



# Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

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**Opening of the Congress**

## State of crime and criminal justice worldwide

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

In its resolution 64/180, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in accordance with past practice, to prepare an overview of the state of crime and criminal justice worldwide for presentation at the Twelfth Congress. The present report contains a description of crime trends and developments since the Eleventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Bangkok from 18 to 25 April 2005. Preliminary findings from the Eleventh United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems are presented, together with information from other national and international sources of data and statistics on crime and criminal justice, as well as main findings from population-based surveys of crime and corruption.

\* A/CONF.213/1.



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## I. Introduction and recent developments

1. Trends in crime and criminal justice have been mixed over the last five years. While certain forms of conventional crime have seen sustained decreases in developed countries, others — including some long-forgotten forms of crime — have emerged or re-emerged and shown significant increases. Until recently, for example, piracy was a rare phenomenon, better known from history books than newspapers. Twenty-first century piracy, however, has taken place in the South China Sea and in the Malacca Straits. Attacks peaked and then dropped again in the first half of the decade. Further dramatic increases in attacks by pirates between 2007 and 2009 off the coast of Somalia have resulted in over 140 incidents in Somalia and the Gulf of Aden in the first half of 2009 alone.<sup>1</sup> The aim of these attacks differ from those seen in other parts of the world, as the intent is to acquire a vessel and hostages for ransom, not to steal the ship and its cargo.

2. Piracy for ransom is a form of kidnapping, as it involves the unlawful detention of one or more persons against their will. On land, acts of kidnapping are becoming more common in many countries in the Americas. Police-recorded acts of kidnapping in one Central American country increased fourfold between 2003 and 2008. Underlying causes of kidnapping in this region may be linked in particular to developments in the traffic in narcotic drugs. Inter-cartel feuding and a sustained decline in the demand for cocaine in North America may be leading criminal groups to kidnapping either for monetary gain or for other ends.

3. Furthermore, in a number of countries, the trade in illicit drugs is responsible for a significant proportion of intentional homicides. In one country in the Americas, the proportion of drug-related homicides climbed to almost 45 per cent of total homicides in the year 2008, from under 25 per cent in 2007. In general, drug-related crime has been increasing, to the extent that in 19 countries for which long-term data series exist, it almost doubled between 1995 and 2008.

4. Some indications on general trends in crime may be obtained by using homicide trends as a proxy. Indeed, rates of homicide generally reflect corresponding levels of non-conflict violence and homicide data do not suffer from the well-known difficulties of under-reporting that other crime statistics suffer from. Although homicide rates in a few countries (particularly those linked with the trade in illicit drugs) have shown increases over the past decade, most countries have seen overall declines in homicide rates over the past five years. The pattern is marked in subregions in Europe, but also in South America, East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia.

5. Not only homicides, but also property crimes have decreased in some countries (primarily in Western, Central and Eastern Europe). Police-recorded burglary and motor vehicle theft almost halved between 1995 and 2008. One possible explanation for this may be linked to increased deterrent initiatives, such as improved household and vehicle security (“target hardening”).

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<sup>1</sup> International Maritime Bureau of the International Chamber of Commerce, *Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships* – Report for the Period 1 January-30 June 2008, January 2009 and ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships* – Report for the Period 1 January-30 June 2009, July 2009.

6. The present report presents an overview of international trends and data in crime and criminal justice. The context of and priorities related to the measurement of crime are described, followed by summaries of available data on intentional homicide, conventional crime, drug-related crime, trafficking in persons and corruption, as well as on the performance of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions. Most of the data presented in the present report are derived from responses to the annual United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Results from the United Nations Survey are published annually, by country, on the website of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)<sup>2</sup> and have been presented regularly at the United Nations congresses on crime prevention and criminal justice.<sup>3</sup> The data are analysed by UNODC with assistance from the institutes of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network, in particular the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations.<sup>4</sup> The information contained in the present report is also derived from relevant UNODC studies published during the period 2005-2010.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Context and priorities

7. The term “crime” describes many different forms of illegal behaviour. In addition, laws in different countries prohibit a vast range of different actions, to varying extents. Some crimes can be considered a highly local phenomenon while others have a much more extensive impact, affecting several countries.

8. The day-to-day incidents of crime experienced by many people — such as robbery, burglary, assault and theft — may seem to be largely an urban phenomenon driven by local factors. Urban planning, crime prevention and police action may all appear to play an important role in decreasing the risk of crime victimization. Nevertheless, petty or conventional crimes may differ significantly between districts in a single city. The proximity of perpetrators to their victims, the vulnerability of targets of crime, the availability of firearms and drugs, the presence of gangs, the population density and the pressures and tensions on a certain community all contribute to an increased risk of insecurity and crime.

9. At the other end of the spectrum are forms of transnational organized crime, including trafficking in goods and persons, that can involve extended cross-national networks. Transnational organized crime is facilitated by corruption at many levels, often manifests itself in acts of extreme violence, generally between rival groups,

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems is available from [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html).

<sup>3</sup> Reports were submitted at the Seventh Congress (A/CONF.121/18 and Corr.1), the Eighth Congress (A/CONF.144/6), the Ninth Congress (A/CONF.169/15 and Add.1), the Tenth Congress (A/CONF.187/5) and the Eleventh Congress (A/CONF.203/3).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Kauko Aromaa and Markku Heiskanen, eds., *Crime and Criminal Justice Systems in Europe and North America: 1995-2004*, HEUNI Publication Series, No. 55 (Helsinki, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2009) and the *Transnational Trafficking and Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment* (2009), as well as a threat assessment on transnational organized crime (forthcoming).

and is mostly limited to the areas in which the organized crime groups operate. Most people may feel that they have never come into direct contact with these types of criminal elements, but the links between organized and petty or conventional crime are close. Crimes such as burglary, robbery and assault frequently become part of the modus operandi of groups involved in transnational organized crime, heavily affecting the lives of victims. Indeed, crime represents one of the most serious causes of disability. In some countries, interpersonal violence is as frequent a cause of disability as road traffic accidents.<sup>6</sup> The overall impact of organized crime is felt ultimately in terms of its net effects, which include drug addiction, a weak rule of law, instability, serious economic losses, poverty and, in some cases, environmental degradation.

10. Progress in getting an accurate picture of crime in the world requires the development of statistics and research that reveal the nature and extent of both conventional crime and organized, transnational or complex crimes. In principle, there are better definitions of “transnational organized crime” than there are of “conventional” or “volume” crime. Whereas international instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime reflect consensus on the core elements of organized crime (see the definition of “organized criminal group” in art. 2 (a)), no equivalent definition exists at the international level for acts such as burglary, robbery and assault, which are clearly defined in domestic criminal law.

11. The different nature of these types of crime requires different approaches. Tools for measuring conventional crime include police-recorded crime statistics and victimization surveys. In addition to criminal justice statistics, promising alternative approaches for measuring the nature and extent of transnational organized crime involve the estimation of flows and market values of specific illicit markets in which organized crime groups operate.<sup>7</sup> This can be achieved by looking at data on seizures and detection: each new element helps to give a clearer view of the overall picture.

