

CRIME IN IRELAND SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over two decades of terrorism have given Northern Ireland the image of being a violent, crime-torn country. Belfast is associated in imagery with the bomb and the bullet, with Beirut and Bosnia and all other alliterations for social breakdown and dislocation. People with greater acquaintance of Northern Ireland, however, have noted its relative peacefulness. In reference to such, people comment on its low crime rate. In these ways, crime levels are held up as testimony against images of a buffeted, battle-weary Northern Irish populace. Ordinary crime levels in Northern Ireland throw up deep issues for empirical investigation and theoretical consideration. Moreover, Northern Ireland sits at the fulcrum of Great Britain and the Irish Republic and a study of ordinary crime there permits a comparative framework to cover crime trends elsewhere in the British Isles, particularly the Irish Republic, about which so little is known compared to the wealth of material on crime in Great Britain.

Criminological research on Ireland

There are remarkably few sources of crime research in Ireland, with comparative studies between North and South being almost non-existent. One exception is Rottman (1989) who provided a brief but instructive overview of crime both before and after partition. He made some comparisons between North and South, urban and rural, and Belfast and Dublin, using both recorded indictable crime statistics and victimisation survey results. O'Mahony (1993) followed this up and reported results for the Republic of Ireland for the period 1973-91. Thus, in the case of the Republic, we have a fairly complete commentary on crime trends during the period 1951-91. This contains mainly descriptions of crime trends in major crime categories but also attempts to link these to broader socio-economic change. This material is supplemented by other publications, such as Dooley's (1995) analysis of homicide in Ireland during the period 1971-91 and another recently published

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victimisation survey by O'Connell and Whelan (1994). This survey allows some comparisons with an earlier survey by Breen and Rottman (1985). When it comes to official figures for recorded crime in the Republic the main source is the Report on Crime produced by the Garda Siochana Commissioner which has been published annually since 1947.

The reporting and analysis of crime trends in Northern Ireland is even more bleak than for the Republic because there has been little tradition of criminological research. Most information on crime trends comes from officially published government sources. Since 1970, after police reorganisation, the main source of information on recorded crime has come from the Chief Constable's Annual Report. Since 1983 the Northern Ireland Office have produced an annual commentary on Northern Ireland crime statistics. In recent years they have also published various research and statistical bulletins, some on an on-going basis. One of the most important pieces of research was the International Victimisation Study which was carried out across fifteen countries in Europe and North America in 1988 (see Van Dijk *et al.*, 1990), showing Northern Ireland to have the lowest rate of victimisation of all countries surveyed. Northern Ireland has not had an equivalent to the British Crime Survey, which is carried out on a regular basis by the Home Office in England and Wales (although a survey of a similar nature was carried out in early 1995 and is currently under-going analysis). The nearest equivalent in Northern Ireland has been a set of questions on crime contained in the Continuous Household Survey which is undertaken on a regular basis.

Brief outline of the larger research project

Our intention in the research project on which this paper is based, is to report on trends in crime in Northern Ireland since 1945 in comparison to that of the Irish Republic. The Irish Republic is a more interesting referent than Great Britain because so little is known about crime in Ireland generally. Comparative studies of crime over time and jurisdictions are notoriously difficult and fraught with methodological problems. To compensate we draw on a range of methodologies and means of analysis. At its most basic we compare recorded indictable (notifiable) crime between 1945 and 1993 for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Where figures are available we also compare similar trends for Belfast and Dublin in order to assess the effect of urbanisation on crime. Trends in specific categories of crimes are also examined, such as homicide, rape, burglary, drug offences and juvenile crime, in order to examine changes over time. This enables trends in recorded criminal offences, at city and national levels, to be located in a sociological profile, which includes demographic changes, industrialisation, urbanisation, the development of consumership, changes in transportation and other larger social changes.

The problems of using official police statistics on crime are well known (for an overview see Bottomley and Pease, 1986; Maguire, 1994; O'Mahony, 1993). The

practice of using officially recorded police statistics as an index of the real level of crime is highly suspect. Thus, it is necessary to supplement the official statistics with data from other sources where they exist, such as victim surveys and self-report delinquency studies. Although these measures are not without problems, their incorporation allows a more critical assessment of the official figures and a better understanding of crime trends. Even so, statistics do not capture people's experiences of crime or how they manage crime locally in the absence of reporting it to the police. Thus, an important dimension of our project is an ethnographic account of crime and local crime management in two closely matched areas of Belfast, enabling us to contrast largely Protestant East Belfast with largely Catholic West Belfast, thus reproducing the city's sectarian divide. This local ethnographic study focuses on such things as perceived levels of crime in the area in the past, the present and the future, fear of crime, views of police-public relations, the reporting of crime to the police, and unofficial crime management in the locale.

Outline of this paper

In this paper we will briefly report on a few selected aspects of the larger project, concentrating on the statistical comparison of trends in indictable crime in both parts of Ireland between 1945-93 set against other survey data on crime trends in specific offences and geographical variations in crime trends. However, brief reference will be made to the ethnographic material on local crime management in Belfast.

2. THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF CRIME

Methodology

A decision was made to use relatively simple descriptive statistical techniques rather than advanced multivariate analysis which has been used in some studies of this nature. A problem with advanced multivariate analysis is that there is often argument amongst statisticians about the procedures involved, such as Pyle's (1994) debate with Field (1990) on the appropriate methodology for examining trends in crime in post-war England and Wales. For this reason it was decided to stick to relatively non-controversial statistical procedures, such as using rates of change in crime, simple bar chart graphs and the use of three year moving averages (which have the effect of smoothing random fluctuations and uncovering underlying trends).

The problems of using official police statistics are well known, but officially recorded indictable/notifiable crime is the best (and possibly the only) method of comparing levels of crime over substantial periods of time. In no other case is there a continuous yearly record going back to the Second World War which would allow comparisons to be made. Nonetheless, at best officially recorded statistics on crime are a proxy for 'actual' levels and must be hedged with all sorts of qualifications and care in interpretation. Therefore, it is necessary to supplement the official statistics by data from other sources, where they exist, such as victim surveys and self-report delinquency

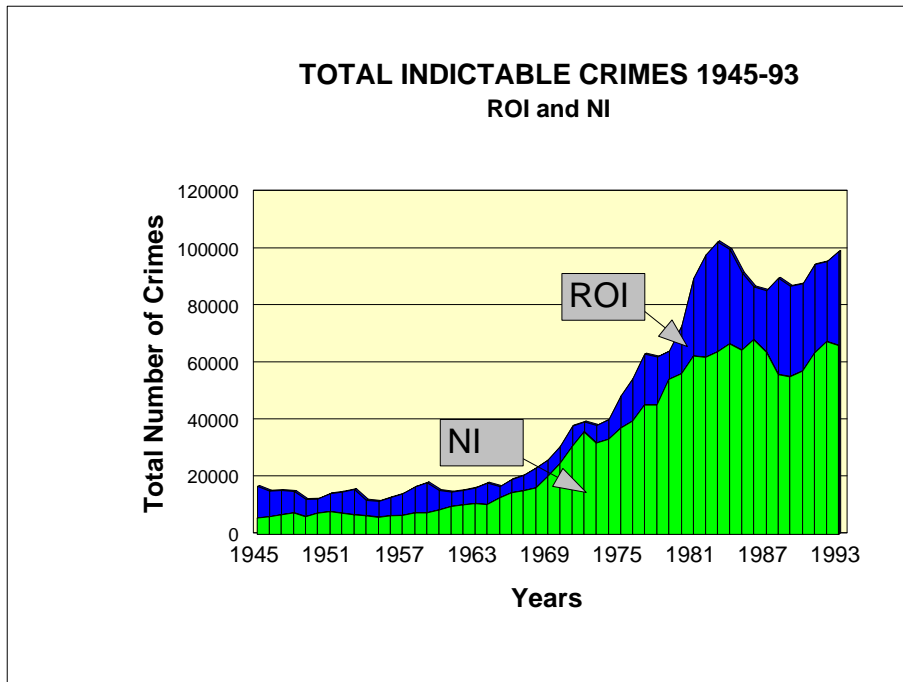
studies, although it should be stated that these measures also have significant problems concerning their validity and reliability. Nevertheless, their incorporation allows a more critical assessment of the recording methods used in the official figures and thus enables a better understanding of the crime profiles.

Fortunately both parts of Ireland come from a common legal system which means there is broad concordance on crime classification, particularly in the earlier part of the period. The major index of crime used in this study for both jurisdictions is based on indictable crime - these are offences, usually of a more serious nature which have to be recorded by the police, whether a suspect is charged or not. Summary offences are usually those of a less serious nature (including assaults, minor offences of dishonesty, and road traffic offences) which are dealt with in a Magistrates Court or the District Court in the Republic of Ireland. They are often only recorded officially when a person is charged with an offence. They are less reliable as an indication of levels of crime and have therefore not been used in this study. In more recent years the Northern Ireland figures refer to notifiable offences - these are similar but slightly different from 'indictable offences' - which brings them into line with the methods of recording in England and Wales. They are, nonetheless, a useful proxy for the indictable classification used in earlier years.

Indictable crime 1945-93

Total levels of indictable (notifiable) crime in both jurisdictions for the period 1945 to 1993 are represented in Figure 1. At the beginning of the period the figures for Northern Ireland were only about one third of those for the Republic, with 5,709 and 16,786 crimes respectively. This is to be expected as Northern Ireland is much smaller in population. However, as the period progresses the differential becomes much less. For example, by 1966 Northern Ireland had 77 per cent of the total for the Republic with 14,673 and 19,029 recorded indictable crimes respectively. Overall there were not substantial changes in either jurisdiction during the late 1940s to the early 1960s, from whence crime increases. This rise continued almost unabated until 1983 in the Republic, when a peak of 102,387 indictable crimes was recorded. This was by any standards a huge increase from the 16,786 recorded in 1945, an increase of more than six fold. In Northern Ireland the peak came a little later in 1986, when a total of 68,255 indictable crimes was recorded. Since that time there have been modest drop backs, although by 1993 the total had again risen to 66,228 offences in Northern Ireland and 98,979 in the Republic of Ireland. It is interesting to look at the overall profiles of the two graphs in Figure 1. In spite of different magnitudes in the levels of indictable crimes the profiles are remarkably similar in trajectory. This would suggest that similar processes have been at work in both countries which have been influencing the overall levels of crime.

