



No.23

# A Comparison of Crime in Australia and Other Countries

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*Since Australia was first used by the British as a penal colony, there has always been considerable interest in comparisons between crime and punishment in this country and elsewhere. From the early days of colonisation the principle comparisons made were between the convict society, which was viewed by some as a kind of social laboratory, and the English society which had created it. The purpose of such comparisons was then, as now, to judge the relative merits or demerits of the two societies and their criminal justice systems.*

*In more recent years it has become fashionable to broaden the scope of comparison to include other nations. However, until now, such comparison has proved surprisingly difficult, due largely to the variety and complexity of the criminal justice systems themselves, and differences in the way they record and define their activities.*

*With the advent of crime surveys, utilising standard sampling techniques and questions to obtain information about victimisation experiences, many of these dilemmas have been overcome as this unique International Survey of Crime Victims vividly demonstrates. The Survey findings reveal that Australia has crime rates which are much more comparable to those of North America than Europe. In a number of cases these rates are the highest recorded among the 14 jurisdictions included in the survey - a result which must surely give cause for concern to all Australians and reinforce the need for the establishment of a national crime prevention strategy.*

**Duncan Chappell**  
Director

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## An Overview

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- How does Australia compare with other countries in terms of its rates of crime and offending? Are we more, or less, likely to become a victim of a crime than people who live in other countries?
- How do Australians feel about their police? Are police in Australia more respected or less respected than their counterparts overseas? Do Australians get the services they need from their police?
- Is there anything about the Australian way of life which makes us particularly vulnerable to crime, or does our

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supposedly free and easy lifestyle reduce the impact of crime?

- Do Australians take appropriate preventative measures to avoid or deter criminals?
- How do our opinions on sentencing compare with those of people overseas?

During 1989, over two thousand Australians took part in a survey designed to answer these and other questions about crime. At the same time, similar sized samples of the population of ten other countries and the three major administrative units of the United Kingdom were being asked identical questions. Questions asked in the survey included details of incidents occurring to respondents over the previous five years, and their responses to them, including degree of satisfaction with police efforts.

Surveys of people's experience of crime offer an alternative view of crime levels to that based on police statistics. It is extremely difficult to compare police figures from one country to another as different police jurisdictions often use diverse methods of recording and defining particular offences. Though 'victim surveys', as they are called, are far from foolproof, they at least allow researchers to estimate the risk of crime for citizens in particular countries as well as citizens' views regarding crime and sentencing matters.

So how did Australia emerge from these comparisons? Unhappily, the report concludes that Australian rates of crime are in some respects very high compared with most other comparable countries. Australia is ranked third highest of the fourteen countries in terms of overall victimisation, behind the other two non-European countries, the USA and Canada. In assaults involving force, in the less serious types of sexual incidents, in burglary and in motor vehicle thefts, Australia ranked highest of all the countries surveyed. Only in the categories of motorcycle or bicycle theft, and pickpocketing did we fail to finish in the top half of the list.

It is perhaps surprising, then, to find also that Australians appear to be

very much happier with the efforts of their police forces than residents in most other countries in the survey. Almost eighty percent of victims of crime expressed satisfaction with the police response to their problem, and around three quarters of all respondents thought the police were doing a reasonable job controlling crime in their neighbourhood.

This apparent paradox is not easily explained. There is evidence that some aspects of the Australian lifestyle may actually be responsible for our high crime rates. For example, we may make ourselves easy targets for burglars with our detached houses in big, impersonal cities. Both these features are found to be associated with high burglary rates. Likewise, it

can be thought that we make life easy for car thieves by driving to work - leaving the car parked all day unattended. Ironically, however, those countries which choose public transport for their journeys to work have much higher rates of pick-pocketing than we do. Different lifestyles give different opportunities to commit crime. Other features of Australian society appear to be associated with high risks of crime, but the in-depth analysis of the data needed to confirm these suspicions has not yet been completed.

