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Self-reported youth delinquency in Europe and beyond: First results of the Second International Self-Report Delinquency Study in the context of police and victimization data

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Abstract

This article reports on the first results of the Second International Self-Report Delinquency Study (ISRD-2), a large international collaborative study of delinquency and victimization of 12–15-year-old students. The analysis is based on a subsample of the data set: 43,968 respondents from 63 cities and 31 countries. The prevalence rates of the major categories of delinquency, both for individual countries as well as for 6 country clusters, are presented as well as data for

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victimization experiences (theft and robbery/extortion). Using different measures, significant differences in level and type of offending are found between country clusters, with the Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries generally (but not always) scoring highest, followed by Northern Europe, Latin American and Mediterranean countries, with post-socialist countries at the bottom. The results for victimization experiences do not follow this pattern. The second part of the article compares ISRD-2 offending and victimization rates with two other main sources of internationally available crime-related statistics: International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) data and European Sourcebook (i.e. police-based) data. The analyses show a moderate level of support for a convergence of different measures. The article concludes with implications and suggestions for further research.

Keywords
cross-national comparison, ISRD-2, police data, self-reports, victimization studies, youth delinquency

As in other fields, international comparative research has gained much momentum over the last two decades. For researchers, this research increases opportunities for testing theories, while for policy-makers, it allows for assessment of their policies through 'benchmarking'. For all these initiatives, the development of cross-national indicators was crucial. In criminology, two types of readily available data have been used to situate a country's particular 'crime problem' in the larger international context: First, international organizations such as Interpol and the United Nations provide officially recorded crime data for a large number of countries (i.e. crime reported to police, arrests, prosecutions, convictions).[1] The work on the *European Sourcebook* – which we will use later in this article – exemplifies current attempts to make such official statistics more comparable and thus useful within the European context (Aebi et al., 2006).

A second important source of comparative crime data are those generated by the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) (van Dijk et al., 2007a, 2007b). In spite of many early sceptics, the ICVS has gained a strong foothold in comparative crime research. A number of publications have focused on the reconciliation of often divergent results of the ICVS and official police crime data (e.g. Aebi et al. 2002; Robert, 2009; Zauberman, 2009). Both sources, no matter their limitations, have contributed significantly to a better understanding of crime and victimization in large parts of the world. But these two sources, admittedly, provide only part of the story.

In this article, we introduce the Second International Self-Reported Delinquency Study (ISRD-2). Although self-report surveys of delinquency have been a mainstay of delinquency research for more than half a century, these studies typically have been limited to one, or at the most, a handful of countries (e.g. Wikström and Svensson, 2008, focus on Sweden and England).[2] At the European level, there are few comparative studies focusing on youth; one example is the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) (see Hibell et al., 2004).[3] Another example is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an internationally standardized assessment of 15-year olds in schools, implemented in 62 countries worldwide in 2009. The WHO report on the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) contains international self-report data on cannabis use, fighting and bullying (Currie et al., 2008). Data on

self-reported delinquency and victimization in six countries (Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Sweden) are reported in Dünkel et al. (2007). So far, only the First International Self-Reported Delinquency Study of 1992 (ISRD-1; Junger-Tas et al., 1994) has explicitly focused on youthful delinquency and victimization for 13 countries simultaneously. The present study is the second of this kind and has, in comparison to ISRD-1, been much extended in scope and in the number of participating countries (Junger-Tas et al., 2010).

In this article, we present the first descriptive results of the extent of self-reported delinquency (12 month prevalence rates), as well as victimization experiences of youth in 31 countries. We then cautiously proceed with analyses which compare the ISRD-2 prevalence rates to ICVS and European Sourcebook (ESB) data. These preliminary comparisons will test the validity of prevalence rates of crime derived from divergent sources.

Purpose and design of the ISRD-2

The ISRD-2 study is an expansion of a first international comparative study of delinquency (ISRD-1) which was initiated in 1988 by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, and which was implemented in 13 countries. The results were published in two volumes (Junger-Tas et al., 1994, 2003). As was the case for ISRD-1, it is one of the goals of the follow-up project ISRD-2 to comparatively describe the extent of criminality of children and youth in European context.[4] In addition to the description of the prevalence and incidence of self-reported delinquency and victimization of youth between the ages of 12 and 15 (paralleling grades 7, 8 and 9), however, it is important to explain the international variability of delinquency patterns and to test the generalizability of different theories such as social control theory, self-control theory, social disorganization theory and life-style theory.

The ISRD-2 Steering Committee guides the research activities of the participants, organizes workshops and makes the basic decisions about methodology and design. Part of this is the standardized questionnaire (ISRD Working Group, 2005), guidelines for sampling, and centrally organized and standardized data entry.

For the purposes of the present article, the essential questions of the questionnaire are those about self-reported delinquency and victimization experiences.[5] Self-reported delinquency is measured by 12 offences (see screening questions in Appendix). These may be grouped in property offences and violent offences, but also in minor and serious delinquency. For *serious property* crime, we include stealing from a car, burglary and car theft. As *serious violence* we count serious assault, robbery/extortion, and snatching.[6] Our distinction between 'minor' and 'serious' follows an empirical criterion, that is, 'minor' are generally speaking the *most frequent* offences and 'serious' are *rare* offences. Based on responses to the screening questions, both the lifetime prevalence ('ever') and previous year prevalence and incidence are estimated.

The ISRD-2 project is a school-based study, with random samples drawn either at the city level or at the national level. The ISRD-2 project uses as the primary sampling unit 7th, 8th and 9th grade classrooms (including 12- to 15-year-old students), stratified by school type. The sampling guidelines recommended city-based sampling with about 2100 respondents per country, where each sample would include at least 700 students

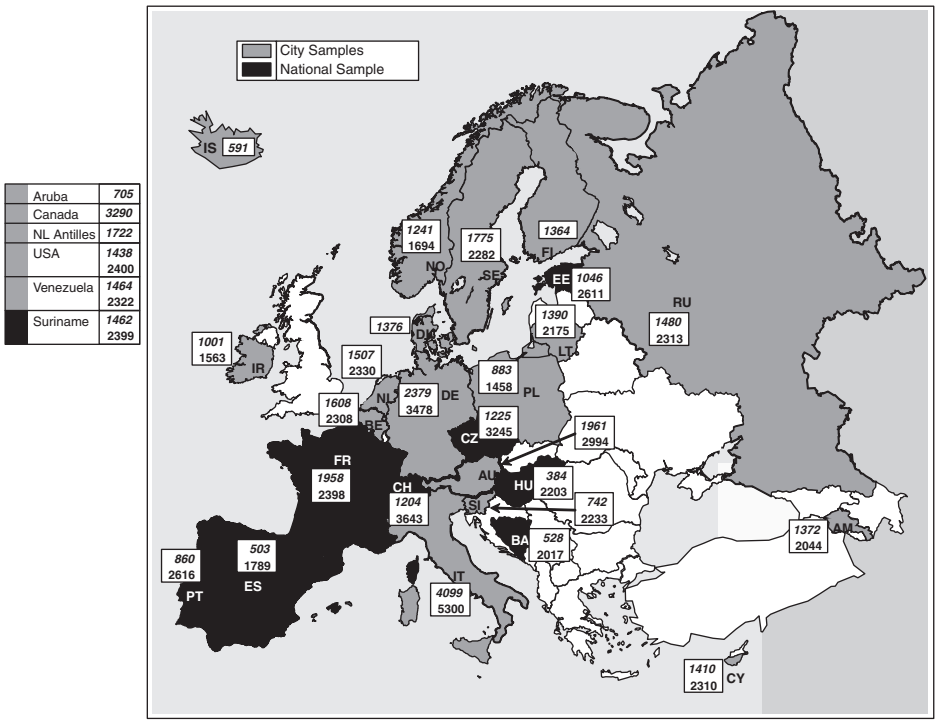

Figure 1. ISRD-2 samples in 25 European and 6 American countries
Remarks: *N* in 63 large and medium cities = 43,968; *N* total = 71,173; *italics*: total in large and medium cities; *not italics*: total sample size

from a large city or metropolitan area (about 500,000 inhabitants), a medium size city (120,000 inhabitants plus or minus 20%), and a cluster of small towns (10,000 to 75,000 inhabitants). For those countries that preferred a national sample, the expectation was that in at least one larger city, 700 students would be interviewed (*oversampling*). Most participating countries took great pains to randomly sample schools in the selected cities, followed by a random selection of classes within these schools, resulting in a fair representation of the school attending population in grade 7–9.

