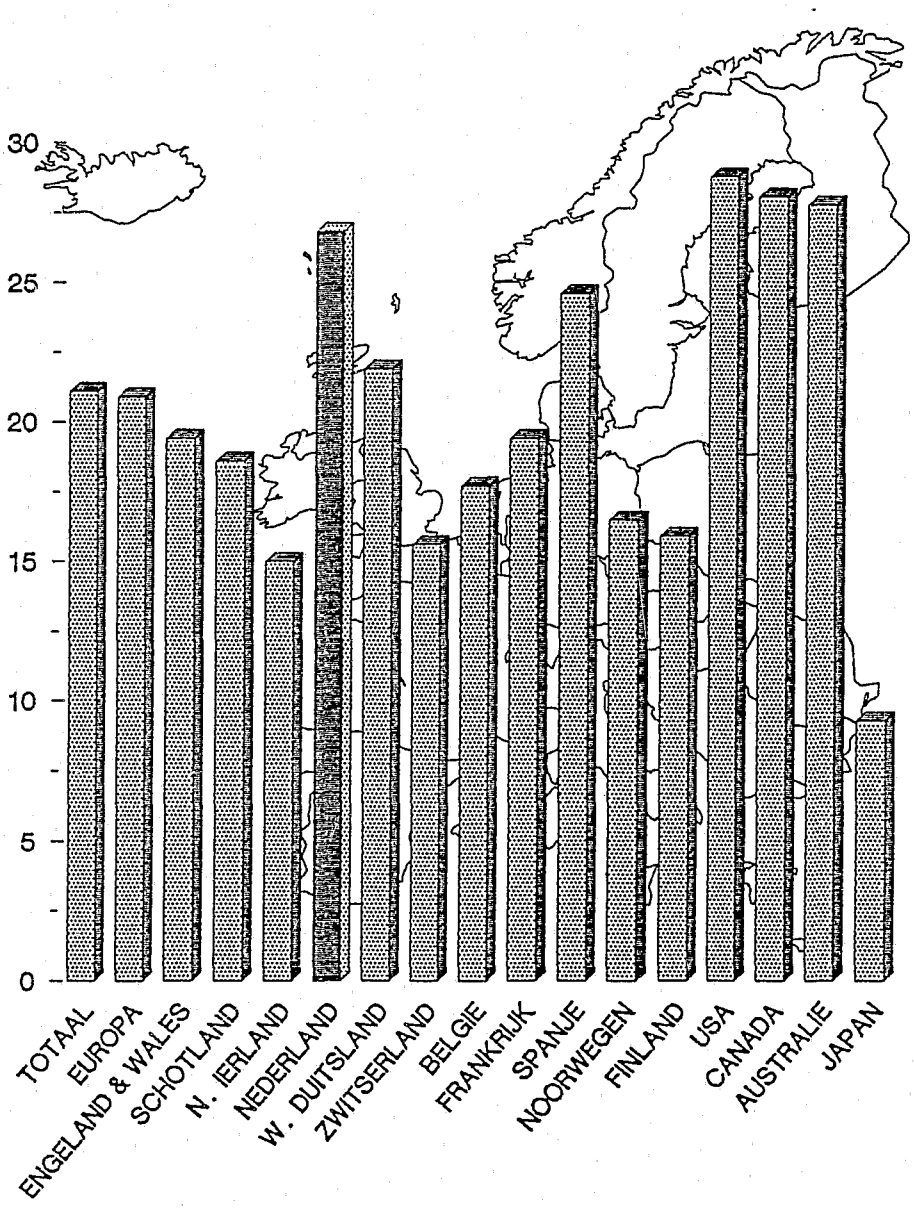
Figure 1: Victimization rates for fourteen different types of crime in seventeen countries in 1988