12. Specific priorities for measuring crime can be further identified, for example, with regard to data on specific types of organized crime (such as trafficking in persons) and to intentional homicide, conventional crime and corruption, as well as to data on the operations of criminal justice systems. In addition, emerging types of crime such as cybercrime require the development of statistics on reported offences, prosecutions and convictions. While revenues from cybercrime are significant and increasing, data remain limited, in particular at the regional and international levels.

13. Data on trafficking in persons have received considerable attention over the past few years. While criminal justice data alone can give some idea about the profiles of offenders and victims, as well as about source and destination countries, they cannot easily give a sense of the scale of human trafficking flows. The number of cases recorded by the police is highly dependent on the extent of law enforcement activities and counter-trafficking operations. A combined approach to

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<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization, disease and injury country estimates, available from [www.who.int/healthinfo/global\\_burden\\_disease/estimates\\_country/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates_country/en/index.html).

<sup>7</sup> See for example, the UNODC study *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*.

collecting data is needed, covering investigations, prosecutions, convictions, identified victims, sheltered victims and market-based measures.

14. With respect to conventional crime, violent acts are those that perhaps have the greatest potential to negatively affect human, social, political and economic development. As set out in the Secretary-General's report on promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence, when associated with large-scale criminal activity, armed violence can undermine State institutions, spread fear and insecurity and contribute to a climate of impunity (A/64/228, para. 2). As a result, the development of better information on crime involving armed violence should receive particular attention, both at the national and international levels. Due to their particular importance, drug-related crimes and drug trafficking also deserve special attention and the collection of accurate relevant information is considered a priority.<sup>8</sup>

15. Increased information on the nature and extent of corruption is crucial to understanding the pervasive effect on economies and the rule of law of this particular form of crime. UNODC supports the development of a package of surveys capable of providing information on the experience and perception of corruption, risk factors, modalities and attitudes on integrity. Such surveys may be targeted to the general population, to the business sector, to civil servants or to specific government institutions, such as those in the justice sector.

16. Data for measuring the effectiveness of the criminal justice system are also needed. Many forms of crime, including violent crime, tend not to be reported to the police. This results in the what is known as the "dark figure" of crime, in other words the difference between the number of cases of crime recorded by the police and the actual number of cases of victimization. Data from the International Crime Victim Survey on the number of incidents of assault with weapons reported by victims to the police, for example, show significant regional differences. Some 30 per cent of victims surveyed in countries in South America stated that they had reported this offence to the police, as compared with 48 per cent in Western and Central Europe.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, in East Africa, where about 31 per cent of victims of assault with a weapon reported the offence to the police, a further 23 per cent stated that they reported the offence to another authority.

17. Crime victimization surveys offer an important tool not only for obtaining prevalence estimates for victimization, by type of crime, but also for understanding perceptions and levels of trust in law enforcement and criminal justice authorities. Cross-nationally comparable crime victimization survey instruments, adapted to local needs, have highlighted that there are many reasons why victims do not report crimes. For example, in some cases victims do not view the offence as serious enough or manage to solve the situation themselves. However, low levels of reporting may be symptomatic in some countries of distrust or even fear of law enforcement authorities. Where victims turn to authorities other than the police, the

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<sup>8</sup> See Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/12, entitled "Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data to monitor the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem".

<sup>9</sup> UNODC calculation using data from the International Crime Victim Survey conducted in urban areas in 74 countries.

role of these authorities, such as village elders or tribunals, must be considered in the broader crime prevention context.

### III. International crime trends

#### A. Homicide

18. The intentional killing of a person by another (intentional homicide) represents the most serious type of violent crime. Recent attention on the issue of armed violence and the growing importance of homicide as an indicator of such violence has resulted in increased efforts to improve statistics at the international, regional and national levels.<sup>10</sup> UNODC, in particular, has placed emphasis on improving the availability and quality of statistics on homicides. UNODC estimates suggest that approximately 490,000 deaths from intentional homicide occurred in 2004, with a world average homicide rate in 2004 of 7.6 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.<sup>11</sup> As the majority of such killings involve the use of some form of weapon, statistics on intentional homicide not only provide information on levels of non-conflict violent deaths, but are also of value as a proxy for overall levels of armed violence.

19. The line between violent deaths that occur in armed conflict and those that can be labelled “crime” is often blurred. However, acts that are likely to be recorded by law enforcement and criminal justice institutions as intentional homicide can take place in a wide range of contexts, including the home or other family, social or domestic settings, in the course of a burglary, theft or robbery, or in the course of gang-related, organized or drug-related crime. The seriousness of the offence means that homicides are usually processed by both the medical and the criminal justice system, creating two potential sources of administrative statistics. In line with its mandate to work with national criminal justice systems, UNODC focuses on criminal justice data supported, where relevant, by public health data.<sup>12</sup>

20. While the data produced by these sources tend to mirror one another in much of the world, data on violent deaths from public health and police or criminal justice institutions measure subtly different phenomena and are unlikely to provide identical numbers. In order to show global homicide levels in as complete a way as possible, the average homicide rate in countries for the latest available year, organized by subregion according to both criminal justice and public health sources, is presented in figure I.

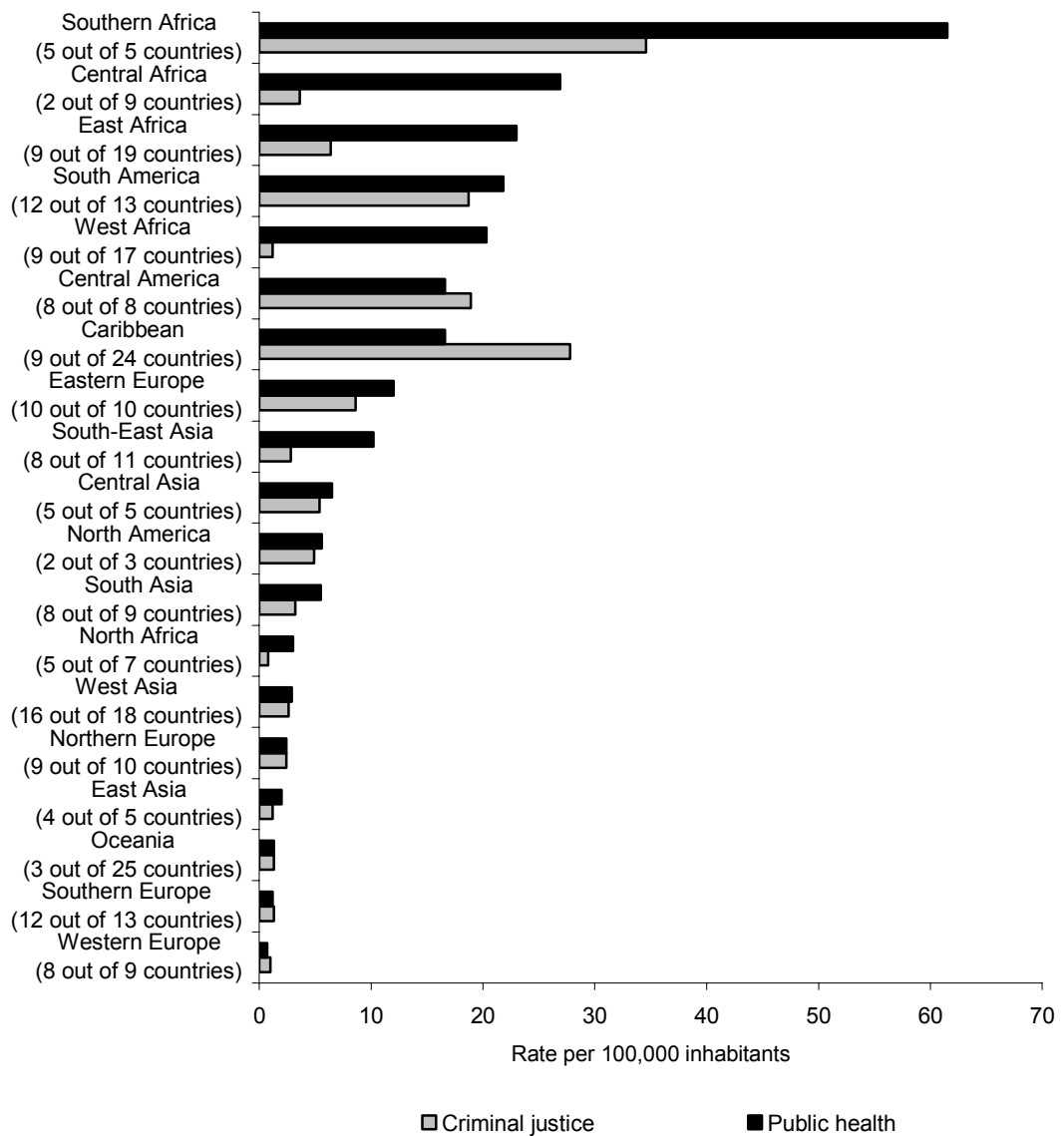
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<sup>10</sup> See: report of the Secretary-General entitled “Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence” (A/64/228); Geneva Declaration Secretariat, *Global Burden of Armed Violence* (Geneva, 2008), available from [www.genevadeclaration.org](http://www.genevadeclaration.org).

