



A survey of 36 Member States³ compared statistical information available on crime and criminal justice statistics and, in particular, how this information was collected and defined. Comparisons below show European averages.

KEY POINTS

- ▶ The majority of countries collected information on crimes reported to the police, resources and the prison population. However few countries carried out victimisation surveys and information available on prosecution/ convictions/ sanctions was often limited.
- ▶ Countries varied at the point in the criminal justice process at which statistics were recorded. For example, whether crimes were recorded when they were reported to the police or following an initial investigation.
- ▶ Violent assaults rose by 16% from 1993 to 1996. Homicides (excluding attempts) fell by just over 10% while robbery and rape increased slightly.
- ▶ Thefts fell by 8% from 1993 to 1996.
- ▶ Drug offences rose by 23% from 1993 to 1996 while drug trafficking offences remained constant.
- ▶ The probability of a suspect being convicted fell for most offences over this period. The exceptions were homicide, rape and assault.
- ▶ In countries where the prosecuting authority had a low workload, cases were more likely to be brought before a court. This suggests that the criminal justice system tends to balance itself out.
- ▶ No relationship was found between the size of the prison population in a country and the level of recorded crime. The main factor influencing the prison population size was the length of sanctions imposed and the number of serious offences.

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1996, the Council of Europe established a Group of Specialists on "Trends in crime and criminal justice: statistics and other quantitative data on crime and criminal justice system", which was composed of experts from thirteen countries (see Notes). The group set up a network of national correspondents, collected data from 36 countries and then prepared a compendium of crime and criminal justice data for the whole of Europe, including data from multi-national surveys.

2. The data collected were put into a database that was set up by the Institut de police scientifique et de criminologie (IPSC) of Lausanne University. This data were then validated to enable outliers to be identified and checked and to ensure a general consistency throughout the information received from each country. The process of validation is missing from most other international criminal justice surveys and this process has enabled the expert group to be more confident in the validity of the results produced.

1 European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, 1999 (Council of Europe)

2 The authors were members of the expert group conducting this survey (see Note 10)

3 England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were counted separately

WHAT INFORMATION DO COUNTRIES COLLECT AND WHEN DO THEY COLLECT IT?

Crime statistics

3. All countries collected police recorded crime statistics but few countries have regular victimisation surveys to assist in the interpretation of these statistics.
4. The best-recorded offences were total homicides, assault, rape, robbery and all thefts. 6 countries (Croatia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Spain and Turkey) could not provide a figure for homicides excluding attempts. Cyprus and Moldova could provide data for offences of theft of a motor vehicle, while 13 countries failed to provide information for bicycle theft and 4 for burglary. Drugs offences proved difficult to identify with 18 countries not able to provide data on drug trafficking offences.
5. Fifteen countries reported that offences were recorded immediately on first reporting to the police, thirteen subsequently, with eight following an initial investigation.

Suspected offenders

6. No data were collected for Belgium, Denmark, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal and the UK and many other countries could not provide the offence breakdown requested. In some countries, a suspect was counted once the police had identified him. In other countries, only suspects against whom some formal action has been taken were included.

Prosecutions

7. Although 25 countries provided information on the total number of prosecutions made in 1995 and their outcome, few could provide this by offence. In addition variations in the way that these data were collected made comparisons difficult.

Convictions

8. A definition was adopted for this survey whereby a conviction included both sanctions/measures imposed by a prosecutor based on an admission of guilt by the defendant and that imposed by a court.
9. Countries varied in the extent to which juveniles were included in such statistics in total or at least partially. All countries, except Luxembourg, were able to supply some figures for convictions however the offence breakdown was often limited.

Sanctions/measures

10. Twenty-seven countries submitted data on sanctions/measures for 1995. The Netherlands had recently changed their method of data collection causing difficulties in providing any data while others (e.g. Ireland) had not yet set up a system for collecting such data. Many countries had difficulties in providing detailed information on the sanctions/measures given for a particular offence.

11. In some countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Italy, Spain) although data were available for individual sanctions (e.g. fines or unsuspended sanctions), there was no possibility of computing the total number of sanctions that had been imposed. Such information was therefore excluded from any analysis.

12. In 11 countries information referred to the position before the convicted offender made an appeal on either the verdict or the sentence. For 21 countries it related to the position when the appeal procedure was completed.

Prisons

13. Although all countries collect and publish information on their prison population, the scope varied considerably. In some countries, it referred to a particular day of the year, for others to an average population.

SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

14. The European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research (volume 8, number 1, March 2000) contained a number of articles based on data published in the Sourcebook. Killias and Rau provided a general introduction to the project, Barclay studied the comparability of data on convictions, Jehle described varying and convergent trends of prosecution in Europe and von Hofer used the Swedish rates for rape according to police statistics to show the difficulties in international comparisons.

15. Three articles in this journal showed in what way the Sourcebook data might contribute to crime and criminal justice research. Some of their findings will be given here.