Figure 1

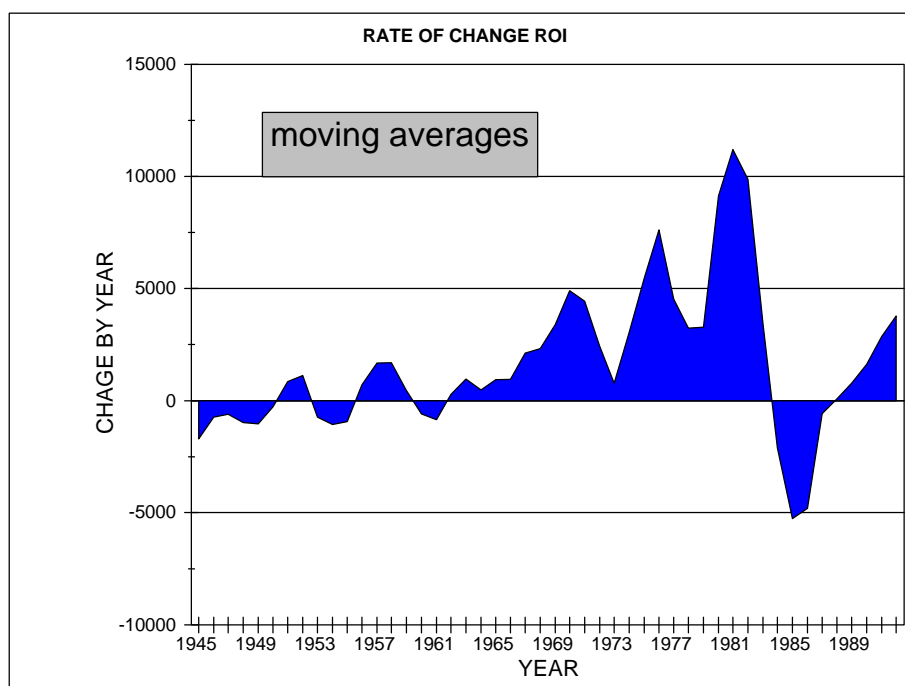


It can be instructive to extend beyond the incidence of crime in terms of the total number of offences recorded to examine other indices of crime, especially an analysis of the rate of change in crime. This is calculated by expressing the increase or decrease in crime in a given year compared to the previous year. As we are primarily interested in longer term trends, rather than random year to year variation as can sometimes happen when dealing with the small numbers in countries of the size of Ireland, it can help to chart three-year moving averages. This method involves summing and averaging the figures for three years in a series and using this as the average figure for the first of three years in the series. In the case of 1945 the figures for 1943, 1944 and 1945 are averaged and this is the score used for 1945, for 1946 the score is the average of 1944, 1945 and 1946 and so on. This technique has the effect of smoothing random fluctuations in the curve and highlighting underlying trends.

This has been done in Figure 2 for the rate of change in indictable crime in the Republic of Ireland for the period 1945-93. It can be seen that three clearly discernible peaks are apparent when the rate of change was averaging around 5,000 or more crimes per year. There was one trough where the average decrease in crime was around 5,000. The years corresponding with these peaks and troughs are worthy of detailed analysis to understand the processes in the Republic which explain these trends. It would seem that the period leading up to 1982 is particularly interesting, for the average increase in

indictable crime amounted to more than 10,000 crimes per year. A similar graph is produced in Figure 3 which provides three year moving averages for the rate of change in indictable crime for Northern Ireland. A number of peaks are apparent where the average increase in the rate of crime amount to 4,000 or more indictable crimes per year. There was one trough, around 1989, where crime dipped by more than 4,000 crimes per annum, although it seems fair to say that the whole period from the early 1970s was marked by fairly rapid increases in crime.

Figure 2



For comparative purposes it is conventional to compare crime between countries or over periods of time in terms of the number of crimes per 100,000 population. This gives a clearer picture than simply using incidence figures. Figure 4 shows a graph

Figure 3

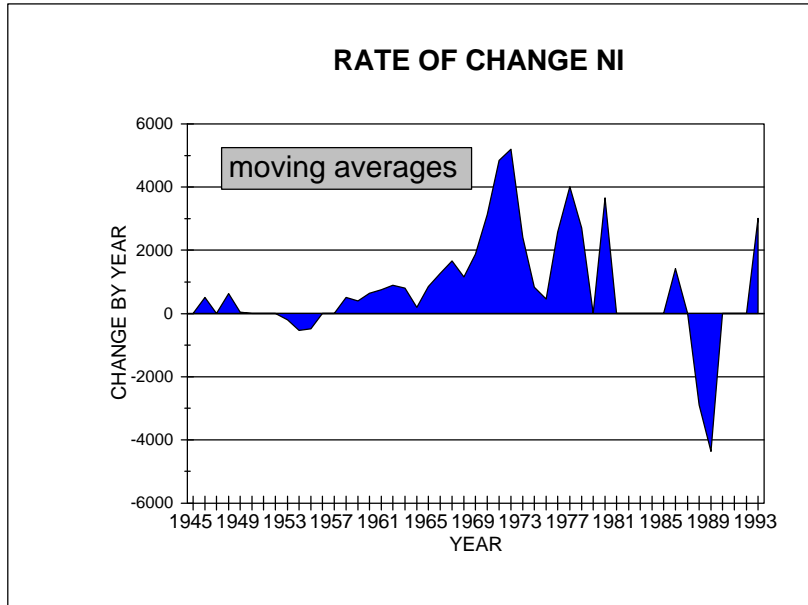
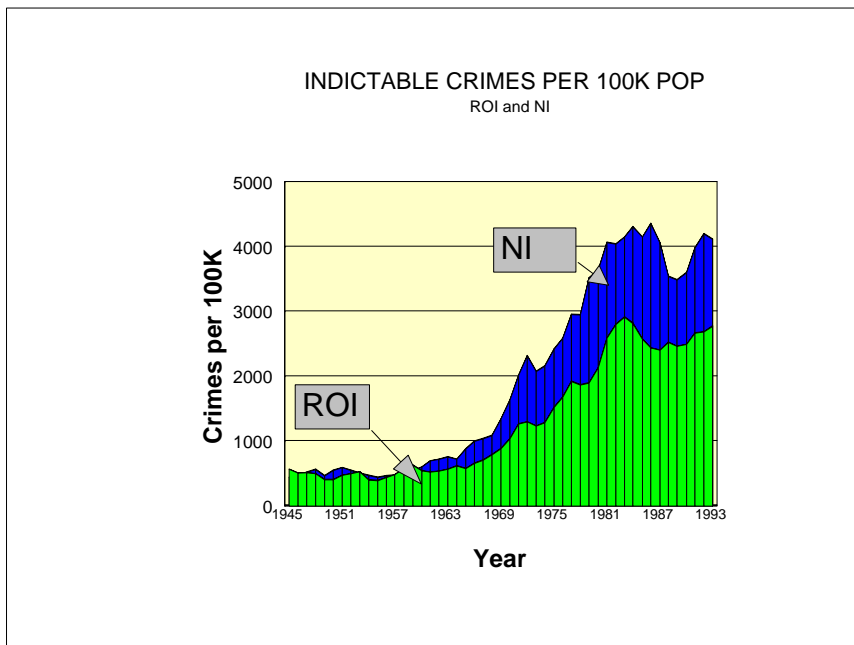


Figure 4



of the number of indictable crimes per 100,000 population for both Northern Ireland and the Republic over the period 1945-93. For most of the period up to 1960 the rates were fairly similar. After that time Northern Ireland has had a consistently higher crime rate. If we look at the actual rates over a ten year time span we can get some idea of the divergence which occurred. In 1945 the figures were 569 crimes per 100,000 in the Republic and 438 in Northern Ireland; by 1955 this was 395 and 434; in 1965 it was 582 and 888 respectively; in 1975 1,523 and 2,430; in 1985 it was 2,579 and 4,146 and by 1993 the rates were 2,778 and 4,113. Thus, there have been substantial increases in both jurisdictions. The decades 1965-75 and 1975-85 accounted for by far the largest increases over the period. In the decade 1965-75 the indictable crime rate per 100,000 population jumped by 174 per cent in Northern Ireland and 162 per cent in the Republic. Interestingly, in spite of the common belief that crime in Northern Ireland really only began to increase after the advent of 'the troubles' in 1969, the rate in 1965 was already 53 per cent greater than that in the Republic at that time. This differential grew to 60 per cent by 1985 and has remained at between half and two-thirds greater than that in the Republic throughout the period since 1965. Overall the indictable crime rate in the Republic grew by a factor of almost five fold between 1945 and 1993. That for Northern Ireland increased by almost ten times during the same period.

By any standards these represent very considerable increases in both countries, although they would not be out of keeping with rises in the crime rate in other European countries over that time span. Comparable figures in England and Wales were 1,094 per 100,000 in 1950 and 10,369 in 1993, an increase of more than 9 fold. If we look at the profile for recorded crime in England and Wales from 1946-93, as shown in Figure 5, there are differences from that for Ireland contained in Figure 1. Crime in England and Wales began to rise steeply almost a decade earlier than in Ireland. In each country there was little change from 1945 to around 1955, thereafter it took off quite substantially in England and Wales, whereas in both parts of Ireland the steep rise did not really become apparent until about 1965. This reflects Ireland's late social and economic development, pointing to a link between changes in economic structure and rises in crime.

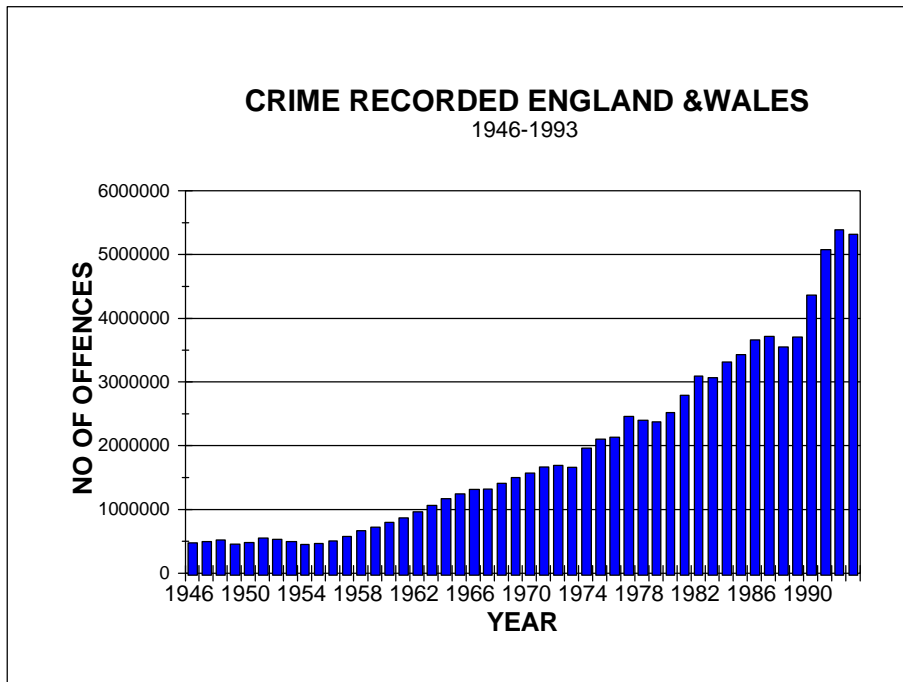
Indictable offence categories

Republic of Ireland

Since the publication of the first Gardai Commissioner's Annual Report in 1947 until the present day, indictable crime has been disaggregated into four main groups. These are: Group (I) offences against the person, Group (II) offences against property with violence, Group (III) larcenies, etc., Group (IV) other indictable offences. Each of these groups is further broken down into a number of categories. There is great stability in the profile of offences in each group. Although the number of offences has increased substantially over the period the ranking of each group has remained the same. This is demonstrated in Figure 6, which plots recorded offences by group from 1976 to 1993. This shows that by far the bulk of recorded indictable offences are 'larcenies, etc.'