	Total[1]	Europe[2]	England & Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Nether-lands	West Germany	Switzer-land	Belgium	France	Spain	Norway	Finland	USA	Canada	Australia	Warsaw	Surabaja	Japan
Theft of car	1.2	1.3	1.8	0.8	1.6	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.8	2.3	1.3	1.1	0.4	2.1	0.8	2.3	2.2	0.2	0.2
Theft from car	5.3	5.8	5.6	5.3	4.0	5.3	4.7	1.9	2.7	6.0	9.9	2.8	2.7	9.3	7.2	6.9	10.2	4.7	0.7
Car vandalism	6.7	7.0	6.8	6.5	4.5	8.2	8.7	4.1	6.6	6.5	6.3	4.6	4.0	8.9	9.8	8.7	7.6	2.7	2.7
Theft of motorcycle[3]	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	1.2	0.3	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.8	0.4
Theft of bicycle	2.6	2.2	1.0	1.0	1.6	7.6	3.3	3.2	2.7	1.4	1.0	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.4	1.9	1.0	2.7	3.7
Burglary with entry	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.0	1.1	2.4	1.3	1.0	2.3	2.4	1.7	0.8	0.6	3.8	3.0	4.4	2.6	3.8	0.7
Attempted burglary	2.0	1.9	1.7	2.1	0.9	2.6	1.8	0.2	2.3	2.3	1.9	0.4	0.4	5.4	2.7	3.8	2.8	1.7	0.2
Robbery	0.9	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.8	0.5	1.0	0.4	2.8	0.5	0.8	1.9	1.1	0.9	1.2	0.5	0
Personal theft	4.0	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.2	4.5	3.9	4.5	4.0	3.6	5.0	3.2	4.3	4.5	5.4	5.0	13.4	5.2	0.2
- pickpocketing	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.0	0.9	1.9	1.5	1.7	1.6	2.0	2.8	0.5	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.0	13.0	3.3	-
Sexual incidents[4]	2.5	1.9	1.2	1.2	1.8	2.6	2.8	1.6	1.3	1.2	2.4	2.1	0.6	4.5	4.0	7.3	3.6	6.3	1.0
- sexual assault	0.8	0.7	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.5	1.5	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.2	2.3	1.7	1.6	2.0	1.7	
Assault/threat	2.9	2.5	1.9	1.8	1.8	3.4	3.1	1.2	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	5.4	4.0	5.2	3.0	0.8	0.5
- with force	1.5	1.2	0.6	1.0	1.1	2.0	1.5	0.9	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.4	2.0	2.3	1.5	3.0	1.4	0.3	0.2
All crimes[5]	21.1	20.9	19.4	18.6	15.0	26.8	21.9	15.6	17.7	19.4	24.6	16.5	15.9	28.8	28.1	27.8	34.4	20.0	9.3

1. Total figure treats each country as of equal statistical importance, with an assumed sample of 2000 (excl. Japan)
2. European totals have been calculated by weighting individual country results by population size (excl. Warsaw/Surabaja)
3. 'Motorcycles' include mopeds and scooters
4. Asked of women only
5. Percentage of sample victimized by at least one crime of any type

Source: Van Dijk, Mayhew, Killias, Experiences of Crime across the World, Kluwer, Deventer, 1990

Figure 2: Percentages of the population victimized by any crime in 1988, in fifteen countries



Source: Van Dijk, Mayhew and Killias, 1990

The percentage of persons 16 years and over who had been victimized in 1988 at least once by one of the eleven types of crime covered by the study was the highest in the USA, Canada and Australia (app. 30%).
Countries with overall victimization rates of about 25% were The Netherlands, Spain and the FRG. A victimization rate of about 20% was found in Scotland, England and Wales, France and Belgium. Rates around 15% were found amongst the public of Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Norway and Finland. Japan has a rate below ten percent. Offense rates in Warsaw (Poland) resemble West-European city rates, although thefts of personal property - in particular pickpocketing - seem more common.

4 Survey estimates and police figures

We have compared the present estimates of national victimization risks with the conventional measure of offences recorded by the police per 100.000 inhabitants ("police figures") as compiled by Interpol. The amount of crime as indicated by the survey will of course be higher than the official police figure, since in all countries less than half of victimizations were reported to the police (e.g. in Japan the overall reporting rate was 46.5% in 1988/89). Our comparisons focused on how far the survey and police measures show similar *relative rankings* of countries with regard to crime levels.
For car theft the ranking of countries on the basis of victimization rates is quite similar to the picture shown by police figures (rank order correlation was 0.83). For instance Australia, England and Wales and France feature at the top and Japan, Finland and the Netherlands at the bottom in both rankings. For burglary there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the two sources of information (0.53). The relationship between survey and police figures is also moderately strong for robbery (0.49). Japan, for example, is at the bottom of both the survey and Interpol list. The rankings for assault and sexual incidents, however, are dissimilar (0.22 and 0.29). The reporting rates for these two categories of crime vary greatly across countries. When the Interpol ranking is compared with the ranking of reported offenses, there were much stronger relationships between survey and police figures for robbery (0.73), assault (0.72) and sexual incidents (0.81).

