The crime drop in The Netherlands and other industrialized countries: Trends and possible explanations

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‘‘It is easy to lie with statistics, but it is easier to lie without them’’ (Frederic Mosteller, Harvard statistician)
‘‘Without data, you are just another person with a opinion’’ (William Edwards Deming)

Crime in the Netherlands has been decreasing significantly since 2002, in terms of both property crime and violent crime. The sense of security has also become substantially greater. This observed decrease in crime also been seen in a large number of other industrialized countries. The question now is how this decrease in crime can be explained. On the basis of the available national and international knowledge, a number of explanations that have previously been given are described.

Introduction

An attempt will be made in this memorandum to answer the following questions. (1). Has the level of crime decreased? Where and to what extent has this decrease occurred? To which types of offences does this relate? On the basis of which sources, statistical and otherwise, can we make statements about this? (2). Why has crime decreased? What plausible explanations can be given? Various different hypotheses set out in the available literature will be assessed. (3). Special attention is given to the so-called security hypothesis. That is based on the fact that the increase and quality of the application of large-scale security measures, such as immobilizers, break-in prevention measures, private security and measures to limit opportunity, have been the significant driving force behind the observed decrease in crime, both nationally and internationally. (4). Finally, a number of main conclusions will be presented.

Has crime decreased in the Netherlands?

Between 1980 and 1990 there was a steep rise in crime in the Netherlands. That was apparent from victim surveys, in which citizens were asked whether they had experienced crimes, as well as from that which the police registered in the way of offences. These two developments run a parallel course: in each case the graph shows an upward trend until the year 2002. As from 2002 the lines have shown a downward trend: over the last decade crime has decreased by around 30%. Since the Dutch Rutte government came into power in 2012 this decrease in crime has continued markedly, as illustrated in figure 1. That applies to property crimes as well as crimes of violence. The public's sense of security has increased significantly (Ministrie van Veiligheid en Justitie, 2014).

Figure 1: Development of crime in the Netherlands: registered crime and crime victim survey data, 1980 - 2014

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Therefore the total level of crime in the Netherlands has decreased. However, fluctuations can be seen when offences are viewed singly. Then it appears that, in the case of specific offences, a (temporary) increase can be observed following a significant decrease. This can be illustrated well by zooming in more specifically on three so-called "high impact crimes”, mugging, house break-in and (commercial) robbery (figure 2). Following many years of decreasing number of robberies, this type of crime increased during the period 2006 to 2009. This relates to robberies carried out both in businesses as well as private homes. The quantity has now significantly decreased again. National figures from the police show that the number of robberies in 2013 had decreased by 18 percent compared with the previous year. This decrease continues in 2014 by 22% compared with 2013. Compared with the year 2009, the number of robberies had more than halved. Also the number of muggings shows, following an increase, a decreasing trend since 2005. There was a decrease of 14% in 2013 compared with 2012. In 2014 there was a decrease of more than 22% compared with 2013. The decrease amounts to more than 50% compared to the year 2005.

The registered number of house break-ins shows an increase in 2007 following a decreasing trend since 1996. However, there has been a turnaround since 2012 and the increasing trend has turned into a decreasing trend. The integrated approach towards house break-ins was started during the second half of 2013. Particularly during the final months of that year the number of house break-ins showed a significant decrease, leading to a 5% decrease over 2013. This number was further reduced during 2014 to around 71,000. This concerns a decrease of 19% compared with 2013.

Figure 2: Development of household burglary, commercial robberies and street robbery in the Netherlands (index: 2005 = 100)
Figure 3 below shows that there has recently been an 'acceleration' in the decrease in the registered level of crime in the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands, 2015). The number of known offences shows a decrease over 2014 of seven percent compared with 2013. During the previous years that decrease amounted respectively to five and four percent.

**Figure 3. Development of registered crime in the Netherlands, 2011 – 2014 (index: 2013 = 100)**

Is there also evidence of a shrinking number of young offenders in the Netherlands?
The number of young offenders shows a significant decrease. Since 2007 there has been a steady and substantial decrease of more than 50% (see figure 4). This decrease can be seen amongst girls and boys, and also amongst ethnic minorities and the native Dutch.

**Figure 4: Development of juvenile and adult suspects in the Netherlands, 2005 – 2013 (index: 2002=100)**

The number of registered offences, whereby minors and adults are suspected, shows a decrease. The decrease in juvenile offenders runs parallel to various surveys in the area of juvenile crime. The decrease amongst juvenile boys and girls lies between 5 and 10% annually (Goudriaan et al., 2014).

The number of problematic youth groups in the Netherlands shows a decreasing trend over the last few years (Ferwerda & Van Ham, 2015). Table 1 below show this development over the last six years.

**Table 1: Problematic youth groups in the Netherlands, 2009 – 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Irritating</th>
<th>Nuisance-causing</th>
<th>Criminal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.341</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.154</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In respect of the first national picture dating from 2009 there has been a decrease of 64% over the course of five years, whereby the decrease is apparent in the youth groups that may be
termed as irritating, causing a nuisance and criminal (respectively around 68%, 50% and 64%).