(Group (III)) and 'offences against property with violence' (Group (II)). Combining these two groups accounts for nearly all the crimes throughout this period. Thus, almost all recorded indictable offences are against property rather than people.

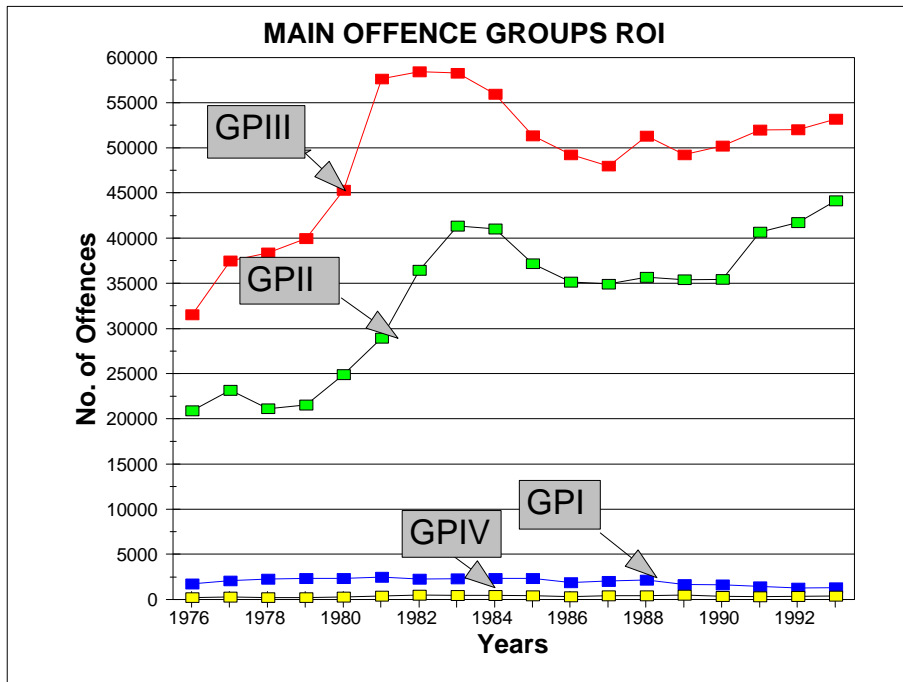
Figure 5



Group (I) offences include very serious violent offences such as murder, manslaughter, rape and wounding and other acts endangering life (felonies) but also include a significant number of less serious offences such as assault, wounding and other like offences (misdemeanors). For example, the number of misdemeanor assaults in 1993 was 473 which accounted for 35.9 per cent of offences against the person recorded in that year (1314 offences). Group (II) offences include burglary, robbery and other malicious injury to property which make up by far the largest number of offences in this Group. Burglary, in fact, accounted for 74.1 per cent of Group (II) offences in 1993. Group (III) is made up mainly of thefts from unattended vehicles, larcenies from the person and 'other' larcenies (burglary involves illegal entry into premises, while theft does not). Larcenies from unattended vehicles accounted for 29.9 per cent of Group (III) offences in 1993. The category of 'other' larcenies accounted for 21,861 or 41.4 per cent of a total of 53,175 Group (III) offences. It is regrettable, given the very large proportion of theft offences this comprised, that no attempt is made to break down this category further into its various component offences. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the crime profile by the major groups of offence is the very low number of

offences of violence against people. Typically in England and Wales this group makes up around 6 per cent of notifiable offences compared to an average of 2.5 per cent in the Republic since 1976.

Figure 6



Northern Ireland

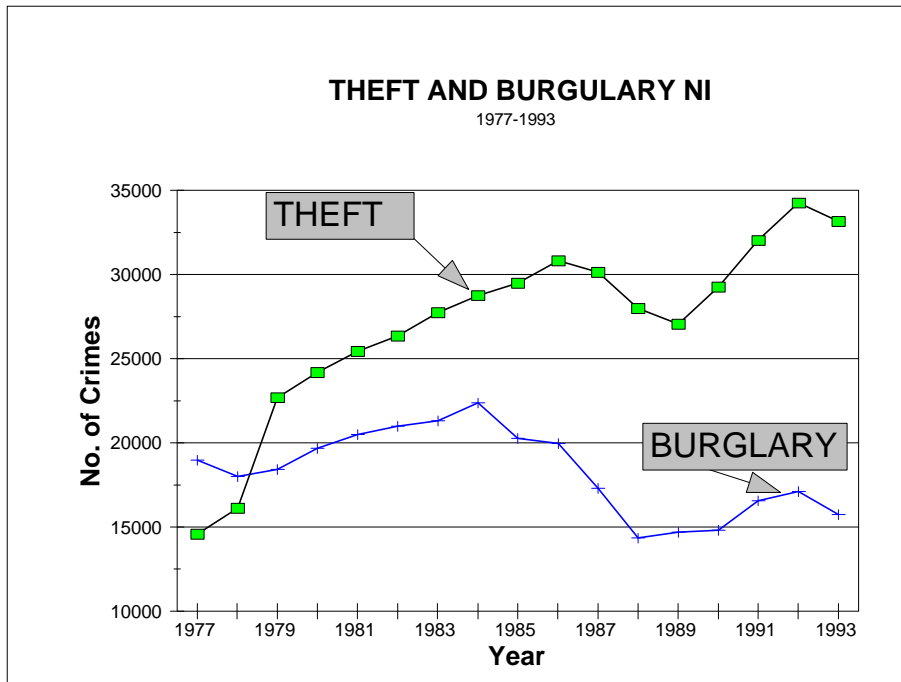
In Northern Ireland the methods of grouping or classifying crimes have changed over the years and it is not possible to produce a time series analysis for the study period using the major crime groupings in use today. The only way to effect this using published statistics is to look at the statistics on persons proceeded against and found guilty for various types of offence. This is shown in Table 1 for the years 1947 and 1971, revealing that in both years larceny and breaking and entering produced the most guilty verdicts. When one sums the various property offences, they amount to around 90 per cent of all persons proceeded against in 1947 and 81 per cent in 1976, compared to 4 per cent and 8 per cent respectively of persons proceeded against for offences against the person. By far the largest proportion of indictable offences known to the police in this period are therefore crimes against property.

Table 1 Persons proceeded against and found guilty for indictable offences in Northern Ireland

OFFENCE CLASSIFICATION	YEAR 1947	YEAR 1971
Breaking and Entering	508	1271
Frauds and False Pretences	83	221
Larceny	1612	1680
Receiving	170	255
Sex Offences	25	84
Violence against the person	89	265
<i>Murder</i>	1	4
<i>Manslaughter</i>	4	6
<i>Wounding</i>	36	206
<i>Other Offences against the Person</i>	48	49
Other Offences	154	489
TOTAL:	2641	4265

Since 1977 the RUC has used nine main groupings of offence: offences against the person, sexual offences, burglary, robbery, thefts, frauds and forgery, criminal damage, offences against the state, and other notifiable offences. Figure 7 shows a profile of offences for the two groups covering theft and burglary during the period 1977-93. It can be seen that total recorded thefts more than doubled during the period from 14,588 in 1977 to 33,233 in 1993, whereas burglaries actually dropped from 18,965 in 1977 to 16,902 in 1993. It is still worth noting that in terms of overall profiles, burglaries tend to rise when theft is rising, and fall when theft is falling. When the theft and burglary groups are combined they make up between 73.8 and 78.6 per cent of the total notifiable offences recorded between 1977 and 1993, or an average of 76.1 per cent of all offences. If we were to add in the groups covering fraud and forgery and criminal damage, by far the greatest proportion of offences are related to property.

Figure 7



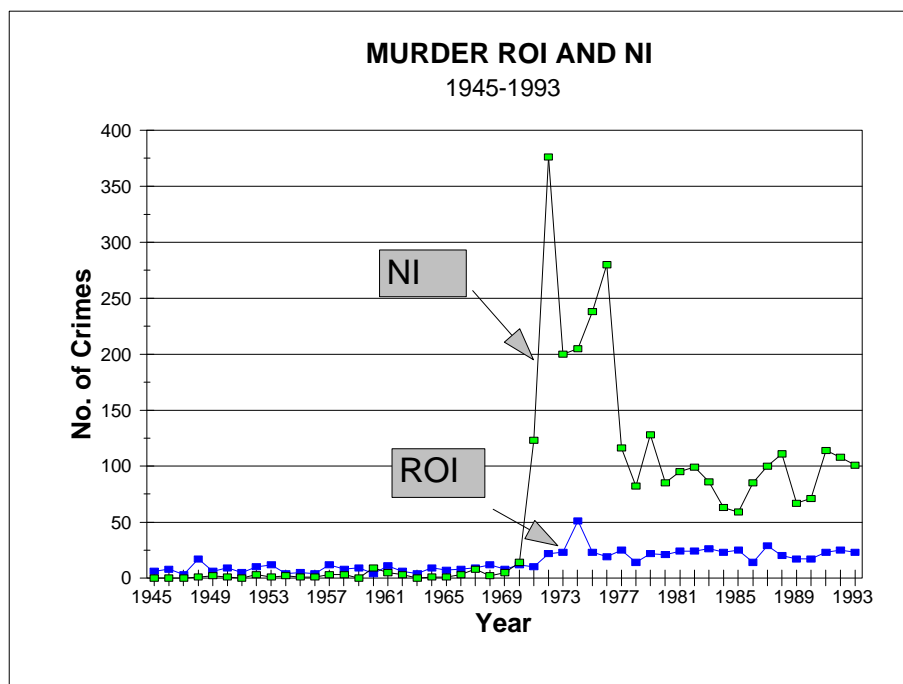
Comparisons using crime index offences

It is not possible using major offence groupings to make appropriate comparisons between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland since 1945 because of classification difficulties. One way of overcoming this problem is to use what is sometimes called Crime Index Offence categories. These isolate specific offence categories, and while in the Irish case one cannot disaggregate all these types of offences with any degree of certainty, it is possible to isolate some types of offence for comparative purposes. These are murder, manslaughter, rape, assault and robbery. Here we focus just upon two categories for illustrative purposes.