The most important result of the analysis is that there is a much closer correspondence between survey and police figures when account is taken of differences in reporting to the police. After adjusting for national reporting rates, the associations between survey measures and police figures were statistically robust for all five crime types. This result confirms our belief that for many types of crime, police figures as compiled by Interpol cannot be used for comparative purposes, simply on account of different reporting rates in various countries.

In the Netherlands, where victimization surveys have been carried out regularly since the early seventies, reporting rates have been found to be unstable over time as well. For this reason trend analyses of police figures within countries must also be interpreted with caution. Changes in police figures over time may reflect actual changes in crime levels but may also be due to trends in reporting rates. In several countries, for instance, the readiness to report minor sexual incidents may go up as a result of a greater awareness among women of their rights to privacy. At the local scale, the readiness to report crimes may also increase in response to special crime prevention programs (Van Dijk et al, 1984). As a consequence crime prevention programs may lead to higher rates of registered crime although actual victimization rates have fallen. Programs which have been successful in preventing crime and increasing public trust will be evaluated quite wrongly on the basis of police figures.
In our opinion, victimization surveys are an indispensable tool for both comparative criminological studies and crime prevention evaluation studies.

5 A victimological risk model

Survey results can be used to analyse the relationships between the social characteristics of people and their victimization risks. Such relationships can be interpreted within the frame of several theories, such as the life style/exposure

theory (Hindelang et al., 1978). In previous work we have constructed a three-factorial risk model based upon attractiveness of target, proximity of offenders, and social as well as "technical" exposure (Van Dijk, Steinmetz, 1984).
In the International Crime Survey information was collected about a few social characteristics of the respondents (mainly demographic). We have analyzed the links between these demographic characteristics and individual victimization rates.

To determine whether there is a link between certain demographic characteristics and the risk of becoming the victim of a offense, cross tabulations can be made examining victimization across categories of characteristics such as age or sex. A cross-tabulation between townsize and victimization risk shows that victim percentages increased with increased urbanization of the municipalities where the respondents lived. Other tables showed that the victim percentages dropped sharply as the respondents' age increased. Moreover, men are victims slightly more often than women. Higher income groups are victims considerably more often than those with lower incomes. Finally those who got out in the evening a lot run higher risks of being victimized.

Such differences need to be interpreted cautiously. It is possible, for example, that the higher victim rates among inhabitants of the large cities result partly from the comparatively low average age of the population. To ascertain whether living in a large city in itself (i.e., disregarding the age factor) entails a higher crime risk, the victim rates for young men living in a large city may be compared with the rates for their contemporaries in the provinces. Figure 3 gives a synopsis of the victim percentage of the nine population groups grouped by municipality size (three categories) and age (also three categories).

Figure 3: Percentages of respondents who were victims of one or more crimes over the past five years, by townsize and age; results of 14 countries

age	19-29		30-54		55+	
townsize	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 10,000	2103	53.1	4047	43.6	2445	23.4
10,000-100,000	2070	65.8	4129	54.6	2274	34.2
> 100.000	1959	73.6	3152	65.5	1828	42.1

N=24007; 3999 missing

Figure 3 shows clearly that municipality size and age each affect the victimization risk independently. In all types of municipality, the victimization percentages for young persons are twice as high as for older people. Similarly, living in a large community appears to produce a substantially higher risk for all age groups as living in a small village. Accordingly, an extremely high percentage of victims is encountered among those under age 35 living in large cities (71%). The lowest percentage is found among older persons living in the smallest communities (23%).

