



FIFTH EDITION

Comparative Criminal Justice Systems

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Measuring and Comparing Crime in and across Nations

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Key Terms and Concepts

dark figure
 developed country
 developing country
 International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS)
 Interpol
 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
 risk of crime
 self-report surveys
 Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)
 United Nations Surveys of Crime and Trends and Operation of Criminal Justice Systems (CTS)

Chapter 2 Learning Objectives

Discuss why we should measure and compare crime statistics in other countries.
 Explore some reasons for the high rate of violent crime in the United States.
 Identify the primary sources of international crime statistics.
 Analyze the three major limitations of international crime statistics.
 Describe how to best compare international crime statistics.

Amador Cortes-Meza was the ringleader of an organization that brought 10 victims (including four juveniles) to the United States and forced them into prostitution. Nine of the victims testified at trial that Amador, his brother, and a nephew tricked and deceived young women in Mexico into coming to the United States. The case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations in Atlanta, which found that Amador and his family members would pretend to be romantically interested in the young girls, many of whom were from rural areas and some of whom did not have much education. The suspects would promise the victims that they would have a life together and then tell the women they needed to travel to the United States to make money working in restaurants or cleaning homes.

Amador obtained false identification for the victims and made arrangements to smuggle them into the United States. The victims were held in homes near Atlanta, and the suspects took turns monitoring the victims. Drivers transported the victims to clients' residences, where the victims were required to engage in commercial sex—sometimes up to 20 times a night. The victims testified that when they refused to engage in prostitution, Amador or his codefendants would beat them and threaten them and their families back in Mexico with physical harm. The co-conspirators and the drivers split the proceeds of the prostitution.

Ultimately, five suspects pleaded guilty. They each received sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years in prison, except for Amador, who received a 40-year prison term. The U.S. Attorney remarked, "No one wants to believe that there are people who will enslave other human beings and require them to commit innumerable commercial sex acts. Yet this intolerable crime is happening right in our own neighborhoods in metropolitan Atlanta" (Irving, 2011; U.S. Department of Justice, 2011a). This case is an example of a human trafficking enterprise whereby an illicit service was

provided by recruiting, transporting, and exploiting victims for their forced labor (see Table 1.1 in the previous chapter).

Unfortunately, there is no national or international count of any of the nine transnational crimes listed in Chapter 1, including human trafficking. These crimes occur across borders, most are undetected, and many have only recently been defined as transnational crimes, so global awareness and response is still in its early stages. Human trafficking and related forms of transnational organized crime are discussed further in Chapter 11, but it should be noted that, like other forms of transnational crimes (e.g., cybercrime, racketeering, counterfeiting, corruption, and all those listed in Table 1.1), it is a compound crime. A compound crime includes the lesser crimes, such as theft, assault, robbery, and sometimes rape, as a consequence of larger criminal conspiracies. Although reliable counts of transnational crimes do not exist, there are counts of the lesser crimes because concern about these offenses has existed for many more years. It is hoped that more attention to generating reliable counts of transnational crimes in the future will enable all countries to assess progress in preventing them.

It is estimated that crime generates \$2.1 trillion in annual global proceeds, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Bank. This represents 3.6 percent of the world's gross domestic product, which is the size of one of the world's top 20 national economies (Reuters, 2012). Crime is increasingly international, transnational, and worldwide in scope. On one level, we have made considerable progress with the collection of crime statistics for individual nations. Yet even with this growing knowledge, we still do not have precise knowledge of the true extent of transnational crime.

It is very difficult to account for the frequency of transnational crimes for at least three reasons. First, they are often difficult to detect due to their secretive and

multi-jurisdictional nature. In order to detect arms trafficking, for example, information is required about activities committed by the buyer, seller, and manufacturer of the illegal arms for sale, which poses tremendous problems of detection and determining location. Second, transnational crimes by definition are committed across legal jurisdictions. This makes it difficult to determine government responsibility for detection, law enforcement, and prosecution. Whose problem is it: that of the source country, transit phase, or destination location? Finally, these crimes often extend over a period of time, with detection often occurring long after the crime is committed. By then, evidence is often difficult to find and suspects have absconded. At present, there is no universal method of counting the plethora of transnational crimes, although some promising methods are underway.

We know that crime is universal—there is no country without crime. French sociologist Emile

Durkheim observed more than a century ago that “Crime is present not only in the majority of societies but in all societies of all types. There is no society that is not confronted with the problem of criminality” (Durkheim, 1895, pp. 65–66; Newman, 1999). Nevertheless, crime rates vary considerably both within and among countries. Although crime may be less of a problem in Iceland, for example, than it is in Colombia or the United States, the problem is present everywhere. We can also say that because of globalization, there are more kinds of crimes of international concern than there were 25 years ago. Whereas drug trafficking and money laundering were the primary issues of transnational concern years past, other crime issues such as corruption, trafficking of human beings, terrorism, weapons trafficking, and cybercrime have since emerged as leading problems of transnational crime.

WHY MEASURE AND COMPARE CRIME DATA?

Crime is a worldwide problem that directly or indirectly touches every one of us in multiple ways: as victims, in paying higher prices for products and services, and in living with the consequences of fear and corruption. The primary reason to understand and compare crime data is to determine risk. **Risk of crime** evaluates the probability that certain crimes will occur and their potential harm. How great is the risk that we will be victimized? How should we adjust our behavior to account for known instances of crime? Can we better anticipate the circumstances around which crime occurs?

In a global context, the questions to be answered become even more important to our security. What is the risk of crime in a certain country? How safe is one country versus another? How does the crime rate in the United States compare

with rates in other countries? What offenses produce the most harm to the most people? The answers to these questions directly influence our fear and our behavior as citizens, and the policies and actions of individual countries and the world community of nations.

Crime statistics summarize experience, so we can judge more effectively whether we live in a safe place, what crimes we should be most concerned about, what locations we should avoid, and what behaviors we should change to reduce our chances of being a victim of crime.

Learning more about crime data is important in the same way that gaining more knowledge about medicine, poverty, or the environment is important in evaluating personal and societal conditions. Acquisition of this knowledge can improve the quality of life for citizens and help government leaders make rational decisions about ways to allocate our valuable resources. In a larger sense, measured knowledge of social conditions such as crime

essential to the health of any democracy (American Sociological Association, 1999).

Measuring crime and comparing crime data in other countries serve at least two larger purposes as well. First, collecting data about crime allows us to determine the kinds and extent of crimes reported in any one country and, more importantly, to distinguish long-term patterns from year-to-year trends. This is in contrast to the practice of looking at crime data for one period of time, as in a snapshot, and then making limited observations and drawing limited conclusions about the data, because we do not know whether we are in the middle of an unrecognized trend up or down.

An example illustrates the importance of observing data over a period of time. Suppose there have been 1,000 car thefts in a country during the year, with a rate of 5 thefts per 100,000 persons. This figure by itself means little; it may or may not be cause for alarm. However, if we can show that the rate of car thefts increased 10 percent from last year, and 20 percent over the last three years, then we can consider the problem to be increasing in seriousness and worthy of further consideration. Therefore, knowledge of trends over time is an essential purpose of gathering crime statistics.

Understanding crime trends is important both domestically and internationally. Evidence indicates that increased crime risk to citizens often prompts public officials to respond to address specific crime problems. For example, if the United States determines that the main entry point of illegal drugs is through its southern border, officials may wish to devote more effort to improving relations with Mexican criminal justice officials and spend more money on border patrols, immigration control, and impacting drug use trends. Therefore, perceived risk and social action are closely tied to each other.