The report concludes, for example, that big city dwellers are over fifty percent more likely to be victimised than those who live in towns of under 10,000 people. Australia is, of course,

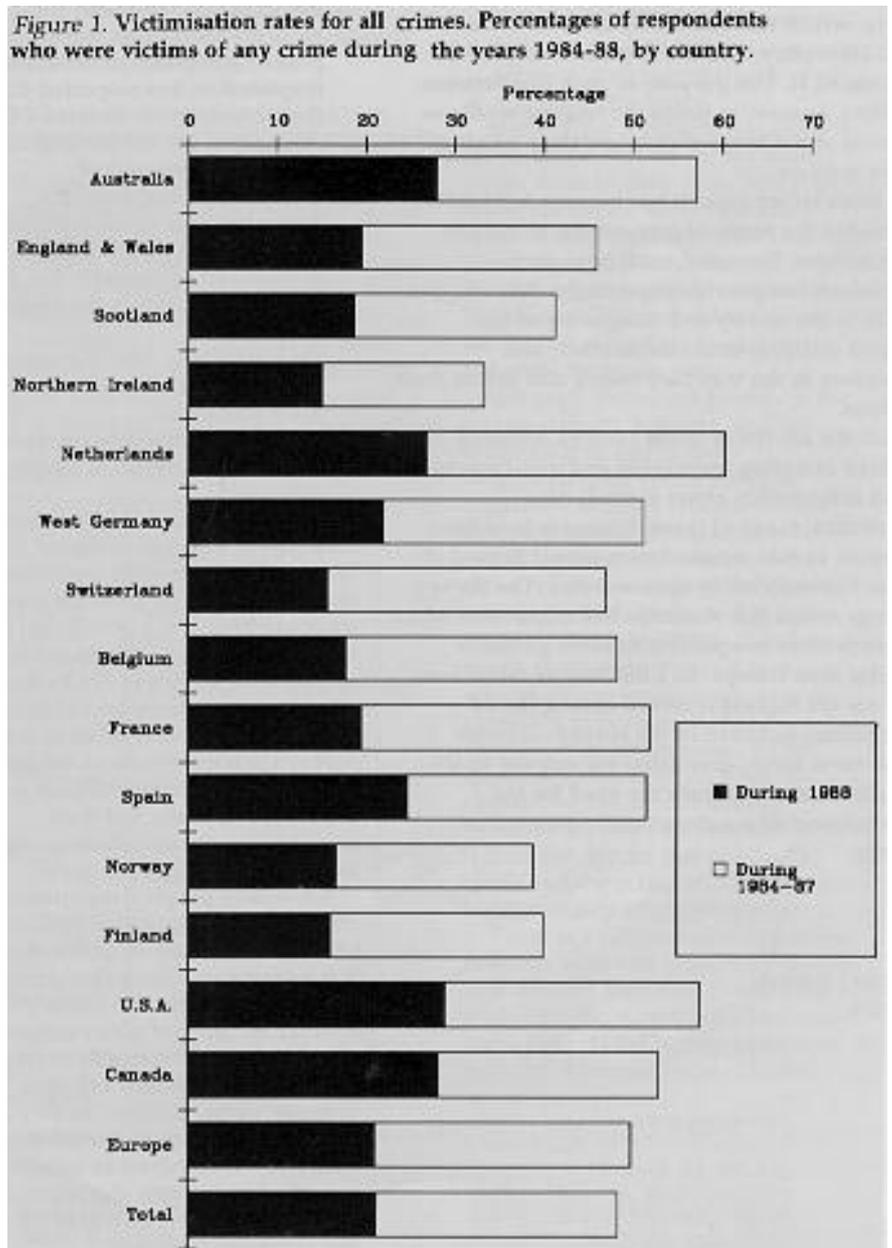


Table 1. Percentage of sample victimised by at least one type of crime in 1988, by country and offence type.