The figures shown in figure 3 could be further broken down by sex and social class. A table devised in this way would indicate whether the characteristics of municipality size, age, sex, and social class etc. independently display any relationship with the victimization figures. Such a table, however, would contain more than 100 entries and would be very difficult to read. For this reason, we have also analyzed the results with the aid of a log-linear model using the ECTA (Everyman's Contingency Table Analysis) program developed by L.A. Goodman (1971). The particular feature of this technique is that it ignores the relationship

between a single variable such as age and the dependent variable (in this case, victimization) and instead considers each combination of variables -e.g. the 16-29 age group, male, working class, inhabitant of a large city - separately to see whether there is any relation with the dependent variable.
For the average person, the likelihood of becoming a victim of an offense over 5 years is 49%, or, the ratio-victims to non-victims is 0.98 in 1. A log-linear model was used to calculate the extent to which belonging to a particular category increased or diminished the risk of becoming a victim irrespective of other characteristics of the persons concerned. In other words, for each category a victimization coefficient was determined that provides an estimate of the victimization risk for that particular category.

For example the ratio for those below 29 years is not 0.96 in 1, but 1.61 in 1 (1.64x0.98) and for those above 55 it is 0.55 in 1 (0.56x0.98).
The risk coefficients can be multiplied with each other in order to calculate the combined risk. For example the victimization ratio of young persons living in a big town is (0.98x1.64x1.53) 2.46 in 1. Members of this group have a 71% risk of becoming a victim (71% = 2.45/2.45+1x100%). These estimates based on the log-linear model are close to the actual percentage (see figure 4).

In figure 4 we present the findings of our analysis of the independent links between townsize, age, gender, social economic status (a scale combining car ownership, level of education, income level and ownership of house) and lifestyle (frequency of outdoor visits).

Figure 4: Marginal frequencies and victimization percentages and results of a log-linear model-based quantification of the extent to which certain social characteristics increase or diminish victimization risks (five year period) in 14 countries

	N	victim %	μ	risk coefficient $e^{2\mu}$
total	24007	49.9	-.010	0.98
townsize**				
< 10,000	8692	40.0	-.222*	0.64
10,000-100,000	8534	51.5	.010	1.01
>100,000	6980	61.6	.212*	1.53
age**				
16-29 years	7105	62.5	.246*	1.64
30-54 years	12853	53.1	.046*	1.05
55 years and up	7776	31.4	-.292*	0.56
gender				
male	12704	51.5	.010	1.01
female	15302	47.6	-.010	0.98
social economic status				
low	5205	30.6	-.256*	0.60
average	18418	50.5	.006	1.01
high	4383	65.5	.259*	1.68
out of door visits				
often	14347	55.9	.064*	1.14
not often	13659	42.4	-.064*	0.88

*) Significance $p < .05$; $X^2=122$; d.f.=99
**) 3800 respondents did not know the size of their town; 272 respondents refused to state their age

Figure 4 shows that the main risk increasing factors are a high social economic status (1.68), an age below 30 (1.64), and living in a town of more than 100,000 inhabitants (1.53). An outgoing lifestyle is a risk factor of minor importance (1.14). Gender is not significantly related to overall risks. The main risk reducing characteristics are an age of 55 years and over (0.56), a low social economic status (0.60), living in a small town (0.64) and a house centred lifestyle (0.88).

The synopsis given in figure 4 can be used to estimate the victimization risks for all combinations of age, gender, townsize, social class, and lifestyle by multiplying the risk coefficients given in the right columns of the table.

In interpreting the results, it must be born in mind that the relationship between the social characteristics and the victimization rates may differ by both type of offense and by country. Sex differences, for example, are significant for car offenses (males owning more cars), assaults (males running higher risks), and, for obvious cultural reasons, sexual incidents (females more at risk). In countries with a low participation of women in the work force, such as Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland, sex differences tend to be larger across the board, due to the protection of a house-based lifestyle for women who stay at home most of the day.

6 Correlates of victimization risks at country level

Are the overall social correlates of victimization risks related to victimization risks at the level of countries? The question now, then, is whether countries with a high percentage of persons living in large towns actually do have higher national victimization risks. Only if risk factors are also correlated with national victimization rates, can the prevalence of such factors in a society be seen as a possible criminogenic factor (a causal factor of crime). In the case of urbanization, this would mean that highly urbanized societies are more likely to suffer from high crime rates, for instance on account of the anonymity and social disintegration of urban society.