The ISRD-2 surveys were conducted between November 2005 and February 2007. Fifteen western European countries participated, 12 of which are EU member states: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. In addition, 10 countries in the eastern part of Europe participated: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, plus Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Russia. Furthermore, Canada and the United States were represented by four states (Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Texas). Finally, for the first time, some countries outside Europe and North America also participated (Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles, Suriname and Venezuela).

Figure 1 shows which countries used a city-based or national sample. It may be argued that – for purely descriptive and internationally comparable purposes – national representative samples are most appropriate. Although the classroom based samples within the cities are drawn randomly, the city-based samples admittedly are less suitable for country-level comparisons. Therefore, in order to maximize comparability, we will limit our comparisons of prevalence rates to only *those respondents who live in cities of at least 100,000 inhabitants*.[7] In the national samples, there was typically only an oversampling of one large or medium size city.[8] For the national samples, we only use the data collected in the oversampled medium or large city (and not the rest of the sample). This means that for present purposes our original sample size is reduced to 43,968.[9]

The data of virtually all countries may be viewed as representative for students from the 7th, 8th and 9th grade (either nationally representative or representative for the selected cities).[10] Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that the data from a country with a city-based sample are not *nationally* representative, just as the subsamples of the (oversampled) larger city from the national samples are not (nationally) representative. For the purposes of international comparability, it is preferable, however, to use city-level data for all participating countries (i.e. including those with national samples).

Prevalence of self-reported delinquency in international perspective

Aside from the fact that juvenile delinquency is normal and ubiquitous, criminality is also an expression of social problems. Before making international comparisons of juvenile delinquency it makes sense, therefore, to group countries by some external criterion related to social problems. Clustering countries also greatly facilitates describing a large number of countries simultaneously. The criterion of decommodification has turned out to be a very useful criterion to use in international comparative studies (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997; Savolainen, 2000). Decommodification (Esping-Andersen, 1990) is the degree to which individuals are protected from market forces when dealing with unemployment, disability and old age; it represents the level of development of the welfare society. Expanding on Esping-Andersen's ideas, Saint-Arnaud and Bernard (2003) have developed an empirical grouping of countries, reflecting different welfare regimes (social democratic, liberal, conservative and 'mediterranean', a family-oriented regime, where the family plays the determining role in ensuring material wellbeing). We expand the clusters identified by Saint-Arnauld and Bernard by adding an Eastern/Central European (see Lappi-Seppälä, 2007) and a Latin American cluster, thus grouping the countries into 6 clusters: *Anglo-Saxon* countries (Canada, Ireland, USA), *Northern European* countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden), *Western European* countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland), *Mediterranean* countries (Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Portugal), *Latin America* (Aruba, Netherlands Antilles, Suriname, Venezuela), and *Eastern and Central European* countries (Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovenia).

Figure 2 shows the main findings with regard to total prevalence rates. In order to increase ease of interpretation, the rates are shown with the 95% confidence intervals, which may be used to estimate the significance of the differences between the

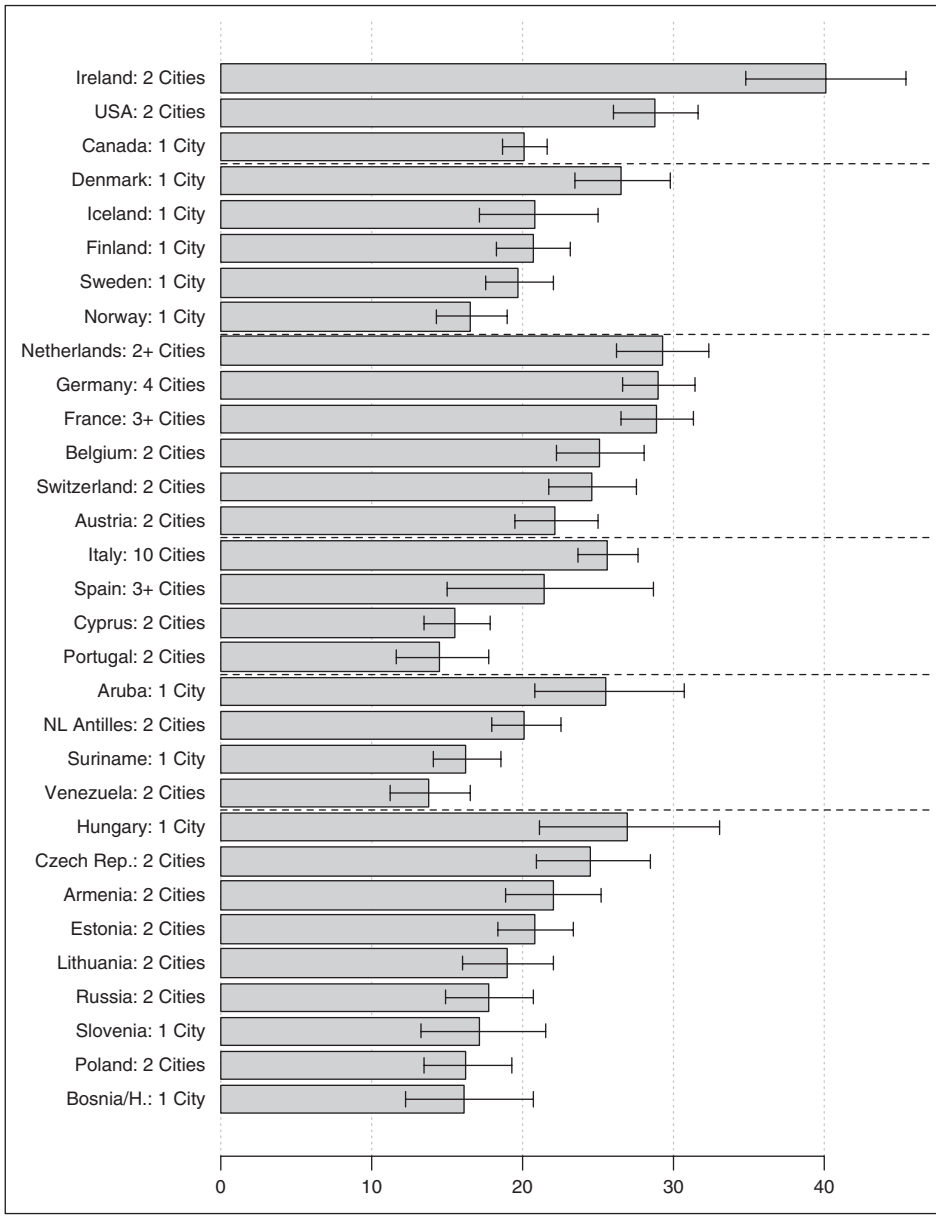

Figure 2. Prevalence rates in % (last year) of total self-reported delinquency

countries.[11] The broken lines in the figures indicate the country clusters discussed earlier. The sequence of country clusters in Figure 2 follows the expanded scheme of Saint-Arnauld and Bernard (2003) (i.e. Anglo-Saxon, Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, Latin America, and the Eastern and Central European clusters); within each country cluster, countries are ranked in declining overall

delinquency prevalence. We maintain this ranking of countries in subsequent figures (Figures 3–5) even though there may be a different ranking depending on the specific type of offence or victimisation experience.

When we consider the prevalence rates of *total delinquency* (last year), we see large variations with 40.1% at the highest end (Ireland), and 13.8% at the lowest end (Venezuela). The overall highest levels of prevalence exist in the cities of the Anglo-Saxon countries (29.6%); however, there are large differences between Ireland (40.1%) and Canada[12] (20.1%), illustrating there is a considerable degree of variability within country clusters. High levels are also found in the cities of Western Europe (26.3%), with The Netherlands and Germany showing the highest rates (resp. 29.3% and 29.0%), compared to Austria with the lowest rate (22.1%). Lower rates may be found in the cities of the Northern European countries with social-democratic welfare regimes (20.8%) as well as in the cities in the formerly socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (20.6%). In the Northern European cities, the rate in Denmark is the highest (26.5%) and in Norway the lowest (16.6%), with Iceland, Finland and Sweden in between. Overall the lowest prevalence rates are found in the cities in the Mediterranean countries (18.7%), where the rate in Italy clearly is higher with 25.6%; the lowest rates in this cluster of countries are found in Portugal (14.5%). In the cluster of the formerly socialist countries, cities in Hungary (27.0%) and the Czech Republic (24.5%) have the highest rates, whereas cities in Poland (16.3%) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (16.1%) have the lowest rates of total delinquency reported. The average prevalence rates of cities in the Latin American cluster are similar (20.3%); within that cluster, the highest prevalence rate was found in Aruba (25.5%) and the lowest in Venezuela (13.8%). Figures 3 and 4 present the annual prevalence rates in the large and medium cities of the ISRD-2 participating countries for *serious violent delinquency* and *serious property delinquency.*

With regard to more serious violent delinquency, Ireland, the USA, Germany and The Netherlands are on top. Overall, the prevalence rates for serious violence of the former socialist Central and Eastern European countries are the lowest. Further, there is considerable variation within country clusters.