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

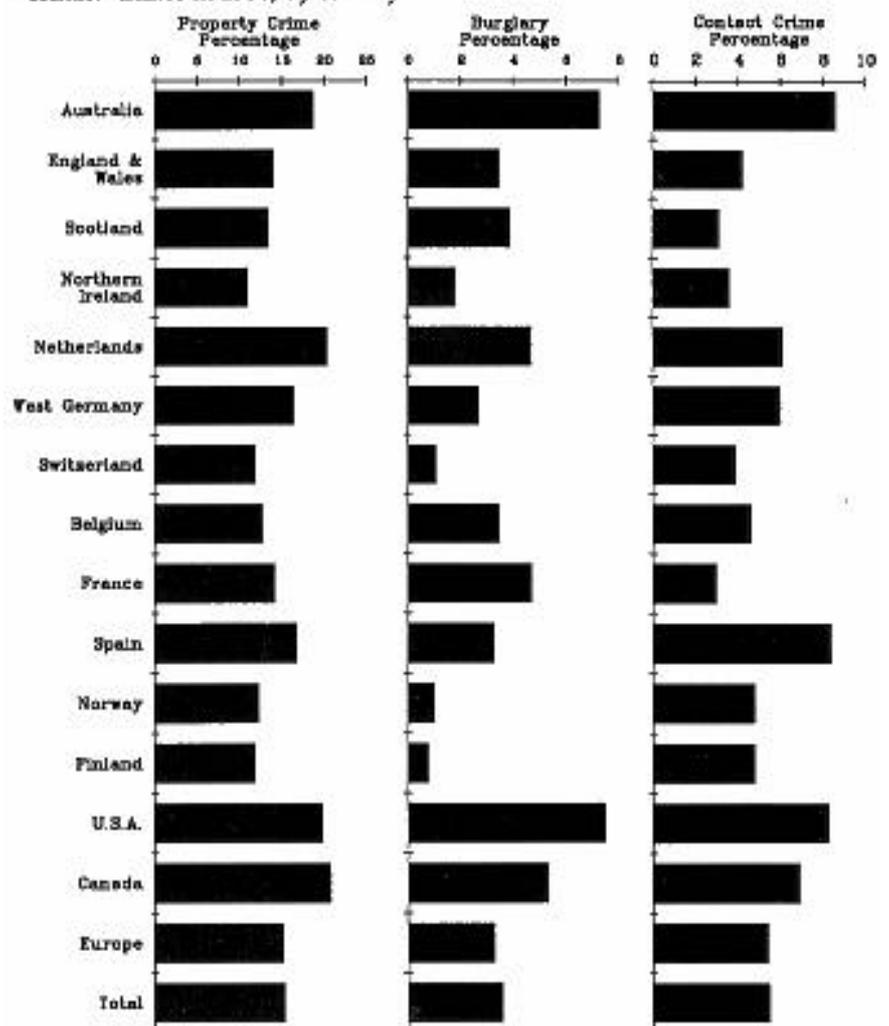
1. European totals have been calculated by weighting individual country results by population size.
2. Total figure treats each country as of equal statistical importance, with an assumed sample of 2000.
3. 'Motorcycles' include mopeds and scooters.
4. Asked of women only.
5. Percentage of sample victimised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

one of the most highly urbanised nations of all, and this single feature appears to explain most of the difference between the risk of crime in Australia and elsewhere. Other factors likely to adversely affect our risk of victimisation include our demography, our high living standards, and our high labour participation rates, especially for women. Most intriguing of all, however, is that the report shows that the risk of all major categories of crime clearly decreases the further a country is from the equator - possibly because a colder climate imposes an informal curfew on both offenders and potential victims alike, reducing the frequency with which people leave the comforts of home and reducing the opportunities for a range of criminal activities. In all these respects, Australia would probably stand out as a 'high risk' country.

Despite the risks, Australians do not appear to be unduly fearful of violent crime, by international standards. Their most common fear was of being burgled, which, as the responses showed, was supported by the relatively high incidence of these crimes in Australia.

There are some clear lessons in these comparisons, in the need for continued and improved crime prevention activities in Australia. But the figures should not necessarily be cause for alarm at our position vis-

Figure 2. Victimization rates for burglary, other property crime and 'contact' crimes in 1988, by country.



Note

- Property crime: theft of cars, motorcycles, bicycles, theft from cars; car vandalism; non-contact personal thefts.
- Burglary: including attempts
- Contact crime: pickpocketing; robbery; sexual incidents; assaults/threats.