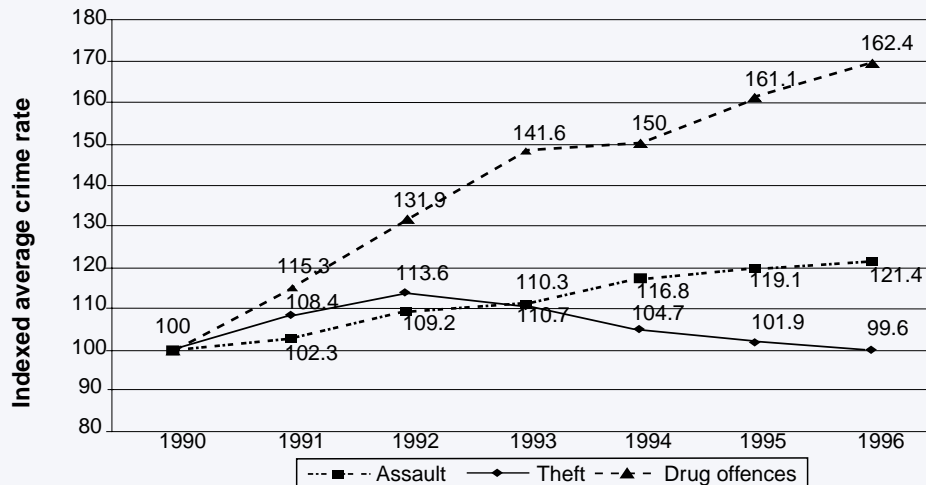
Crime trends

- a) Killias and Aebi used police statistics to study crime trends in Europe from 1990 to 1996. While absolute comparisons of police data are questionable in comparative perspective, the inherent biases within each criminal justice system may be relatively stable over time. It can be seen that police recording practices do, overall, not change very much over time, and that, therefore, statistics on crimes known to the police are relatively valid indicators of crime trends. Figure 1 shows some trends for selected offences for countries that provided information for the whole period considered (1990 to 1996).

Due to the many political changes that took place in Europe in the early 1990s comparison given below look at average changes over Member States for the period 1993-1996 only.

- Theft offences decreased by 8% over this period. Similar falls took place for both domestic burglary (8%) and car theft (6%) while bicycle thefts fell by 12%.

Figure 1 Crime trends for selected offences according to police statistics (1990=100)



- Assault increased by 16% and for most countries the peak was reached in 1995 or 1996, suggesting that the increase might not have reached its upper level by the end of the time series. Robbery and rape also increased slightly (2 –3%) during this period while homicides (excluding attempts) fell by 13%.

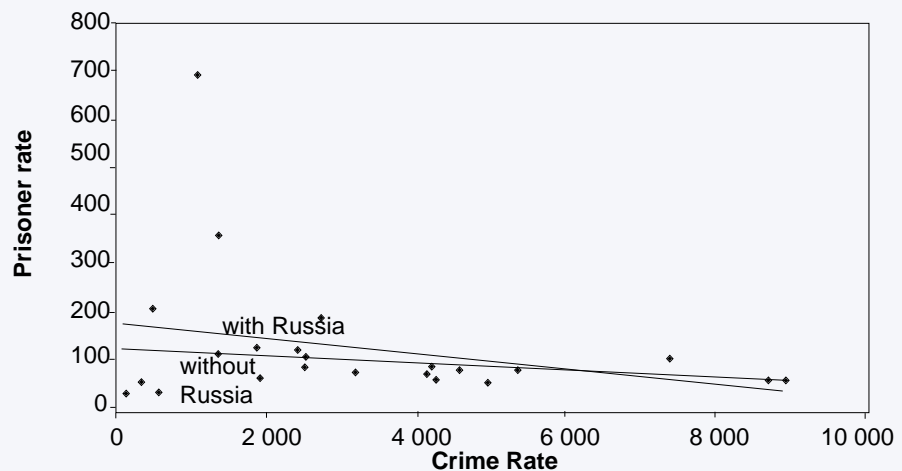
- Drug offences in general increased substantially (23%) between 1993 and 1996 in all of the 26 countries that provided data. Drug trafficking offences remained stable over this period, although only 12 countries provided data.

- A comparison between the number of persons convicted of an offence with the number of

suspected offenders indicated that the probability of a conviction had fallen over this period for most offences. The exceptions were homicide, rape and assault. In 1996 about 60% of persons suspected of an assault were convicted, 50% for robbery, 40% for burglary and 30% for car theft.

- Killias and Aebi suggested that the increase in violence found in European countries might be related to the trends in drug offences. In particular they noted the importance of the role of different types of drugs in changing violent crime trends. Such differences may explain the different crime trends in Europe as against those in the United States.