<sup>11</sup> UNODC elaboration of homicide statistics published in *Global Burden of Armed Violence* (see footnote 8), p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> See [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/ihs.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/ihs.html).

Figure I  
**Rate of intentional homicides by subregion, latest available year, criminal justice and public health data**



21. The rates presented in figure I correspond to the average of a limited set of countries in each subregion (144 countries in total) in which at least one criminal justice and public health value for intentional homicide are available for the period 2003-2008. The range of countries for which data are available for each source alone is somewhat greater. Average rates calculated on this wider set of countries would be different.

22. Overall, figure I shows comparatively low homicide levels in countries in Europe, Asia and North America, with reasonable agreement between criminal justice and public health data. In contrast, both criminal justice and public health data (albeit with less agreement) indicate significantly higher homicide rates in South America, Central America, the Caribbean and Southern Africa. Large data discrepancies remain for Central, West and East Africa. Substantive work on administrative data recording systems in both the criminal justice and public health fields is required in these subregions before meaningful comparisons can be made with other subregions of the world.

23. Figure I also reveals the continued existence of significant data limitations. In particular, very few countries in Central, West and East Africa are able to provide criminal justice data on intentional homicide. Where data are available, significant differences exist between criminal justice and public health figures. For nine countries in West Africa, for example, the public health average rate is 10 times that of the average criminal justice rate. Information on mortality is not available for the majority of countries in Africa and public health values for those countries are derived from estimates using cause-of-death models.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it is likely that law enforcement and criminal justice institutions in these countries significantly underestimate the levels of violent deaths. This can be due to many factors, including limitations in the capacity of police and law enforcement agencies to identify and record homicides.

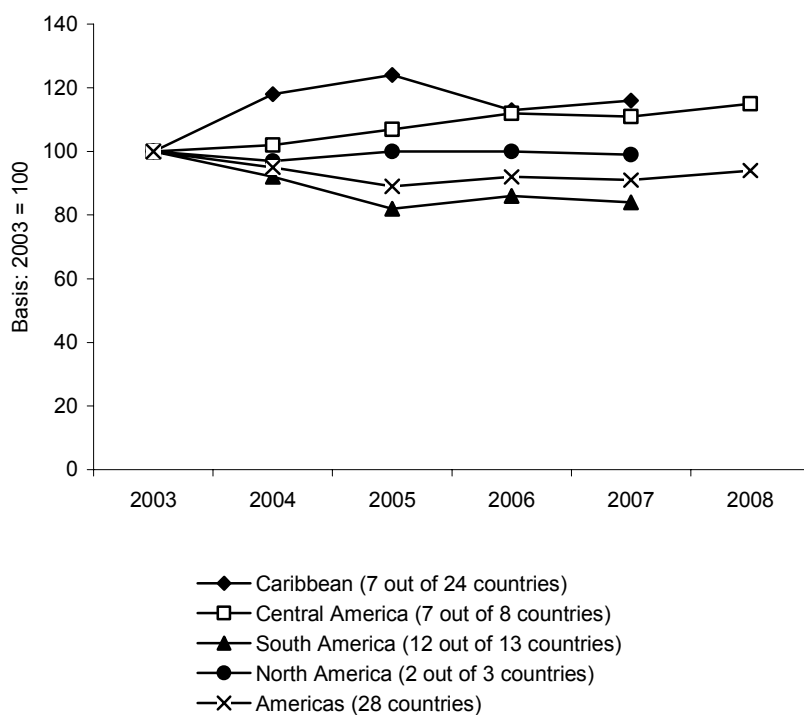
24. In countries in Central America and the Caribbean, the average rate of intentional homicide reported by criminal justice institutions is higher than that reported by public health institutions. This may be due to a number of factors. The dataset used in figure I relies primarily on national data for countries in Central America and the Caribbean. Data published by national authorities may be less comparable than that collected through cross-national initiatives, such as the United Nations Survey, which make use of standard definitions and metadata. With respect to the public health data, some countries in these regions have incomplete death registration data, which might result in the underestimation of violent deaths. Finally, as shown in figure II, homicide rates in a number of countries in Central America and the Caribbean have increased in recent years. Criminal justice data for countries in these subregions correspond to more recent years (mostly 2007 and 2008) than public health data (mostly the period 2003-2006). A combination of these factors may explain the pattern observed.

25. Increased availability of criminal justice data on intentional homicide allows the calculation of yearly trend data for some 88 countries in the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania. While many countries have a value for at least one recent year available, far fewer are able to report a consistent time series, which is why fewer countries are included in figure I than in figure II. Figures II, III and IV show average intentional homicide rates in these 88 countries, by subregion. Overall averages for countries in the Americas, Asia and Oceania, and Europe are also shown.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the “levels of evidence” provided by the World Health Organization in *The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 Update* (Geneva, 2008). Available at [www.who.int/evidence/bod](http://www.who.int/evidence/bod).

Figure II  
**Average intentional homicide rates for countries in the Americas, 2003-2008**



*Note:* Weighted average of homicide rates in countries consistently reporting such crime for the entire period 2003-2008, using the United Nations Survey questionnaire.