Table 2. Percentages of incidents reported to police in 1988, by country and offence type

	Australia	Eng. & Wales	Scotland	N.Ire-land	Nether-lands	West Germany	Switzer-land	Belgium	France	Spain	Norway	Finland	USA	Canada	Europe	Total
Theft of car	91.3	100.0	100.0	96.9	100.0	95.7	—	88.2	97.1	76.9	81.8	100.0	97.6	82.4	94.6	93.2
Theft from car	37.6	72.6	79.4	30.0	74.3	79.4	73.7	75.0	71.1	34.0	67.9	71.4	54.6	61.1	63.6	62.2
Car vandalism	27.3	33.1	51.5	31.5	35.4	39.7	46.3	34.8	48.5	20.3	34.8	36.6	49.2	44.8	37.2	38.6
Theft of motorcycle	100.0	100.0	66.7	100.0	100.0	90.0	100.0	100.0	88.9	41.2	66.7	—	100.0	100.0	76.9	85.4
Theft of bicycle	74.4	70.0	65.0	45.2	59.6	66.9	87.5	60.7	28.6	23.8	50.0	56.3	62.3	60.6	57.6	60.9
Burglary with entry	79.5	88.1	92.7	63.6	93.6	75.0	80.0	72.3	75.0	28.6	75.0	33.3	78.9	80.6	73.5	76.9
Robbery	58.6	71.4	54.5	80.0	64.7	54.5	60.0	33.3	83.3	22.4	60.0	12.5	59.5	56.5	45.0	49.0
Personal theft	45.0	55.6	43.4	20.9	41.6	36.1	46.7	43.9	48.1	46.1	25.0	43.2	38.9	29.2	44.8	40.7
Sexual incidents	5.4	8.3	41.7	30.5	19.2	8.8	0.0	14.3	0.0	4.0	9.1	0.0	12.8	9.3	8.1	9.9
Assault/threat	35.6	47.4	33.3	50.0	31.3	14.3	25.0	19.0	53.3	24.2	26.7	10.0	34.3	31.7	29.9	30.7
All crimes	46.9	58.8	62.3	45.8	52.6	47.9	58.7	48.6	60.2	31.5	42.6	41.8	52.1	48.3	50.0	49.6

vis other countries - rather they should be used to identify the special needs of a country such as ours, in terms of crime prevention, policing and the criminal justice system in general.

### The Survey

This is the first time an attempt has been made to conduct parallel surveys of crime in several countries. It fills a long-felt need for genuinely comparable estimates of crime and patterns of victimisation in different countries. Researchers have principally wanted to test theories about the social causes of crime by means of cross-national comparisons. Policy makers have principally wanted to understand better their national crime problems by putting these in an international perspective. Comparisons based on numbers of offences recorded by police have presented severe difficulties, not least of which are caused by differences in offence classifications, counting rules, and the frequencies with which offences are actually brought to the notice of police.

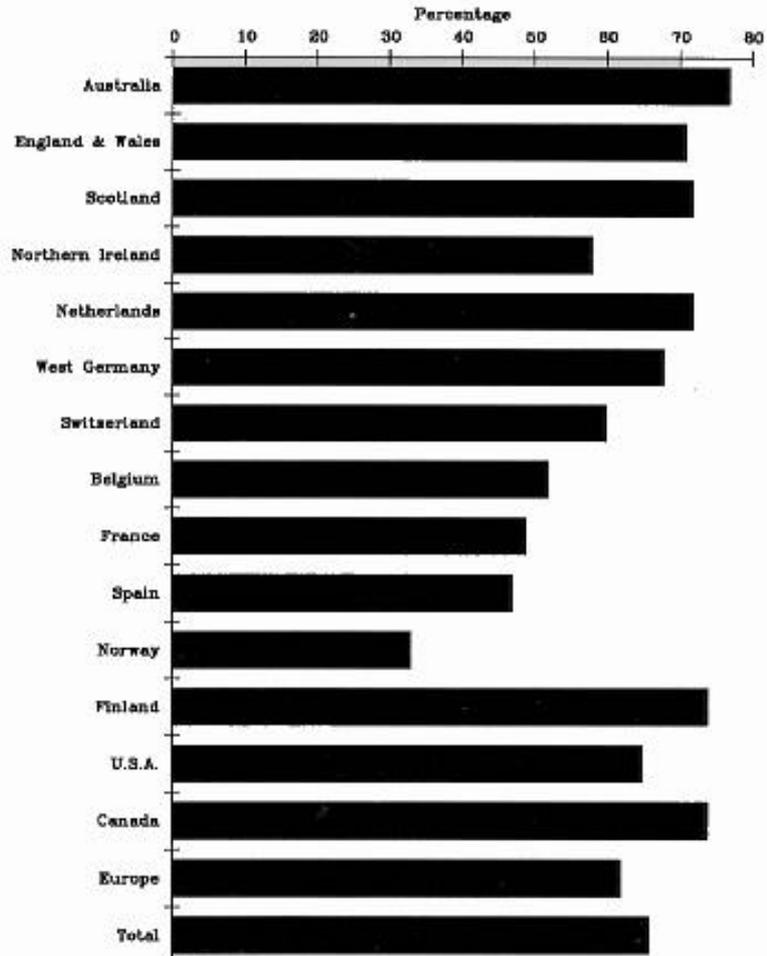
Crime victim surveys, of one form or another, have been developed in many countries in recent years, as a means of estimating the 'true' level of crime, the extent and nature of offences which are never reported to police, and the distribution of risks across different sections of the community. This particular survey was first proposed to a meeting of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe in 1987,<sup>1</sup> but the idea of extending it to other, non-