Second, measuring crime and comparing crime data provide clues as to why some nations are more successful than others in controlling crime rates. In this way, we can learn from the experiences of other countries. Suppose we review the criminal justice system of a country and find that a lower crime rate is associated with specific policies relating

to families, drugs, alcohol, or crime prevention. We may then study these policies and see whether they can be adapted to our own situation. For example, an assessment of various drug treatment programs in the prisons of five different countries found that programs containing both individual and group counseling, coupled with follow-up aftercare, had a significant impact on substance abuse. Given the large number of inmates who were using drugs at the time of their offense, these cross-national results suggest that substance abuse treatment within corrections is worth the investment (Reyes, 2009). This kind of comparative information can inform the crime prevention and criminal justice responses in many countries.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INTERNATIONAL CRIME DATA

The first attempt to collect data on crime at the international level occurred in 1853 at the General Statistical Congress in Brussels. Soon thereafter, in 1872, another attempt was made at the International Congress on the Prevention and Repression of Crime in London. The major issue discussed at both of these meetings was how to define certain crimes, for the comparability of definitions clearly was to be a major stumbling block in the collection of crime data. The problem of definitions remained an issue in 1946 at the conference of the International Penal and Penitentiary Foundation (IPPF), which soon handed over most of its functions to the newly formed United Nations (UN) organization.

In the early years of the UN, attempts were made to develop a mechanism for collecting criminal data at the international level. The Economic and Social Council of the UN passed several resolutions from 1948 to 1951, but they met with little success. Only one cross-national crime survey was conducted over the period 1937-1946 (Burnham 1997). Between the 1940s and the early 1970s, crime data collection was limited to th

International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO), more commonly called **Interpol**, which tried to collect data from as many of its member nations as cared to report them. Interpol has since discontinued this statistical effort, in favor of providing information for investigative support to police agencies worldwide.

In 1970, a breakthrough occurred when the UN General Assembly resolved through its Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice branch to develop a survey that would collect information from member countries about crime rates and the operations of criminal justice systems. The first survey, covering the years 1970–1975, appeared in 1977 with 64 nations reporting (Fields & Moore, 1996, p. 17). The UN carried out the tenth UN survey in 2008 with 86 nations responding. The survey is administered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and is now called the **United Nations Surveys of Crime and Trends and Operation of Criminal Justice Systems (CTS)**. The CTS questionnaire consists of four parts dealing primarily with statistical information about the main components of the criminal justice system (police, prosecution, courts, and prisons) and an Annex. The Annex was developed for countries in Europe and requested supplementary information on police-recorded crime statistics relating to homicide and thefts of motor vehicles. Therefore, the CTS focuses more on information about criminal justice systems than on the measurement of crime.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF CRIME DATA

There are three major ways to count crime because there are often three perspectives on each criminal incident: those of the offender, of the victim, and of the police. Clearly, an offender and victim are involved in every crime, and many times the police are called to respond, providing a third way to count criminal incidents. This section summarizes major crime-counting efforts under each of these perspectives.

The Police Perspective

Because crime statistics are gathered by governments, it is not surprising that there has been much world experience with counting crime through reports to the police. In the United States, these police reports are called the **Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)**, and are collected by each police agency in the United States and compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation annually. The UCR program has been under way since 1930, so it has the benefit of assessing trends over time, but the count of crime it provides has serious flaws, which affect its accuracy. Most serious is that the UCR, like all police counts, counts only those crimes reported to the police—crimes that do not come to the attention of police are missed. It has been found that less than half of all crimes are reported to police, so a great deal of crime is overlooked when using police statistics to count crime. Second, the UCR program is voluntary, so not all police departments report crime data every year—and some departments have not been diligent in counting crimes in their jurisdiction, resulting in further undercounts (State Police, 2004; Lynch & Jarvis, 2008; Maki, 2012). Third, the UCR program gathers information on a limited range of offenses: criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. As we have noted, none of the major transnational crimes are included as listed in Chapter 1. Fourth, the UCR program counts arrests for 29 other generally less serious offenses, but arrests occur even less often than do reports of crimes to police, so they cannot be used to count criminal incidents accurately.

In recent years, the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) has been developed to broaden the extent and depth of crime data gathered by police agencies. The NIBRS collects data on every incident and arrest within 22 offense categories made up of 46 specific crimes. For each of the offenses coming to the attention of law enforcement, specified types of facts about each crime are reported. The FBI has certified 31 state UCR programs for NIBRS participation so far, but the data

from those agencies represent 25 percent of the U.S. population and 25 percent of the crime statistics collected by the UCR Program (FBI, 2010). Therefore, the potential of the NIBRS program as a national data source has not yet been realized. It is important to recognize that the limits of police-based crime statistics are shared by police agencies around the world.

The Victim Perspective

Significant efforts have been made in recent years to develop systematic crime data by interviewing citizens to learn about the nature and extent of their crime victimization (whether or not they were reported to police). In order to know who has been the victim of a crime, a representative sample of the population (from 76,000 households including more than 135,000 persons) is selected, and participants are asked questions about their experience with crime in recent months. The **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)** was developed in the United States during the 1970s, and it is now an annual survey covering six crimes: rape, robbery, assault, larceny, burglary, and motor vehicle theft (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010). NCVS has found that the total number of crimes committed in the United States is at least double the number reported to the police in the UCR.

The NCVS improves our knowledge of the true extent of crime by reducing the **dark figure** of crime; that is, the amount of crime occurring which is unknown to police or the general public. In addition to improving our knowledge about crimes committed, the NCVS also enhances our knowledge about criminal behavior and the consequences of crime on victims. In this way, we can use the NCVS to build explanations of the circumstances of crime and crime prevention approaches.

While the Uniform Crime Reports collect a little information about all crimes known to police, victimization surveys collect exhaustive information about a smaller number of crimes from a representative sample of the population, whether or not the victimization was reported. There is fairly close

correspondence between the crime definitions used by the UCR and NCVS, so it is possible to assess national crime information from two points of view: those of the victims and the police. The NCVS finds that, overall, approximately 50 percent of violent crimes (rape, robbery, assault) and 40 percent of property crimes (burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft) are reported to police. Therefore, victimization surveys reveal that there is between two to three times more crime occurring than is reported in police statistics.

The Offender Perspective

A third way to count crime is from the perspective of the offender. This perspective is gathered from **self-report surveys**, in which people are asked to report their own delinquent and criminal acts in an anonymous questionnaire or confidential interview. Self-reporting is helpful because it is able to compare information about known offenders with those who have not been caught. Self-reports also provide information about "victimless crimes," in which the offender and victim are the same person (e.g., drug use) or engage in conduct consensual (e.g., prostitution).

Most self-reports are surveys of smaller samples of youth and, less often, adults. A national survey in the United States had findings consistent with those of other self-report surveys: Virtually all persons break the law at one time or another, although only 10 to 20 percent are caught and arrested, and few commit serious crimes or do so frequently (Piquero, Brezina, & Turner, 2005). However, self-report surveys are used mostly with young persons and rarely in national samples, so self-report surveys have limited utility in understanding the overall crime rate and are much less likely to be used in cross-national comparisons due to their limited size and duration.

An exception is the International Self-Report Delinquency (ISR/D) study, which has used a standard instrument to compare juvenile rates of crime in 12 European locations and the United States. The results showed that between 80 and 90 percent of juveniles had committed either one or

combination of property, violent, and drug crimes (Junger-Tas, Terlouw, & Klein, 1994). A second international administration of this instrument gathered self-reported information from 70,000 12- to 15-year-old youths in 28 countries with similar results. Although the self-report methodology has not been applied on such a large scale in an international context until recently, this method has documented that the vast majority of juveniles violate the law but that most do not go on to become adult criminals (Howard et al., 2000; Junger-Tas et al., 2010).