Figure 2 Correlation between prisoner rates⁴ and crime rates⁵, with and without Russia 1995



Factors affecting the prison population

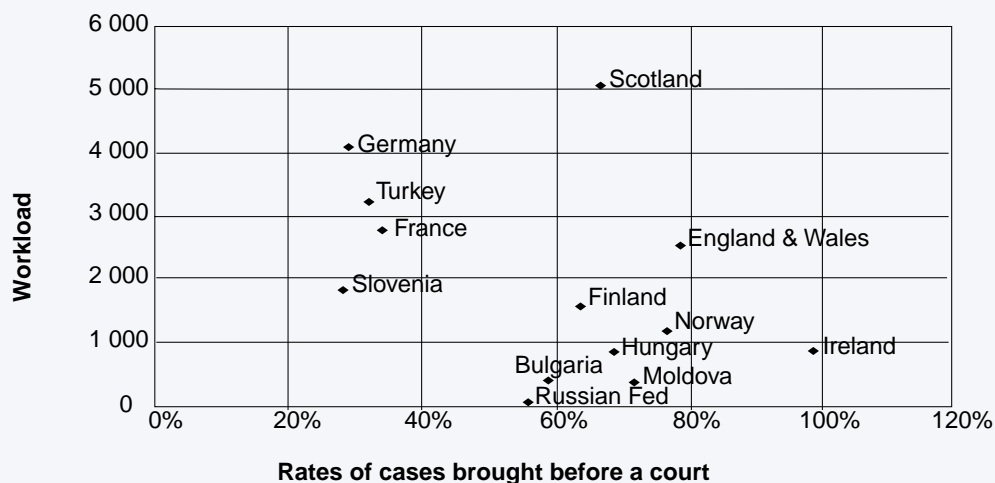
a) Combining data on police recorded offences, conviction and correctional statistics, Aebi & Kuhn analysed the prisoner rate (rate of detained people per 100 000 population) across Europe. Their results show that the prisoner rate does not depend on the crime rate (i.e. countries with more offences do not have higher prisoner rates, see Figure 2), but on the length of the sanctions

imposed. However, when each offence was considered separately, it seems that, for the most serious offences, the number of incarcerations (number of receptions into prison) offered the best explanation of the prison population. The length of the sentences imposed, however, explains better the rate of prisoners incarcerated for less serious offences.

⁴ Prisoners per 100 000 population

⁵ Number of offences of homicide, assault, rape, robbery, theft (including burglary) and drugs offences recorded by the police per 100 000 population

Figure 3 Rate of cases brought before a Court and Workload of Prosecuting Authorities – Selected Countries – 1995



Prosecution rates

b) Jehle showed the great variety of prosecution statistics throughout Europe, due to differences at the input level (cases brought to the prosecution authorities) and output structures (cases disposed of by the prosecution authorities). Nevertheless, some common trends can be found across Europe: There is a negative correlation between the workload of prosecuting authorities (disposed cases per 100 000 population) and the rate of cases brought before a court (see Figure 3). This means that in countries where the prosecution authority had a low workload the rate of cases brought before a court would be high (e.g. Norway), while in countries where the workload was high the rate would tend to be low (e.g. Germany). This suggests that the criminal justice system tends to balance itself out with the prosecutors dealing directly with a higher volume of cases when workload rises.

group in 1997 and 1998 respectively. Kristiina Kangaspunta (HEUNI) was present as an observer. Marcelo Aebi (Switzerland) was also a member of the group and supervised the data processing and analyses of the data carried out at the University of Lausanne. Finally, Wolfgang Rau (Council of Europe) was secretary to the group.

2. The following offences were included in the survey: homicide (including and excluding attempts), assault, rape, robbery (of which armed robbery), theft (of which theft of a motor vehicle, bicycle, burglary and domestic burglary), drugs offences (of which drug trafficking and serious drug trafficking).

3. The survey covered :

- Police statistics on crime, suspects and resources;
- Prosecution statistics including resources;
- Court statistics including sentencing;
- Correctional statistics including prisons, prison population, community sentences and resources. The data was derived from both the Annual Penal Statistics of the Council of Europe (SPACE) and from the Sourcebook questionnaire;
- Data from the international crime surveys (victimisation data).

NOTES

1. The expert group was chaired by Martin Killias (Switzerland). Other members were Andri Ahven (Estonia), Alberto Lagua Arrazola (Spain), Gordon Barclay (UK), Uberto Gatti (Italy), Hanns von Hofer (Sweden), Vlado Kambovski (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Zdenek Karabec (Czech Republic), Imre Kertesz (Hungary), Max Kommer (Netherlands), Jörg-Martin Jehle (Germany), Calliope Spinellis (Greece) and Pierre Tournier (France). Paul Smit (The Netherlands) and Bruno Aabusson de Cavarlay (France) also joined the

If you have any enquiries about the figures in this report or the Sourcebook please contact:

<p>Martin Killias Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law Lausanne University UNIL_BCH Lausanne Switzerland Tel 41-21-692-4640 Fax 41-21-692-4605 Email martin.killias@ipsc.unil.ch</p>	OR	<p>Gordon Barclay Home Office 50 Queen Anne's Gate London SW1H 5AT U.K. Tel 44-20-7273-3960 Fax 44-20-7273-3362 Email gordon.barclay@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk</p>
---	----	--