Figure III  
**Average intentional homicide rates for countries in Asia and Oceania, 2003-2008**

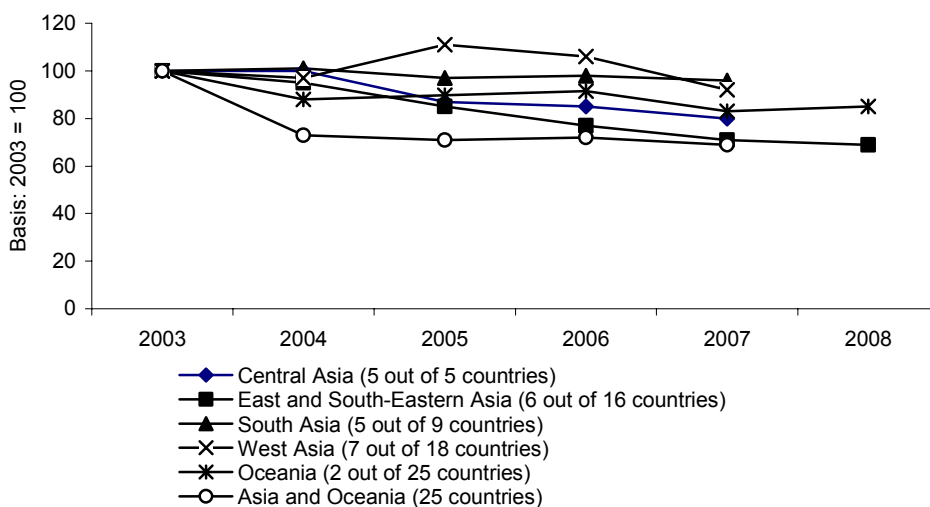
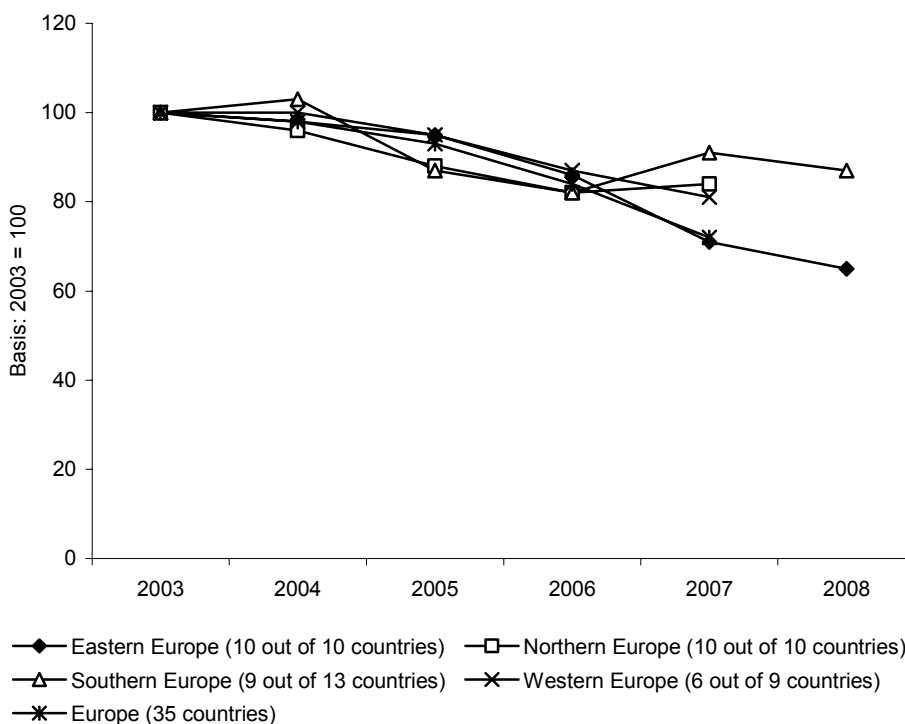


Figure IV  
**Average intentional homicide rates for countries in Europe, 2003-2008**



26. At the regional level, average intentional homicide rates recorded by criminal justice institutions decreased during the period 2003-2008 for counties in Asia, Oceania and Europe. They stayed largely constant for countries in the Americas. At the subregional level, however, Central America and the Caribbean, which already had high homicide rates, showed average increases over time. Nonetheless, subregional rates in general changed reasonably slowly and did not exhibit unpredictably large increases or decreases from year to year.

27. At the national level, countries in Central America and the Caribbean such as Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) have shown significant increases in homicide rates in recent years. According to police statistics, the homicide rate in Honduras, for example, approximately doubled between 2004 and 2008. Increases in homicide rates in Central America and the Caribbean may be linked to homicide associated with gangs, drugs or organized crime. The drug trade fuels crime in numerous ways: through violence linked to trafficking, by normalizing illegal behaviour, by diverting criminal justice resources from other activities and, importantly with respect to homicide, by contributing to the widespread availability of firearms.

28. In contrast, subregions with lower homicide rates also tend to be those that show either stable or gradually decreasing homicide rates over time. Countries in Central Asia and in Eastern and Western Europe show consistently decreasing rates during the period 2003-2008. Although this is encouraging, continued and concerted action to prevent crime is required to maintain low and decreasing homicide rates. At the national level, a number of countries in Europe, including Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova, showed a noticeable increase in police-recorded intentional homicide rates from 2007 to 2008.

29. Although firearms are not the only weapons used in homicide, their availability can be a key factor in increasing levels of armed violence and homicide rates. Subregions with high homicide rates tend to be among those where a high percentage of homicides are committed with firearms. Available data from 44 countries indicate that the percentage of homicides committed with firearms varies from 19 per cent in Western and Central Europe to around 77 per cent in Central America.<sup>14</sup> Although a number of interpretations may be given to the data, such as the effect of gun control laws and differing availability of firearms, the results must be interpreted with caution. Countries operate different recording systems and may inaccurately record the number of homicides committed with firearms. This may be the result of limited criminal justice statistics-gathering capacity or factual difficulties in identifying the cause of death.

## **B. Conventional crime**

30. Due to its seriousness, intentional homicide tends to be one of the crimes that is most effectively recorded by law enforcement institutions. As crime victimization survey results show, however, police-recorded data on other forms of conventional crime cannot generally be taken as representative of underlying crime rates.

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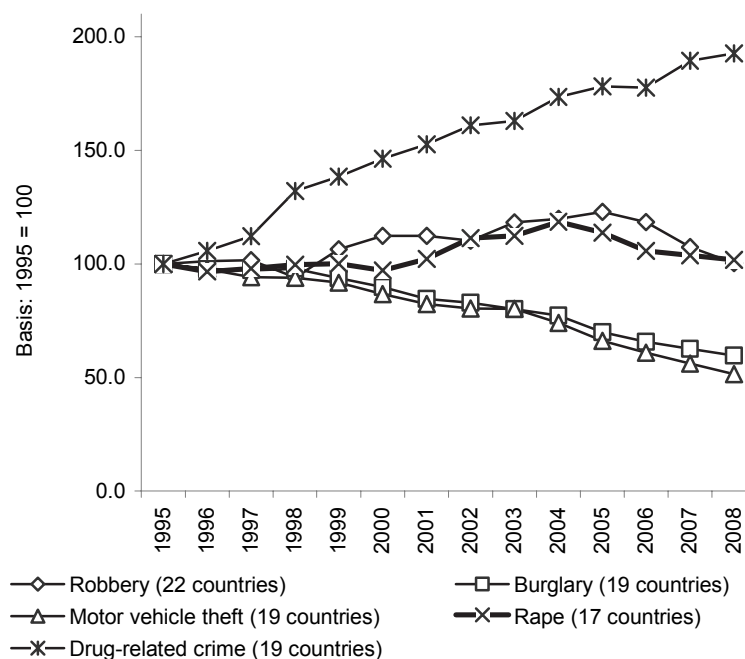
<sup>14</sup> UNODC elaboration of data collected through the United Nations Survey published in *The Global Burden of Armed Violence* (see footnote 8), p.75.

