This section contains a selection of abstracts of reports and articles on the central topic of this issue. The aim of publishing these short summaries is to generate and disseminate additional information. Most of the articles have been published in other journals in the English language, although we aim to incorporate French, Dutch or German literature on the subject. General information on criminal policy and research in Europe can be supplied by the WODC Documentation Service (infodesk@wodc.minjust.nl). Single copies of the articles can (when used for individual study or education) be provided by the WODC Documentation Service.


The police statistics published annually by the French Ministry of the Interior are often commented upon in terms of trends in crime. Now that other sources, such as victimisation surveys and statistics on the work of public prosecutors’ offices, are available, it has become clear that these figures only cover a fraction of the offences susceptible of being recorded, and at the same time, that the specific counting methods used for police statistics make it difficult to compare them with other sources. This article offers an overview of how these counts are developed and interpreted, rather than a detailed analysis of the statistics produced.


The assessment of trends in crime and criminal justice has been a permanent concern of the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC). In 1993 a group of specialist was created to discuss ‘Trends in crime and criminal justice: statistics and other quantitative data on crime and criminal justice system’. In 1995 a draft model of the European Sourcebook was published. The data in this publication cover the 1990–1996 period. The information was gathered by use of a questionnaire in the summer of 1997. Each chapter is divided into four sections: general comments; tables; technical information and sources. The Sourcebook itself is divided into five chapters: police data, prosecution statistics, conviction statistics, correctional statistics and survey data.


The fifth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (1990–1994) elicited responses from nearly all European countries, the United States and Canada. Due to the manner in which various nations gather and analyse statistics, and the ensuing difficulty in comparing that data, a five-year lapse from data collection to initial conclusions in international work is considered excellent.

This report is the result of an analysis of European and North American national responses to the Fifth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operation of Criminal Justice Systems (1990–1994). The working group has supplemented the responses with a large amount of other data, in particular the data emerging from the mammoth International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS). This volume provides a national perspective on the data. It contains profiles of 51 criminal justice systems in Europe and North America. Each basic profile contains three parts. Part one provides background information on the structure and development of the criminal justice system. Part two provides a basic set of data: selected data on victimisation, offences reported to the police, sanctions imposed by the courts, prison population, and personnel and resources. Part three is an attempt to see how various demographic, economic and social factors can help to explain some of the differences and patterns detected in crime trends and the operation of criminal justice.


This is the 26th annual Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics. It brings together in a single volume American nation-wide data of interest to the criminal justice community. The book has the following sections: characteristics of the criminal justice systems; public attitudes toward crime and criminal justice-related topics; nature and distribution of known offences; characteristics and distribution of persons arrested; judicial processing of defendants; and persons under correctional supervision.


Initiated in 1972, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is an annual sample survey of households in the United States conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). All household members age 12 or over, or approximately 94,000 residents, are interviewed twice a year about incidents in which they were the victims of a crime during the previous six months. Intended for an audience that is not trained in statistics, this report presents statistical information in a non-technical format by using graphical displays of violent crime trends which include the degree of precision of these estimates. In addition, it discusses sampling; statistical significance; precision in the NCVS estimates; statistical inference; and sample size and precision.


The International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) is the most far-reaching programme of fully standardised sample surveys to look at householders’ experience of crime in different