No relationship was found between the national rates of going out in the evening and national victimization rates for all crimes (Van Dijk et al, 1990). National victimization rates are positively related, however, with levels of urbanization (correlation coefficient 0.64). Countries with fewer persons living in cities of 100,000 inhabitants or more tend to have lower overall victimization rates, and vice versa. The correlation is much weaker after the inclusion of Japan (0.34). Japan is the outlier here, since it combines the highest level of urbanization with the lowest crime rate. National victimization rates are negatively related to the age structure: countries with a higher percentage of young tend to have higher crime rates (0.49). We have presented the main findings in figure 5.

National victimization rates are not significantly related to Gross National Product per capita (-.04) or unemployment rates (-.34) according to our analyses. No clear association was found with the distribution of housing types - prevalence of tower blocks or detached houses - either.

Figure 5: Ranking of 15 countries in terms of victimization rates, rates of city dwellers (>100,000 inhabitants), unemployment rates, proportion of young people (15-29 years), Gross National Product per capita and rates of car ownership

countries	victim. rate 1=high	urbaniz. 15=high	unemploy. 1=low	% youngsters 1=low	GNP p.c. 1=low	car ownership 1=high
England&Wales	8	5	12	8	3	9
Scotland	9	7	12	8	3	14
Northern Ireland	14	15	12	8	3	13
the Netherlands	4	11	14	14	6	10
W.Germany	6	6	7	12	9	7
Switzerland	13	13	1	10	14	12
Belgium	10	14	10	6	5	5
France	7	8	8	5	8	4
Finland	12	9	4	3	11	11
Normay	11	12	3	4	13	8
USA	1	10	5	15	15	1
Australia	2	2	9	1	12	3
Canada	3	4	6	13	7	2
Spain	5	3	15	11	1	15
Japan	15	15	2	2	10	6

Source for victimization rate, urbanization and car ownership: Van Dijk et al, 1990
Source for other measures: International Marketing Data and Stat., 1987/88

There are positive relationships between national ownership rates of cars and overall victimization rates (r=.48), and between national ownership rates of bicycles and motorbikes and victimization rates for bicycle and motorbike theft (0.86; 0.65). Also, rates of TV-ownership are associated with national burglary risks (Block, Zhang, 1990). National victimization rates for burglary in particular are positively associated with the percentage of the paid work force that is female. This is probably because in countries with high female participation the houses are less well guarded at daytime (Block, Zhang, 1990). Interestingly and intriguingly, Walker et al (1990) discovered that countries with colder climates have lower levels of crime than countries nearer to the equator (this is true for sexual incidents and burglary in particular and may be accounted for by a more outgoing lifestyle in countries with a more gentle climate). The inclusion of Japan, however, weakens the association.

Japan has a relatively small proportion of youngsters. This factor may partially explain Japan's low crime rate. On the other hand Japan is a highly urbanized society and there are high ownership rates of cars, bicycles, motorbikes and TV's. The participation of women in the work force is also moderately high ($\pm$ 39%). The country is situated relatively close to the equator. The prevalence of most known criminogenic factors is relatively high in Japan. Our epidemiological results, then, make Japan's low crime rates even more remarkable. It is a veritable criminological puzzle.

7 A closer look at national victimization rates

The next question we want to address is to which extent differences between the national victimization rates are accounted for by the differential prevalence of known criminogenic factors such as the level of urbanization, and levels of affluence in terms of the rate of car ownership etc.
As a first step in this analysis we have repeated the multi-variate analysis presented in section 5 with the inclusion of the variable "country" (with fourteen categories). We have, in short, repeated the loglinear analysis of individual

victimization risks, with the addition of the respondent's country as a separate category (and the deletion of the less relevant factor gender). This allows us whether the residence in a particular country is a risk increasing or diminishing factor independently from other risk factors. It allows us to explore whether and to what extent differences between national victimization rates persist if the criminogenic impact of known risk factors is controlled for. In other words, we will analyse, for example, whether the low crime rate of Switzerland is wholly or particularly accounted for by it being a relatively rural country.