**Possible explanations for the decrease in juvenile crime in the Netherlands**

There are no 'definitive explanations' for the decrease in juvenile crime. It is possible that the approaches aimed at target groups and areas and also towards 'multiple and repeat offenders' over the last few years have had an influence on the decrease in juvenile crime (Bervoets et al., 2014; Wijters & Van der Laan, 2014). Another possible explanation could be that through improved security the opportunity to commit offences, such as theft from cars, shoplifting and break-ins has been significantly reduced. The first step (or debut offence) on the path to a criminal career has become increasingly difficult. (Tseloni et al., 2012; Owen & Cooper, 2013; Farrell, Laycock & Tilley, 2015). Berghuis (2015) gives an indication, on the basis of an analysis, of an important explanation for the decrease in the number of juvenile offenders: "Then it is striking that there are signs of considerably dramatic developments involved amongst the youth: the number of years of juvenile detention imposed decreases from 2005 by 60% (from 500 to 200); this concerns all types of offences, including the relatively serious. If we look deeper into what could be going on, then that does not really arise from the fact that less juveniles come into contact with the police due to a crime (that volume only decreases by 10%), but that the police are involved with less repeat offenders amongst juveniles: their numbers decrease by almost 70%, whereby it stands out that the younger the juvenile, the greater the decrease of registered repeat offenders amongst juveniles (in the case of 12-year-olds their numbers decrease by 84%, by 13-year-olds that is 80% and that carries on in the case of the 17-year-olds, where the decrease is 56%). It is therefore not improbable that this lack of growth will lead in the future to a further decrease in number of adult offenders who will become eligible for the application of a term of imprisonment. And therefore to even less cells being needed".

**Is the decrease in juvenile offenders only apparent in the Netherlands?**

It is striking that also in international terms youth crime has been capped. An illustration of this fact can be seen in the following picture seen in Canada (figure 5). A strikingly similar picture is apparent to the one in the Netherlands.

**Figure 5: Development in the seriousness of registered juvenile crime in Canada, 1999 - 2013**

http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/140723/dq140723b-eng.htm

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2 See Statistics Netherlands StatLine, registered offenders per age group and re-offence.
Finally, evidence of the decrease in the number of juvenile offenders between 1988 and 2010 in the US (figure 6). It is remarkable that the decrease there lies in the number of offenders in the age category between 10 and 17 years, with respectively 56% and 52% for crimes of violence and 78% and 41% for property crimes.

**Figure 6: Development in the number of juvenile offenders in the US, 1988 - 2010**

![Figure 6](image)

Source: (Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni, 2014, pages 477-478)

**Decrease in crime: An international phenomenon**

The decrease in crime can be seen widely across the Western world. There is increasing evidence and consensus in the world of scholarly research that an extensive international decrease in crime can be seen (for recent summary studies see Van Dijk, Tseloni & Farrell, 2012; Farrell, Tilley & Tseloni, 2014; Tonry, 2014). This concerns property crimes as well as crimes of violence, such as murder and manslaughter, sexual offences, vandalism and offences against the Opium Act. In **appendix 1** a recent summary is presented as an illustration of the development in crime trends in a large number of countries where crime has decreased. This relates to a summary of statistical information from separate national victim surveys, the *International Crime Victims Survey*, and registered crime trends from the police.

All these separate sources present convincing evidence of an international decrease in crime (Farrell et al., 2010; Van Dijk, 2012; Weatherburn & Holmes, 2013; Ross, 2013; Morales Flores & Fanara, 2014; Clancey & Lulham, 2014; Baumer & Wolff, 2014; 2014a Kesteren, Dijk & Mayhew, 2014; Knepper, 2015; Roeder, Eisen & Bowling, 2015). The period in which the start of the decrease in crime can be seen varies per country. It started in the United States and Canada in the 1990s. A large number of Western countries then followed around five years later. The level at which crime has decreased in various countries shows great similarities. During a period of 20 years or more, the total level of crime in many countries decreased on average by 30 to 50%. Peaks can also be seen, for example a decrease in the US by 70% in violent crimes and 65% in the number of house break-ins in England and Wales. This means that in a large number of countries the level of crime has been reduced to the same level seen at the start of the 1980s (Van Dijk & Tseloni, 2012).
The variety in the number of sources and the large number of countries where crime has decreased means that the chance is extremely small that this is purely a coincidence. Also in relation to the *registered crime* the picture in many EU countries is the same as in the Netherlands: a decrease in registered property crimes, as well as a decrease in the number of violent crimes. It is striking that there has been a sharp decrease worldwide in the number of murders. The following figure illustrates this decrease.

**Worldwide decrease in the number of murders**

The number of murders shows a worldwide decrease (Figure 7). In countries with the highest incomes on average, the decrease observed is the most sizeable. A decrease can also be seen in the other countries, although to a lesser extent. During the period from 2000 to 2012 the estimated worldwide decrease in the number of murders amounted to 16% (from 8.0 to 6.7 murders per 100,000 of the world population). In countries with the highest incomes the decrease amounts to 39% (from 6.2 to 3.8 murders per 100,000 of the population). In the countries with high and low average incomes a decrease of 13% can be seen. In countries with the lower incomes the decrease measures 10% (WHO, 2014, page 12).

**Figure 7: Trends in the estimated level of the number of murders per 100,000 of the world population in relation to income status per country, 2000 - 2012**

Seen in historical terms the level of *murder and manslaughter* has decreased dramatically over the centuries, and since the middle ages even by a factor of 30 (Eisner, 2003). This movement applies to the whole of the Western world. In particular, serious violent offences committed by the elite classes has decreased, as well as fights in public places between men with a fatal outcome. In addition there has been an improvement in healthcare, which has led to injuries becoming fatal less often. There is also a certain consensus that citizens appear to feel less reason to use violence and that they are less inclined to take this step. According to Pinker (2011) there appears to be a long-term trend towards less violence, including the

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acceptance of violence. The number of murders in the Netherlands also shows a decreasing trend (figure 8), and the graph shown below illustrates this clearly.