INTERNATIONAL CRIME DATA

Given the three possible perspectives on counting crime, it is important to determine their availability on an international level for cross-national comparisons. Many industrialized countries have some kind of crime reporting system published from the reports to police agencies. There is no standardization among countries, however, in how crimes are recorded because of the many differences in criminal codes and in the precise definitions of various crimes. As a result, the reporting and publication of crimes reported to the police remains largely an exercise for individual nations, with too many differences to compare across national boundaries.

The United Nations has been interested in comparable crime data since its establishment as an organization after World War II. Its surveys are the most comprehensive, but the response rates from member states is often less than 50 percent, and developing countries are underrepresented. A **developing country** is one with a low level of material and social development, measured by such indicators as income per person, life expectancy, and literacy rates. A majority of the world's nations are developing countries. Conversely, **developed countries** are those with a high level of development, measured by the factors above, plus other indicators such as gross domestic product and industrialization.

Interpol's efforts to gather police statistics biennially began in 1950, but the results have not been published in recent years. Interpol even removed all crime statistics from its public website in 2006 because the statistics reported to them did not correlate well with crime data generated from the UN or the Council of Europe, leading to questions of reliability and validity in the reporting from member nations (Killias & Aebi, 2000; Van Dijk, 2008, p. 16;). It is also a problem of all international crime statistics that countries are sometimes embarrassed by the results and do not report them comprehensively for reasons involving political criticism. There are examples in many countries of crime statistics being used within countries to attack the political party in power or to deny the validity of the data themselves. In many ways it is a shame that greater effort is not devoted to better international crime data in the same way that international efforts have been established to measure economic activity, diseases, infant mortality, literacy, employment, and agriculture across nations via the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization, United Nations Development Program, and International Labor Organization.

The best available sources of international crime data are international victimization surveys. Victimization surveys have the advantage of avoiding government-controlled data collection or screening (through the police or the political process), and these surveys use standard crime definitions to avoid the differences in definitions among the world's criminal codes. The results are based on interviews with a sample of the population, rather than relying only on offenses that come to the attention of police. Although the initial modern crime victimization survey was conducted in the United States in 1965, the first national study was carried out in Finland in 1970. Soon thereafter, international studies were undertaken in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the United Kingdom (Jousten, 1994).

The first major comparative victimization survey was developed and carried out in 1988 by three European criminologists, Jan van Dijk, Pat Mahew, and Martin Killias. The second was conducted in

1992–1994, the third in 1996–1997, and the fourth in 2000. These surveys, now formally called the **International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS)**, are conducted through the coordinated efforts of the Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, located in Italy. The ICVS is now the most extensive standardized survey of victims in the world (Nieuwbeerta, 2002). The primary collection tool used in the ICVS is computer-assisted telephone interviewing, which randomly selects and calls a sample of 800 to 2,000 individuals in each country. In some countries, smaller samples are used because of logistical difficulties, and where telephone ownership is limited, in-person interviews are conducted.

The ICVS surveys ask representative samples of individuals from households about 10 specific offenses they have may have experienced, and their perceptions and attitudes, over the year leading up to the survey. The ICVS is interested in incidents both reported and not reported to the police, and the reasons why people do or do not choose to notify the police. It provides a count of how many people are affected by crime. Those who mention an incident of any particular type are asked some additional questions about what happened (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 15). Respondents are also asked a series of questions concerning their attitudes toward police performance, actions taken to protect against victimization, how safe they feel at home, how safe they feel in the streets, their levels of home security, and attitudes toward punishment.

Data from several administrations of the ICVS are available from 30 countries, including a majority of developed nations. In addition, separate data from 33 major cities are included to add greater representation from developing countries for which nationwide data is not available. Two large tables are presented here to display the levels of crimes uncovered by the ICVS by country and by major city. The numbers reflect the percentage of those aged 16 and over who experienced a specific crime at least once over the course of a year. The numbers do not reflect the number of times that people were victimized during the year, so they

do not count total crimes per population (incidence rates), but the ranking of countries by prevalence rates has been found to be similar to rankings by incidence rates (crimes per 100,000) (Van Kesteren, Mayhew, & Nieuwbeerta, 2000). In addition, these figures are estimates generated from a representative sample of interviews in each location. These estimates are precise within statistical confidence limits of between 0.5 to 1.5 percent, meaning that a victimization rate of 5.0 percent indicates that there is a 90 percent certainty that the true crime rate lies between 4.2 and 5.8 percent.

Table 2.1 summarizes the percentage of people victimized one or more times by any of the 10 crimes included in the ICVS. The table includes six of these crimes, with the others being theft from a car, motorcycle theft, bicycle theft, and attempted burglary. Nearly 16 percent (15.7) of the adult population of the 30 participating countries were the victim of at least one crime over the course of a year. Countries with overall victimization rates that are statistically higher than average include Ireland, England and Wales, New Zealand, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Estonia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Mexico, Switzerland, and Belgium. Countries with rates near the average include the United States, Canada, Australia, and Sweden. The countries with the highest victimization rates are a mix of developed and developing countries, which suggests that poverty is not a major contributor to crime rates. Countries with the lowest levels of victimization include Spain, Japan, Hungary, Portugal, Austria, France, Greece, and Italy, which are also heterogeneous in composition and culture.

The last three rows of Table 2.1 illustrate victimization trends over time. It can be seen that there has been a general downward trend in victimization rates across all crime categories. Therefore the widely reported experience of crime declines in the United States and Europe are mirrored in many other countries as well. Indeed, the availability of these crime data across countries permits some assessment of national crime control policies. For example, the general downward trend in crime beginning in the 1990s was roughly the same across countries. The findings from a study of 26 countries

TABLE 2.1 One-Year Victimization Rates in Participating Countries (Percentages)

| Country | Overall Rate for 10 Crimes* | Car Theft | Burglary | Robbery | Theft of Personal Property | Sex Offenses against Women | Other Assaults |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Australia | 16.3 | 1.1 | 2.5 | 0.9 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 3.4 |
| Austria | 11.6 | 0.1 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 3.4 | 2.2 | 1.9 |
| Belgium | 17.7 | 0.5 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 3.4 | 0.9 | 3.6 |
| Bulgaria | 14.1 | 1.2 | 2.5 | 0.9 | 3.4 | 0.2 | 1.7 |
| Canada | 17.2 | 0.8 | 2.0 | 0.8 | 4.0 | 2.3 | 3.0 |
| Denmark | 18.8 | 1.3 | 2.7 | 0.9 | 3.3 | 1.9 | 3.3 |
| England and Wales | 21.8 | 1.8 | 3.5 | 1.4 | 6.3 | 1.9 | 5.8 |
| Estonia | 20.2 | 0.5 | 2.5 | 1.6 | 5.6 | 1.1 | 2.7 |
| Finland | 12.7 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.3 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 2.2 |
| France | 12.0 | 0.6 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 3.3 | 0.4 | 2.1 |
| Germany | 13.1 | 0.2 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.7 |
| Greece | 12.3 | 0.3 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 5.3 | 1.7 | 2.4 |
| Hungary | 10.0 | 0.2 | 1.7 | 0.9 | 3.0 | 0.1 | 1.2 |
| Iceland | 21.2 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 6.9 | 3.0 | 5.9 |
| Ireland | 21.9 | 1.2 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 7.2 | 3.8 | 4.9 |
| Italy | 12.6 | 1.0 | 2.1 | 0.3 | 2.4 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| Japan | 9.9 | 0.1 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 0.6 |
| Luxembourg | 12.7 | 0.6 | 1.7 | 0.7 | 2.9 | 0.6 | 2.3 |
| Mexico | 18.7 | 0.9 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 4.3 | 1.5 | 2.2 |
| Netherlands | 19.7 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 0.5 | 3.7 | 1.9 | 4.3 |
| New Zealand | 21.5 | 1.8 | 3.2 | 1.1 | 4.1 | 2.5 | 4.9 |
| Northern Ireland | 20.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 5.1 | 3.0 | 6.8 |
| Norway | 15.8 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 4.8 | 2.5 | 2.9 |
| Poland | 15.0 | 0.7 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 3.5 | 1.3 | 3.0 |
| Portugal | 10.4 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 0.5 | 0.9 |
| Scotland | 13.3 | 0.3 | 1.5 | 0.9 | 2.9 | 1.5 | 3.8 |
| Spain | 9.1 | 10.0 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 0.3 | 1.6 |
| Sweden | 16.1 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 2.4 | 3.3 | 3.5 |
| Switzerland | 18.1 | 0.2 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 5.9 | 2.9 | 2.5 |
| United Kingdom | 21.0 | 1.8 | 3.3 | 1.3 | 5.7 | 1.9 | 5.4 |
| USA | 17.5 | 1.1 | 2.5 | 0.6 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 4.3 |
| 1995 average | 20.3 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 1.1 | 4.6 | 2.3 | 4.0 |
| 2000 average | 18.4 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.1 | 2.0 | 3.8 |
| 2005 average | 15.7 | 0.8 | 1.8 | 1.0 | 3.8 | 1.7 | 3.0 |