As figure 6 shows, the ranking of countries is indeed somewhat altered when the influence of known criminogenic factors is controlled for. The USA, Australia and Canada have high rates but relatively low risk coefficients. The high rates of crime in these countries seem partially accounted for by the national prevalence of known risk factors. Canada's victimization rate of 53%, for instance, is similar to that of France (52%). However, the independent risk coefficient of Canada is 0.97 and that of France 1.31. This finding shows that the Canadian rate is lower than might be expected on the basis of Canada's prevalence of risk factors such as urbanization and car ownership. The crime rate of the Netherlands, France and Belgium in contrast is relatively high, given the prevalence of risk factors in those countries.

What may well lie behind these results are other cultural factors which cannot be incorporated into our model. In other words, there could be unknown crime-generating factors at play in the Netherlands, France and Belgium which increase their crime rates. Similarly, there could be crime-inhibiting factors depressing crime in Norway, Finland and the United Kingdom. The data were not available to allow Japan to be included in the analysis for figure 6. However, it seems highly likely that if Japan had been included, it would have emerged as a country with a crime rate far below what might be expected given its high level of urbanization and affluence.

Figure 6: Marginal frequencies and victimization percentages. Results of a log-linear analysis of the relationships between town size, age, social economic status, lifestyle and country of residence on the one hand and individual victimization risks on the other

	N	victim %	μ	risk coefficient $e^{2\mu}$
total	28006	49.2	-.011	0.98
town size				
< 10,000	8692	40.0	-.206*	0.66
10,000-100,000	8534	51.5	.001	1.00
> 100,000	6980	61.6	.205*	1.51
age				
16-29	7105	62.5	.244*	1.63
30-54	12853	53.1	.046*	1.10
55+	7776	31.4	-.290*	0.56
social economic status				
low	5205	30.6	-.254*	0.60
average	18418	50.5	.002	1.00
high	4383	65.6	.252*	1.66
out of door visits				
often	14347	55.9	.077*	1.17
not often	13659	42.2	-.077*	0.86
countries				
the Netherlands	2000	60.4	.270*	1.72
France	1502	52.0	.136*	1.31
Belgium	2060	48.3	.090*	1.20
Australia	2012	57.2	.075*	1.16
USA	1996	57.6	.073	1.16
Germany	5274	51.3	.064*	1.14
Spain	2041	51.6	.055	1.12
Switzerland	1000	47.1	.037	1.08
Canada	2074	53.0	-.015	0.97
England and Wales	2006	46.0	-.058*	0.89
Scotland	2007	41.4	-.115*	0.79
Finland	1025	40.1	-.190*	0.68
Norway	1009	38.9	-.200*	0.67
Northern Ireland	2000	33.4	-.222*	0.64