Even more striking are the distinctions between the country clusters with regard to shoplifting (not shown). The lowest rate can be found in Armenia where consumer goods are rare. The generally higher prevalence rates of shoplifting for children and youth in prosperous countries are also noteworthy because in some of these countries, there has been a steady decrease in this behaviour over the last years.[13] In the more prosperous countries, automated surveillance and theft prevention systems have become common place; but in some former socialist countries (e.g. Estonia), it has become much harder to shoplift because of the use of security personnel in the stores, including small shops.

Prevalence rates of serious property offences are low. Again, Ireland is an outlier.[14] For present purposes, we have not included bicycle theft (including moped and motor cycle theft) in the group of serious property crimes, since in some countries bikes are not prevalent, and in other countries bikes play a special role, which puts serious limitations on comparability.[15]

One general observation when comparing prevalence rates between countries and offences is that – with the exception of serious violence – the Anglo-Saxon countries

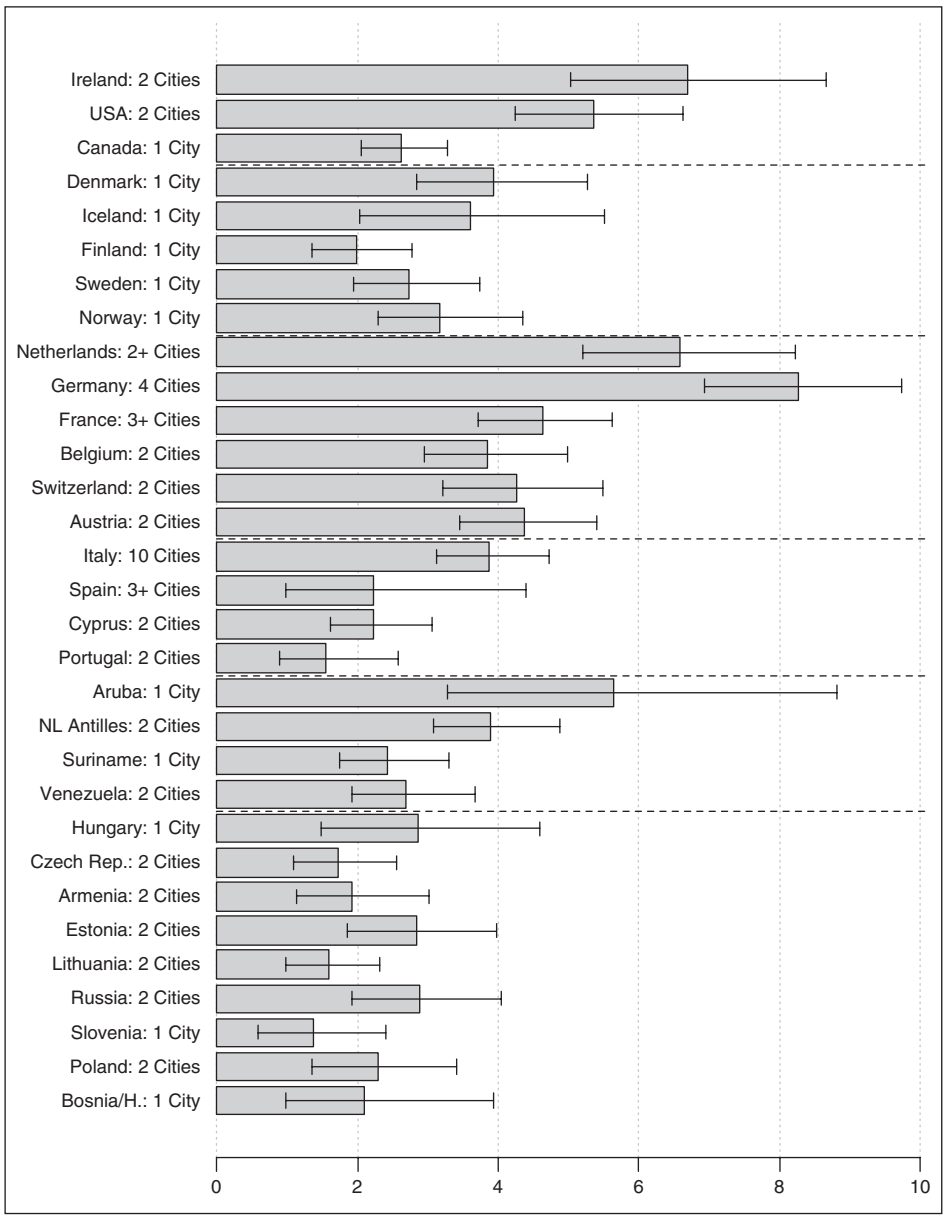

Figure 3. Prevalence rates in % (last year) for serious violence

(and particularly Ireland) show the highest level. As Figure 5 shows, this does not only apply to simple prevalence rates, but also to versatility. Versatility, defined as committing at least three different offences over the last 12 months, is considered a better indicator of the level of delinquency than prevalence. Figure 5 shows that (with the exception of Italy, Spain and Aruba) the children and youth from the Mediterranean countries, the