**Figure 8: Development in the number of murders in the Netherlands, 1996 - 2014**

![Graph showing the development in the number of murders in the Netherlands, 1996 - 2014.](image)

http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=81453NED&D1=a&D2=0&D3=a&D4=a&HDR=G1,T&STB=G2,G3&VW=T

http://www.elsevier.nl/Nederland/Background/2014/12/Aantal-moorden-in-2014-spectaculair-gedaald-1670592W/

**A summary of the picture concerning the decrease in crime**

A number of conclusions can be reached on the basis of what has been stated above. These are set out one by one below:

- In a large number of industrialized countries a long-term and significant decrease in crime can be seen;
- That decrease is apparent in property crimes (car theft, house break-ins, theft from cars, shoplifting, muggings and pickpocketing), as well as violent crimes (assault, sexual violence, rape, murder and manslaughter);
- The observed decrease in crime was preceded in most of the countries by a sharp increase in crime;
- The level and background of the decrease in crime appears to a greater extent to show similarities between various different countries. Significant similarities can be seen, for example, between the Netherlands and England and Wales and between the United States and Canada;
- The level of the available evidence of the decrease in crime in a large number of different countries means that the possibility of a coincidental development occurring at the same time is extremely small, and hence there must be a causal connection;
- The decrease in crime in a majority of the industrialized countries is still an ongoing fact in 2015. In the Netherlands there has recently been an 'acceleration' in the decrease;
- What is striking is the sharp decrease in the number of juvenile offenders in the Netherlands and other countries.
Explanations concerning the decrease in crime: Introduction

It has been established that between the end of the 1970s and 1990 there was a steep rise in crime in the Netherlands and many other industrialized countries. That was apparent from national and international victim surveys, in which citizens were asked whether they had experienced crimes, as well as from that which the police registered in the way of offences. The first signs of a decrease in crime were observed around halfway through the 1990s. This can be seen in a reduction in the level of house break-ins and car thefts in the Netherlands. As from 2002 the lines have shown a complete downward trend and we can see that crime has decreased by around 30%. This decrease is still continuing in 2015. Not only in the Netherlands, but also in a large number of Western countries. What has led to the decrease in crime? Which explanatory factors are given in the scientific literature? Only recently has national and international criminological research been started into explanations for the decrease in crime. It appears that we had difficulty in actually recognizing the decrease in crime as such.

A summary of those explanations is given in this paragraph. There are a large number of explanations to be distilled from the available literature. Use is made of a recently published summary from Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni (2014), in which the most prevailing explanations are described and analyzed. The most important findings are described in short. Finally, a number of typical Dutch explanations are set out and these are followed by a summary of the picture as a whole.

A box full of explanations

"There is no single cause or even an evident leading cause for the nine years of declining crime at the national level".

With this somewhat discouraging conclusion Zimring (2007) summarizes the discussion carried out up till then concerning the ‘‘Crime Drop’’ in the US. The discussion there has been ongoing for much longer than in Europe because the decrease started there earlier. The attention primarily concentrates on explanations for the decrease in violent crime. It mainly involves the disappearance of the so-called "crack epidemic" and the gang wars associated with that, weapon legislation and the widespread incarceration of prisoners (Blumstein & Wallman, 2000; Levitt, 2004; Blumstein & Rosenfeld, 2008; Zimring, 2012; National Research Council, 2014). To a greater extent, these explanations relate to the specific situation in the US. However, that situation differs greatly from the situation in Europe, as well as countries such as Canada and Australia. Many of the explanations therefore do not relate to countries outside the US. It is striking that American criminologists almost exclusively look at the situation in the US when explaining the decrease in crime, and they barely take into account the developments outside their own borders. A recently published large-scale survey carried out in the US, which gained much attention in the media, is a good example of this (Roeder, Eisen & Bowling, 2015). Anyone going through the available literature will soon come across a large number of possible explanations, which are apparent from the box given below.

Box: A selection of the possible explanations for the observed decrease in crime

- Selective effects of incarceration/targeted selective approach towards offenders.
- Cultural factors / other manners of spending free time / "new smartness".
In the course of many analyses researchers looked at whether there is one single explanatory factor for the increasing followed by decreasing movement in the crime figures. This might involve economic factors such as prosperity and unemployment, demographic factors such as size of the risk groups, immigration and age, and policy factors such as the increase in terms of imprisonment/infliction of punishment and a selective offender-targeted approach. However, just as there is no magic bullet that can be seen as the cause of the burgeoning criminality, there is also nothing in that way to explain the subsequent downward trend.

**A summary of the explanatory factors**

The box above shows that a large number of explanations can be found in the literature. In order to introduce methodology into the matter, for pragmatic reasons the choice has been made to use a recently published research synthesis into the available hypotheses from Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni (2014). The table given below gives the reader the most complete summary of the hypotheses available at the present time concerning the explanation for the crime drop. These have been distilled from a large number of published studies.
In order to test the 17 aforementioned hypotheses the authors use four tests with which a hypothesis must comply.

1. **The cross-national test.** Can the hypothesis be applied to different countries? The basis for this test forms the previously reached conclusion that the crime drop occurred in a large number of countries and that this development is not based on coincidence.

2. **A test whereby there must previously have been a rise in crime over a period of several decades.** The basis for this test forms the previously reached conclusion that there was a long-term rise in crime in most of the countries prior to the observed crime drop.

3. **The so-called e-crimes and theft of mobile telephone test.** Is the hypothesis consistent with, or at least not contradictory to, the fact that some types of crime show an increase at the same time as a decrease in many other types of offences? Consideration must be given here for the increase in theft of smart phones, iPads and laptops, for example. Also offences whereby the internet is used as modus operandi fall into this category. Examples hereby include identity fraud, purchase and sales fraud, or hacking for financial gain.
4. The so-called test of variable duration of the development. Is the hypothesis comparable with, or at least not contradictory to, the variation in duration, length of the crime drop between countries and type of offence?