European, countries was readily accepted by the coordinators of the survey. Eventually, Australia, through the support of the Australian Institute of Criminology and the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, joined Belgium, Canada, England and Wales, West Germany, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland and the USA in the venture. (Local surveys were also

conducted in regions of Poland, Japan and Indonesia, but in each case the sample was not drawn from the whole population, and would therefore be unrepresentative.)

Each survey was based on a sample of the population and, for cost reasons, was conducted by telephone. Both of these features may clearly limit the degree to which the survey responses adequately represent the actual level of crime in each country.

Figure 3. Percentages of victims satisfied with treatment by police.



However, great care was taken to ensure that, as far as possible, fair comparisons between nations could be made from the results.

The offences about which people were asked included :

- thefts of cars, motor cycles and pushbikes
- thefts from, and damage to, cars
- burglary and attempted burglary
- robbery
- thefts of personal property
- sexual assaults and offensive behaviour
- other assaults and threats

Respondents who had been victimised were asked for details of when, where and how the incident happened, its material consequences, whether the police were involved (and if not, why not), and satisfaction with the police response and any victim assistance given. Questions were also asked relating to fear of crime, general satisfaction with local policing, crime prevention behaviour, and attitudes to sentencing

## The Results in More Detail

### *Crime in Australia, Compared to Other Countries*

Table 1 shows estimates of the percentages of the sampled population aged 16 or over in each country who had been victimised at least once during 1988.

Australia is ranked third highest of the fourteen countries in terms of overall victimisation, behind the other two non-European countries, the USA and Canada. In assaults involving force, sexual incidents, burglary and motor vehicle thefts, Australia ranked highest of all countries surveyed. Only in such categories as motorcycle or bicycle theft, and pickpocketing did we fail to finish in the top half of the list.

The risk of having a car stolen in 1988 was equal highest with France (2.3 per cent of respondents), even after taking Australia's high rate of car-ownership into account. During 1988 6.9 per cent of Australian

respondents also said they had had things stolen from their cars during 1988 (e.g. luggage, radios, car mirrors etc.), and 8.7 per cent had their car damaged in some way.

Burglary affected 4.4 per cent of Australian respondents during 1988 compared with 3.8 per cent in the USA and 3.0 per cent in Canada. European rates of burglary were only around half the Australian figure. These figures appear to be related to the percentage of detached or semi-detached houses, which is very high (85 per cent) in Australia.

Australia on 5 per cent ranked equal second with Spain for its frequency of personal thefts, with Canada (5.4 per cent) in the unenviable top-spot. These crimes consisted of thefts of personal items such as purses, jewellery or shopping while at work, school or in some public place. Interestingly, however, Australians were at very low risk of pickpocketing.

Australia also had very high rates of sexual incidents, including sexual assaults, even when other factors, such as the high female labour participation rate and our high propensity to go out in the evenings, are taken into account. The researchers suggest that an additional factor may be differences in willingness to talk about such incidents. Issues such as sexual harassment have been the subject of heated debate in some countries in recent years, but are still *taboo* subjects in others.

It is relevant to note that 80.1 per cent of all sexual incidents were for 'offensive behaviour' (grabbing, touching) while 7.8 per cent were for rape or attempted rape and 11.3 per cent for indecent assault. Of all sexual incidents, 92.4 per cent were not reported to the police. Half the respondents who failed to report any sexual incident to the authorities said that they did not do so because the incident was not serious enough or because they would 'solve it themselves'.

The survey results also revealed that a much smaller proportion of incidents of a sexual nature are

described as actual 'assaults' by Australian respondents in comparison with those surveyed in other countries. This result tends to support the view that sexual incidents are understated in other countries by current Australian standards.