*) $p<0.05$; $X^2=990$; df= 699

8 The Dutch victimization rates in a cross-cultural perspective

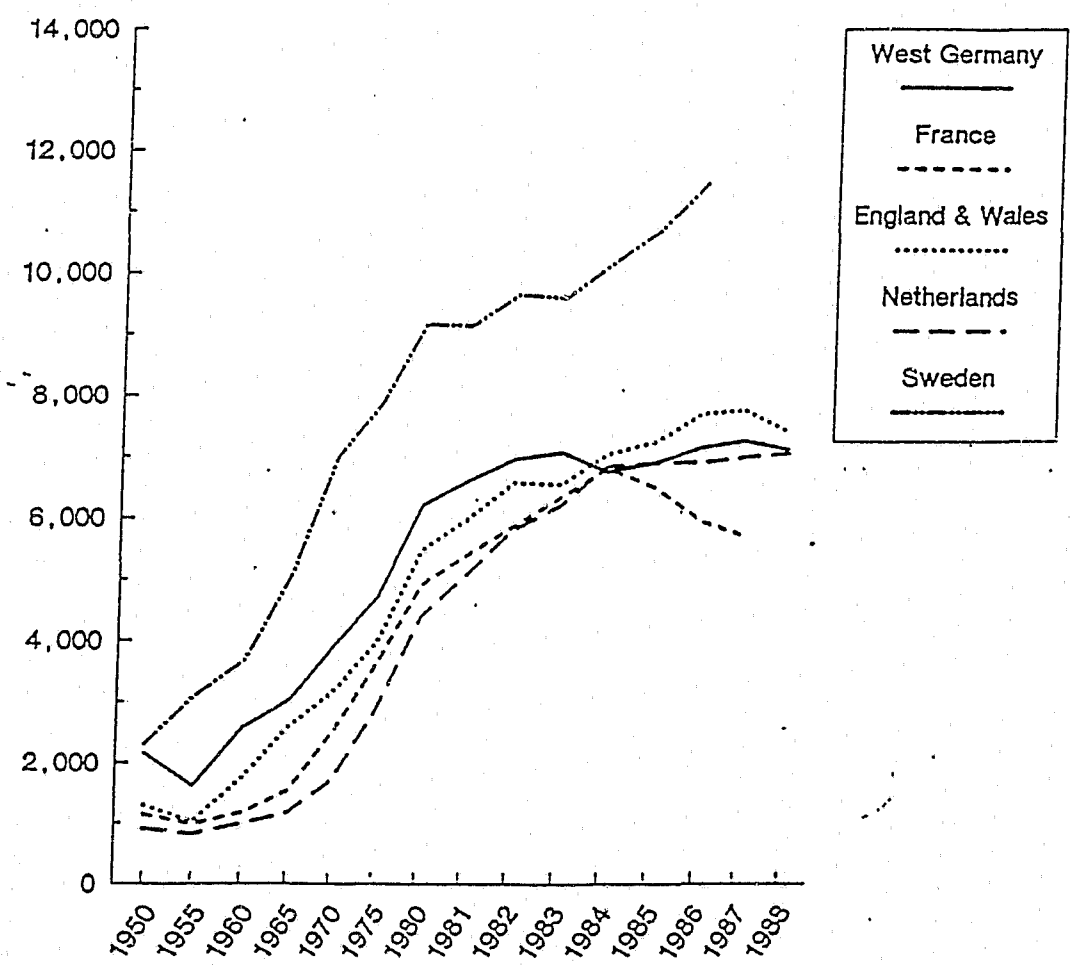
Among the participating European countries, the highest rates were in the Netherlands. According to our loglinear model, controlling for urbanization and affluence, the Dutch risks are unexplainably high. The high Dutch rate, however, is partly due to the very high victimization rate for bicycle theft (7.6%; the second highest rate was found in Japan: 3.7%). The opportunities for bicycle theft are very high in the Netherlands: 91% of all households own at least one bicycle. If the bicycle thefts are not counted, the overall victimization rate for 1988 of the Netherlands is 21.3%. This is still a relatively high rate, but lower than the rate of Spain (excluding bicycle theft).

The Netherlands is a relatively prosperous, egalitarian and peaceful country (SCP, 1990). There seem to be no obvious criminological reasons for its high crime rate. According to the official figures of Interpol, the homicide rate of the Netherlands

is relatively low (1 per 100,000 inhabitants). There are also relatively few households who possess a firearm (1%). For the most part, the Dutch crime problem consists of a high rate of juvenile delinquency. Both police figures and survey figures show that the Netherlands have experienced a boom in crime between 1970 and 1985 unparalelled by increases elsewhere in Western-Europe (Van Dijk, Junger-Tas, 1988). In figure 7 an overview is given of registered crime trends in five European countries. Per 100,000 inhabitants the Dutch police figure was much lower than in neighboring countries in 1970. The Dutch registered crime rate is presently at the same level as West-Germany and the United Kingdom.

In our opinion, the Dutch crime boom between 1970 and 1985 was generated by a rapid transformation of Dutch society. Till the late sixties social life in the Netherlands was largely governed by religious and political organizations. Each of the main religious denominations - the protestant church, the catholic church and the so-called 'red family' (the socialist movement) - ran its own political party, labour union, broadcasting company, newspaper, universities, hospitals, schools, houses for the elderly, youth and sports clubs. The majority of all youngsters were socialized within the shelter of their parents' church or political movement, the so-called 'pillars' of Dutch society ('zuilen'). Life in the Dutch society was fairly conventional. Between 1965 and 1975 both the main churches and the 'red family' suddenly lost almost all of their authority and social power.