For further information, the reader interested in the description and outcomes of this test of the 17 hypotheses presented above can refer to the original contribution. Under the scope of this contribution, it is not possible to give a complete description of the 17 separate tests. The table below gives a summary of the outcomes.

Graham Farrell, Nick Tilley, and Andromachi Tseloni

TABLE 3
Findings from Four Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Gross-National</th>
<th>Prior Crime Increase</th>
<th>E-Crime and Phone Theft</th>
<th>Variable Trajectories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strong economy</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Concealed weapons law</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Capital punishment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gun control laws</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Imprisonment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Policing strategies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. More police</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Legalization of abortion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Immigration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Consumer confidence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Waning hard-drugs market</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lead poisoning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Changing demographics</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Civilizing process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Improved security</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The Internet</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Phone guardianship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.—√ = pass, X = fail.

Source: (Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni, 2014, page 458)

Taking into account the comparable international development of the crime trends in a large number of countries (see appendix 1) it is an obvious choice that explanations for this are sought that apply to all of the countries. From the summary given above it appears that only one hypothesis passes all four tests (Improved security, also called the ‘security hypothesis’), and therefore this hypothesis applies internationally. Ten hypotheses pass one test, three pass two tests, and one hypothesis passes three tests (phone guardianship).

As previously mentioned there is a large number of available explanations that are typical or exclusively applicable to one specific country or a limited number of countries. Examples of this include the disappearance of the crack epidemic in the US and its associated fatal violence. No other country experienced a similar level of consumption of crack cocaine. Due to the weapon legislation in most of the European countries, there is only a limited use of firearms causing a fatal outcome in comparison with the US. Therefore the call for extra investment into the expansion of the police apparatus and the far-reaching application of custodial penalties as explanation for the crime drop does not apply to countries outside of the US. The size of the police force and the quantity of personnel involved in the criminal justice chain, as well as the ratio of prisoners, all show a marked variation between countries (Van Dijk & De Waard, 2000; De Waard & Van Steden, 2012; Aebi, et al., 2014). Also the explanation involved around the liberalization of abortion (whereby the cohort of "risk
groups" was reduced in size) does not apply. The variation in legislation and regulations involved in abortion shows a large variation in time between countries.

Demographic developments also show large differences between countries and thereby cannot form a universal explanation. The assumption that a downturn in the economy contributes to a growth in the level of crime is contradicted by the international developments that can currently be observed. Despite the downturn in economic growth experienced in many countries, the crime rates are still declining at the same time. According to some authors, there is in fact a reverse effect. In times of economic prosperity, crime actually increases (Van Dijk, 2012). There is, in simple terms, more to be stolen because the availability of luxury goods increases, there is an increase in individual lifestyles, people are away from home to a greater extent and they are more mobile. There is more property to be stolen that is less well safeguarded (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Clarke, 2012).

Four 'typical Dutch explanations'

There appear to be four 'substantial explanations', which are connected with each other, for the developments of crime in the Netherlands. However, they are not entirely unique to the Netherlands, as may appear from the latter statement, given the parallel tendency elsewhere.

*Private prevention.* A reaction can be seen amongst Dutch citizens and the business community to the increase in crime during the 1970s and 80s through the slow but steady realization that people need to protect themselves against the risk of crime. The willingness of the public and the business community to take preventive action has increased enormously over the last 25 years. That leads to significant investments in prevention, which are now at a level that is far removed from what was previously considered necessary (Roethof Committee, 1986). A massive growth in the size of the private security industry can be seen over the last 30 years, both in terms of the size itself, as well as the turnover. This had led to the number of employees in that area increasing from around 10,000 at the start of the 1980s to 32,000 at the present time. Hence, triple the amount in just over 30 years. During the same period the turnover also increased from EUR 150 million to around EUR 1.5 billion (Van Steden & De Waard, 2013). Therefore individual citizens and the business community have invested enormously in their own security. That is a consequence of the deployed policy, but also of the recognition that the judiciary and the police alone are not able to prevent crime.

*Recovery of the capacity and authority of criminal law* The government has taken a long time to bring its interventions up to standard, starting at a very low level of provisions in a social climate in which toleration was the rule and criminal law was considered more of a problem than a solution. It appears that since the end of the 1980s the reaction has also been to impose punishment (often light or symbolic) in relation to the lighter forms of crime, where previously the reaction had generally been simply to look the other way. This has sent out the signal that crime will not be tolerated: crime deserves a robust approach. Generally speaking, toleration is no longer accepted. Crime is no longer a problem for the police and the judiciary alone, but a joint responsibility of citizens and businesses (Society and crime, 1985). This is precisely the area where the turnaround can be seen, in which it is recognized that crime is objectionable and deserves a reaction from the government that clearly demonstrates that fact (Boutellier, 2008). Toleration is no longer accepted in the case of forms of crime that are committed en masse, such as theft and violence, as well as in the case of offences in the area of public order, and this generally has a preventive effect. The criticism that this leads to a repressive overreaction...
only seems to form a valid argument if a reaction that is too hefty would lead to a reduction in the willingness to abide by the law. And not that a reaction would in principle follow a violation of standards. One surprising outcome is that more serious offences are not systematically more heavily punished now than was previously the case (Berghuis, 2011). The average duration of punishment has shown a stable picture for decades. Such a reaction therefore does not appear necessary in order to reduce crime. The typical Dutch tradition of imposing relatively short terms of imprisonment has remained valid. That has enabled avoiding the situation that, despite the decrease in crime, the prisons are becoming increasing full, as is the case in the USA and the UK. The chance is also greater in the case of shorter punishments that offenders can return to a meaningful existence in society.