Figure 8 demonstrates in a stark fashion the massive rise in murder since the start of 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland. Typically from 1945 to 1959, the annual rate of murder did not exceed three, indeed in five years there were no murders at all. Even during the 1960s the annual murder rate remained very low. It rose in 1970, when the rate went up to 14, and exploded to 123 in 1971, peaking at 376 in 1972. The vast majority of these murders were, of course, the result of terrorist activity - many were multiple killings through car bombs and the blowing up of pubs and other buildings. The overwhelming majority of murders in Northern Ireland have been due to civil unrest. Without a detailed analysis of each individual case it is not possible to be sure

how many murders are unrelated to civil unrest: official statistics classify all murders together. However, a very crude analysis which extrapolates killings carried out by terrorist organisations from the overall murder statistics would suggest that there were never more than 30 murders unrelated to ‘the troubles’ in any year between 1969 and 1993, and in at least one year (1990) there appears to have been none. Overall the additional number of murders per year seems to be low, probably averaging around 13 per year since 1969.

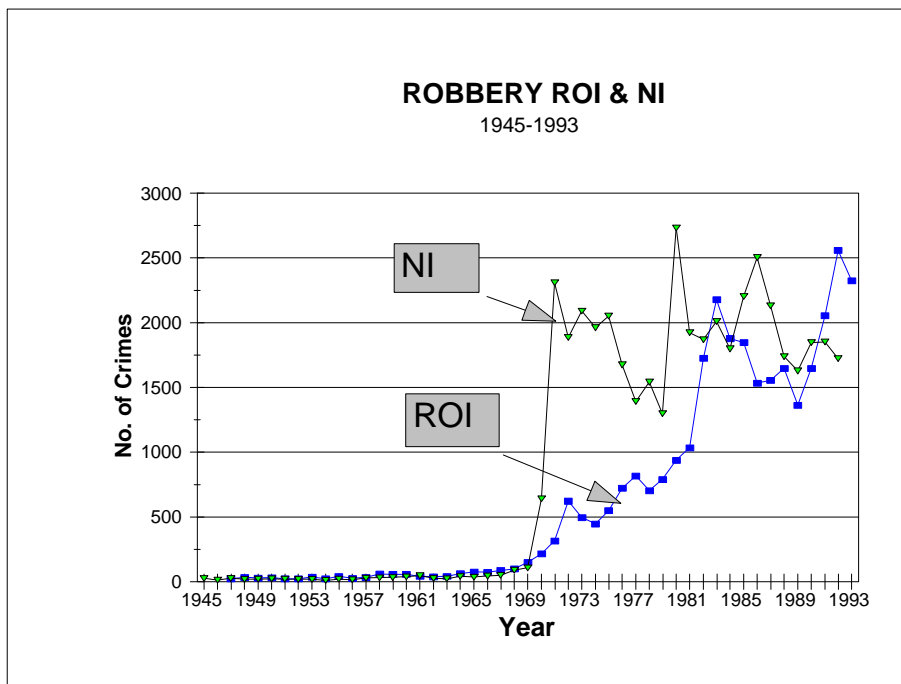
Figure 8



In the case of the Republic the annual murder rate was rather more unstable from 1945 to the 1960s. For most years the total was in single figures, except in certain years. In 1948, for example, it was as high as 17, which was the highest rate throughout that period. The pattern changed after 1970 and since then has virtually always been greater than 20. The highest rate recorded was in 1974, when there were 51 victims of murder; thirty-three people were killed in a single day as a result of four separate car bomb explosions in Dublin and Monaghan perpetrated by Loyalists. As in Northern Ireland, most of the increase in murders since 1970 can be attributed to terrorist incidents, although not on the same scale as the North. Again, as in Northern Ireland, after excluding terrorism, there appears to be a background increase in all types of murder from 1970 onwards.

Robbery is a crime index offence and can be plotted for both jurisdictions from 1945, in the case of Northern Ireland, and 1947 for Republic of Ireland. This has been done in Figure 9. The figures for Northern Ireland contain armed robbery, hi-jacking and other robbery, and for the Republic, robbery and robbery with arms. Thus, like is not always compared with like. Nonetheless, this shows that robbery in both areas was very low and only began to increase slowly in the mid-1960s. The figure for Northern Ireland did not reach three figures until 1970, but thereafter it took off exponentially over the next two years reaching a high of 2,092 by 1994. Similarly for the Republic, three figures were not reached until 1968, after which there was a fairly rapid rise, although at nothing like the same scale as Northern Ireland. Clearly the big increases in robbery in the early 1970s relates to civil unrest in the North, since most of the armed robberies were carried out by terrorist groups in a quest to raise funds. This included many bank robberies across Ireland in small rural towns.

Figure 9



The activities of the paramilitaries set a model for other criminals to emulate. Thus, in 1987, an all time high of 2,504 robberies was reached in Northern Ireland, since which the trend has been mainly downward. For the Republic very large increases occurred between 1981 and 1982, reflecting, according to Williams (1995), the emergence of criminal gangs carrying out armed robberies, as well as paramilitary activity. At that time there was also a big increase in drug related crime, suggesting the emergence of more organised crime. Nonetheless, if one extrapolates these figures into rates of robbery per 100,000 population, since 1980 the rate of robbery in the South has been running at normally less than half the rate of Northern Ireland, and sometimes only a quarter. This is demonstrated in *A Commentary on Northern Ireland Crime Statistics 1990* (HMSO, 1991: 11), which compares robbery and other crime index offences from 1980 to 1990 over a number of jurisdictions. The figures show a rate per 100,000 for the Republic in 1990 of 46, 72 from England and Wales, 103 from Northern Ireland and 257 for the United States. If one converts the 1993 figure to a crime rate per 100,000, the Republic emerges with 72.

Measuring crime with other survey data

There is no established tradition of victimisation studies in either part of Ireland. This is unfortunate as such studies provide a complementary perspective to recorded crime figures, allowing comparisons to be made with recorded data and, to some extent, a method of verifying the official statistics, although victimisation studies are not without their own theoretical and methodological difficulties (for a summary of the difficulties relating to crime surveys see Maguire, 1994; O'Connell and Whelan, 1994).

The Economic and Social Research Institute published a report on victimisation experiences in the Republic (see Breen and Rottman, 1985), giving results of a survey carried out between October 1982 and October 1983 on a national sample of 8,902 individuals. They were asked if they had been the victim of any one or more of six specified crimes during the previous twelve months. The six crimes were: illegal entry of the dwelling place (burglary); automobile theft; theft from the inside of an automobile; theft from the environs of the dwelling place; vandalism to the dwelling place or environs; and theft from the person. The levels of victimisation are shown in Table 2. This presents estimates of the overall levels of crime measured in two ways. First the victimisation rate is shown, which is the number of households which had been the victim of each type of offence per 100 households in the sample, secondly, the mean number of incidents per victim of each crime is shown. The latter figure, when multiplied by the former, gives an estimate of the number of crimes committed. The figures in parenthesis in the table give the 95 per cent confidence intervals around the estimates. These show that one can be confident that the true population rate of victimisation falls within half to one percentage point above or below the estimates. These estimates can in turn be used to calculate estimates for the numbers of victims and incidents in the population as a whole. From Table 3 it can be seen that Breen and Rottman estimated there were 35,642 burglaries, compared with

16,558 burglaries of dwelling houses recorded by the Gardai in 1982. The Gardai thus recorded 46.5 per cent of the estimated reported burglaries, as well as 70.6 per cent of estimated reported car thefts and 67 per cent of estimated reported thefts from inside vehicles. However, these estimates were subject to sampling error, and Breen and Rottman accepted that a number of the offences which they estimated as not recorded by the Gardai could have been recorded under different categories.

Table 2 Rates of victimisation in the Republic of Ireland per year 1982-83

Offence Type	Victimisation Rate per 100 Households	Mean Number of Incidents per Victim
Burglary	3.6 (0.6)	1.25
Theft of property around dwelling	4.8 (0.6)	1.42
Vandalism of house/property	3.9 (0.6)	1.82
Theft from person	5.3 (0.6)	1.21
Theft of car	4.5 (0.7)	1.25
Theft of object from car	6.1 (0.9)	1.30

Source: Breen and Rottman (1985).

Note: Figures in parenthesis are the 95 per cent confidence levels around these estimates.

Table 3 Reporting rates and estimated number of incidents reported to Gardai for six offences

Offence type	Percentage of incidents reported	Estimated number of incidents reported in the population	Confidence intervals
Burglary	88.20	35,642	5,465
Theft of property around dwelling	46.84	28,602	4,919
Vandalism	46.12	29,405	4,982
Theft from person	64.19	34,966	5,556
Car theft	91.89	31,051	5,057
Theft from inside car	64.33	30,647	5,034

Source: Breen and Rottman (1985)

Breen and Rottman offered comparisons with the 1982 British Crime Survey and threw into serious question the conventional wisdom on 'low' crime rates in Ireland. They acknowledged the many difficulties in making international comparisons of this kind, nonetheless, they believed that comparisons could be made with substantial confidence for four offences types; burglary, car theft, theft from a motor vehicle, and vandalism to the household. The main threats to the validity of the comparisons

were that British estimates pertained to 1981, whereas ESRI estimates to 1982-3, and the BCS may have tended to yield more conservative estimates of victimisations because of procedural differences and screening practices. The comparative results are shown in Table 4, representing the estimated level of victimisation in the three jurisdictions of England and Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. The estimates contained in the table are all of incidence levels. That is, multiple victimisations for each type of offence are included in order to obtain a rate of incidents per 10,000 households 'at risk'. This means that in all cases the number of households victimised per 10,000 will be smaller, and would suggest that the risk of being a victim of one or more burglaries in the Republic would be about 360 per 10,000 households (1 in 27). Perhaps the most important finding emerging from this table is that the rates per 10,000 households for the Republic were running at significantly greater levels for burglary, vehicle theft and vandalism compared to England and Wales (but not Scotland); police recorded figures would have suggested the opposite conclusion. The table also shows an incidence of 562 per 10,000 vehicle owning households is shown for Ireland, which is more than twice the level found in England and Wales (232) and exactly twice that for Scotland. Vandalism to the dwelling is somewhat more common in Ireland than England and Wales but is rather less than Scotland. Theft of items from vehicles was more frequent in Britain than in Ireland.

Table 4 Incidence of victimisation per 10,000 household comparison of BCS and ESRI survey estimates

Offence Type	England and Wales 1981	Scotland 1981	Republic 1982/83
Burglary	260	257	450
Vehicle theft	232	280	562
Theft from vehicle	1,040	1,512	793
Vandalism to dwellings	595	783	710

Source: Breen and Rottman (1985)

While it is not possible to suggest that overall property crime was higher in Ireland than Britain, it is clear that this was so for burglary and vehicle theft, two major types of property crime. Breen and Rottman argued from these findings that Gardai statistics are collated in a manner that tends to understate the level of offences relative to England and Scotland. They point out that Irish official statistics are based on an updating procedure that shifts 'main offence' category in line with court proceedings, so that only the most serious offence within a particular incident is entered into the statistics; secondary subsidiary offences are not enumerated. This will tend to understate the seriousness of crime in Ireland relative to other countries, rather than the number of offences. Because the manner in which reports on incidents are processed by the Gardai in the Republic of Ireland is more selective than the

British police it is wiser and more satisfactory, they concluded, to use survey based estimates to provide a base for comparative analysis across jurisdictions.