### *Our Reaction to Crime.*

**Reporting Crime:** At first sight these are frightening results. In several of these types of crime, in particular sexual incidents, Australia appears to have higher rates even than the USA. Previous analyses, based on police statistics of crime reported, have concluded that the general level of Australian crime is much lower than that of America, although higher than comparable European states.

Table 2 helps to explain the phenomenon. In terms of the percentage of incidents reported to police, Australia ranks only twelfth out of the sixteen countries. Basically, this could be either because Australians have so little confidence in the police that they frequently prefer not to ask for their assistance, or because a large proportion of offences are of such a minor nature that they are not worth reporting.

For example, around two thirds of incidents of assault were not reported to police, mostly because they were 'not serious enough', or the victims 'solved it themselves', or believed that it was 'inappropriate for police'. Fewer than 10 per cent of sexual incidents were reported to police in Australia - less than average - and the reasons for non-reporting were largely similar to those for other assaults. Australians were **not** more likely than average to avoid reporting incidents because of fear or dislike of the police.

**Satisfaction with Police:** Police in Australia actually appear to be more popular with the communities they serve than their counterparts overseas. All respondents who reported incidents to police in 1988 were asked whether they were satisfied with the way police dealt with their problem. Australia ranked first with almost 80

per cent of respondents satisfied, compared with an average across all countries surveyed of around 66 per cent.

In more general terms, Australian police also appeared to receive relatively high community support. All respondents, whether victims or not, were asked 'Taking everything into account, how good do you think the police in your area are at controlling crime. Do you think they are doing a good job or not?' Australia in this case ranked third behind Canada and the USA, still scoring over 70 per cent compared to an average of around 66 per cent. As in many of the countries polled, young people were the most likely to be critical of police.

**Crime Prevention Measures:** Fear of crime induces people to take precautions including fitting burglar alarms, taking out insurance policies, or avoiding going out alone after dark. To provide information about fear of violent crime in public places, respondents were asked if they had to avoid certain areas after dark and if they go out with companions to avoid crime. Australia was quite close to average in these questions. As elsewhere, women and people who live in large cities were more likely to take precautions. The high incidence rates measured for violent crimes in Australia did not seem to translate into high levels of fear of violence.

On the other hand, burglary in Australia does seem to worry people. A question was asked 'What would you say are the chances that over the next twelve months someone will try to break into your home?' Forty four per cent of Australian respondents thought that this was 'likely' or 'very likely' - ranking third behind West Germany and Switzerland. Despite this, Australians are moderately, not exceptionally, high users of such precautions as burglar alarms, caretakers and insurance. The fact that Australia has a very high percentage of people living in large cities, and our preference for detached houses, which are comparatively easy targets for burglars, appears more than likely to explain both Australia's high rate of

Table 4. Victimization rates for three categories<sup>1</sup> of crime, by different groups of the population — 14 countries combined.

	Property crime	Burglary crime	Contact crime	Any
% victimised once or more				
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	16.7	3.7	5.1	21.0
Female	14.2	3.6	6.0	20.3
Total	15.4	3.6	5.5	21.1
<b>Age</b>				
16-34	21.1	4.5	8.9	28.9
35-54	16.7	3.9	4.3	22.0
55+	6.5	2.3	2.5	10.1
<b>Household income<sup>2</sup></b>				
Below average	11.7	3.5	5.4	17.6
Above average	19.8	3.9	5.9	25.6
Not stated	13.5	3.2	4.8	18.6
<b>Size of place of residence</b>				
<10,000 residents	12.5	2.5	4.8	16.7
10,000-50,000 residents	15.1	3.3	5.3	20.8
>50,000 residents	19.7	5.2	7.7	27.5
Not stated	13.3	3.6	5.1	18.5

**Notes**

1. Property crime: theft of cars, motorcycles, bicycles, theft from cars; car vandalism; non-contact personal thefts.

Burglary: including attempts.

Contact crime: pickpocketing; robbery; sexual incidents; assaults/threats.

2. Respondents were asked first whether or not their total household income after deductions was above or below a given figure (set in the questionnaire at the median level for the country). They were then asked whether it was above or below the upper or lower quartile figure (as appropriate). Quartile figures were set independently in each country on the basis of national income data.

burglary and Australians' reactions to it.