Demography and drugs. At the start of the 1980s crime was partly cultivated by the growth in the trade and use of drugs, most particularly heroin: this led to violence in the illegal drugs markets and to procurement crime amongst marginalized heroin addicts. The growth in the use of drugs during the 1970s, particularly heroin, led to a large population of tens of thousands of addicts, who committed countless offences in order to pay for their addiction. The more forceful approach towards this group, which led to longer terms of imprisonment, had a repressive effect on crime. This group has slowly disappeared as a result of physical exhaustion and a conscious policy of helping such people by leading them away from the criminal path. This group of addicts to hard drugs, who committed large quantities of crimes, has virtually disappeared from the streets. The Kruiskade in Rotterdam, the Zeedijk in Amsterdam, Hoog Catharijne in Utrecht and Central Station in The Hague now look completely different in comparison with how they were 25 years ago: the commotion caused by heroin users and dealers has disappeared. There is strong evidence that the large-scale disappearance of the heroin cohorts provides an important explanation for the significant reduction in property crime (Morgan, 2014; 2014a).

Stimulating and active role of the government. The government’s policy, which has been deployed since halfway through the 1980s, has mainly played a facilitating and stimulating role in relation to the aforementioned explanations. It is difficult to give a precise indication as to how important the effect has been of the separate measures put in place by successive governments in order to bring down crime. It is also difficult to assess the purported relationship between crime policies and subsequent effects. We must be careful not to think too much in terms of the means rather than the end. In relation to that, the extent to which social change can be affected by government policies is limited. However, research results are available which give an indication that particularly a mixture of connected repressive and preventive measures is successful (Versteegh et al., 2010). A better targeted deployment of the police forms a contribution to the decreasing trend in crime (Karn, 2013). The integrated and problem-targeted approach deployed by many of the parties involved, including the police, the Public Prosecution Service, municipalities, schools, housing associations, healthcare providers and the business community, is a successful example of this. Intensive collaboration with the business community has been going on in order to deploy more and better preventive measures. The help of the public has also been called upon by way of reporting suspicious situations and by stimulating electronic payments. It can therefore be argued that an active and stimulating government policy partly provides an explanation for the decrease seen in crime.

The heavier terms of imprisonment are meant here, the programme Criminal accommodation of addicts and the subsequent measure for placement in an Institution for systematic offenders. For the effect, see: Ben Vollaard. The effect of long-term imprisonment of repeat offenders on security in society. Lessons of a natural experiment in twelve urban areas. University of Tilburg, 2010.

See the periodic 'Repeat offenders monitor' (www.wodc.nl).
Summary of the explanations concerning the crime drop

On the basis of what has been set out above, a number of conclusions can be reached. These are set out one by one below:

- Only recently has such national and international criminological research been started into explanations for the decrease in crime. It seems as if criminologists are mainly oriented towards explanatory models for the existence of crime and that they have great difficulty in giving explanations for the observed decrease;
- The list of explanations that are possibly responsible for the decrease in crime, both nationally and internationally, provides an immensely varied picture. From the reduction of lead poisoning through to the selective dealing with offenders, from demographic changes through to the legalization of abortion, from a shift in addiction (to drugs as well as other forms of addiction) through to the application of the death sentence, from economic factors through to an increase in security and the limitation of opportunity;
- Just as there is no magic bullet that could be seen as the cause of the burgeoning criminality, there is also nothing in that way to explain the subsequent downward trend;
- In order to interpret the explanations for the drop in crime, people often look exclusively within their own national borders, which therefore makes the explanations country-specific and they do not then apply outside the borders of the country in question;
- In the case of the Netherlands, there appear to be four 'main explanations', which are connected to each other, for interpreting the drop in crime: (1) increase in private prevention; (2) recovery of the capacity and authority of criminal law; (3) demography and drugs; (4) stimulating and active role of the government;
- Taking into account the comparable international development in the crime trends in a large number of countries (see appendix 1), main explanations must be sought that apply in all countries;
- Then it appears that the so-called security hypothesis is the most valid. There is sufficient empirical evidence that the increase and quality of the application of large-scale security measures, such as immobilizers, break-in prevention measures, private security and measures to limit opportunity, have been the significant driving force behind the observed decrease in crime, both nationally and internationally.

Attention is given to this hypothesis in the following paragraph. A number of specific features will be addressed one by one, as well as the empirical evidence and the positive indirect effects that appear to go hand-in-hand with the rise in the scope and quality of the application of large-scale security measures.

The ’Security hypothesis’ explained in further detail

Based on the above, it appears that one 'solid' unequivocal explanation for the decreasing trend in crime cannot be given. Research into the decreasing trend (Berghuis & De Waard, 2008; Vollaard et al., 2009; Van Dijk et al., 2012), assumes a combination of explanatory factors. On the basis of the knowledge that is now available (Van Dijk, 2012; 2013; Van Dijk et al., 2012; Farrell, 2011; 2013; Farrell, Tilley & Tseloni, 2014) the security hypothesis appears to be the most promising explanation. There is a general increase, both nationally and internationally, in the willingness for prevention, the quality and financial investment in crime prevention by the public at large, governments, the business community and
manufacturers. We see that cars, bicycles, homes, businesses, industrial parks, shops, banks, town centers and entertainment areas are all being better protected (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit, 2007). The quality of the security measures has increased significantly (Tilley, Farrell & Clarke, 2015). The international private security industry appears to be a pre-eminent growth market (De Waard and Van Steden, 2012). This has meant the growth, for example, in the total numbers of employees within the private security industry in the 15 old EU Member States between 1996 and 2010 by 86 percent (1996: 592,050 employees – 2010: 1,102,300 employees). In 1996 that was 140 on average per 100,000 inhabitants and in 2010 that number had risen to 274. This means that hereby the opportunity structure has offered clearly less possibilities over the last few years for committing simple and unnoticed offences. This is the so-called “Security hypothesis”. The latter is based on the fact that the increase and quality of the application of security measures (immobilizers, break-in prevention measures, prevention measures standardly inbuilt during production processes, certification / standards, effects of crime reports, etc.) has been the main driving force behind the observed drop in crime, both nationally and internationally (Tseloni et al., 2014; Home Office, 2015). It is becoming increasingly difficult for offenders and potential offenders to commit offences. The opportunity is increasingly less often creating the offender.