There have been two other victimisation surveys carried out in the Republic of Ireland, both undertaken in the spring of 1994 and reported by Murphy and Whelan (1995) and O'Connell and Whelan (1994). The first covered a national random sample of 938 respondents, the second was a smaller scale survey covering the Dublin area only. Murphy and Whelan's study was part of a much wider survey undertaken to investigate overall social attitudes to the Irish police force. A small number of questions were asked of respondents to ascertain if they or any member of their household had been the victim of a crime within the past three years. The results showed that only 14 per cent had been a victim during the previous three years. The figure was higher for Dublin (23 per cent) and for other urban areas (21 per cent). The 1994 Dublin Crime Survey reported much the same findings (see O'Connell and Whelan, 1994). The authors estimated a rate of 170 crimes per 1,000 population per annum; the Gardai gave a figure of 49 crimes per 1,000 in the Dublin metropolitan area in 1992, although the Gardai figure refers only to indictable crime whereas the survey was not limited in this manner. Clearly, therefore, there are very serious difficulties in comparing survey and Gardai figures, but it is once again evident that police figures for recorded indictable crime offer a very considerable under-estimate of the level of crime occurring in Ireland.

Unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland has not been included in the regular sweeps of the British Crime Survey. The Northern Ireland Office's *Commentary on Northern Ireland Crime Statistics* for 1986 reports the results from the amalgamated data for the 1984 and 1985 crime sections of the Continuous Household Survey, which includes some questions on crime. This gave a larger sample from which it is possible to more accurately estimate province-wide crime levels. The results are shown in Table 5. They contain, where appropriate, comparisons with the 1984 British Crime Survey. It can be seen that only around half of the number of household vandalism offences were reported to the police; moreover, less than one sixth of these offences were recorded by the police. Car related crime was also considerably under-represented in police statistics, but in this case non-reporting may represent some of the shortfall. The *Crime Commentary* suggested that official statistics may under-estimate theft of vehicles by a factor of two and a factor of three for thefts from vehicles. For burglary in a dwelling, there was an average of 9,922 offences recorded by the police annually (1984-1985), which compared to a Continuous Household Survey estimate of 17,881 offences. Since 75 per cent of victims claimed that they reported the incident to the police, the number reported can be estimated as 13,348. This suggests that while 75 per cent of incidents are reported, 55 per cent are actually recorded by the police. This compares favourably with the British Crime Survey results which estimated 68 per cent and 48 per cent respectively. The 1986 *Commentary* pointed out that differences in levels of insurance do not account for the difference in reporting rates as fewer people were insured in Northern Ireland (33 per cent) compared to England and Wales (60 per

cent). Thus, comparisons of the data appear to support the conventional picture of a lower crime rate in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain.

Table 5 Levels of reported and recorded Crime 1984-85 in the Continuous Household Survey (NI) and British Crime Survey (1984)

Type of crime	Best Estimated	Number Reported	Per Cent Reported	Offences Recorded by Police	Per Cent Recorded by Best Estimate
Vandalism	25,213	12,859	51	4,237	17
Theft of Motor Vehicle	15,107	N/A	N/A	7,093	47
Theft from Motor Vehicle	18,407	N/A	N/A	5,464	30
Burglary in Dwelling					
i) NI (CHS)	17,881	13,348	75	9,922	55
ii) GB (BCS)	904,000	615,000	68	403,000	48

Source: Commentary on Northern Ireland Crime Statistics (1986)

Notes: Vandalism is equated with Chief Constable's category of criminal damage. Theft of and from vehicles in the CHS includes attempts but the BCS excludes these.

One survey which was specifically designed for comparisons between countries was the 1989 International Crime Survey reported by Van Dijk *et al.* (1990). Northern Ireland participated in this survey along with thirteen other Western European and North American countries, but excluding the Republic of Ireland. The survey measured victimisation in the six years up to 1988. The crimes covered in the survey were theft of cars, theft from cars, car vandalism, motorcycle theft, bicycle theft, burglary (with entry), robbery, theft of personal property, assaults and threats, and sexual incidents (women only). The results for 1988 are regarded as more accurate, being less susceptible to memory loss. The results for prevalence of crime are presented in Table 6. These show that in terms of all fourteen participating countries, Northern Ireland had the lowest overall risk of victimisation at 15 per cent. Only for theft of cars and motorcycle theft did Northern Ireland come above

Table 6 Percentage prevalence rates for 1988 from the International Victimisation Survey

Country	Overall risk	Car theft	Theft from cars	Car vandalism	Motor-cycle theft	Bicycle theft	Robb-ery	Pick-pocket-ing	Burgl-ary with entry	Attemp-ted burg-lary	Assau-lts/ threats	Assau-lts with force	Sexual assaults
USA	29	2.2	9.9	9.3	1.0	4.6	1.9	1.3	3.8	5.4	5.4	2.2	2.3
Canada	28	0.9	8.1	11.0	3.4	5.4	1.1	1.3	3.0	2.7	4.0	1.5	1.7
Australia	28	2.6	7.8	9.9	2.6	4.0	0.9	1.0	4.4	3.8	5.2	3.0	1.6
Netherlands	27	0.4	6.8	10.6	3.2	8.3	0.9	1.9	2.4	2.6	3.3	2.0	0.5
Spain	25	1.9	14.6	9.2	3.9	2.6	2.8	2.8	1.7	1.9	3.0	1.2	0.7
West Germany	22	0.5	5.8	10.8	1.8	4.4	0.8	1.5	1.3	1.8	3.0	1.5	1.5
England and Wales	19	2.4	7.3	8.8	0.8	2.8	0.7	1.5	2.1	1.7	1.9	0.6	0.1
France	19	2.8	7.1	7.6	3.6	2.5	0.4	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.2	0.5
Scotland	19	1.2	7.7	9.4	7.1	3.2	0.5	1.0	2.0	2.1	1.8	1.0	0.7
Belgium	18	1.0	3.3	8.0	2.9	4.6	1.0	1.6	2.3	2.3	2.0	0.7	0.6
Norway	16	1.4	3.5	5.7	3.1	3.8	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.4	3.0	1.4	0.6
Finland	16	0.5	3.5	5.2	0.0	3.5	0.8	1.5	0.6	0.4	2.9	2.0	0.2
Switzerland	16	0.0	2.4	5.2	4.8	4.6	0.5	1.7	1.0	0.2	1.2	0.9	0.0
Northern Ireland	15	2.2	5.5	6.1	3.7	3.5	0.5	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.8	1.0	0.5

Source: Van Dijk et al. (1990)

the mean for all the countries concerned. For all other offence types Northern Ireland was rated well below the mean. The most prevalent type of offence for Northern Irish respondents was car vandalism at 6.1 per cent followed by theft from cars (5.5 per cent). Sexual assaults and robbery had the lowest prevalence rates. The results for victimisation over five years was also lowest for Northern Ireland at 33.4 per cent compared with a mean of 48.4 per cent for all the countries.

The International Crime Survey measured a number of other crime related variables apart from victimisation, including crime reporting rates. In this case Northern Ireland had a percentage rate just below the mean, with a rate of 48.7 per cent. It had a low reporting rate relative to Scotland and England and Wales, which had 62.3 per cent and 58.8 per cent respectively.

When it came to satisfaction with the police after reporting an offence to them, evaluations were again just below the average for all countries, and was lower than England and Wales and Scotland. Attitudes towards the police were less favourable for people living in the greater Belfast area than in other parts of the province and while overall 63.5 per cent of respondents felt that the police were doing a good job in controlling crime in their area, this was just lower than the mean of all the countries. In Northern Ireland fear of crime was relatively low with a little over 16 per cent of respondents stating that they avoided certain areas at night and around 14 per cent going out accompanied because of fear of crime.

In 1995, Northern Ireland had its own crime survey commissioned by the Northern Ireland Office. A random sample of around 4,500 addresses was drawn from the Rating Valuation List, which is a list of all private addresses in Northern Ireland. All persons at each address aged 16 or over were eligible for interview. From the eligible adults one person from each household was randomly chosen, yielding a total of 2,939 interviews, a response rate of 72.4 per cent. Unfortunately, the full results of the analysis have not been released. However, some preliminary results are available. The victimisation rate was 27 per cent, considerably higher than had previously been assumed, throwing the traditional view of low crime rates into question. The 807 victims experienced a total of 1,219 crimes, which points to the phenomenon of revictimisation, illustrating that a relatively small number of persons experience a disproportionately high level of crime. The most prevalent crimes were thefts (52 per cent), criminal damage (20 per cent), burglary (13 per cent) and assaults (9 per cent). Just under half of crimes were reported to the police, with car theft and burglary being the most likely to be reported. The overall reporting rate was not much different from that found for Northern Ireland in the International Victimization Survey in 1989, although the level of victimisation was now higher. The increase in victimisation between the two surveys exceeds the increase in the level of crime in the period, which rose by 21.5 per cent.

The findings from victimisation surveys in Northern Ireland are in marked contrast to those for the Republic of Ireland. Breen and Rottman (1985) found much higher

levels of burglary, vehicle theft and vandalism compared to England and Wales. However, their survey was carried out in 1982-83 at a time when recorded crime per 100,000 population was running at an all time high in the Republic. Murphy and Whelan (1995) found an overall victimisation rate in the Republic of only 14 per cent. This survey was carried out in 1994, when recorded crime was lower. Thus, in the Republic victimisation surveys reveal a declining incidence of victimisation, while the reverse is the case in Northern Ireland, although this may be an artefact of the different methodologies used in the surveys.

Geographical variations in crime

Rottman (1989) pointed out that the Dublin metropolitan area in 1965 comprised roughly one quarter of the population of the Republic and yet was the location of almost one half of all burglaries. For other property crimes this proportion tended to be even higher. From the mid-1960s, crime increased in all areas, for while property crime first became apparent in Dublin, it rapidly spread to other areas, urban and rural. It would thus seem that common criminogenic factors were at work across the country. By 1980, Dublin also led the way in terms of crime related to drugs. There is little doubt that the big increases in urban property crime in the 1980s was strongly linked to the availability of addictive drugs.

The Garda Commissioner's annual report normally cites the figures for recorded indictable crime in the Dublin area. From this it is possible to build a time series which allows the levels of indictable crime in Dublin to be compared with the levels recorded in the Republic as a whole. This has been done in Figure 10. It will be noted how similar the profiles are with peaks and troughs occurring at the same time. This demonstrates how strongly the incidence of crime in Dublin influences the profile for the whole country. Typically the incidence of crime in Dublin has been running at around 50-60 per cent of that of the whole country, whereas, based on the 1991 census of population, the Dublin metropolitan area accounts for only 29.8 per cent of the total population. It can be instructive to convert the crime figures into prevalence rates per 1,000 population. This has been done in Figure 11 for the period 1964-93. For a number of reasons it is difficult to calculate prevalence rates before that date. Clearly the area covered by the metropolitan area has changed over time, thus working out the population living there can be awkward. The Garda Commissioner's annual report usually gives an estimated population for the area. However on a number of occasions this has been found to be an under-estimate and has been subject to subsequent revision. For this reason the figures used in Figure 11 differ from those cited for the same years by Rottman (1989), although our rates are more accurate as they are based on revised population estimates.