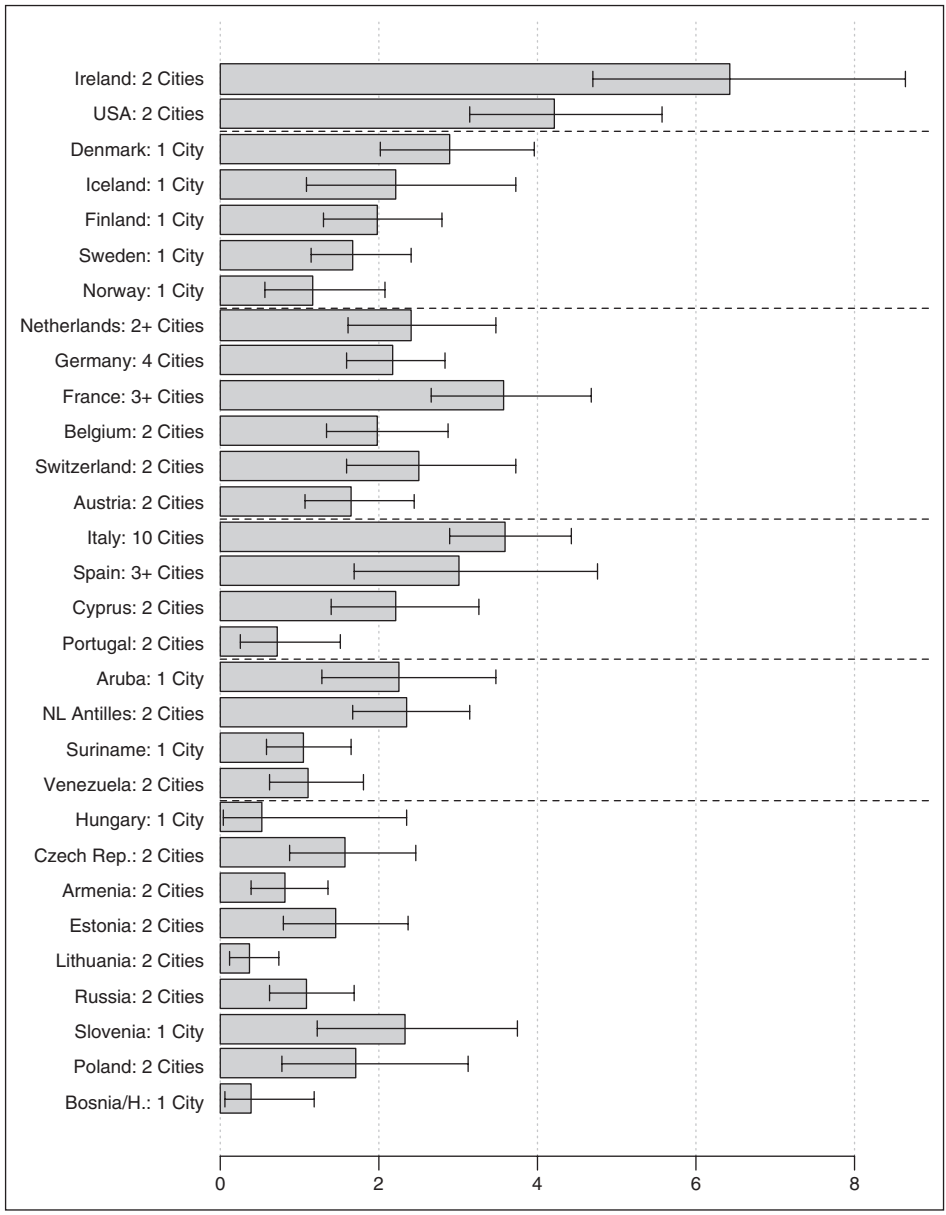

Figure 4. Prevalence rates in % (last year) serious property crime (without bike theft)

Latin American countries and the former socialist countries appear to have rather low involvement in delinquency (i.e. they exhibit a lower level of variety in their delinquent behaviour). The data shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5 suggest that in the former socialist countries, self-reported delinquency, in particular, serious delinquency, is less pronounced than in the other country clusters.

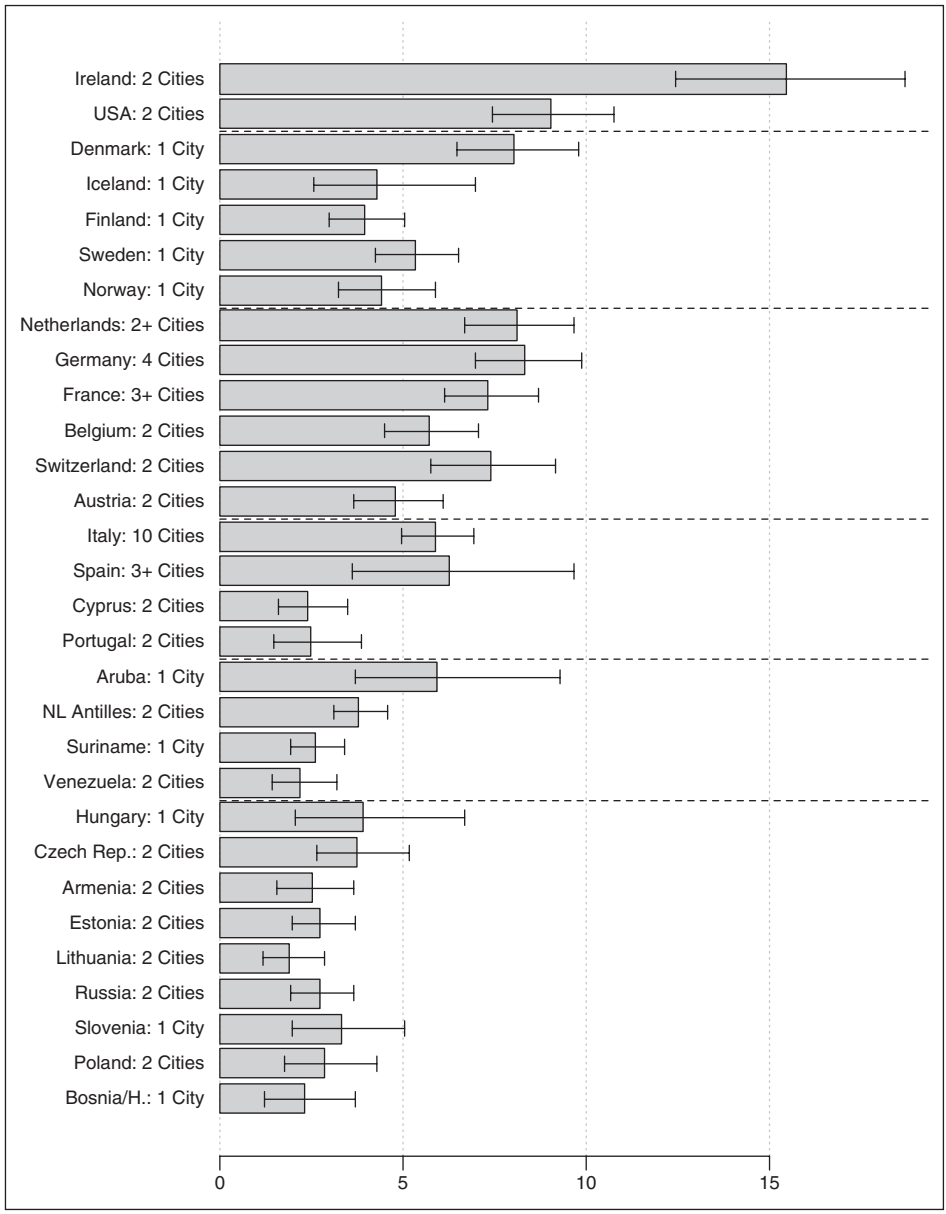

Figure 5. Versatility of self-report delinquency – in % – (at least 3 different offences over the last year)

Victimization experiences

In order to compare the level of criminality in different countries, one should not only use self-reported offending, but also draw on reported victimization experiences. They provide some indirect measure of the extent of criminality in the cities of

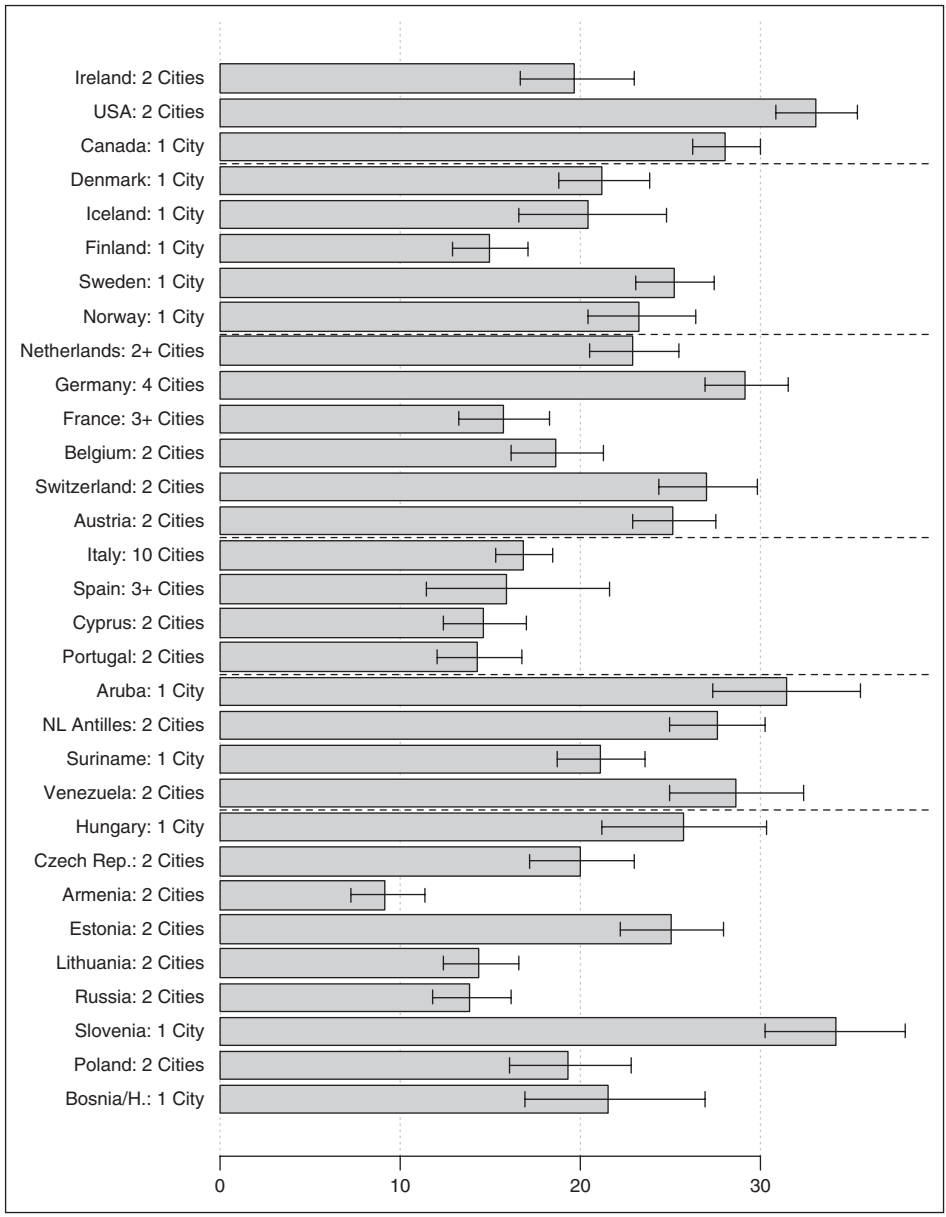

Figure 6. Victimization prevalence rate in % (personal theft last year)