Effectiveness of the situational crime prevention measures

All of those different security measures, also referred to as situational crime prevention, can be applied to various different types of crime (Clarke, 1995; 1997). Many of the measures are applied on a large scale, which means that the scope is often very great indeed. That applies particularly in the case of car theft (the obligatory inbuilt immobilizers) and also in the case of house break-ins (certification / "secured by design" / Buildings Decree). There has also been a significant decrease in shoplifting from department stores and retailers (due to CCTV, no cash, anti-theft strips, private security, sensors, alarms, dummy packaging) (TNS NIPO, 2011; Home Office, 2014). In a large number of countries the application of these types of measures has led to a significant decrease in these specific offences (see appendix 1). The measures have raised the chances of being caught, the profits for offenders and potential offenders have fallen and the opportunistic offenders have been massively discouraged (in the case of house break-ins by around 70%) from committing break-ins (De Waard, 2012).

The effects of these measures can be large-scale. Figure 9 below illustrates the trend of the level of car thefts in England and Wales between 1995 and 2010.

Figure 9: Development of car theft in England and Wales, 1995 - 2010
Figure 10: Development of the number of vehicle thefts in the Netherlands, 1995 - 2014

The number of thefts of private vehicles fell by 60% in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2014 (figure 10). The decrease in relation to all types of vehicles amounted to more than 51 percent between 1995 and 2014 (Stichting Aanpak Voertuigcriminaliteit, 2015). That provides a striking comparison with the situation in England and Wales.

There is a great deal of empirical evidence showing that a large number of preventive measures to limit opportunity appear to be effective. The box below gives a summary of a number of these successful measures.

**Box: Effective situational crime prevention: A number of examples**

- The installation during the production phase of consumer goods (cars, cameras, bicycles, GSMs) of standard security measures. Effect: large-scale fall in crime, for example 30% less theft of GSMs through the installation of a so-called 'kill switch' (Ekblom, 2012; Behavioural Insight Team, 2014; New York Times, June 2014; Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2014a).
The installation of an immobilizer in all newly manufactured cars within the European Union, which has been obligatory since 1998, has led to a reduction in car thefts of 40% in the Netherlands. We can see a similar decrease occurring in other European Member States (Ours & Vollaard, 2013; Brown, 2013, 2013a). A similar development is also apparent in the US (Fujita & Maxfield, 2012).


Prevention of violence in entertainment areas through the reorganization of the catering industry, ban on happy hours, sufficient transport available after closing time, targeted exchange of information, targeted police surveillance, responsible sale of alcohol. Effect: up to 40% less violence in entertainment areas (Fujita & Maxfield, 2012).

Raising the level of lighting in public and semi-public areas. Effect: less violence, fewer muggings and an increase in the sense of security (Welsh & Farrington, 2008).

The use of CCTV cameras in certain locations and targeted at specific offences. Effect: sometimes significantly less violence and theft, plus a rise in the effectiveness of detection (Welsh & Farrington, 2009).


Tackling repeated victimization. The targeted approach towards repeated victimization appears to be successful in areas that are characterized by high levels of crime. This approach also works within the retail industry. In relation to this it appears that just three percent of the number of branches within the retail industry suffer 40% of the total amount of victimization. Effect: 12 to 20 percent less crime due to a focused, specifically preventive approach (Grove, et al., 2012; Farrell & Pease, 2014).

Raising the general level of security and reorganization of residential areas. Effect: significant decrease in crime and feelings of disquiet (Armitage & Monchuk, 2010; Pease & Gill, 2011).

The so-called hotspots approach, whereby the police carry out targeted surveillance at criminal hotspots. This strategy is known as problem-targeted police approach. Effect: significant reduction in crime and increased satisfaction amongst residents and the business community (Braga, Papachristos & Hureau, 2012; 2014).

The deployment of supervisors in residential complexes, public transport and in public areas. Effect: significant reduction in crime in public and semi-public areas (Welsh, Farrington & O’Dell, 2010).

Regarding crime displacement

Criticism is regularly expressed concerning the level of effectiveness of measures that limit opportunity (Barr & Pease, 1990; Von Hirsch, Garland & Wakefield, 2000; Klein, 2008). People cite the displacement of crime (in terms of time, type of offence, choice of target, geographical area and modus operandi). However, empirical evidence exists showing that the phenomenon of crime displacement occurs far less often following the application of situational crime prevention than is often supposed. In a recently published meta-evaluation, 102 effect evaluations were assessed for the possible effects of crime displacement (Guerette & Bowers, 2009). Relocation of crime occurred in 26% of the analyzed observations. The reverse effect, the so-called "bonus effect" (whereby the positive effects are also measured outside of the experimental area), appeared to occur in 27% of the analyzed observations.
Furthermore, it appeared that in the cases in which crime displacement was measured there was never a case of 100% displacement. The effect of the intervention / measure always appeared to be positive in total (Hesseling, 1994; Johnson, Guerette & Bowers, 2014).