*The other crimes not included in this table are theft from a car, motorcycle theft, bicycle theft, and attempted burglary.

SOURCE: ICVS and EU International Crime Surveys, 2005. Jan Van Dijk, John van Kesteren, and Paul Smit. (2007). *Criminal Victimization in International Perspective*. The Hague: Bibliotheek WODC.

using ICVS data, provided little support for country-specific explanations for the crime drop. That is to say, if severe punishment played an important role in the crime declines, countries that implemented more imprisonment and intensive policing prior to and during the period of the crime drop (such as the USA and the UK) would have had a sharper crime reduction than the countries that did not change their emphasis on crime control during the same period. But that did not occur; the crime drop occurred everywhere. The findings of the study suggest that the explanation for the crime drop may lie in factors that changed more universally, such as improved antitheft measures in automobiles (Tseloni et al., 2010).

Table 2.2 summarizes the results of victimization surveys carried out in 33 major cities around the world. This group is very diverse, comprising cities in both developed and developing countries, some of which have not yet participated in national-level victimization surveys. It can be seen that the average victimization rate in these cities is

21.5 percent, higher than the 15.7 percent average rate in national surveys (depicted in Table 2.1). In nearly every country, victimization rates are 25 to 33 percent higher in these large cities than in the nations as a whole. The rate of victimization in these major cities is higher in developing countries (28.4 percent) than it is in developed countries (19.9 percent). The five cities with the lowest victimization rates are Hong Kong, Lisbon, Budapest, Athens, and Madrid.

Table 2.1 shows that 0.8 percent of citizens had a car stolen during the previous year (on average). In major world cities the victimization rate is higher, at 1.3 percent (1.1 percent in developed countries and 1.8 percent in developing countries). In many countries car theft rates have dropped by half over the last 10 years, despite the fact that car ownership has increased. This declining rate is likely due to growing use of antitheft devices in cars, such as automatic locks, alarms, and electronic ignition systems. Interestingly, the likelihood of theft from or out of a car is much more common than that of

TABLE 2.2 One-Year Victimization Rates in 33 Major World Cities (Percentages)

| City/Country | Overall Rate for 10 Crimes* | Car Theft | Burglary | Robbery | Theft of Personal Property | Sex Offenses against Women | Other Assaults |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Amsterdam (Netherlands) | 27.0 | 0.7 | 2.1 | 1.1 | 4.4 | 3.2 | 5.9 |
| Athens (Greece) | 13.5 | 0.7 | 1.7 | 0.7 | 3.5 | 1.1 | 2.4 |
| Belfast (North Ireland) | 26.1 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 5.9 | 2.0 | 9.2 |
| Berlin (Germany) | 19.3 | 0.4 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 5.2 | 2.5 | 4.1 |
| Brussels (Belgium) | 20.2 | 0.9 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 6.0 | 0.2 | 2.6 |
| Budapest (Hungary) | 12.6 | 0.4 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 5.5 | 0.3 | 1.6 |
| Buenos Aires (Argentina) | 31.2 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 10.0 | 6.6 | 2.1 | 3.2 |
| Copenhagen (Denmark) | 22.9 | 1.0 | 2.6 | 1.2 | 4.6 | 3.8 | 3.6 |
| Dublin (Ireland) | 25.7 | 3.0 | 2.6 | 1.8 | 6.8 | 0.8 | 3.9 |
| Edinburgh (Scotland) | 16.6 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 4.6 | 1.2 | 4.6 |

TABLE 2.2 (continued)

| City/Country | Overall Rate for 10 Crimes* | Car Theft | Burglary | Robbery | Theft of Personal Property | Sex Offenses against Women | Other Assaults |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Johannesburg (South Africa) | 23.5 | 2.6 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 6.9 | 1.7 | 11.2 |
| Helinski (Finland) | 20.5 | 1.7 | 4.4 | 1.4 | 3.0 | 4.3 | 4.5 |
| Hong Kong (China) | 7.8 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 3.6 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Istanbul (Turkey) | 17.9 | 0.9 | 4.6 | 0.9 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 0.6 |
| Lima (Peru) | N/A | 0.3 | 6.8 | 7.4 | 12.3 | 4.7 | N/A |
| Lisbon (Portugal) | 9.7 | 2.0 | 0.7 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 0.4 | 1.3 |
| London (England) | 32.0 | 1.3 | 4.5 | 2.6 | 10.2 | 3.0 | 8.6 |
| Madrid (Spain) | 13.7 | 1.8 | 1.1 | 1.5 | 4.4 | 0.7 | 2.9 |
| Maputo (Mozambique) | 37.7 | 1.9 | 12.6 | 7.6 | 9.9 | 2.6 | 6.2 |
| New York (USA) | 23.3 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 7.7 | 3.5 | 5.1 |
| Oslo (Norway) | 21.5 | 1.0 | 1.9 | 1.0 | 7.5 | 2.3 | 4.1 |
| Paris (France) | 17.8 | 0.2 | 1.9 | 1.2 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 3.1 |
| Phnom Penh (Cambodia) | 41.3 | 0.2 | 15.8 | 1.8 | 12.8 | 1.4 | 6.8 |
| Reykjavik (Iceland) | 26.4 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 0.7 | 8.2 | 2.6 | 7.0 |
| Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) | 15.0 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 5.1 | 2.5 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| Rome (Italy) | 16.6 | 3.4 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 3.2 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Sao Paulo (Brazil) | 21.7 | 4.2 | 1.5 | 5.4 | 2.0 | 1.3 | 2.6 |
| Stockholm (Sweden) | 22.5 | 1.8 | 2.1 | 0.7 | 4.0 | 0.8 | 3.2 |
| Sydney (Australia) | 15.9 | 0.7 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 3.7 | n/a | 2.8 |
| Tallinn (Estonia) | 29.3 | 0.6 | 3.7 | 2.8 | 9.6 | 1.4 | 3.7 |
| Vienna (Austria) | 17.2 | 0.4 | 2.8 | 0.8 | 5.7 | 1.3 | 2.5 |
| Warsaw (Poland) | 21.9 | 1.6 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 5.3 | 2.3 | 2.6 |
| Zurich (Switzerland) | 20.1 | 0.2 | 2.7 | 1.7 | 7.7 | 3.1 | 3.5 |
| 2005 Average | 21.5 | 1.3 | 3.2 | 2.4 | 5.9 | 1.9 | 4.0 |

*The other crimes not included in this table are theft from a car, motorcycle theft, bicycle theft, and attempted burglary.