the participating countries and thus may serve as validation of the rank-order of the delinquency prevalence rates (for the questions, see Appendix). When we look at theft (Figure 6), the average prevalence rates in the Latin American and former socialist countries are, despite considerable within-cluster variation, in the range of the Anglo-Saxon, Northern and Western European countries.

In the case of victimization by assault (not shown), the prevalence rates for the Latin American and former socialist countries are slightly higher than for the other country clusters. The highest rates are found in Russia (7.9%), the Netherlands Antilles (7.7%), Estonia (6.8%), Suriname (6.2%), Poland and Germany (both 6.1%), the lowest in Belgium and Lithuania (both 2.8%), Finland (2.4%), Sweden (2.3%), Portugal and Spain (both 1.2%). Despite high rates of self-reported assault, the victimization rate in Ireland (4.0%) is not particularly high. That self-report and victimization data do not perfectly match might be related to the fact that juveniles aged 12–15 may often be victimized by older offenders, and that such patterns vary across countries. Unfortunately, the victimization part of the questionnaire did not include items on the age of the offender.

Comparing ISRD-2 offending and victimization rates with other international data sources

The figures in the previous section show comparative estimates of absolute delinquency and victimisation rates. In this article, we consider the *relative ranking* of countries (and country clusters) with regard to self-reported delinquency and victimization. The validity of several indicators of crime (and police data in particular) has been a controversial topic of debate at the *national* level in several countries for over 20 years (e.g. O'Brien, 1985; Lynch and Addington, 2007; Maguire, 2002; Robert, 2009; Wittebrood and Junger, 2002; Zauberman, 2009), with a growing consensus that there is a reasonable level of convergence between survey and official measures with regard to trends. The same concerns exist – albeit exacerbated because of the added complexity related to legal and cultural variability – when *international* comparisons are made using both official crime data and survey data simultaneously. Therefore, current 'best practice' when using international data sources is to avoid making direct comparisons between absolute figures, but instead use *relative* comparisons (as we have tried to do), or use these data to study *trends*.

Research and debate about issues related to the international comparability of crime data has centred upon official data and victimization data, since self-report studies of offending (such as the ISRD-2) have not been available for a large number of countries so far. In the next section, we explore this issue by making comparisons between selected ICVS, ESB and ISRD-2 *age-specific* and *offence-specific* data. We limit our comparisons to a relatively small number of (mostly) European countries for which the required data are available.

We make two types of comparisons. First, we compare official police data (European Sourcebook, ESB) with self-report data (ISRD-2). Second, we compare data on *victimization* based on either the ICVS or measures of victimization in ISRD-2. We use rank-order-based simple correlation coefficients in combination with visual presentations (scatter plots).

Self-reported and official offending

The European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (ESB) collects standardized data on major offences known to the police. For present purposes, the data from

the upcoming edition were used. They refer to the year 2006, that is to say, the same as for the ISRD-2. The ESB data are following standardized definitions and data collection procedures, although not all countries are able to fully comply with the general format. Data on offences known to the police include robbery, assault, total theft (as a broad category), as well as subcategories of theft of cars and other motor vehicles and burglary. Next to offences reported to, and recorded by, the police, the ESB includes data on offenders known to the police for each offence that is included. Using the percentage (of all offenders) who, at the moment of the act, were minors (below 18), we computed the number of minors per 100,000 in each country that were known to the police as suspects of any included offence.

In order to make ESB and ISRD-2 data as comparable as possible, we had to collapse self-reported offences into categories that came as close as possible to ESB definitions. For example, we combined snatching and robbery/extortion, assuming that both types of violent theft are covered by the concept of robbery (as defined in the ESB format) in most countries. Also, the ISRD-2 variables of car theft, breaking into a car and burglary, were merged into the category of 'serious' property offences in order to be comparable with the ESB category of 'total theft'. In the case of burglary, the ISRD-2 data defines burglary as breaking into a building, whereas the ESB's definition of domestic burglary consists in the 'gaining access to private premises by use of force with the intent to steal goods'.

It should be kept in mind, however, that despite these approximations of comparable offence definitions, not all problems could be eliminated. First, ISRD-2 data have been collected, in most countries, on juveniles in school grades 7 to 9, that is, aged approximately 12 to 15, whereas the ESB category of minors extends to the age of 17 (and does not in all countries include juveniles below 14 or 15). Second, the ESB data on the number of minors as a percentage of all suspects (per 100,000) refers to the general population and not to 100,000 minors. The ISRD-scale is the percentage (i.e. the prevalence rate) of respondents who admitted having committed the particular offences at least once over the last year. Third, the comparison is limited to countries for which data from both sources are available. For Figures 7 to 9, this is about 12 or 13 countries. Fourth, ESB data refer to the national level, whereas ISRD-2 data are for the cities in each country. Keeping these reservations in mind, we present the results on robbery (Figure 7), assault (Figure 8), and theft (Figure 9) using both ESB and ISRD-2 data.

Figure 7 shows differences in the rank ordering of the ISRD-2 prevalence rates and ESB numbers of suspects per 100,000 as well as bivariate outlying countries: Whereas Germany ranks highest on the ISRD-2 measure, it is in the more intermediate range with regard to the ESB measure. Armenia ranks lowest on both measures, whereas Lithuania is an outlier with a rather low ISRD-2 prevalence rate and a rather high ESB measure.

The relative match of ISRD and ESB data on juveniles (minors) as offenders as tested by Spearman's rho is in the medium range[16] (.38), which is mainly due to the outlier Lithuania. If we exclude Lithuania, the strength of the correlation increases (.62). For the time being, no explanation of the surprisingly high rate of minors known as suspects of robbery in Lithuania can be offered.

There are, of course, good reasons why one should not expect a perfect match of the two data sources with respect to robbery. Police data on robbery (as collected in the ESB) include a broad variety of violent thefts, including bank hold-ups and robberies

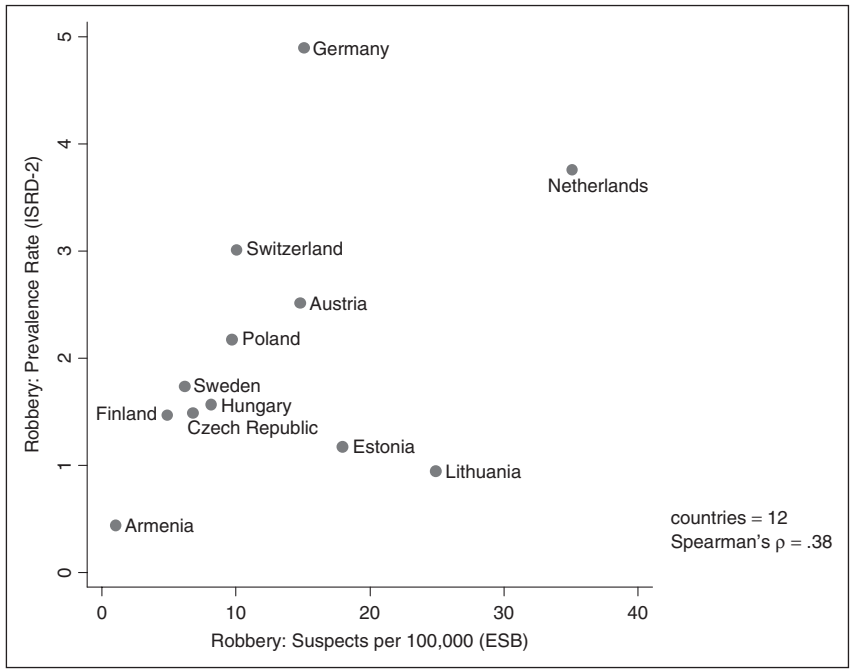

Figure 7. Self-reported robbery (including extortion and snatching) according to the ISRD (prevalence in percent over the last 12 months), and minors known to the police as suspects of robbery (ESB)

committed against commercial premises. Theoretically, ISRD measures would include such incidents also in the category of robbery/extortion, but it is far more likely that such offences, when committed by juveniles aged 12 to 15, will be directed against individuals (often other minors) rather than against commercial targets. Future analyses on ISRD data will assess this.