Nonetheless, while crime rates derived from law enforcement data may not represent the full extent of criminal acts, changes over time may be more accurately followed. Even trends monitoring, however, is dependent upon the maintenance over time of equivalent police-recording systems within a country.

31. Monitoring trends over the long term requires consistent periodic reporting by Member States. Over a period of 15 years, the number of Member States for which annual data on forms of conventional crime is available is comparatively small, and most reporting countries are located in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite this limited subset of countries, analysis of data on property crime, violent crime and drug-related crime at the national level shows a clear picture.

Figure V

**Trends in conventional types of crime in countries for which long-term trend data are available**



32. Figure V shows a clear decreasing trend in property-related crime (burglary and motor vehicle theft) over the period 1995-2008. In contrast, over the same period, police-recorded drug-related crime almost doubled. Violent crime (robbery and rape) increased slightly up until 2004, but by 2008 returned to approximately the same levels recorded in 1995. As discussed further in the section on drug-related crime (paras. 35-37), it is difficult to know whether increases in drug-related crime are due to a greater law enforcement emphasis on this type of crime or to real increases in drug-related activity. While it is likely that drug-related crime has received significantly more attention by law enforcement institutions in the last decade, data on drug demand show a rising demand for cocaine in countries in

Europe (including countries used in figure V) from the late 1990s until around 2007.<sup>15</sup>

33. One explanation for the consistent decline in burglary and motor vehicle theft may be due to “target hardening”. The countries included in figure V are primarily developed countries where stronger locks, security lighting and, in the case of motor vehicles, road-side security cameras and tracking systems have been introduced over the past decade. In many countries, banks and post offices have also reduced their vulnerability through increased protection. Such measures are not applicable to violent crimes such as individual robbery or rape, which increased in certain years but remained largely constant over the whole 15-year period. However, increased levels of police-recorded rape should be interpreted with caution. Reports of rape to the police may be as much dependent upon levels of trust in the police and education of the victim concerning the nature of the crime as they are on underlying crime levels.

### C. Drug-related crime

34. Crime recorded by law enforcement agencies may be directly or indirectly related to drugs. A proportion of crimes such as robbery, theft, assault and burglary are driven by underlying factors such as drug use. However, from a statistical point of view, the extent to which drug use is responsible for such crimes is not easily captured and rarely forms part of official reports. On the other hand, law enforcement agencies in most countries produce and retain information on drug offences. These can be broken into two broad categories: “drug-related crime, possession or abuse”, which corresponds more closely to personal use offences, and “drug trafficking”, which deals with the sale of certain illicit substances.

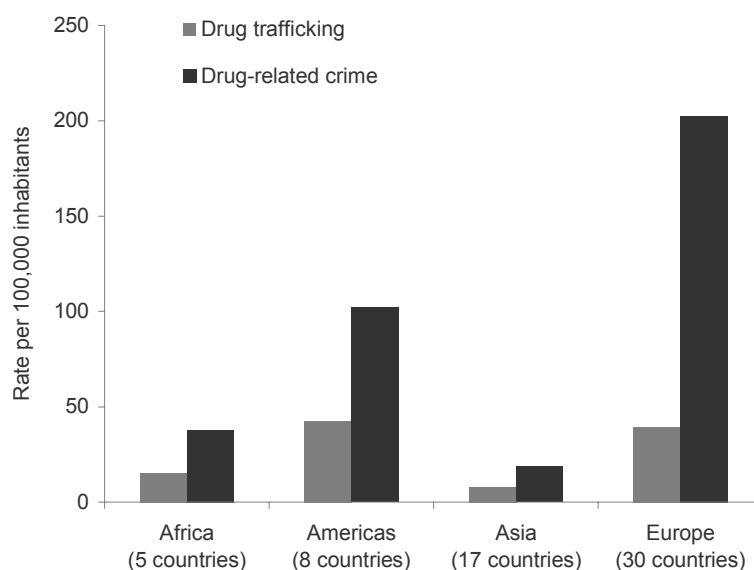
35. Through the annual United Nations Survey, data from Member States are collected both on “drug-related crime, possession or abuse” and “drug trafficking”. Some 60 countries have provided responses to the United Nations Survey question on drug-related crime and to the question on drug trafficking, defined as drug offences that are not connected with personal use. Figure VI shows average rates for both types of crime, by region, as reported through the Tenth and Eleventh surveys. Rates of police-recorded drug trafficking offences are reasonably comparable across regions, probably because of the restricted definition of this crime.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, recorded drug-related offences show significantly greater variability between regions. The number of drug-related offences recorded may be more heavily affected by variations in national definitions and law enforcement priorities and by different approaches to case recording.

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.XI.12).

<sup>16</sup> For the Tenth United Nations Survey, for example, nearly 70 per cent of countries that provided data on drug trafficking also reported that the definition provided in the Survey was consistent with that applied in the country.

Figure VI  
**Police-recorded drug-related crime and drug trafficking by region, 2008 or latest available year**



36. With respect to trends in drug-related crime and drug trafficking, most of the countries reporting to UNODC indicated an increase in such crimes in recent years. Combined data from the United Nations Survey and the UNODC annual reports questionnaire indicate that some 62 per cent of countries showed an increase in possession offences and 56 per cent of countries showed an increase in drug trafficking offences.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it remains difficult to say whether this trend is the result of a growing problem or increased enforcement activity. Of those countries that showed an increase in drug trafficking offences, almost 70 per cent showed an increase in possession offences. This strong association suggests that these increases may be driven by strengthened drug law enforcement rather than by changes in the drug situation.

#### D. Trafficking in persons

37. In its Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, UNODC found that over 21,400 victims of human trafficking had been identified among the 111 countries that reported victim data for the year 2006. Human trafficking is not, however, a crime for which offenders are often prosecuted. Just 46 per cent of countries for which data were available reported at least one conviction for the specific offence of trafficking in persons during the reporting period.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *World Drug Report 2009* (see footnote 15).

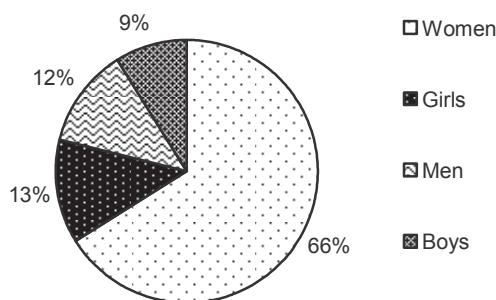
<sup>18</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (Vienna, 2009). Available from [http://www.unodc.org/documents/Global\\_Report\\_on\\_TIP.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf).

38. As with many other forms of organized crime, and indeed conventional crime, data collected by criminal justice institutions cannot provide a good estimate of the scale or nature of the human trafficking problem. In the absence of reliable estimates of the “dark figure” of human trafficking, it remains unclear what share of such cases come to the attention of the authorities and whether the cases detected are representative of the underlying activity.