SOURCE: ICVS and EU International Crime Surveys, 2005. Jan Van Dijk, John van Kesteren, and Paul Smit. (2007). *Criminal Victimization in International Perspective*. The Hague: Bibliotheek WODC.

the car itself being stolen. The victimization rate for theft from a car was 3.6 percent (not shown in the tables) versus 0.8 for car theft, although the rates are falling in recent years for both types of theft.

Motorcycles were found to be stolen much more often than cars, and such thefts are generally highest in countries with the highest rates of motorcycle ownership, such as Italy (33 percent of adult citizens own a motorcycle), Greece (32 percent), Japan (29 percent), and Sweden (25 percent). Finland, Austria, the Netherlands, and Germany also have motorcycle ownership rates of more than 20 percent. Bicycles are an important means of transportation in many countries, and they have a theft rate of 2.9 percent for countries and 3.3 percent for major world cities (data not shown in the tables). The highest rates of bicycle theft exist in the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Japan, and Sweden (5 percent or higher), while the lowest rates occur in Portugal, Spain, France, Bulgaria, Australia, and New Zealand (under 1.5 percent). As you might expect, the rate of bicycle theft is much larger than rates of motorcycle or car theft.

Residential burglary occurs in 1.8 percent of households on average in the 30 countries surveyed. Burglary rates in major cities were generally higher, averaging 3.2 percent. The highest rates of residential burglary are found in England and Wales, New Zealand, Mexico, Denmark, Bulgaria, Australia, Estonia, and the United States (all with rates of 2.5 percent or higher). The lowest burglary rates were found in Sweden, Spain, Finland, Japan, Austria, and Germany (all below 1 percent). In major cities in developing countries, burglaries occur significantly more often than in developed countries (6.4 percent versus 2.3 percent). The general decline in average national burglary victimization rates is likely associated with increasing security awareness on the part of residents, growing use of alarms, and more residents working in or near the home.

Another type of crime covered by the ICVS is theft of personal property that includes no personal confrontation, threat, or force. Examples include theft of wallets, purses, clothing, equipment, or accessories. Pickpocketing accounted for a third of

these cases. Rates of theft of personal property are mixed, although national averages are generally declining. Ireland, Iceland, England and Wales, Switzerland, Estonia, Greece, and Northern Ireland have the highest rate of thefts (greater than 5 percent). London, Tallinn, Reykjavik, New York, Zurich, and Oslo are the cities with the highest victimization rates for personal theft.

Robbery includes theft by force or threat, and attempts to do so, using personal confrontation. Like other offenses, robbery victimization is higher in major cities (2.4 percent) than at the national level (1 percent). Robbery rates in developing countries are significantly higher (6.1 percent). National trends indicate that rates are decreasing in most countries. Interestingly, about 60 percent of robberies involved more than one offender, and a weapon was present in 28 percent of cases at the national level but in 39 percent in major cities. Cities with the highest proportion of robberies at gunpoint are Phnom Penh (66 percent), Rio de Janeiro (56 percent), Sao Paulo (51 percent), Johannesburg (47 percent), and New York (27 percent).

Sex-related offenses are measured in the ICVS by asking about victimization in a broad way, "People sometimes grab, touch, or assault others for sexual reasons in a really offensive way (inside or outside the home)." Therefore, responses include offenses far less serious than the crime of rape, although rapes would also be included. Measuring these incidents is very difficult because of differences in acceptable sexual behavior among countries and the somewhat greater likelihood of nonreporting of these offenses to interviewers, despite the anonymous nature of the telephone interview. An average of 1.7 percent of women reported a sexual victimization, a rate that has been dropping across nations. Sexual offenses occur somewhat more often in major world cities (1.9 percent).

When sexual offenses are divided into two groups—sexual assault (rapes, attempts, indecent assault) and less serious cases of offensive sex-related behavior—sexual assaults occur at a rate of 0.6 percent on average and at only slightly higher rates in

major cities (0.7 percent). Cities in developing countries, however, have higher rates of sexual assault (1.2 percent average), although the cities of New York, Copenhagen, and Helsinki also have rates of 1.0 percent and above. Taking all sexual offenses together, victims knew the offender in about half the cases. In cases where the victim knew the offender's name, it was a colleague or boss (17 percent), an ex-intimate partner (11 percent), current intimate partner (8 percent), or close friend (16 percent). The vast majority of sex offenses involved one offender (78 percent), and the use of weapons was uncommon (8 percent of cases).

The last category of crime covered by the ICVS involves assaults. The question asks whether the person was "personally attacked or threatened by someone in a way that really frightened you (inside or outside the home)." On average, there was a 3.0 percent victimization rate for assaults across nations, a figure that has been declining in recent years. Higher than average rates were reported in Northern Ireland, Iceland, England and Wales, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States. The lowest rates of assault victimization were in Italy, Portugal, Hungary, and Spain (below 2 percent).

The characteristics of assaults showed that victims knew the offender in about half the incidents, and that weapons were used in 17 percent of cases. Mexico (16 percent), the United States (6 percent), and Northern Ireland (6 percent) had the highest percentages of gun-related attacks. In major world cities, 22.6 percent of assaults involved a weapon of some kind. Cities with the highest rates of attacks with guns include Rio de Janeiro (39 percent), Sao Paulo (35 percent), Phnom Penh (13 percent), Johannesburg (13 percent), Istanbul (10 percent), New York (10 percent), Brussels (10 percent), Maputo (7 percent), and Belfast (6 percent). The ICVS also asked about household gun ownership. Handgun ownership ranged from 0 percent in Japan to 6 percent in Lima, 6.8 percent in Argentina, and 17.6 percent in the USA. The average gun ownership rate in Europe is 3.2 percent.

In sum, international victimization surveys provide the best available information about

crime rates internationally because they include crimes both reported and unreported to police, and because they use a standardized questionnaire with uniform definitions of offenses. Approximately half of all crimes are found to be reported to the police, with higher reporting rates in developed countries and lower reporting rates in developing countries. Nevertheless, the ICVS surveys only residences, so crimes against commercial establishments are not counted. Individuals may also underreport some victimization because they involve people close to the victim, a particular problem with victims of sex crimes (Zvekic & Alvazzi del Frate, 1995). For these reasons, the ICVS likely underreports to some extent the true extent of the crimes it measures. In research conducted by G. O. W. Mueller, a former chief of the UN Crime Prevention Branch, it was found that countries fail to keep accurate crime statistics for a number of reasons. Mueller found that, although all countries do collect some form of crime data, many do not participate in the international crime surveys. Among the reasons are the following:

- Countries are so small that administrative staffs may not be able to handle the requests.
- Some countries are too involved in civil war to keep track of crime problems.
- "New" emerging countries have not developed a system of collection and dissemination of crime data.
- Some countries lack the technical resources and knowledge necessary to report crime data.
- Some countries have the resources but still refuse because they are concerned that crime data will negatively affect the nation's world standing or tourist trade. (Mueller, 1997)

A more complicated problem in comparing crime rates across nations is that of nonstandardized definitions of crime among countries. This problem has plagued comparative researchers for many years (see Ancel, 1952; Wolfgang, 1967). At the root of the problem of nonstandardized definitions is the issue of determining what is a *crime* versus what is

legal. All nations agree that major predatory actions such as murder, robbery, and burglary should be illegal. When it comes to certain other actions, however, we may find that what is criminal in one country is acceptable behavior in another. Here are a few examples:

- Prostitution, largely illegal in the United States, is sanctioned and licensed in Japan and parts of Germany.
- Gambling, largely illegal in the United States, is legal in many other countries, including Japan, Germany, and France.
- Drinking alcoholic beverages, legal in most countries, is illegal in certain Muslim societies, including Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- Cases that would constitute minor traffic offenses in the United States are often classified as “professional negligence” in Japan on the theory that a driver’s license constitutes a kind of professional certification.
- Sexual acts such as those of adultery, fornication, and homosexuality, which are not usually handled as criminal cases in Western countries, may result in very grave sanctions, including death, in fundamentalist Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.