Assault. Of particular interest is assault as a typical offence of violence. In the present context, we compare the prevalence rate of self-reported acts of assault directed at another person according to the ISRD-2, as a percentage of all respondents, with rates of offenders known to the police as suspects of assault (ESB). It should be kept in mind that the ISRD definition of assault was restricted to cases where the victim needed medical assistance.

Visual inspection of Figure 8 as well as Spearman's rank-order correlation suggest that the match between the two sources is in the medium range (rho = .55). This is rather surprising, given that assault is a broad concept allowing many interpretations that may vary across nations.

Theft. Theft is a very broad category, covering a wide variety of real-life situations. In order to bring the categories from the two data sources as much as possible in line with each other, we have used 'total theft' from the ESB. The ISRD category of 'serious property offences' includes theft of a car, breaking into a car and burglary.

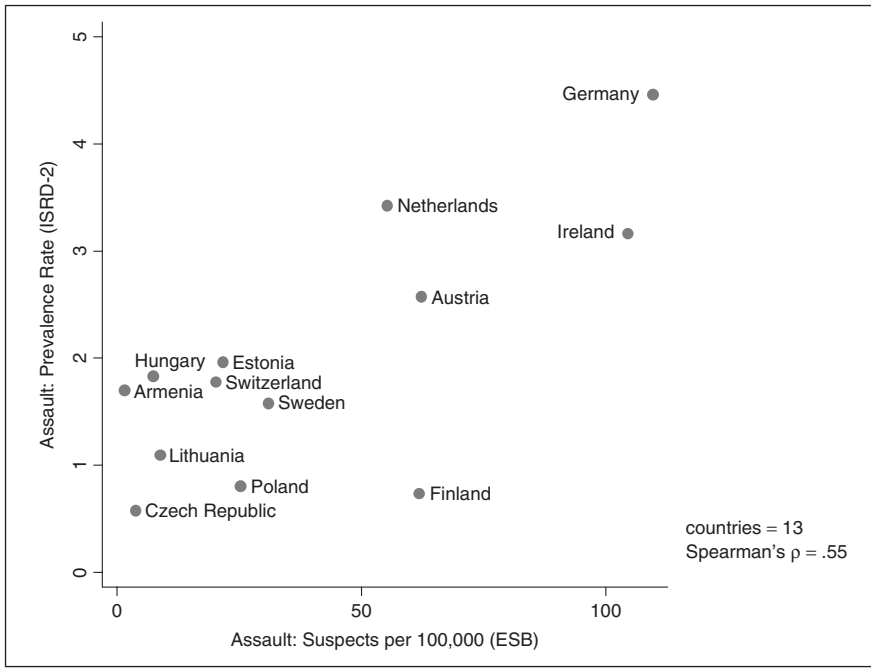

Figure 8. Self-reported assault according to the ISRD (prevalence in percent over the last 12 months), and minors known to the police as suspects of assault (ESB)

With the exception of Ireland with its extreme position on both variables, the other 12 countries shown in Figure 9 are ranked in a relatively consistent way. Including Ireland, Spearman's rho is in the medium range (.59), but the rank-order correlation is slightly reduced if this country is excluded (rho = .48).

For this preliminary exploration, we have looked at only three offence categories, for a limited number of European countries. The results suggest a moderate and consistent (rho ranging between .38 and .59) support for the notion that there is overlap between the level of self-reported offending (for these selected offences) measured by ISRD-2, and the number of suspects brought to the attention of the police (for the same offences) measured by the ESB.

Victimization among young people according to the ISRD and the ICVS

The ISRD has collected data on victimization through robbery, assault and theft.[17] The International Crime Victimisation Survey (ICVS) has also collected data on these offences over many years, the last sweep having taken place in 2005 (van Dijk et al., 2007b). In the ICVS, sample sizes are at least 1000. Often, however, 2000 respondents are interviewed in a growing number of countries. Comparisons with the ISRD can be made for 20 countries (including Canada and the USA this time). Again, however, the match of the age-groups is far from perfect, since the ICVS includes only subjects aged at least 16, whereas the ISRD focused on juveniles aged 12 to 15. The size of the ICVS

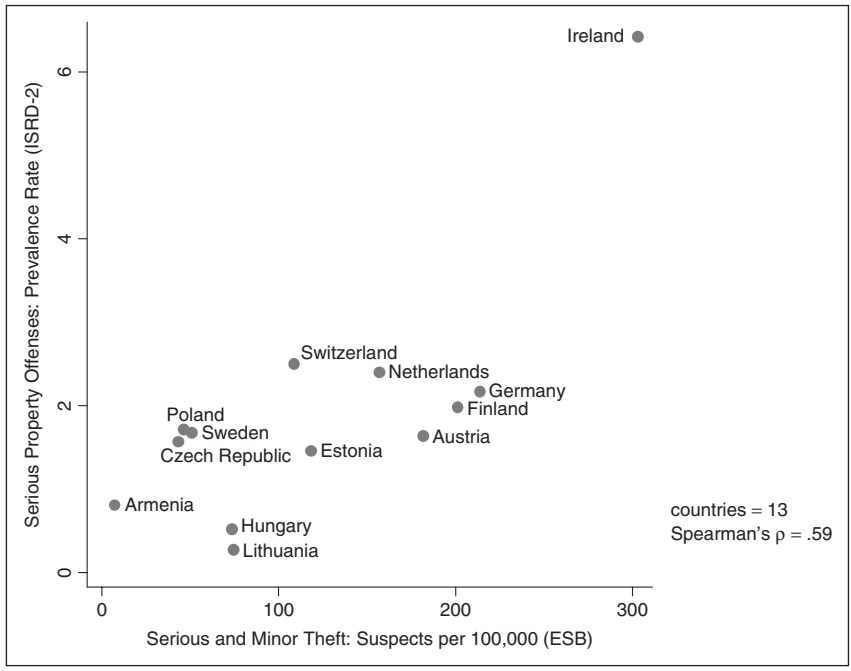

Figure 9. Self-reported rate of serious property offences according to the ISRD (in percent, prevalence over the last 12 months), and minors known to the police as suspects of any kind of theft (ESB)

samples in several countries being generally small, the number of young people (aged 16 to 19) is far too small to allow robust comparisons. We have, therefore, included victimizations experienced over the last five years in order to increase the reliability of national estimates of juvenile victimization. Former studies have shown that national five-year and one-year rates are almost perfectly correlated (van Dijk et al., 1989). Therefore, taking ICVS data referring to five years from 2000 to 2004 should not significantly affect the validity of the comparison with 2005/2006 ISRD one-year victimization rates.[18] Figures 10 (robbery), 11 (assault) and 12 (theft) provide comparative prevalence rates based on ISRD-2 and ICVS. Note that one would expect the ICVS prevalence rates – based on 5 years – to be higher than the ISRD rates based on 12 months. The focus of our comparisons needs to be on the relative rank-ordering of the countries based on these rates, not on their absolute magnitude.