39. Nonetheless, criminal justice and victim data can provide some insight into trafficking in persons in specific countries. Data published by UNODC in its Global Report on Trafficking in Persons include information on issues such as the sex and citizenship of victims and forms of victimization. Whereas men, for instance, are over-represented among perpetrators of violent crime in general, women make up a larger share of those convicted for human trafficking offences than for most other forms of crime. At the same time, women also make up about two thirds of those victims identified by State authorities in the 61 countries where information was collected (see figure VII). In the 52 countries where the form of exploitation was specified, 79 per cent of the victims were subject to sexual exploitation. While it remains likely that the full extent of labour exploitation and of male victimization is not known, the over-representation of sexually exploited women is true across regions, even in countries where other forms of trafficking are routinely detected.

Figure VII

**Profile of victims identified by State authorities in 61 countries, aggregated for 2006**



40. Criminal justice figures also shed light on the source and destination countries of victims of trafficking in persons. Data suggest that even when victims are trafficked across borders they do not always travel long distances. In fact, in many cases people are trafficked between countries of the same region and, in particular, between neighbouring countries. Recent research also suggests that a shift is taking place in terms of where victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation come from: fewer victims are coming from Eastern Europe and more are coming from a wider variety of countries. Most people arrested for human trafficking are citizens of the country in which they are arrested, suggesting that local criminal networks sell victims to criminal networks in destination countries.

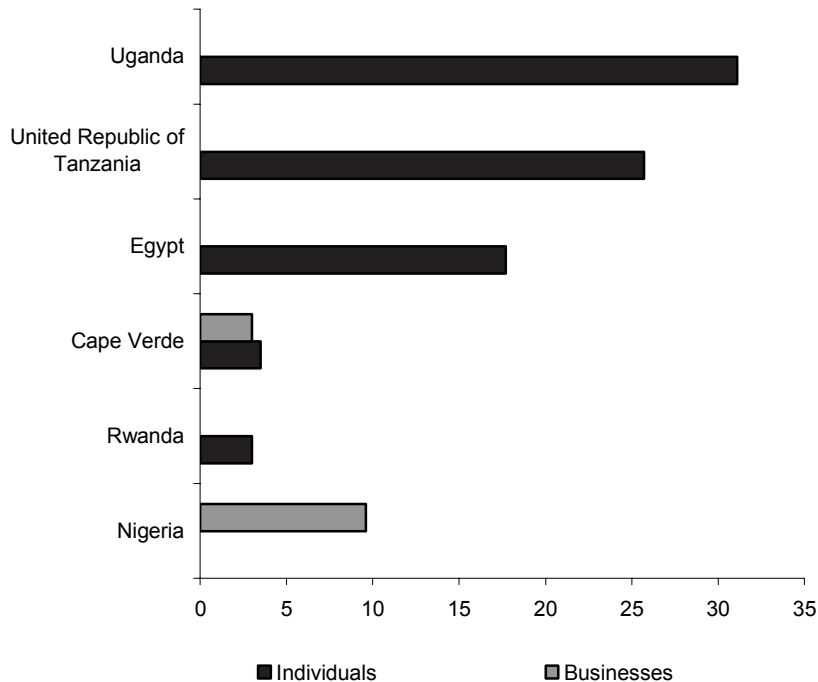
## E. Corruption

41. Efforts to describe and qualify corruption face a number of methodological challenges. Since data based on reported cases of corruption usually do not reflect the real extent of corruption, a number of alternative approaches have been developed. Several attempts at measuring the worldwide extent of corruption have been made, both in general terms and in specific areas. Frequently, these attempts have involved the production of composite indices on corruption.

42. Such indices can be a powerful way to draw attention to the issue of corruption worldwide and to convey the message that it is possible to measure corruption. At the same time, however, composite indicators present some weaknesses. Such weaknesses include the fact that data from different sources are aggregated so that it is frequently unclear what exactly is being measured by the index; that, in constructing composite indicators, the data producer must make a number of choices that introduce several elements of subjectivity; and that the final result is represented by the ranking of countries, a ranking that does not constitute an actual measurement of corruption and does not provide direct information for policymaking purposes.

43. In contrast, sample population surveys allow the direct collection of data on experience and opinions of representative samples of a given population, including households, businesses or government employees. When conducted in a methodologically sound manner, sample surveys can provide an answer to a range of questions, including the proportion of individuals (or enterprises) that paid a bribe in the previous year, the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, changes in the level of corruption over time, and the sectors or regions most affected by corruption. Results from recent surveys conducted in five African countries, for example, indicate that between 4 and 30 per cent of respondents paid a bribe to a public official in the 12 months prior to the survey (see figure VIII). Survey results also suggest that businesses more frequently pay bribes to some government sectors, including the police and medical sectors, than to other institutions, such as tax or municipal offices. Survey responses also indicate that police investigations and offences connected to the violation of traffic regulations were typical situations in which bribes were paid.

Figure VIII  
**Survey respondents (individuals and businesses) requested to pay at least one bribe over the previous year, by selected country, 2008-2009**  
 (Percentage)



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

44. A recent UNODC population-based survey on corruption in Afghanistan also found that Afghans routinely had to pay bribes when dealing with public officials.<sup>19</sup> Some 52 per cent of adult Afghans had to pay at least one bribe to a public official during the 12 months prior to the survey. In three quarters of cases, bribes were paid in cash (on average, the bribes amounted to 160 United States dollars — in a country with a gross domestic product of US\$ 425 per capita per year). Those Afghans who participated in the survey ranked corruption as their biggest worry, with 59 per cent of them stating that public dishonesty was a greater concern than insecurity (54 per cent) or unemployment (52 per cent). Such findings highlight the need for full implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption,<sup>20</sup> which provides for an effective and well-funded anti-corruption authority, disclosure of the income and assets of persons holding public office, public commitment to integrity by senior officials and streamlined administrative procedures.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims* (Vienna, 2010). Available from <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghanistan-corruption-survey2010-Eng.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2349, No. 42146.

## IV. Criminal justice systems

45. Over the past five years, the United Nations Survey has continued to provide valuable information on the operations of criminal justice systems through responses from Member States. Apart from providing statistics on offenders, the United Nations Survey provides information on resources and on the performance (productivity) and punitivity of criminal justice systems. In addition, the Survey provides information on corrections, including prison capacity and the number of detainees. As valuable as this information is, however, a number of challenges have arisen with regard to drawing comparisons between countries. Figures on police and criminal justice personnel, national criminal justice budgets and the progress of suspects through the criminal justice system, for example, may be measured and defined very differently in different countries.

46. As such, the United Nations Survey alone cannot provide an exhaustive assessment of the performance of criminal justice systems from an international perspective. Data derived from instruments like the Survey must be examined together with in-depth analyses of how criminal justice systems operate in theory and in practice.

### A. Resources

47. With respect to data on law enforcement and criminal justice personnel, methods differ across countries in terms of the approach used to count the size of the workforce (for example, in some countries actual persons are counted while in other countries it is the number of budget posts that is important) and to assess which institutions are included in the count. As regards law enforcement personnel, for example, many different types of police forces exist, sometimes even within a single country; then again, some types might exist in one country, but not in another. Also, the tasks carried out by the police differ from one country to the next. Thus, data on law enforcement personnel might include criminal police, traffic police, border police, gendarmerie, uniformed police, city guards or municipal police. In some cases, such data might also include customs officers, tax police, military police, secret service police, police reserves, cadet police officers or court police. Differences in the ratio of criminal justice personnel to citizens may affect the capacity of the system to deal with crime and result in different clearance, prosecution and conviction rates.