What a country decides is illegal tells us something about that nation’s social, economic, and political situation. For example, the need for a sober and reasonably docile working class in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution led to criminalization of acts such as vagrancy, loitering, drunkenness, and brawling. Religion-based governments tend to criminalize acts that dishonor the religion or violate its moral code. Socialist governments criminalize incursions against property belonging to the state (e.g., educational, government, or military buildings). Nations that, for economic reasons, wish to segregate people along racial or ethnic lines pass laws against miscegenation or other kinds of social contact between groups. In each case, actions that are perfectly legal in one country are defined as crimes in another.

HOMICIDE RATES

Homicide rates are of particular interest, not only because homicide is the ultimate offense against an individual and the social order but also because statistics on homicide rates should be more reliable than those for other crimes because of the presence of a human body in nearly every case. Of course, some homicides are masked as accidents and suicides, and there are cases in which individuals disappear and we can only guess whether or not they have been murdered. In general, however, the reality of a dead body forces the state to make a determination as to the cause of the individual’s demise.

Despite the presence of a dead person under suspicious circumstances, counts of homicides within and among countries are not always consistent. Police agencies, public health agencies, and various other government agencies count deaths, but they do not always reach the same totals nor the same conclusion about the cause of death (Gabor et al., 2008; Karch & Logan, 2008). For example, a person hospitalized due to an assault can develop an infection and die. Although this can be considered a criminal homicide in many nations (i.e., the assault caused the infection, which caused the death), not all nations’ health statistics agencies would count this as a criminal homicide. Many jurisdictions would simply count this as a hospital death due to infection, because there is no ability to track the original cause of the hospitalization.

Developing nations often do not have the government resources to count deaths systematically or to classify them carefully. This probably causes some of the larger variation in homicide rates displayed in Table 2.3, because it is unlikely that actual homicide rates vary dramatically over short periods of time within a country, absent major civil conflict.

Table 2.3 presents homicide rates (per 100,000 population) for 54 nations around the world. Nations were chosen based on the availability of data over multiple years, using UN crime survey, Geneva Declaration reports, and individual country reports. It can be seen that developing countries often have higher homicide rates than developed

TABLE 2.3 Homicide Rates in 54 Countries (Rate per 100,000 Population)

| Country | 2000 | 2008 | Country | 2000 | 2008 |
|---------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|
| Honduras | 50 | 58 | Portugal | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Venezuela | 33 | 52 | Armenia | 3.3 | 2.5 |
| El Salvador | 37 | 49 | Switzerland | 2.6 | 2.3 |
| Jamaica | 34 | 49 | Finland | 2.9 | 2.2 |
| Guatemala | 26 | 45 | Scotland | 2.0 | 2.1 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 10 | 42 | New Zealand | 1.2 | 2.0 |
| South Africa | 50 | 37 | Canada | 1.6 | 1.8 |
| Colombia | 63 | 36 | Hungary | 2.0 | 1.6 |
| Belize | 16 | 31 | Chile | 1.9 | 1.6 |
| Brazil | 27 | 26 | France | 1.8 | 1.6 |
| Dominican Republic | 13 | 24 | Belgium | 2.8 | 1.5 |
| Russia | 28 | 17 | England and Wales | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Panama | 10 | 13 | Czech Republic | 1.7 | 1.3 |
| Nicaragua | 9 | 12 | Australia | 1.6 | 1.2 |
| Mexico | 14 | 10 | Spain | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 8.4 | 8.5 | Italy | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| Lithuania | 1 | 8.1 | Iceland | 1.8 | 1.0 |
| Costa Rica | 6.3 | 7.7 | Saudi Arabia | 0.5 | 0.9 |
| Belarus | 10 | 7.5 | Sweden | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| Georgia | 4.8 | 7.3 | Germany | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| Latvia | 1 | 6.5 | Denmark | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| USA | 5.6 | 5.4 | Austria | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| Argentina | 7.2 | 5.3 | Norway | 1.1 | 0.7 |
| Moldova | 8.1 | 4.8 | Morocco | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| Mauritius | 2.2 | 4.0 | Hong Kong | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| Philippines | 7.6 | 3.8 | Japan | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| Romania | 2.5 | 2.5 | Singapore | 0.9 | 0.4 |

countries, although there are some exceptions. The world average homicide rate is approximately 7.5 per 100,000 population. The three regions with the highest homicide rates are Southern Africa, Central America, and South America. Western and Central Europe, East Asia, and Southeastern Europe are the three regions with the lowest rates of homicide.

Approximately 60 percent of all homicides are committed with firearms, ranging from a low of 19 percent in Western and Central Europe to a high of 77 percent in Central America (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2011). The data show that in recent years there has been a general decline in homicide rates in most countries, which

corresponds to the decline in crime rates across many countries. The availability of homicide data across countries and over time is crucial to permit assessment of changing national policies and socio-economic conditions within countries to evaluate potential explanations for homicide trends (McPhedran, Baker, & Singh, 2011).

Crime Rates in Model Countries

If we want to study and compare the crime rates in our model countries of France, Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia, England, and China, it can be seen that the lowest homicide rates are in Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. France and the United States have higher homicide rates. China does not have homicide rates published regularly over time, although Hong Kong reports very low rates of homicide.

The International Crime Victimization Surveys show that for the 10 crimes surveyed the United States has the highest overall rates, followed by England and Wales, Germany, and France. Neither China nor Saudi Arabia participates in the ICVS, although Hong Kong has generally low crime rates. Japan has the lowest overall crime rates, much lower than the other model countries or the United States.

THE EXCEPTIONS: COUNTRIES WITH LOW CRIME

We look with fascination at those societies that seem to have "beaten the odds" with respect to increased industrialization and accompanying increased crime. Switzerland, landlocked, mountainous, and located in the heart of Europe, has remained aloof from foreign entanglements and has been a pacifist society for centuries in the midst of multiple European wars. Japan, by contrast, is an island nation, expansive and dynamic, with a history of warlike and imperialistic behavior prior to its defeat in World War II. With a population of 7.3 million, Switzerland is a rather small nation; in fact, after Luxembourg, Denmark, and

Norway, it has the smallest population in Western Europe. Japan's population is 127 million, about 40 percent of the population of the United States. Much of Japan's land mass is mountainous and uninhabitable, so most of its people are crowded into coastal cities on Japan's two major islands, Honshu and Kyushu.

The fact that Japan is so often included in comparisons among Western countries reflects the fact that the degree of wealth accumulation, industrialization, and modernization that has occurred in the country makes it appear to be part of the Western world. In fact, however, Japanese industrial might masks the fact that Japanese culture is both highly peculiar to that society and different from Western culture in many ways. For instance, Japanese culture stresses group norms, the suppression of individualism, suspicion of outsiders, harmony, and conflict avoidance. Japan practices a kind of modified capitalism in which the government is highly involved in industrial development and social welfare. Another related perspective is that in Japan there is an emphasis on informal local-based group formation (such as within schools or workplaces) along with a strong emphasis on security and rule within those settings. These elements produce a high level of self-control and consequently a built-in crime-control mechanism. This is in contrast to countries in the Western world such as the United States that emphasize that individual freedoms are superior to the group and where rules are more limited and permissive. The result is a weakening of crime prevention in Western-type nations and the emphasis on punishment rather than prevention (Komiya, 1999; Falsafi, 2010).