**Regarding ‘debut offenses’ by juveniles**

Large-scale situational crime prevention measures (by residents, the business community and in the course of production of consumer goods) can also have an influence on the prevention of a *debut offence* committed by juveniles. It is becoming increasingly difficult to carry out a first offence due to measures limiting opportunity (Owen & Cooper, 2013; Farrell, Laycock & Tilley, 2015). The result may be that an early halt is called to a criminal career (Butts, 2000). Most criminal careers are characterized by a general working method and rarely a specialist one. Property crime forms the principal area of the number of offences committed (Tollenaar and Van der Laan, 2013). Making the preliminary offence difficult may provide a possible explanation for the observed reduction in the number of juvenile offenders. Offenders themselves also indicate that the increase in situational prevention measures provides an important explanation for the drop in crime (Brown, 2015).

**Summary concerning the security hypothesis**

On the basis of what has been stated above, a number of conclusions can be reached. These are set out one by one below:

- On the basis of our current knowledge it appears that the most promising explanation for the national and international decrease in crime is the security hypothesis;
- There is a general increase, both nationally and internationally, in the willingness for prevention, the quality and financial investment in crime prevention by the public at large, governments, the business community and manufacturers;
- The security hypothesis is principally applicable to the explanation for the reduction in property crimes (in particular car thefts, shoplifting and house break-ins). However, the explanation in relation to various types of violence, both sexual and otherwise, is less clear;
- Over the last few years there has been an accumulation of knowledge about the effectiveness of situational crime prevention measures;
- In a large number of countries the application of these types of measure has led to a significant decrease in crime;
- Relocation of crime occurs much less frequently than is often supposed. The reverse effect is also apparent, whereby the scope of the measures is estimated to be much greater by offenders and potential offenders;
- The so-called "debut crime hypothesis" (the assumption that it is becoming increasingly difficult for juveniles to commit a preliminary crime due to measures limiting opportunity) deserves further investigation.

**Conclusion**

Has the level of crime decreased? If yes, what plausible explanations can be given for that? Those are the two main questions that are answered in this background document. The first one is simple to answer. Yes, in a large number of industrialized countries a long-term and significant decrease in crime can be seen, both in relation to property as well as violence. That is apparent from the trends in registered crimes, data from national victim surveys, data from Eurostat, data from the World Health Organization, as well as data from the
International Crime Victims Survey. Therefore it can be said that there has been an international drop in crime.

The second question is clearly more difficult to answer. What plausible explanations can be given? That question has only recently been given the necessary attention within the world of scholarly research. This can therefore be termed as work in progress. However, the number of available explanations for interpreting the fall in crime is very sizeable. The assessment has come up with a wide range of explanations. As could be estimated beforehand, there is no single magic bullet that can be given as explanation. In the explanations for interpreting the crime drop, the view is often concentrated exclusively within a country's own borders. Those explanations are therefore specific to one country only and the crime problems which are specifically present there. This means it is difficult to make generalized statements about which explanations are plausible that relate to a number of different countries. Still, a main explanation does need to be sought, bearing in mind the comparable international development of crime in a large number of countries, which can be applicable to all those countries.

On the basis of a research synthesis carried out recently by Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni (2014) into the most common hypotheses concerning the available explanations, only one sticks out strongly: the security hypothesis. That is based on the fact that the increase and quality of the application of large-scale security measures, such as immobilizers, break-in prevention measures, private security and measures to limit opportunity, have been the significant driving force behind the observed decrease in crime, both nationally and internationally. These measures principally relate to property crime and, to a lesser extent, crimes of violence. It is clear that further research is needed to arrive at more robust explanations. That applies to the area of violence as well as the area of decreasing juvenile crime. Prevention remains a fundamental condition for reducing the opportunity for committing simple and frequently unnoticed offences. That prevention must increase together with the social developments. This will mean that the emphasis will come to lie more and more on social changes arising from technical developments and internationalization. This deserves timely preventive investments in order not to miss the chance of ensuring that the hinges and locks on our front doors are secure, as well as ensuring that the general public and businesses do not become victims of theft via the electronic highway (Tcherni, Davies & Lizotte, 2015; Jardine, 2015). Much can be learned from the current insights, which give the most valid explanation concerning the decrease in "classic" crime.

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6 It is an interesting fact that during the Stockholm Criminology Symposium, 8 – 10 June 2015, a large number of presentations are about explanations concerning the “Crime Drop”. For the programme, see: http://www.criminologysymposium.com/download/18.779f51ff14b839896442162/1428911652157/Preliminary+Program+2015.pdf
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http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07418820802506206


Appendix 1

Crime trends in a number of industrialized countries

Australia


Property crime victimisation rate

Figure 4 Victims of property crimes, 1996–2012 (rate per 100,000 population)

- The rate of ‘other’ theft victimisation reached its lowest point since data were available at 2,064 per 100,000 in 2010, before rising modestly to 2,206 per 100,000 in 2012.
- The rate of UEWI victimisation has generally declined since 2001. In 2012, the victimisation rate was 944 per 100,000 population—the lowest on record since the collection of data in 1996.
- Between 2011 and 2012, the rate of MVT victimisation increased by five percent; from 245 to 258 per 100,000 population.
Violent crime victimisation rate

**Figure 3 Victims of violent crimes, 1996–2012 (rate per 100,000 population)**

- Homicide
- Sexual assault
- Robbery
- Kidnapping/abduction

**Note:** Homicide and kidnapping each occur at rates of fewer than 5 per 100,000 population per year and are difficult to distinguish on this graph.

- In the last six years, the rate of robbery victimisation has steadily declined from 86 per 100,000 in 2007 to 58 per 100,000 in 2012. Generally, the rate of robbery victimisation has been declining since 2001.

- The rate of sexual assault victimisation increased to 80 per 100,000 in 2012. The last increase in the rate of victimisation was seen in 2006. The rate of victimisation in 2012 is at a similar rate to what it was in 1996, when the rate was 79 per 100,000.

- The rate of homicide victimisation has never exceeded two per 100,000 in the 17 years for which data are available. Victimisation has stayed at one per 100,000 since 2007.