Figure 10

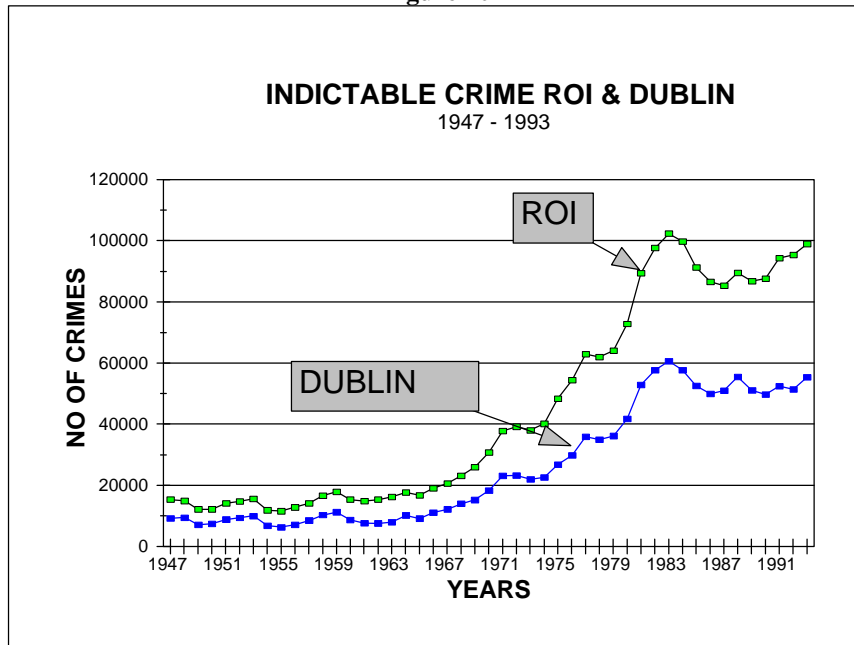
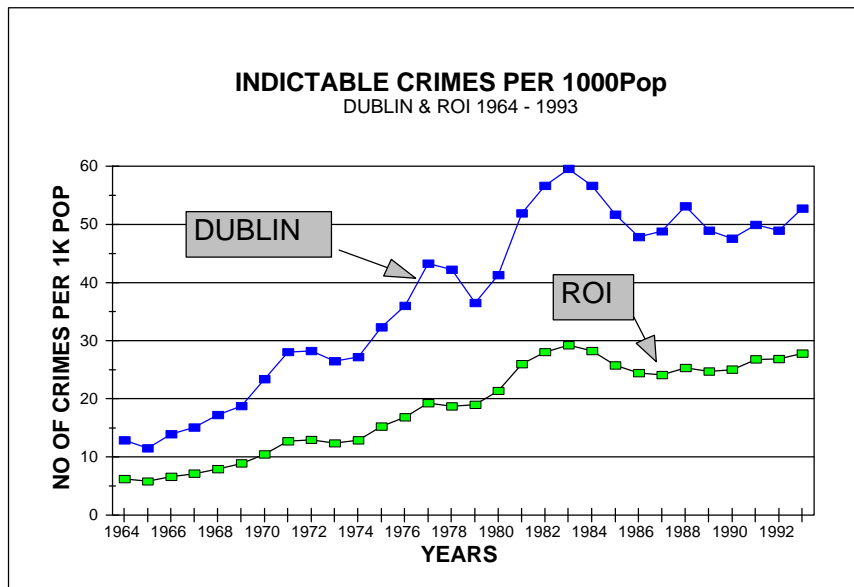
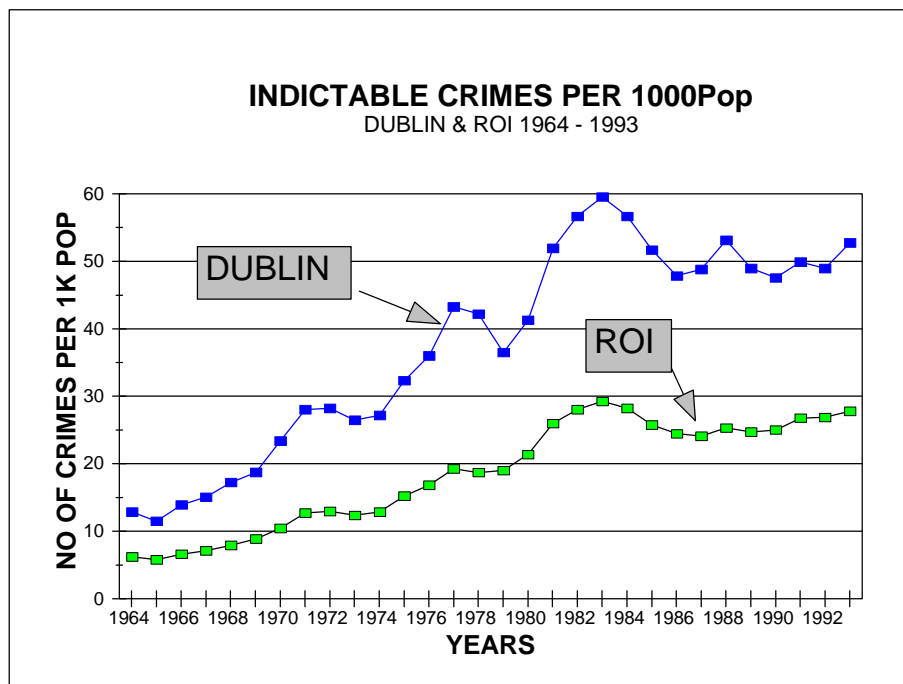


Figure 11



The crime rate per 1,000 for the Dublin metropolitan area did rise rather more quickly than for the whole of Ireland, at typically twice that for the country as a whole. Both peaked in 1984 and have dropped back a little since then. In more recent years the Garda Commissioner's report has given indictable crime rates per 1,000 population by each police division. This is presented in modified form in Figure 12 for the period 1980-93, covering six geographic areas, the Dublin metropolitan area, Limerick, Cork East, Louth/Meath, Mayo and the rest of the Republic of Ireland. These were chosen to give a spread of different types of division. Limerick and Cork East represent the next largest cities to Dublin; Louth/Meath offers a reasonably sized east coast division located North of Dublin and going right up to the border with Northern Ireland. It contains the sizeable towns of Drogheda and Dundalk, the latter significantly affected by civil unrest in the North. By contrast Mayo is included to represent a large rural division in the West, without any large urban population centres.

Figure 12



As expected the Dublin area has by far the greatest indictable crime rate per 1,000 population, followed by Cork East, which appears to have been experiencing substantial recent increases after a dip in the mid-1980s. Limerick, by contrast, after peaking in 1982-3, has been showing significant decreases since then. Louth/Meath has had a fairly steady rate, averaging around 20 crimes per 1,000 during the period

but still tends to be somewhat higher than the average for the rest of Ireland (excluding Dublin), perhaps reflecting both its relatively high urban population and the fact that the main road between Dublin and Belfast passes through a number of its urban centres. The police division with by far the lowest crime rate is Mayo. The crime rate has been uniformly low during the period and has not risen above 7.9 crimes per 1,000 population (in 1992) and was as low as 4.5 crimes in 1989. It is thus very apparent that crime tends to concentrate on large urban areas, with very low crime rates persisting in rural divisions.

It is only since the restructuring of the RUC in 1970 that it is possible to get a break down of crime by police divisions and since the divisions have been subject to significant changes in boundary since then, it is very difficult to construct a meaningful time series by region. This has been done for 1991 (after new divisional boundary changes) and 1994, and shown in Table 7. The rank order by division for each year is largely similar. 'A' division recorded the highest number of notifiable offences in both 1991 and 1994, and covers the commercial centre of Belfast and also has a large number of public houses, clubs and places of entertainment. In both years the divisions covering the rural West of the province ('K' and 'L') had the lowest incidences of notifiable crime. If one combines the scores for the four Belfast divisions, Belfast accounts for 61.5 per cent of the total notifiable crime recorded in 1991 and 58.1 per cent in 1994. It can thus be seen that the bulk of recorded crime has been happening in the greater Belfast area.

Table 7 Breakdown of notifiable crime by RUC police divisions 1991 and 1994

Police Division	Offences known 1991	Offences known 1994
A Musgrave St, Belfast	13,838	13,964
B Grosvenor Rd, Belfast	6,469	6,549
D North Queen St, Belfast	12,407	11,141
E Strandtown, Belfast	6,315	7,779
G Newtownards	3,429	4,768
H Armagh	3,138	3,523
J Portadown	3,546	3,546
K Cookstown	1,630	1,948
L Enniskillen	2,204	2,685
N Strand Road, L'derry	3,700	4,680
O Coleraine	2,729	3,242
P Ballymena	4,087	4,261

3. THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF CRIME IN BELFAST

Introduction

The rationale behind the ethnographic study of crime in two police sub-divisions of Belfast is to use the benefits of the ethnographic method to supplement the quantitative approach to crime trends. The data are drawn from two closely matched police sub-divisions in Belfast, Castlereagh in East Belfast and Woodburn in the West of the city, the former largely Protestant and the latter largely Catholic. This research design reproduces the city's communal spatial divide. Each sub-division also comprises a mix of inner city deprivation and suburban splendour. Fieldwork was conducted over a twelve-month period between 1994 and 1995. The paramilitary ceasefire was called only four months into fieldwork, permitting consideration to be given to the likely effects of peace on ordinary crime.

The benefits of ethnographic data are widely documented in the methodological literature and need little rehearsal (but see, for example, Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Brewer, 1994). Ethnographic data come in the form of extracts of natural language, such as quotations obtained from indepth interviews, notes from personal documents or records of participant observation, providing actors' own accounts. Such data capture the richness of people's experiences in their own terms, proffering a counterweight to the breadth and geographical coverage of official statistics. Actors' accounts take on added value with respect to crime statistics because of the well known limitations in official statistics on crime. The ethnographic part of the study therefore sought to supplement the quantitative analysis of crime trends at national and city levels by addressing people's experiences of crime and policing, to permit the expression of these concerns in the actors' own terms, and to capture the richness and depth of the crime problem in two localised areas of Belfast.