**Attitudes to Sentencing:**

Respondents were asked which of five types of sentence they thought was most appropriate for 'a twenty-one year old man found guilty of burglary for the second time. This time he stole a colour TV'. Table 3 shows the principal results of this question. Contrary to conventional wisdom, imprisonment is not the public's preferred sentence for a recidivist burglar, in Australia as in most other countries. Community service is seen as most appropriate by almost half of all respondents. Less than 10 per cent opted for a fine. Just over one in three Australian respondents would send the offender to prison. Comparison with actual imprisonment rates in these countries showed that public opinion in each country was broadly in line with actual sentences. Respondents from countries with high imprisonment rates tended to support prison as the best option. Whether this means that the courts in each country are

actually expressing the wishes of the public, or that the public is conditioned by its knowledge of what the courts actually do, is impossible to decide from this study.

*Who is at Risk*

As Table 4 shows, men are marginally more at risk than women, except in 'contact' crimes. Even here, however, men are more at risk of violence than are women, particularly of robbery. Because only women were asked about sexual incidents, women appear to be at greater overall risk than men. These results confirm the findings published in *Violence: Directions for Australia* (National Committee on Violence 1990).

In addition, those aged 16-24 years were at least three times more at risk than those aged over 65 years. Because of Australia's post-war baby-boom and high levels of immigration, we have a particularly high proportion of our population in this younger age group. The fact that so many of us crowd into large cities also

predisposes us to crime. Those living in towns of less than 50,000 people had lower risks of crime than those living in the capital cities. Those in cities of more than 50,000 people were over 50 per cent more likely to be victimised than those who live in towns of under 10,000 people.

Employed people are more at risk than the unemployed. Women in the labour force were particularly at risk, however. Those in higher income groups were at greater risk than the less well-off.

Opportunity is an important feature of criminal offending. Clearly, communities with high levels of vehicle ownership are more at risk of crimes involving theft of, or from, vehicles or damage to them. Vehicles left unattended in public places are particularly at risk, so Australia's high car-ownership and our tendency to use private cars for journeys to work, rather than public transport, probably combine to explain in part, at least, our high rates of motor vehicle theft.

On the other hand, this tendency of ours to drive to work could help to explain our comparatively low rates of pickpocketing, since public transport offers considerable opportunities for such crimes.

People who frequently go out at night for recreational purposes are more at risk, in all categories of offence. This could be because they were more exposed to crimes committed in public places, such as pubs or public transport, but also because they were more frequently leaving their cars and houses unattended. Our climate, which for most of the year gives us pleasant evenings and longer hours of daylight, is likely to be particularly culpable in this respect, increasing the range of opportunities for all manner of crimes. (See Table 5.) Australian respondents appear to be about 30 per cent more likely than, for example, the Dutch to go out in the evening.

Most intriguing of all, however, is the discovery that countries with colder climates have lower levels of all types of crime than countries nearer the equator. The most significant statistical effects of this

Table 5. Frequency of outdoor evening activities and 1988 victimisation rates—14 countries combined.

	Almost daily	At least once week	At least once month	Less	Never
	% victimised				
Theft of car	1.8	1.3	1.2	0.7	0.7
Theft from car	7.9	6.4	4.8	3.9	2.6
Car vandalism	10.4	7.7	6.3	5.5	2.9
Theft of motorcycle	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.1
Theft of bicycle	3.7	3.2	2.3	2.3	0.9
Burglary with entry	2.8	2.2	1.9	1.6	1.8
Attempted burglary	2.8	2.2	2.1	1.7	1.2
Robbery	1.7	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.9
Personal theft	7.7	4.8	3.0	2.4	2.4
Sexual incidents	2.6	1.6	1.0	0.8	0.2
Assault/threat	6.7	3.4	2.1	1.9	1.3
Total	50.5	36.0	26.7	23.3	16.4

sort were found in burglary and sexual incidents, in which over half of the statistical variation between countries can be explained by the countries' distance from the equator. (See Figure 4.) The most likely explanation for this appears to be that cold or wet weather acts as an informal curfew, keeping both offenders and potential victims at home, thereby reducing the opportunities for crime. Most burglaries, for example, take place while the occupants are away. Most sexual incidents take place away from the victim's home.

country as far as crime is concerned as this cross-national survey indicates. Happily, we are not in the same league as the USA, but we do appear to have higher crime rates than most European countries. In terms of serious crimes, Australia does not differ substantially from most other countries surveyed. We do appear, however, to have higher rates of relatively minor incidents than most other countries. Our lifestyles appear to create opportunities which predispose us to much of this minor crime.