48. An analysis of data collected through the United Nations Survey indicates a median of approximately 300 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants worldwide for 2006. Nevertheless, Survey responses show that rates of police officers per population vary significantly among countries. Results imply that there is a minimum number of police officers per 100,000 inhabitants that is necessary in any country. Only four countries worldwide, for example, show police personnel values lower than 100 officers per 100,000 inhabitants. Relatively high median rates of police personnel (around 400) were observed in countries in West Asia, as well as in Eastern and Southern Europe. The median rate of police personnel per population at the global level remained quite stable over the period 2002-2006, after an increase between 1995 and 2002.

49. With regard to prosecution personnel, rates were much lower than for police officers in all countries, with a median rate of 6 per 100,000 inhabitants. The median average annual change rate is of approximately 2 per cent. Some countries showed remarkable increases, in some cases of up to 11 per cent per year over the period 1995-2006, with only a few countries showing significant decreases. A similar increasing trend was observed in rates of professional judges, which in 2006 showed a median rate of approximately 10 judges per 100,000 inhabitants, with average annual change rates of approximately 2 per cent in the median.

50. The number of staff in adult prisons varied significantly across countries, ranging between 2 and 160 prison staff members per 100,000 inhabitants, with a median of 51. In many countries, high rates of prison staff per 100,000 inhabitants matched high incarceration rates, although this was not always true. On average, prison staff rates have increased over the past 11 years by approximately 1 per cent per year.

## **B. Productivity**

51. Regarding criminal justice system performance, basic estimates of productivity can be carried out by comparing data on levels of criminal justice officers with data on the number of suspects and offenders with which those officers have to deal. Data from the United Nations Survey show no correlation between rates of police personnel and suspects per 100,000 inhabitants. This indicates that having more police officers does not necessarily result in more crimes cleared (understood as crimes for which at least one suspect has been identified). There is also no clear relationship between police effectiveness and the region in which a country is located, although most of the countries ranking lowest in terms of police productivity are in Latin America and Asia.

52. While similar results were observed with regard to the number of persons prosecuted per prosecutor, in this case it is even more difficult to compare data across countries. In particular, differences in definitions (for example, the term "official charge" might be understood to mean "all persons officially prosecuted" but also "persons indicted") mean that the degree to which data are comparable depends heavily on the nature of the criminal justice system and methods used to record statistics.

## **C. Punitivity**

53. One measure of punitivity, understood as the severity of a criminal justice system's response to criminal offences, can be calculated as the ratio of convicted persons incarcerated to persons convicted in one year. Remarkable variation in the punitivity ratio across countries was observed. Most of the countries ranking low on the punitivity scale are located in Europe, while most high-ranking countries are in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

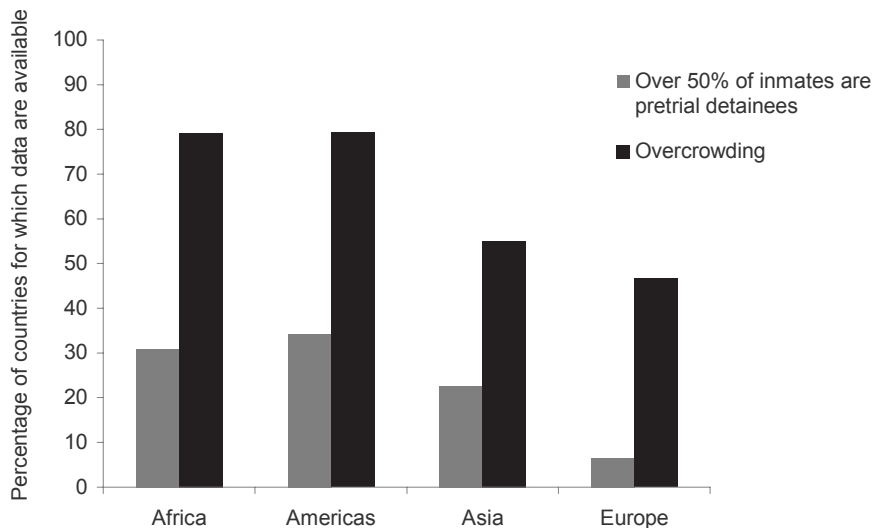
## D. Prisons

54. Between 1997 and 2007, prison population levels increased in 104 of the 134 countries for which information is available. The rise was consistent across regions, with an increase in prison populations in 60 to 75 per cent of countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania combined. The greatest increases were seen in Asia, where 39 per cent of countries for which data are available showed an increase of more than 50 per cent over the period 1997-2007.

55. In addition, a significant number of countries showed very high rates of pretrial detention. International standards emphasize that prisoners must be brought to trial and the proceedings completed within a “reasonable time” or be released on bail.<sup>21</sup> The excessive length and use of pretrial detention can be a major cause of overcrowding in prisons. Pretrial detention appears to be used particularly in countries in Africa and the Americas, where more than half of the prison population in approximately one third of countries for which data are available is in pretrial detention. As shown in figure IX, most of the countries with overcrowded prisons are in Africa and the Americas. Of the 24 countries in Africa for which data are available, occupancy levels exceeded capacity in 19 countries; in 11 of those countries, capacity was exceeded by 150 per cent. In the Americas, of the 29 countries for which data are available, the occupancy level exceeded capacity in 23 countries; in 10 of those countries, capacity was exceeded by 150 per cent.

Figure IX

**Countries where over 50 per cent of the prison population consisted of pretrial detainees and where prisons were overcrowded**



<sup>21</sup> See, for example, articles 9 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI), annex).

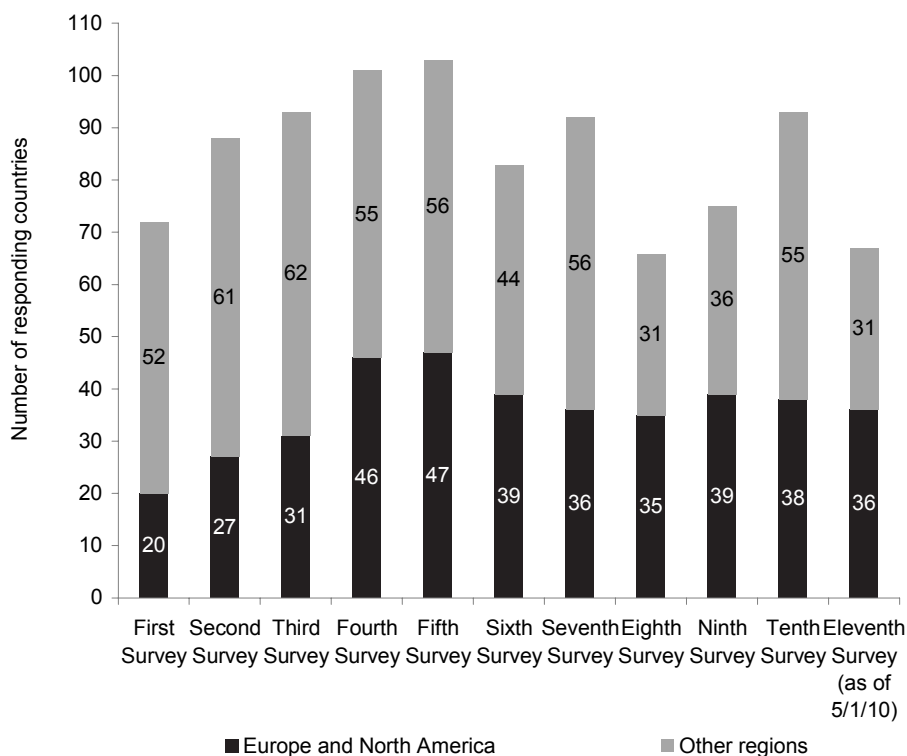
## V. Development of statistics

56. Recent data from the United Nations Survey have been analysed by UNODC with the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations. Further information on methodologies has been presented in articles published in the 2006 edition of the *Forum on Crime and Society*.<sup>22</sup>

57. Responses to the Eleventh United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, providing information on the period 2007-2008, were received from 67 States, or approximately one third of all Member States (figure X). Some countries have indicated that they need more time to respond. The response rate is still very low, especially among developing countries.