Summary of the main findings

The majority of respondents in both study areas thought that ordinary crime in their locality was real and not a product of moral panic or media hype. It comprised mainly the visible crimes, such as anti-social behaviour by youths (drink, solvent abuse, vandalism, stone throwing, graffiti, joy riding), drugs, theft (shoplifting, car theft, electrical and domestic goods, bikes) and burglary. Joyriding was seen as a West Belfast problem rather than one generic to the city, although it was recognised by most people in West Belfast to be on the decline, being replaced by drugs as the single most commonly perceived crime in the area. The drug problem is becoming the new moral panic for most people we interviewed irrespective of where they live. Crime was seen as overwhelmingly against property not the person. Community definitions of crime tended to exclude from mention the 'invisible' crimes like domestic violence, child abuse and fraud, or the socially acceptable crimes such as social security fiddles or 'doing the double'. Levels of fear of crime are contextual and particularly high for certain categories of people, particularly the elderly. Fear of

crime is much lower in West Belfast than East. However, the frames of reference through which crime is approached today militate against high levels of fear of crime for most people except the elderly, because Belfast's crime rate is located against the much higher levels of crime that are thought to exist in other Irish and British cities. However, crime is universally seen as having increased in recent years. This increase in crime is explained by several processes, including broad social changes that have led to a moral decline and a loss of discipline in the home, peculiar factors special to Northern Ireland's civil unrest and political violence, and social deprivation. However, given the very high levels of social deprivation that exist in some parts of the study areas and the years of political violence, people commented that crime is lower than might be expected.

Some people report crime for insurance purposes, others because it is seen as the normal and proper thing to do, but there is under-reporting of crime on a wide scale. The data cannot provide a measure of its extent, but can usefully describe the nature of the problem of under-reporting as people account for it in their own reporting behaviour. One important factor is fear of contacting the police, which is based on the fear of being seen by the community as a tout or informer, reprisals from the paramilitaries or perpetrators, ostracism from neighbours, and harassment, threats and intimidation from criminals. There is also a reluctance to report to the police for several reasons. Some feel alienated from the police because of ideological antipathy based on the sectarian image of the RUC or experiential distance, grounded in experiences of harassment, intimidation and past atrocities. In this regard, some people have long memories and mention atrocities back in the 1970s, events which have entered the neighbourhood's collective memory. Another process involved in the reluctance to involve the police is the inefficacy of doing so, which is itself based on several factors. One of these is pejorative judgments of the RUC's effectiveness, based on the reluctance of the police to do anything in the past, partly for fear of the call being a trap or because of the under-valuation of certain forms of ordinary crime with the focus on terrorism, the inability of the police to respond quickly enough, or to clear up the incident to the victim's satisfaction, although some respondents, even in West Belfast, recognised the dilemma of the RUC in trying to deal with ordinary crime in the midst of civil unrest. A second dimension in the lack of efficacy of reporting crime to the police is the effectiveness of other local crime management agencies, which satisfy people's wish for immediate 'justice', although paradoxically the same people express reservations about the punishment beatings and shootings by which this immediate 'justice' is dispensed. A related process is dissatisfaction with the formal criminal justice system, which fails to provide victims with the justice they see as their deserts. There is also a sense that the police have lost control of the fight over crime and have given up.

These processes affect working class Protestants nearly as much as Catholics, and under-reporting appears to be nearly as common in hardline Loyalist areas as Nationalist ones. One of the reasons for this is that working class Loyalists have as poor a relationship with the RUC as their equivalents in Republican areas. There is

also a shared sense of the ineffectiveness of the RUC. This is not always rooted in political opposition to the police but also in experience of the RUC's service delivery in the past, for even moderate Catholic opinion in West Belfast complained of the RUC's slow response to calls, as did people in Protestant East Belfast. This militates against telephoning the police to report crime and undercuts the brave efforts some people make to rise above community pressure against involving the police. Some people in West Belfast commented, however, that the RUC's response rate had improved markedly since the ceasefire.

In the context of extensive under-reporting of crime to the police, mechanisms for local crime management become critical in people's sense of how real and serious the ordinary crime problem is in their neighbourhood. Local crime management is successfully effected by means of the survival of community structures, such as extended family kinship patterns, a strong sense of neighbourliness, even on the large and relatively new estates, and a vivid sense of local identity. It is also effected by the availability of authority figures in the community, such as youth workers, priests and ministers, teachers and representatives of community organisations, who get drawn into dealing with crime, and the ready mobilisation of the skills and resources of community agencies and organisations which interest and involve themselves in crime management.

A sense of local community survives but is weaker in East Belfast, where there is a sense of greater social change and dislocation, in part due to the different effects of 'the troubles' on patterns of mobility and redevelopment. The areas where community structures are at their strongest are also those with the highest social deprivation, which presents a paradox, confounding most ideas of the causes of crime, which link it to social deprivation. People are aware that their neighbourhoods are often very socially deprived but that this has not led to a crime explosion. Thus, common sense explanations of crime proffered by most respondents do not link it with social deprivation but with such things as moral decline, social change, the search for status and displays of machismo, although their common sense solutions to crime often address issues of deprivation. In West Belfast there is a greater sense of the ethics or morality of crime, which seems to determine that on the whole criminals do not commit crime in their own area, and that they do not touch the elderly or children, although this local moral economy operates successfully only if criminals buy into the code. The victimisation experiences of children and the elderly in West Belfast seem to suggest that the code is not over-arching.

Local crime management is also successfully undertaken by paramilitary organisations which have a policing role in both working class Protestant and Catholic areas. The paramilitaries present themselves as responding to the community's needs for crime control so that their policing role is by community consent; some people even claim that the police themselves and other para-state agencies, like the Housing Executive, encourage victims to contact the local paramilitaries. However, there is also some intimidation and fear associated with

involving the paramilitaries. Yet in claiming that they police by consent, the paramilitaries have a dilemma: they have a policing role foisted upon them by the community but punishment beatings and shootings lose them community support, yet there are few other mechanisms by which they can impose control in their neighbourhoods. Hence the young hoods have lost some of their fear of the paramilitaries, and the paramilitaries some of their control in their neighbourhoods, because of the constraints based on punishment beatings and shootings since the ceasefire. However, the Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries have different profiles. The former are more likely than the latter to be involved in ordinary crime themselves and are less likely to be sensitive to the notion of community consent. Loyalist paramilitaries are often perceived as keen to control crime only in order to participate in it themselves or take a cut. The IRA's involvement in crime is not so much in visible, petty crime but in organised crime.

Most respondents expressed fears for the future, based around concern that there would be an explosion in the drug problem and its consequent escalation in drug-related ordinary crime, that an underclass would develop of alienated and disaffected youths, and that with the ceasefire, the paramilitaries would shift into organised crime. The ceasefire was associated in the minds of most people with a dilution of social control in their communities as community structures are weakened, broad social changes produce indiscipline, the paramilitaries lose control in their neighbourhoods and the police are unable to fill the vacuum. People have lived with 'the troubles' so long that, at the moment, most are unable to perceive a future without high levels of crime, of one sort or another.

4. CONCLUSION

In terms of indictable crime, Ireland has, like other island countries on the fringe of Europe, a low crime rate. There has been a switch from largely agrarian violent crime in the nineteenth century to more urban orientated property crimes. In the early part of this century, over half of Ireland's recorded indictable crime occurred in the Dublin metropolitan and Belfast city areas. Following the Second World War, there was no substantial increase in crime in either jurisdiction up to the early 1960s. Thereafter, there were very substantial increases which continued until 1983 in the Republic, when a peak of 102,387 indictable crimes was recorded, and to 1986 in Northern Ireland, when a peak of 68,255 indictable crimes occurred. There are marked similarities in the crime profiles of both countries which suggests that similar processes are at work to influence overall levels of crime. There are a number of significant peaks and troughs in the annual increase/decrease in crime for both North and South, and these times of rapid change are worthy of detailed analysis.

When crime incidence is translated into prevalence rates per 100,000 population it is clear that from around 1958, Northern Ireland has had a consistently higher rate than the Republic. This divergence has gradually widened, with the rate for the Republic being typically only 60 per cent of that of Northern Ireland. Overall, the indictable

crime rate in the Republic grew by a factor of almost five fold between 1945 and 1993, while that of the North by almost ten fold. This is not dissimilar to the rate of growth in England and Wales between 1950 and 1993, which is around nine fold. However, the crime rate per 100,000 population in England and Wales in 1993 remained considerably above that for both Northern Ireland and the Republic, being 10,369, 4,113 and 2,778 respectively.

For both countries by far the bulk of recorded indictable offences relate to offences against property, mostly theft and burglary. Violent offences against people, including sex offences, only make up a very small percentage of the total. Comparisons between the Republic and Northern Ireland using a number of crime index offences reveal that murder was very low in both countries until the start of 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland. By 1971 the murder rate escalated in Northern Ireland and peaked in 1972. By 1977 it had dropped back significantly but still remained at a very much higher level than the Republic. Civil unrest in the North also influenced the murder levels in the Republic. The level of homicide in the Republic remains low and appears to be among the lowest in Europe, although latest figures to November 1995 show that 40 murders have occurred so far compared to 25 for the whole of 1994, thought to relate to drugs and organised crime. Sex crimes, particularly rape, have shown very substantial increases since the early 1970s, much of this increase due to changes in reporting and recording practices. There is some evidence that a substantial amount of serious sexual crime goes unreported in the Republic, which may in part explain the much lower rate of rapes per 100,000 population reported in the Republic compared to Northern Ireland.

Robbery in both parts of Ireland increased substantially from around 1970 with the advent of civil unrest in Northern Ireland. However, by around 1981 similar levels were reached in the Republic, perhaps reflecting the emergence of criminal gangs and drug-related robberies. Nonetheless, when converted into rates per 100,000 people the rate in the Republic has been running at normally less than half that of Northern Ireland. Burglary for the Republic has generally been happening at a lower rate than Northern Ireland and elsewhere, although the findings of local crime surveys throw the official statistics on burglary in the Republic into serious doubt.

Victimisation and self-report surveys give us an alternative picture of crime which supplements that available from recorded crime statistics despite their theoretical and methodological limitations. Neither part of Ireland has a tradition of having victimisation or self-report studies, however the surveys thus far completed have produced invaluable information. Because of differences in instrumentation and methodology it is difficult to make direct comparisons between the various surveys; comparisons on crime over time and between countries requires close liaison and co-ordination in design and procedures to ensure like is being compared with like. Nonetheless, the various surveys do yield a number of common themes. Crime and victimisation are more prevalent than suggested by recorded crime statistics, although much of this crime is of an essentially minor nature, which in many

instances has not warranted involvement of the police. Certain crimes are much more likely than others to be reported to and recorded by the police. Much domestic vandalism and minor theft goes unreported. Burglary and car theft are more likely to be reported, probably for insurance reasons, yet a substantial number of burglaries still go unrecorded. Breen and Rottman (1985) suggested that the rate of burglary may be twice as great in the Irish Republic as that found in recorded statistics. The rate of robbery may be as much as ten times greater. Overall, only about one in three crimes mentioned in crime surveys appear to find their way into official crimes statistics, although this is to be expected as recorded crime statistics are designed to pick up only the more serious crimes. What is more, certain crimes reported by the public may appear under different crime categories after being processed by the police. The British Crime Surveys suggest it is one in four, although this is not necessarily comparable.