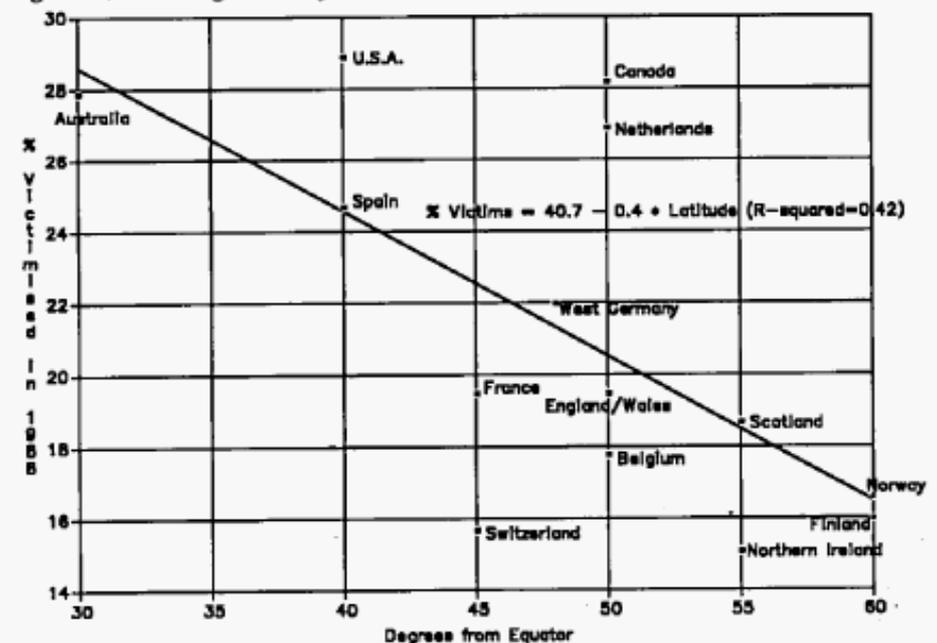
Among the elements of the Australian way of life which determine how much crime we have to put up with are:

### Summary and Conclusions

Australia is a relatively high risk

Table 3. Percentage in favour of a fine.

Figure 4. Percentages of respondents victimised, by latitude of country.



- we live in large impersonal cities, with few of the informal social safeguards which are available in smaller communities; we compound this by living in houses separated from our neighbours by large gardens which actually make a burglar's job easier;
- we travel to work across the city by car, leaving behind us residential suburbs with little protection against opportunist burglars, and leaving our cars and their contents in public places all day at the mercy of joy-riders, vandals and professional thieves;
- our long hours of daylight and pleasant evenings tempt us to enjoy outdoor recreational activities in public places, including pubs and sports clubs, again leaving the home with little protection other than perhaps the odd light left on, and subjecting ourselves to risk of all sorts of misfortunes.

Many of the incidents that affect us are so minor that we do not bother to report them to the police. When we do call in the police we are generally satisfied with their efforts to assist us. This survey also confirms previous surveys conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology in finding that we are not exceptionally punitive in our attitudes to offenders.

Although the recent growth in the private security industry, and the continuing spread of the Neighbourhood Watch concept, suggests that many Australians are adopting greater precautionary measures because of their concern about crime, we suspect that the majority will continue to live an outgoing lifestyle. Efforts to reduce the levels of violence through better education and family support and measures to reduce alcohol consumption, as proposed by the National Committee on Violence, clearly need to be maintained, however. At least, at this point in time, it does not appear that our fear of crime and the actual crime rate should fundamentally affect the way we live.

There is a considerable amount of research still to be performed on the

data derived from this survey, and it is likely that the results will shed even more light on the nature and extent of crime in Australia, compared with other countries.

Note: This Trends and Issues summarises the results published in:  
Van Dijk J., Mayhew P., and Killias M. (1990)  
*Experiences of Crime Across the World: Key Findings from the 1989 International Crime Survey*, Kluwer, Deventer and Boston.



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