Robbery. Visual inspection of Figure 10 shows that ICVS rates do not vary perfectly with ISRD rates. This is indicated by the moderate rank-order correlation coefficient (rho = .41). There are several possible explanations why these two survey measures are not more narrowly correlated. Possibly, some national ICVS estimates are unreliable, despite the extension of the reference period to five years. In addition, victimization among juveniles depends, in general, very much on their life-style including frequent socializing in public at night-time hours. Countries may differ considerably

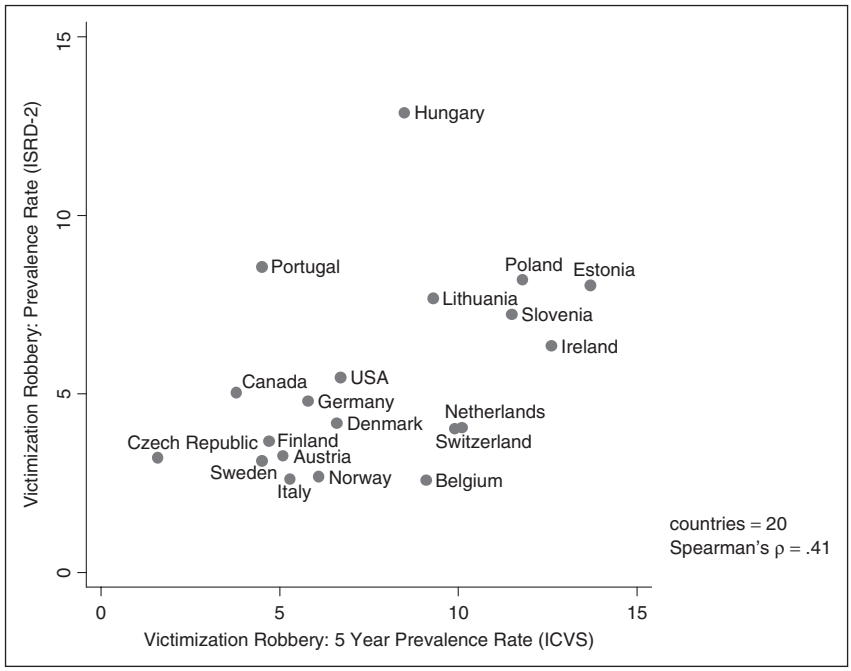

Figure 10. One year victimization rate of robbery experienced by young people aged 12–15 (ISRD) in 2006/2007 and 5 year prevalence rate of robbery experienced by young people aged 16–19 in 2000–2004 (ICVS)

regarding from what age juveniles assume such habits. It is, therefore, not surprising that robbery victimization of school children aged 12–15 is only moderately correlated with robbery experiences among somewhat older young people. This is supported by the fact that in many countries victimization is higher among young people aged 16–19 than among school kids.

Assault. Figure 11 shows predictably that – with the exception of Italy – the ICVS 5-year prevalence rates are consistently higher than the ISRD 12-month prevalence rates. In addition to the fact that the ICVS rates are based on a longer reference period (5 years), this may be because – generally speaking – assaults are far more frequent among young people (16–19) than among school kids (12–15), most likely because of the strong correlation of violent victimizations with going out at night that becomes far more common during later adolescence. Another salient feature of Figure 11 is there seems to be more international variability in the ICVS victimization estimates than in the ISRD assault estimates, something to explore in the future. Important for present purposes, the correlation of ICVS and ISRD measures of assault is weak (rho = .17).

Theft. Figure 12 shows that for four countries (Slovenia, USA, Sweden and Portugal) the 5-year ICVS prevalence rates for theft are clearly lower than the 12-month ISRD-based

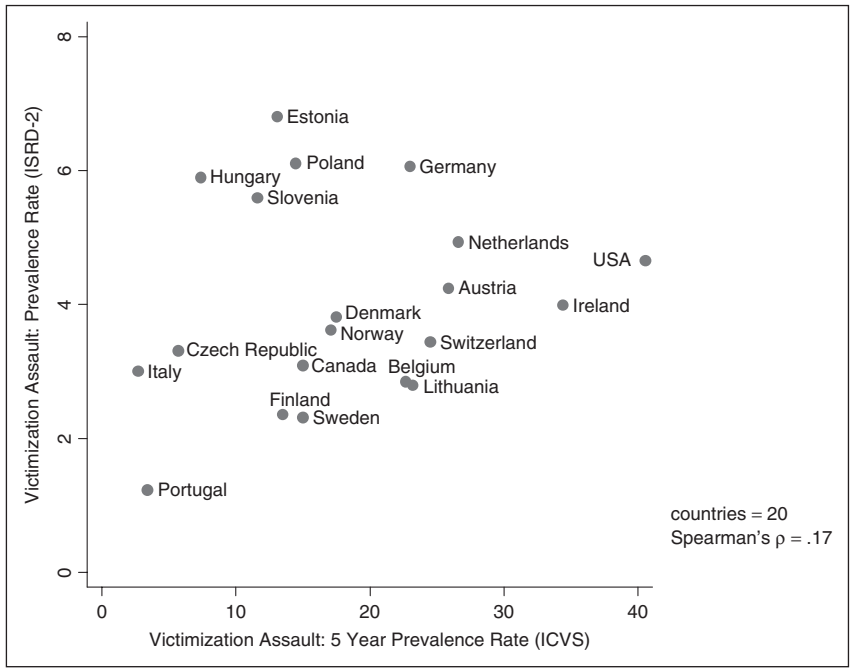

Figure 11. One year victimization rate through assault experienced by young people aged 12–15 (ISRD) in 2005/2006 and 5 year prevalence rate of assault experienced by young people aged 16–19 in 2000–2004 (ICVS)

theft victimization rates. That by itself is a rather curious finding. Be that as it may, and focusing on the relative rank-ordering of the 20 included countries, we can make several additional observations. First, the top and bottom-ranked countries (based on ISRD measures) for theft victimization (Slovenia versus Lithuania and Portugal, respectively) are different than for robbery (Hungary and Italy, respectively, see Figure 10) and assault (Poland and Portugal, respectively, see Figure 11). But this is also true for the ICVS data. Second, the degree of variability between ICVS theft victimization rates is greater than among ISRD theft victimization rates. And third, we do find a moderate association (rho = .34) between the ICVS and ISRD measures of theft victimisation.

Is there any convergence?

The correlations and figures show, overall, a somewhat mixed picture. We find moderate but consistent correlations between data on offenders known to the police (ESB) and ISRD data on self-reported offending, in spite of the differences in operationalization. In view of earlier research (e.g. Hindelang et al., 1979) that has shown frequent and serious self-reported offending is linked to the likelihood of police detection, it is not surprising that we find police statistics – even in a cross-national context – may be a reasonably valid measure of crime.

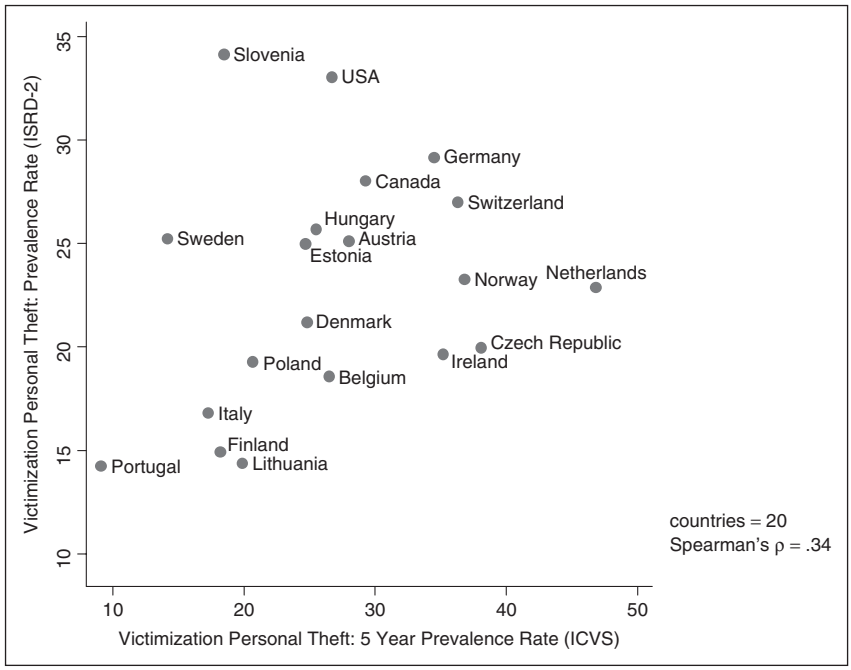

Figure 12. One year victimization rate through theft experienced by juveniles aged 12–15 (ISRD) in 2005/2006 and 5 year prevalence rate of theft of personal items experienced by young people aged 16–19 in 2000–2004 (ICVS)

ICVS and ISRD data on victimization are correlated more weakly. We find a moderate correlation between the two measures for theft and robbery, but a very low correlation for assault. This is rather surprising given that both sources are based on surveys, and that offence definitions match far better between these two surveys than between the ISRD and the ESB. It underlines that the dynamics of victimization may be dependent on lifestyle and general risks young people face in the different countries. Exposure to such risks may not necessarily be similar in different age-groups in different countries. A further factor might be that ISRD-2 data are, for most countries, city-level school surveys, whereas ICVS rates are based on national estimates for all countries.