- In 2012, like 2011, the rate of kidnapping/abduction was three per 100,000 population; much lower than the peak of four per 100,000 in 1999.

Source: References 1 and 2
The police-reported Crime Severity Index (CSI), which measures the volume and severity of crime, declined 9% in 2013 compared with 2012. This was the 10th consecutive decline in the index. The CSI was 36% lower than 10 years earlier.

The traditional crime rate also declined in 2013 compared with 2012, falling 8%. It continued its long-term downward trend that began in the early 1990s, reaching its lowest level since 1989. Since 1982, the traditional crime rate has measured the volume of crime, but does not take into account the severity of crimes.

**Chart 1**
Police-reported crime severity indexes, Canada, 1999 to 2013

Canadian police services reported just over 1.8 million criminal incidents (*Criminal Code* offences excluding traffic) in 2013, down approximately 132,000 from the previous year.

Most offences were down in 2013. The decline in the CSI was specifically attributable to declines in breaking and entering and robbery. Decreases in some of the less serious but very frequent offences, such as theft of $5,000 or under and mischief, also contributed to the drop in the CSI.

However, some offences were up in 2013. In particular, police services reported more incidents of extortion, child pornography, aggravated sexual assault (level 3), sexual violations against children and identity fraud.
Trends in CSEW and police recorded crime, 1981 to year ending June 2014

(Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics)

Number of offences (millions)

Sources: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics / Police recorded crime, Home Office
Prior to 2001/02, CSEW respondents were asked about their experience of crime in the previous calendar year, so year-labels identify the year in which the crime took place. Following the change to continuous interviewing, respondents' experience of crime relates to the full 12 months prior to interview (i.e. a moving reference period). Year-labels 2001/02 onwards identify the CSEW year of interview.
Some forces have revised their data and totals may not therefore agree with those previously published.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence group</th>
<th>Jul-13 to Jun-14</th>
<th>Jan-95 to Dec-95</th>
<th>Apr-03 to Mar-04</th>
<th>Apr-08 to Mar-09</th>
<th>Jul-12 to Jun-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>building to a dwelling</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other household theft</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>-79</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-56</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle-related theft</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>-43</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle theft</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>-58</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-43</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unweighted base - number of households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL CSEW CRIME</td>
<td>7,075</td>
<td>-63</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-38</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table notes:
2. For more information about the crime types included in this table, see Section 5 of the User Guide.
3. Base sizes for data since year ending June 2013 are smaller than previous years, due to sample size reductions introduced in April 2012.
4. Statistically significant change at the 5% level is indicated by an asterisk.
5. More detail on further years can be found in Appendix Table A1.
Fig. 4.—Household crime and personal crime, England and Wales, 1981–2012. A, Rates per 1,000 households or persons. B, Rates indexed to 100 in 1981. Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales.
Police recorded burglaries and theft of vehicles, England and Wales, 1981 to 2012/13

The Netherlands

Figure: Development of crime in the Netherlands: registered crime and crime victim survey data, 1980 - 2014
Figure: Dutch Crime Victim Survey: victim rates and feelings of unsafety, 2005-2014

Crime victim rates and feelings of unsafety, 2005-2014

% who say they perceive this as a problem

Figure: Development of household burglary, commercial robberies and street robbery in the Netherlands (index: 2005 = 100)
Figure: Development of registered crime in the Netherlands, 2011 – 2014 (index: 2013 = 100)

Figure: Development of juvenile and adult suspects in the Netherlands, 2005 – 2013 (index: 2002=100)
Figure: Development in the number of murders in the Netherlands, 1996 – 2014

Figures: Registered crimes by the Dutch police: various types of crimes, 2011-2014
Registered crimes

Registered crimes

Index (2011=100)

2011  2012  2013  2014

Theft/burglary, box/garage/barn/garden house
Theft/household burglary and barns
Theft/household burglary
Theft/burglary businesses and establishments
Theft of/from motor vehicles

Registered crimes

Index (2011=100)

2011  2012  2013  2014

Threat
Bodily harm
Public violence (personal)
New Zealand


Schotland

![Chart showing police recorded crime and convictions in Scotland from 1989 to 2014.](image-url)

"In Scotland there was a major T system change in 1989."
Fig 2: Declines in convictions rate of young men in Scotland 1989-1999 are not seen in other groups, but both young women and young men show declines in convictions 2007-2012

United States of America

Table 2: Crime and Incarceration Rates (1990-2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault)</td>
<td>50% decline</td>
<td>28% decline</td>
<td>27% decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Crime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft)</td>
<td>46% decline</td>
<td>26% decline</td>
<td>25% decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
<td>61% increase</td>
<td>61% increase</td>
<td>1% increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports; U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.13


Development of crime in the USA according to the National Crime Victim Survey, 1993 - 2013
FIGURE 1
Violent and property victimization, 1993–2013

Note: See appendix table 1 for estimates and standard errors.
*See Criminal Victimization, 2007 (NCJ 224350), BJS web, December 2008 for information on changes in the 2006 NCVS.

Fig. 2.—UCR violent crime (including homicide) and motor vehicle theft rates per 100,000 population, United States, 1960–2012. Source: Uniform Crime Reports.
The 76 city sample represents the cities with populations over 200,000 (N=104 in 2005) for which we were able to obtain 2010 UCR crime data. The crime data for 1980-2008 were obtained from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR); the data for 2009 were obtained from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the 2010 data were obtained directly from individual law enforcement agencies.
International Crime Victims Survey
* The Australian trend is based on nine crimes that consistently occurred over a longer period.

**NB** The trends in total victimization rates are based on ten crimes that consistently occurred over a longer period.