Another explanation for the disparity in crime rates between Japan and the United States is abundant heterogeneity and multiculturalism in the United States. These factors have assuredly contributed to the growth of the large American cities where much crime often occurs. Although this may be true, it hardly explains the fact that crime rates actually declined during the years of rapid urbanization and industrialization in Japan, while they have gone in the opposite direction in the United States.

Although there may be some validity to different theories as to why Japan has a low crime rate, no clear explanation for the phenomenon exists. It is worth noting that in each neighborhood in Japan, police officers organize both crime prevention and traffic safety associations. These crime prevention associations meet regularly with police, discuss strategies, and organize yearly festivals or other celebrations. The close surveillance over the Japanese population by the police may have some effect on the crime rate. There is wide discretion to avoid arrests in local cases, because local police officers often know all the citizens and can seek different ways to handle criminal situations. Certainly, close surveillance is a factor in the high apprehension rate of offenders in Japan, a rate far surpassing that of Western nations (Bayley, 1991).

Low crime rates in Japan cannot be attributed to high punitiveness in the criminal justice system, however. The incarceration rate is well below that of the United States, and prison sentences are generally short in comparison with those in Western nations. In fact, prison is seen as so much of a last resort in Japanese corrections that only hard-core criminals are sent there. Prison life itself is highly regimented and work oriented in Japan.

Another model country, Saudi Arabia, also has a comparatively low crime rate. It does not participate in the ICVS. Saudi Arabia is not a highly developed country in some ways and is certainly not highly urbanized, despite its great wealth per capita. Also, a sizable portion of the population continues to be nomadic Bedouins, who are unlikely to resort to a formal legal system to settle their disputes and resolve their crime problems.

The Saudis themselves offer two explanations for their low crime rate. The first is that the harsh corporal punishments they employ, which are based on a philosophy of retribution, serve as effective deterrents to crime. The second, and contradictory, explanation is that Saudis commit fewer crimes not for fear of punishment but because of their devotion to the Qur'an (Koran) and its teachings. According to the proponents of this argument, since the criminal law and the punishments for breaking that law are contained in the holy book

and merely administered by the government, it is widespread religious belief and practice that inhibits lawbreaking.

One scholar claims that Saudi Arabia was a hotbed of banditry until the fundamentalist regime of King Abdul Assiz created the modern Saudi state in 1932 and the people became more law-abiding (Badr-el-din, 1985). This scholar thus concludes that it was the religious nature of the state that made the difference.

The puzzle remains: Why is it that some societies have been able to maintain low crime rates while succeeding as developed societies and economies? A closer look is needed, not only at crime data but at the variations in the social fabric and criminal justice response of various countries, to see what criminogenic and crime-control forces are at work (see box "Reasons for Crime").

HOW DOES THE UNITED STATES MEASURE UP?

A review of international crime data clearly reveals that the United States has a high level of crime. But that is only part of the story. When we compare the United States to other countries, we see that the American crime problem is really one of violent crime—robbery and murder in particular. The murder rate in the United States is much higher than that of other countries with similar developed societies and economies.

Even though the United States may be safer than some countries in a number of crime categories, crime is still undeniably a major social problem. Why does the United States have such a high rate of violent crime? Among the reasons that have been mentioned are the significant economic disparity between rich and poor, the heterogeneity of the population, the widespread urban areas, and even the extensive images of violence in the media. Many observers claim that the increase in crime is the result of a general disrespect for authority beginning in the 1960s. Others state that the strong influence of drugs, more specifically the increase in the use of crack and

cocaine in the 1980s, fueled violent crime rates. Others focus on socioeconomic factors or deterrence (see Bellis et al., 2011; Zimring, 2001).

Some scholars have tried to understand the problem by looking at the historical factors associated with violence. They claim that the United States has historically been a violent nation, with Indian wars, race riots, frontier feuds, and vigilantism as savage norms at various periods of our history (Brown, 1979). Agrarian uprisings and labor conflicts have added to this background of violence. Reed (1974) described violence as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the American South. In addition, assassinations and multiple homicides are not unusual occurrences, at least since the Civil War. By contrast, European nations, with their older civilizations and more homogeneous populations, may have evolved beyond the stage of easy recourse to violence as a way to settle disputes or as a norm in the socialization of young boys.

Easy access to guns is another factor that may contribute to the high homicide rates in the United

States. Homicides are most often committed with guns, especially handguns, which is in sharp contrast to most other developed countries, where ownership of guns is strictly regulated (Brandl & Strohshine, 2011). Nevertheless, the presence of motivated offenders, most common in developing countries, also appears to contribute to levels of serious crimes (DeLisi & Conis, 2011). It is difficult to separate the relative importance of different factors in influencing crime rates within countries, as well as across countries, because even a large number of factors explain only a very small proportion of crime (see boxed insert).

Our discussion of the causes of crime is only a brief summary, because thousands of articles and books have been written on the subject of the causes and correlates of crime. In the attempt to make sense of the reasons behind criminal behavior one fact remains: In most countries today, crime is perceived to be a serious problem that defies an easy solution.

Reasons for Crime: Correlates and Causes

The struggle to understand the causes and circumstances of crime continues through research, policy, and prevention efforts because of the seriousness of the problem and the harm it produces. Causal explanations of crime are varied, and no single explanation accounts for all crime, but these explanations can be grouped into four general types. Summarized in Table 2.4, these four approaches to explaining criminal behavior include classical, positivist, ethical, and structural explanations.

Positivist

The positivist perspective in criminology corresponds with the rise of social science and the scientific method in the late 1800s. Positivism looks to internal or external influences as the cause of criminal behavior. Numerous efforts to explain crime have been attempted, employing some combination of psychological, social, economic, and biological factors, although most rely on social factors (Akers & Sellers, 2008; Williams & McShane, 2009). All these theories

have in common the assumption that changes in these conditions will reduce or prevent criminal behavior.

There are many factors that may "push" a person toward a crime, but these factors do not determine that decision. Therefore, positivistic explanations point to conditions that make crime an easy choice, but they do not explain why or how that choice is made, rather than other choices that would not involve committing a crime.

A different type of positivistic approach focuses on "criminal settings" (environments conducive to criminal activity) rather than on the motivations of individuals or groups of people. These rational-choice theories attempt to explain why offenders commit crimes in some situations and not in others by examining how circumstances affect criminal thinking (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). A popular explanation of this type is routine activities theory, described by Marcus Felson. He observed that three things must occur simultaneously for a criminal event to occur: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a

TABLE 2.4 Four Approaches to Criminal Behavior

| Approach to Crime Causation | Primary Cause of Crime | Prescribed Remedy |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Positivist | Internal or external factors (i.e., social, economic, psychological, or biological influences) | Rehabilitation or reform by changing these internal or external conditions, or changing a person's reaction to them. |
| Classical | Free-will decision guided by hedonistic tendency to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. | Deterrence through threat of apprehension and punishment. |
| Structural | Political and economic conditions promote a culture of competitive individualism in which individual gain becomes more important than the social good. | More equitable distribution of power and wealth in society, so that all individuals have a greater stake in a better society. |
| Ethical | Free-will decision is guided by ethical principles in which an individual fails to appreciate an act's wrongfulness and lacks empathy for the victim. | Education and reinforcement in ethical decision making from an early age; reduction of external factors that promote unethical decisions. |

capable guardian to intervene (Felson, 2010). According to this view, routine activities of everyday life bring potential offenders and victims together. Changes in society that have led people to work and play farther from home, fewer children to have continuous supervision, and more homes to be empty during the day, along with related social trends, lead to changes in crime rates in neighborhoods and cities because motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of guardians are occurring together more often. Therefore, crime control becomes a matter of educating potential victims about being targets and avoiding situations without guardians. This explanation does not deal with the important issue of how motivated offenders develop in the first place, but it states that individuals with low self-control exist and will exploit suitable targets if those targets are not well protected.