Figure X

**Number of States responding to the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems**



58. While a number of initiatives have been implemented recently to improve statistics on crime and criminal justice, including on the emergence of crime, violence and delinquency, such statistics at the national, regional and international levels remain scarce. Many countries still face significant challenges in compiling, processing and disseminating relevant statistics on crime and criminal justice in a

<sup>22</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IV.18.

systematic and sustainable way. The international community has recognized the importance of building the capacity of Member States to collect and report such information.<sup>23</sup> Such capacity-building must involve assistance not only in generating and collecting criminal justice statistics, but also in institutional reporting at the national, regional and international levels, including by systematically responding to the United Nations Survey.

59. UNODC, in cooperation with relevant partners, has begun strengthening its capacity to support countries in this respect, with the aim of increasing the quality, availability and cross-country comparability of crime and criminal justice information. The establishment of a network of national contact points for statistics on crime and criminal justice is an important step in this direction. Such a network should include contact focal points in national statistical offices, law enforcement agencies, prosecutorial offices, the courts and national penal administrations. For specific crime issues, including corruption and some forms of organized crime, national focal points should be established on a thematic basis, along the lines of the informal European Union network of national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms on trafficking in human beings.<sup>24</sup> UNODC has taken concrete steps in this direction, including through the development of regional expert networks. Experience gained through the “Data for Africa” initiative suggests that identifying national points of contact can be an effective way to increase the response rate and to stimulate discussion on issues of mutual interest among countries in the same region. At the time of writing, for example, the number of African countries responding to the Eleventh United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2007-2008), was almost double that of African countries responding to the Tenth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2005-2006) .

60. A manual on victim surveys by UNODC and the Economic Commission for Europe will be published in the course of 2010. The manual, which has been drafted by a task force composed of experts from seven countries and three international institutions, in addition to UNODC and the European Commission for Europe,<sup>25</sup> covers a wide range of issues related to planning and implementing a survey on victimization. The manual includes information on how to analyse, present and interpret data with a view to communicating key findings and results. It is addressed, in particular, to States that are in the process of developing victim survey programmes for the first time and have limited experience in this field.

## VI. Further work and conclusions

61. UNODC will continue to work to improve the availability and quality of crime and criminal justice statistics at the national and international levels. In particular, it

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<sup>23</sup> Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/25, entitled “Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data to enhance knowledge on trends in specific areas of crime”.

<sup>24</sup> See: [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/NewsWord/en/jha/108312.doc](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/NewsWord/en/jha/108312.doc).

<sup>25</sup> Australia, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America; the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Eurostat.

will, subject to funding, continue to support States in building their institutional capacity to conduct victimization surveys in line with the guidance to be provided in the manual on victimization surveys. It will also continue its work on surveys of corruption in countries that request assistance in establishing baseline data and monitoring trends regarding corruption-related behaviour.

62. UNODC will continue to work to achieve a better understanding of global and regional homicide patterns by conducting research on available homicide statistics from multiple sources. Following the publication in December 2008 of a dataset on homicides in various countries, UNODC published updated figures early in 2010, drawing on multiple sources for the period 2003-2008.

63. The statistics on homicides published by UNODC are intended to promote further research, and need to be elaborated upon and updated as more timely information becomes available. Nonetheless, within the framework of initiatives such as the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, such data sources play an important role in forming the basis of indicators for measuring the nature and extent of non-conflict-related armed violence. In response to the need for a greater understanding of armed violence, recently UNODC has also carried out research on the structure and underlying causes of intentional homicide in selected regions, in addition to developing methodological approaches to measure the performance of criminal justice systems dealing with crimes involving armed violence. The results of this work are to be published in the course of 2010.

64. UNODC is continuing its work on identifying core indicators for measuring the activity of criminal justice systems. Part of this work is being conducted in collaboration with the European Commission, through the participation of UNODC in an expert group on policy needs for data on crime and criminal justice<sup>26</sup> (and relevant subgroups) and in a parallel group established by Eurostat.<sup>27</sup> In the course of 2008, UNODC was involved in the development of a European Union-level system for the classification of criminal offences and in research aimed at developing indicators for the effectiveness of criminal justice systems, including specifically those dealing with juvenile offenders. Further work is foreseen in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe and the Conference of European Statisticians. This may include the following activities: (a) developing a set of principles around international crime classification systems for statistical use; (b) undertaking a case study for defining and classifying selected offences; and (c) working with the European Commission on the current European Union-level classification project.

65. In the countries of South-East Europe, UNODC, in partnership with the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, the Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, has commenced a two-year project

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<sup>26</sup> The expert group was established by the European Commission to guide the work on identifying selected crime indicators. See the Council and Commission Action Plan implementing the Hague Programme on strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union (2005/C 198/01), p. 13. Available from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2005:198:0001:0022:EN:PDF>.

<sup>27</sup> The statistical authorities of member States were represented in the group, which was created by the Directors of Social Statistics and coordinated by Eurostat.

(2009-2011) funded by the European Commission on the development of monitoring instruments for judicial and law enforcement institutions in the Western Balkans. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the response to crime and corruption in countries of the Western Balkans by bringing national statistical mechanisms within justice and home affairs institutions in compliance with relevant international standards and good practices. UNODC has carried out research missions to most countries involved in the project and is preparing for a regional workshop and individual country training activities.

66. As a follow up to the 2006 meeting of the open-ended expert group on ways and means to improve crime data collection, research and analysis, UNODC organized an expert group meeting on crime statistics, held in Vienna from 28 to 30 January 2009. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/25, entitled "Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data to enhance knowledge on trends in specific areas of crime", UNODC established an open-ended intergovernmental expert working group to prepare recommendations on the improvement of tools for the collection of relevant crime data, in particular the United Nations Survey. The first meeting of that expert working group is to be held in Buenos Aires from 8 to 10 February 2010.

67. Pursuant to that same resolution, the expert working group will focus on the need to simplify and improve the reporting system of the United Nations Survey in order to encourage more Member States to report, in a coordinated and integrated way, on their efforts, achievements and challenges in specific areas of crime. A set of practical recommendations for improving the collection and analysis of international crime and criminal justice statistics will be made. In particular, a key recommendation will be to revise the Survey in order to improve response rate, produce more timely data and minimize the reporting burden and complexity for Member States.