Figure 7: The development of crimes known to the police in five European countries



The three main Christian political parties merged into one Christian Democratic party. The catholic labour union merged with the largest socialist union. The various non-governmental probation associations merged into one neutral federation. Many more examples of the 'depillarization' ('ontzuiling') of important social institutions in Dutch society could be given. This process was partly the result of the rapid social, economic and political emancipation of the catholic and lower-middle class calvinistic population groups during the post-war period. The 'zuilen' were also weakened by the growth of the welfare state and the general process of secularization.
Due to these developments a declining number of the schools, youthclubs, sportclubs etc. are presently affiliated with one of the 'zuilen'. Since the 'zuilen' played a dominant role in the social life of large sections of the Dutch population the sudden process of depillarization has probably undermined some of the traditional socialization structures in Dutch society. This may explain why the cultural trend of rebellious individualism in the seventies has been particularly marked among Dutch adolescents, as evidenced by the so-called provo and squatter movements in Amsterdam (see also Downes, 1988).
In some cases the newly acquired freedom leads to a tendency to satisfy personal needs at the expense of others or of the community, or even to delinquency or crime. The increased abuse of alcohol and drugs also forms part of this pattern of negative individualism. No wonder a section of the population expresses nostalgic feelings about the old society of the 'zuilen'.

It is our hypothesis that this rapid process of secularization or 'Americanization' is a major cause of the boom in juvenile delinquency between 1970 and 1985. Traditional means to socialize and control the young generation were abolished within years. They were not timely replaced by new, up-to-date means of informal social control. The Dutch youngsters brought up in the seventies and eighties are highly individualistic and consumer-oriented. As a consequence, some of them can easily be persuaded by peers to commit minor crimes, such as shoplifting, graffiti, bicycle theft and/or to experiment with the taking of drugs.

As a response to this problem, the government has issued a comprehensive policy plan to combat crime in 1985. The capacity of the prisons was enlarged with 2500 cells, which represents an increase of around 50%. The number of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants in the Netherlands used to be 25 and is now 38. This is still one of the lowest rates in the industrialized world. In 1987 it was 46 in Japan, about 100 in England and Wales and about 250 in the USA.

The Dutch government is firmly committed to a preventive strategy to reduce crime. The 1985-plan announced a new policy with regard to social crime prevention. The plan proposed that other ministries, public authorities at a local level, businesses, schools, housing associations, private organizations and the individual citizen must take a considerable share in preventing the most commonly occurring crimes. The aims of the social crime prevention policy of the Minister of Justice and his essential partners in the public and private sectors can be summarized under three main headings:

a. the use of town planning and architectural criteria to develop an urban environment which will present a minimum of opportunity for crime;
b. the strengthening of the bond between the younger generation and the rest of society, e.g. by employment-schemes and special classes for school drop-outs;
c. the strengthening of professional surveillance by, for example, inspectors in public transport, caretakers, janitors, shop staff, sports coaches, youth workers, private security guards, etc.

An associated aim also put forward is to improve the way in which victims of crime are treated by the police and in the administration of justice and to set up victim support centres throughout the country.

The plan is generally considered to have been a success in many respects. Almost all larger towns have set up crime prevention councils, chaired by the mayors with participation of the chief prosecutors and the chiefs of police. Altogether 300 different local crime prevention projects have been sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (Van Dijk, 1990). Since 1985, the national crime level has remained fairly constant. The crime rate decreased in towns with exemplary crime prevention policies such as Haarlem. Drugs use among young people has become much less common (less than 5% of young people below 19 years have ever used any kind of drugs).

In order to strengthen crime prevention policies in the future, a Department of Crime Prevention was established within the Ministry of Justice in 1989. The Department is responsible for police-based crime prevention activities, social crime prevention programmes, victim support and the regulation of the private security industry.

Perhaps the Dutch experience with rapid social transformation in the seventies leading to a sudden boom of juvenile delinquency can alert Japanese experts to the risks of Japan's present process of modernization. Most probably a timely introduction of a fully fledged crime prevention strategy, supported by all relevant authorities, can help to mitigate such negative side effects. When Japan introduces such a strategy prior to a crime boom, this would be a policy of crime prevention in its fullest sense. This would really mean "locking the stable door before the horse is stolen".

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