Classical

In many ways, the classical perspective is the converse of positivism. Rather than focusing on influential factors that contribute to crime, classicists see crime as the result of a free-will decision to choose it. This free-will decision is guided by the pain-pleasure principle: that is, people always will act in a way that maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain. Classicists believe that people are hedonistic and will naturally seek pleasure at every opportunity and avoid pain. The way to prevent crime, in this view, is through deterrence. Criminal

behavior is prevented, therefore, when the pain associated with criminal conduct (i.e., the likelihood of apprehension and punishment) is greater than the pleasure derived from the crime (usually economic gain).

Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi offer a classical explanation that they intend to explain "all crime." They believe that crime results from "the tendency of individuals to pursue short-term gratification in the most direct way with little consideration for the long-term consequences of their acts." This tendency is associated with impulsiveness, aggression, and lack of empathy. They base this theory on the classical assumption that "human behavior is motivated by the self-interested pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain" (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990, p. 90). Following the classical view, the only effective way to prevent criminal behavior is through the threat of apprehension and punishment that will outweigh (at least in the mind of the offender) the pleasure derived from the criminal conduct.

The problem with the general theory of crime, and with the classical viewpoint in general, is an overemphasis on the impact of penalties for crime prevention. First, deterrence is not very effective in criminal justice because the odds of apprehension are quite low and uncertain. Second, the hedonism, or tendencies toward short-term gratification, must come from somewhere. If they are innate, what prevents the

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majority of us from engaging in a life of crime? If only some of us have these tendencies, where do they come from? Classical explanations have difficulty with these questions.

Structural

The structural perspective focuses less on individual behavior and more on how acts come to be defined as criminal. Social, economic, and political circumstances cause certain behaviors to be defined as criminal, resulting in a great deal of "marginal" criminal behavior, such as gambling, prostitution, and vagrancy. Structuralists argue that we create some of our own organized crime problems by prohibiting gambling unless the state is running the game, or disallowing prostitution unless it is sanctioned by the state. These inconsistencies are viewed by structuralists as a mechanism by which we create illicit markets and then prosecute people for catering to the demand that the state has manufactured (Reiman, 2007).

On the one hand, the structural view can illuminate the inconsistencies in our laws regulating gambling, sex, and other consensual "vices." On the other hand, it offers little help in understanding the behavior of specific individuals who choose to violate the law.

Ethical

The ethical perspective sees crime as a moral failure in decision making. In this view, crime occurs when a person makes a criminal choice because of the failure to appreciate the act's wrongfulness and its impact on the victim. The ethical explanation of criminal conduct recognizes that external factors play a role in influencing some people to engage in crime, but these factors do not cause the crime by themselves, as positivists suggest. In a similar way, the ethical perspective sees a freely willed decision that lies at the base of virtually all criminal behavior, but there is no hedonistic tendency to engage in crime controlled only by the risk of apprehension, as the classicists suggest.

Instead, crime occurs when criminal acts bring pleasure rather than guilt or shame, according to the ethical perspective on crime. Ethicists argue that people are often incapable of thinking through decisions in ethical terms because ethical principles and decision making are rarely part of the educational process and are often not modeled or taught by parents, the educational system, or the larger society. Lacking education and experience with ethical decisions, people often do what comes naturally: They make decisions based on their own self-interest, and they fail to

understand or appreciate the legitimate interests of others or of the community at large (Albanese, 201

Religious explanations are based on the ethical perspective, arguing that lack of religious values and failure to live a religious lifestyle lead to a proliferation of crime in society. This idea is generally shared in countries that have a "sacred base." That is, they utilize some sacred text (e.g., the Bible, the Talmud, or the Qu'ran) as a basis for law and social control. Countries with a strong sacred and religious base have generally experienced lower crime rates than other countries. The most obvious examples can be found in the Islamic nations of Iran and Saudi Arabia. In these countries, sacred (religious) and secular (nonreligious) laws are not developed or practiced in isolation from each other. Other countries in which sacred or religious principles are deeply ingrained in societal structure include Israel, where Judaism is practiced; India, where the majority of persons practice some form of Hinduism; and Japan, where Buddhism and Confucian thought form a spiritual foundation.

Whether religion does, in fact, reduce crime in society is not scientifically established. Some have argued that it is questionable to imply that an increase in a person's religiousness will cause a decrease in criminal behavior or delinquency (Sutherland & Cressey, 1974). Yet some research has indicated that religion decreases victimless criminality such as marijuana usage and that in "moral communities" (places where religion is paramount with community members) crime can be reduced (Cochran, 1987; S. Kent, & Doyle, 1982).

Quantitative and Qualitative Factors

Other researchers have grouped large numbers of factors to determine the influence on crime rates of multifaceted concepts as "modernization" or "industrialization" (Howard et al., 2000; Uludag et al., 2002). Criminologist Freda Adler identified 10 "nations not obsessed by crime," including low-crime countries in Western Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia. Saudi Arabia and Japan, two of our model countries, are included in her list of low-crime societies. Adler examined the influence of 47 different variables on crime rates, from population and per-capita income to education level and divorce rates. She found no strong association between any of these factors and crime rates. She then looked in detail at qualitative factors present in each of the 10 low crime countries and found that "all 10 countries appear to have developed some form of strong social control, or social control apart from the criminal justice system ... [wh

transmit[s] and maintain[s] values by providing for a sharing of norms and by ensuring cohesiveness" (Adler, 1983, p. 130). The 10 countries displayed some combination of historically strong family systems, cohesive local communities, and strong religious institutions, which provide ongoing reinforcement for shared

norms and values that contribute to low crime rates. This study is interesting because it recognizes that the failure to develop a better understanding of the causes and prevention of crime may require examination of qualitative factors not yet completely understood or measured effectively.

SUMMARY

We measure crime and compare crime data across nations to determine the types and extent of crime, to identify long-term trends, and to learn why some countries are more successful than others in controlling crime. International crime data collection dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, although there are no comprehensive international crime statistics. Modern sources of international crime data rely largely on the International Crime Victimization Surveys, which have had some remarkable findings:

1. Crime rates have generally been declining in recent years, especially in developed nations.
2. Given the known circumstances of some crimes, more attention should be given to increasing the difficulty of carrying out these crimes (e.g., theft and burglary), which requires crime prevention measures.

3. In crime measurement, more attention needs to be given to serious nonconventional crimes such as organized crime, human trafficking, and corruption.
4. Performance of police in victim satisfaction and in improving victim's perceptions of crime reporting and crime prevention requires greater attention.

Studying variation in crime rates around the world can help us to understand the underlying social factors associated with crime rates and to find ways to mitigate the problem of crime.

Comparative Criminal Justice at the Movies

Movies seek to entertain and inform the audience about a story, incident, or person. Many good movies also hit upon important substantive themes relevant to understanding crime and justice in comparative perspective. Read the movie summary below (and watch the movie if you haven't already) and answer the questions below to make the subject matter connections to comparative criminal justice.

Taken (2008)
Pierre Morel, Director

Human trafficking is considered one of the most serious forms of crime because it often involves

kidnapping or coerced enslavement and sexual assault of the victim. Bryan Mills (Liam Neeson) is a retired U.S. government agent who retired to California to be near his teenage daughter Kim (Maggie Grace), who now lives with her mother and wealthy stepfather. Kim convinces her father to allow her to travel to Paris with her friend Amanda. The girls arrive in Paris and let it slip to a stranger that they are alone in France. Based on this information, an Albanian gang of human traffickers kidnap the girls for the purpose of selling them as enslaved prostitutes. Kim has only seconds to call her father and give him some basic information about the attackers.

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