Discussion

The findings we report in this article are still relatively preliminary and mostly descriptive. However, we are confident that even these preliminary analyses reflect robust findings about international differences and similarities in levels of offending and victimization experiences among 12–15-year olds. Because of the high degree of methodological standardization of the ISRD-2, and the large number of countries represented, the ISRD-2 data promise to provide an important contribution – both substantively and methodologically – to comparative international knowledge on delin-

quency and victimization. Below follow our observations, based on the analyses reported in this article.

First, with respect to *property* offences, prosperity, opportunity structure and surveillance may go a long way in explaining the higher rates in Anglo-Saxon countries and Western Europe as compared to Central and Eastern Europe. However, these same factors are of questionable use when trying to account for the lower levels of post-socialist countries' involvement in *serious violent* crimes. The Mediterranean and Latin American countries occupy an intermediate position with regard to serious property and violent crime, as do the Northern European countries. A similar picture emerges when using *versatility* of offending, with the Anglo-Saxon and Western European countries on top, the post-socialist country cluster at the bottom, and the Latin American and Mediterranean countries in-between, together with the Northern European countries.

Second, our preliminary findings suggest that country clusters based on theoretical and policy-related (rather than regional) criteria provide a promising method to present and interpret the large amount of international data (Smit et al., 2008) that was also successfully applied in the analysis of the results of the First International Delinquency Self-report Study (Junger-Tas et al., 2003). Although there is considerable variation within clusters, the observed differences between the clusters support our belief that this approach is most promising and worthy of continuing exploration.

Third, the partially contradictory trends in self-reported offending and victimization that were shown in the ISRD-2 data are striking. In ex-socialist countries, tighter social control on school children than in Western countries may prevent them from committing more offences, whereas older juveniles may be less controlled and, occasionally, victimize younger juveniles. The willingness to report on one's behaviour candidly may also vary across countries. This is supported by a European alcohol and drug study. Hibell et al. (2004) showed that the rate of respondents saying that they would never report their use of hashish varied between 2% (Finland) and 12% (Lithuania). The hypothesis of differential validity should become a routine empirical dimension for comparative criminological self-report studies (see also Pauwels and Svensson, 2008).

Fourth, our attempts to compare ISRD-2, ICVS and ESB data on three specific offences (robbery/extortion, assault and theft), illustrate, once again, the enormous challenges associated with trying to disentangle – at the international level – the (possible) convergence of different measures of crime. Previous research (Aebi et al., 2002) has shown that police and ICVS data are highly correlated once necessary adjustments are made to match these sources (with respect to offence definitions and counting rules), as in the case of the ESB. If ICVS and ISRD data on robbery, assault and theft victimization are only moderately or not at all (in the case of assault) correlated, this may be due to the fact that ISRD and ICVS data concern different age-groups (12–15 vs. 16–19) and levels (city vs. nations). Beyond this, ICVS data may be more questionable when it comes to assess the extent of victimization among teenagers given the small size of relevant samples and the chronic underrepresentation of this age-group in population surveys. More encouraging is the finding of a moderate and consistent correlation between police data on offenders known to the police (ESB) and ISRD data on self-reported offending (for robbery, assault and theft).

Fifth, beyond all measurement problems, the ISRD-2 data allow analysis of the causes of criminality, and to assess to what extent theories on crime causation hold across nations. Information about life-style, social bonding and control, neighbourhood contexts and other risk factors is, therefore, essential when one wants to examine the causes of delinquency (Junger-Tas and Marshall, 1999). An upcoming publication, based on the analysis of the merged international data set, will focus on the social response to delinquent behaviour, the meaning of the family, the impact of schools and school systems, the meaning of life styles and the influence of the neighbourhood on delinquency and victimization.

Notes

1. See United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and the Operations of the Criminal Justice Systems (CTS) at http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html
2. For an overview of the methodological issues related to the self-report method, see Junger-Tas and Marshall (1999).
3. http://www.espad.org/espad-reports.
4. Although the bulk of the ISRD-2 countries are European, it is important to keep in mind that there are also countries from the American continent involved: Canada, USA, Venezuela, Aruba, Netherlands Antilles and Suriname.
5. The complete questionnaire may be found at our website http://webapp5.rrz.uni-hamburg.de/ISRD/JDEB
6. In the original English version ('Did you ever snatch a purse, bag or something else from a person?') this is clearly a violent offence. Sometimes it was interpreted as pick pocketing; however, most researchers interpreted this offence as a violent offence.
7. An exception is Aruba: Although Oranjestad has less than 100,000 inhabitants it is included because it is the capital city.
8. Spain did not explicitly oversample one large city; however, it is possible to identify a number of cities with a sizeable population within the Spanish data set. Iceland included only 8th grade students in the sample.
9. The Canadian data are not available for all analysis because of reasons of confidentiality; that is why for certain analyses the sample is reduced to 40,678 respondents from 62 cities and 30 countries.
10. Details about the response rates and samples may be found in Junger-Tas et al. (2010).
11. The confidence intervals represent asymmetrical Maximum-Likelihood-Estimates, which take into account design effects (resulting from the interviewing of entire classrooms) as well as the stratification of the sample by grade levels. For Canada no raw data were available because of concerns for the confidentiality of the data; therefore, the confidence intervals for Canada were estimated by averaging the design effects of the other countries.
12. The total prevalence rate of Canada includes arson (prevalence: 3.0%).
13. For Sweden and Finland see Kivivuori (2007, pp. 90ff.); for a summary of more recent German studies, see BMI/BMJ (2006, pp. 393 ff.); Baier et al. (2009).
14. Unusually high prevalence rates for Ireland are not only found in this study, but also in the ICVS conducted in 2005 (Van Dijk et al, 2007b).
15. For example, the prevalence rate of bike theft in Copenhagen is extraordinarily high, which may be explained by the particular culture related to the use of bikes (cp. Kivivuori, 2007).

16. For social science research, it reasonable to accept the following standards: 0.1 to 0.3: weak; 0.3 to 0.7: moderate; 0.7 to 1.0: strong (http://www.dmstat1.com/res/TheCorrelationCoefficientDefined.html)
17. The questionnaire also includes a question on bullying, but this question is not included in this analysis.
18. The ICVS data for Slovenia and Czech Republic are, in Figures 10 to 12, from the 2000 and 1996 sweeps, respectively (no data available for 2005). Since the relative position of countries is hardly changing over time, this should not affect the comparisons made here.

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Appendix

Screening questions to measure self-reported delinquency:

- Did you ever *damage on purpose* something, such as a bus shelter, a window, a car or a seat in the bus or train, a car…?
- Did you ever *steal something* from a shop or department store?
- Did you ever *break into a building* with the purpose to steal something?
- Did you ever *steal a bicycle, moped or scooter?*
- Did you ever *steal a motorbike or car*?
- Did you ever *steal something out or from a car***?**
- Did you ever *snatch a purse, bag or something else from a person*?
- Did you ever *carry a weapon*, such as a stick, knife or chain (not a pocket knife)?
- Did you ever *threaten somebody* with a weapon or to beat them up, just to get money or other things from them?
- Did you ever *participate in a group fight* on the school play ground, a football stadium, the streets or any public place?
- Did you ever *intentionally beat up someone, or hurt him* with a stick or knife, so bad that he had to see a doctor?
- Did you ever *sell any (soft or hard) drugs* or act as an intermediary?

Screening questions for victimization experience:

Thinking over the last 12 months, did any of the following happen to you:

- Someone wanted you to give him/her money or something else (watch, shoes, mobile phone) and threatened you if you did not do it?
- Someone hit you violently or hurt you so much that you needed to see a doctor?
- Something was stolen from you (such as a book, money, mobile phone, sports equipment, bicycle . . .)?

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