The bench-mark victimisation survey by Breen and Rottman (1985) threw into serious question the conventional view that the Republic of Ireland has a low crime rate. When they compared their survey results for burglary in a dwelling, vehicle theft and vandalism, it indicated that the Irish rates were running substantially higher than those in England and Wales as measured by the 1982 British Crime Survey. However, later surveys, most notably by Murphy and Whelan (1995), have found that Ireland has a low victimisation rate compared to other countries, and is on the decline. They also discovered different patterning of crime across the country with Dublin having a much higher level than the rest of the country. Murphy and Whelan found that professionals/managers and other non-manual workers were more at risk than manual workers. This differs from findings in England and Wales, where much property crime is targeted against the less well off. This difference may be a reflection of a moral code in which criminals in Ireland are less likely to steal from 'their own'. A further finding from the O'Connell and Whelan (1994) study was that women in Dublin were more likely to be victimised than men, which is at odds with international findings.

In Northern Ireland, the Continuous Household Survey consistently found that victimisation for such offences as burglary, vehicle thefts and vandalism was lower than that in England and Wales as measured by the British Crime Survey. This finding was reinforced by the International Crime Survey which estimated that Northern Ireland had the lowest rate of victimisation of all fourteen participating countries over a range of personal and property offences. Only for car and motorcycle theft did Northern Ireland come above the mean. On the other hand, the recent Northern Ireland Crime Survey, carried out in 1995, found that Northern Ireland had a victimisation rate of 27 per cent, which puts it closer to the rate in England and Wales. This puts into doubt the view that the province has a low crime rate. Just under half of crimes mentioned by survey respondents were reported to the police. The Self-Reported Delinquency Study carried out in Belfast showed that delinquency was widespread amongst young people but much of it was a minor

nature and of low intensity. However, there was a minority who reported offending more than fifty times per year, especially in the drug and violence categories.

The results of the various crime surveys from both parts of Ireland are complex and at times yield findings which are unlikely to be explained by changes in the levels of crime. It is almost certain that some of the discrepancies are due to differences in instrumentation and sampling procedures, for which reason caution must be exercised in comparing survey results. However, the findings from both crime surveys and self-report studies show that lifestyle is an important factor in both victimisation and perpetration. Social behaviour, such as the places where people go at night or the property they own, can influence their risk of victimisation. This adds to our knowledge of the distribution of crime and vulnerability to victimisation in a manner which is almost impossible to determine from recorded crime statistics.

When crime began to rise steeply in the Republic from the mid-1960s it increased in all areas, suggesting that similar criminogenic factors were at work. However, Dublin led the way, particularly in more sophisticated crimes and in drug related crime. The crime profile for Dublin strongly influences that for the whole country. Although having only about 30 per cent of the total population it regularly accounts for between five and six crimes out of every ten in the whole country. Thus, the Dublin area has by far the greatest crime rate per 1,000 population, followed by Cork East and Limerick. Police divisions on the West coast, most notably Mayo, have very low crime rates. Violent crimes, such as murder, have not been high in Dublin and usually make up less than one per cent of the total crimes recorded. On the other hand, the Dublin area is usually the location for over 80 per cent of armed robberies in the Republic. There were large increases in armed robberies in the early 1980s, largely attributed to drug related crime in Dublin. In Northern Ireland, the Belfast area usually accounts for around 60 per cent of the recorded crime. The most crime prone police division is 'A', which covers the commercial and entertainment centre of Belfast. Serious crime increased very dramatically after 1970, associated with civil unrest. Belfast typically accounted for between half and two-thirds of such crimes, notably murder and robbery. Crime is thus an urban phenomenon and crime patterns in both parts of Ireland are crucially structured by crime in the capital city in each jurisdiction.

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DISCUSSION

Paul O'Mahony: It gives me great pleasure to propose a vote of thanks from the Society to Dr Bill Lockhart for his excellent presentation of this fascinating and enlightening paper, describing his research and that of his colleagues, Prof. John Brewer and Dr Paula Rodgers.

This paper is particularly timely because it is a pioneering and meticulous approach to the important and previously neglected work of comparison of crime statistics of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland undertaken at a time when public opinion in the Republic seems firmly convinced that we are suffering under the lash of a horrendous crime wave of dimensions unknown since the time of Genghis Khan. This paper is a salutary reminder of the relative favourableness of our position and it sounds an important cautionary note about the inadvisability of the sort of extreme and exaggerated claims about crime that have become commonplace in public discourse in recent years.

Official Garda figures accord with popular perceptions and the impressions conveyed in the media insofar as they tell us that crime and especially confrontational crime involving assault or the threat of it, **is** now at the highest level of modern times in the Republic of Ireland. However, there can be no question but that we have seen, especially in the aftermath of the three separate, horrific murders occurring almost simultaneously in January, a totally unjustified hysteria about crime generated by sectors of the media and certain politicians. This paper is a very useful antidote. While recognising that we face a serious and deteriorating crime situation, it serves no useful purpose for us to engage in an emotional and unsubstantiated rhetoric that loses track of the fact that many other countries routinely and for the most part soberly deal with far worse crime situations.

The growth in crime of the last several decades is an almost universal phenomenon and the Irish experience is reflected in all other western industrialised democracies. Dr Lockhart and his colleagues plot an amazingly similar trajectory for the growth in crime for the Republic and Northern Ireland in the period since World War II. The two jurisdictions even shared a short period of relief - with declining crime rates for a few years in the late eighties. Incidentally, the crime growth curve for Britain also takes a generally similar path. The authors make the reasonable inference that "similar processes are at work to influence overall levels of crime."

However, while the authors show that the profile of growth of crime has been very similar in the Republic and Northern Ireland, they also adduce evidence which indicates that in the forties and early fifties per capita crime rates were almost identical South and North of the border, but that in the sixties this changed to the point where crime rates, over most categories and not just terrorist-related crimes, were consistently worse in Northern Ireland. This difference has been maintained into the present and Dr Lockhart and his colleagues tell us that on average, according

to official figures, crime rates in the Republic are about 60 per cent of those in Northern Ireland.

What makes this result especially significant is the fact that in an important International Victimisation Study, Northern Ireland, as the authors point out, “has been found to have the lowest rate of victimisation of all fourteen participating countries over a range of personal and property offences.” It would appear that the crime rate in Northern Ireland stands in much the same relation to those in other developed countries as that in which the Republic stands to Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Office has been able to exploit this result very successfully in support of inward investment by multinational companies. It was a major missed opportunity that the Irish Government refused to participate in the International Victimisation Study. The results would have no doubt been very favourable and of great utility to the IDA. Instead, the IDA have to combat and counteract, as best they can, exaggerated and unrealistic impressions of Ireland as a country plagued by crime, which are found in the press and broadcast media.

The significant differences, favouring the Republic, also apply to the case of homicide, even when terrorist-related killings are factored out of the equation. The American criminologist Bill Wilbanks has recently presented figures for Northern Ireland relating specifically to non-terrorist homicide. Dr Lockhart and his colleagues have, apparently, not had access to these official figures on non-terrorist homicide. Nevertheless they, surprisingly suggest that there were no such non-terrorist killings in Northern Ireland in 1990. However, this view is contradicted by Wilbanks’ figures, which suggest there were in fact 17 such deaths in 1990. Going by Wilbanks’ figures, we can conclude that the Republic’s homicide rate is about 60 per cent of the non-terrorist homicide rate in Northern Ireland over recent decades, thus mirroring the differential found in crime more generally.

I cannot agree with Dr Lockhart and his colleagues that “as in Northern Ireland, most of the increase in murders since 1970 (in the Republic) can be attributed to terrorist incidents”. There have been a large number of terrorist related killings in the Republic in the period of the Troubles, notably the 33 deaths in one day due to the Monaghan and Dublin bombings in 1974. However, recent years have seen few Troubles-related deaths in the South but a significant and very worrying increase in sex murders, felony murders and contract killings.

Dr Lockhart and his colleagues are to be commended for their care in examining the various issues about comparative crime rates in the two jurisdictions against the widest possible evidential background. They are right to raise serious difficulties about the reliability and validity of official crime figures. They are also right to place considerable weight on the alternative vision of the crime problem emanating from the few victimisation studies that have been undertaken in Ireland.

Some years back a policy decision was made by the Garda Síochána to exclude bicycle theft from the category of indictable crime, which is the category of nontrivial crime which attracts most media attention and for that matter most attention from the police themselves and the criminal justice system generally. When it is remembered that just a few years ago as many as 3,000 bicycles disappeared from the grounds of Trinity College in one year, it may be appreciated that simply dropping this category of crime can amount to ‘massaging’ of the data, leading to a very significant improvement in official crime figures. Similarly, car thefts do not appear in the indictable crime figures in the Republic, if the car turns up within a few months - even though burnt out and totally destroyed. The ‘theological’ reasoning behind this little sleight of hand is that the police cannot know if the car was burned by a different person from the one who took it in the first place. The person who originally took the car may after all, the argument runs, not have intended to deprive the owner of the use of his car on a permanent basis.

In their effort to get at the whole picture and in particular to find a corrective for the problems of definition, categorisation, non-reporting and non-recording, which afflict official crime statistics, Dr Lockhart and his colleagues have presented us with the available evidence from victimisation studies as well as official data sources. They have shown that very serious questions are raised by the conflict of evidence emerging in this comparative process. For example, the Breen and Rottman study of 1985 challenges the conventional wisdom, repeated yet again here, that crime rates in the Republic of Ireland are considerably lower than in Britain.

However, Dr Lockhart and his colleagues have, I believe, over-emphasised the dramatic results of the Breen and Rottman study, which, for example, show that according to victims’ surveys burglary rates are higher in Ireland than in England despite official figures from both countries strongly indicating the reverse. There are methodological issues around the Breen and Rottman study that suggest caution in accepting this conclusion, but it is also relevant that their survey coincided with an all time peak for some of the small number of crimes they studied such as joy-riding. More recent studies by O’Connell and Whelan and Whelan and Murphy suggest that victimisation studies generally confirm the validity of the comparative picture derived from official figures and in fact add to our confidence that crime rates in the Republic are significantly lower than in the UK.

Finally, Dr Lockhart gave us a brief introduction to the ethnographic side of their research project. Their multimethod approach is very much to be welcomed and it was clear from the presentation that the ethnographic method had a great deal to contribute to our understanding of the multi-faceted and intricate business of criminal behaviour and indeed law-abidingness. Many of the findings from this part of the study were challenging and thought-provoking. For example, we learned that fear of crime is much lower in West Belfast than in East and that some of the subjects commented that crime is lower than might be expected given widespread unemployment and deprivation in certain areas of the city.

One quotation in particular indicates both the importance of the always unique social and psychological context of crime and the value of the ethnographic approach to unravelling its complexities: “The areas where community structures are at their strongest are also those with the highest social deprivations, which presents a paradox, confounding most ideas of the causes of crime which link it to social deprivation.” This stimulating statement conjures up a veritable Pandora’s box of ideas for research with ‘Hope’ rattling around in there somewhere.

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Kieran O’Dwyer: Dr Lockhart and his co-authors are to be congratulated on their research. It highlights many key aspects of the crime situation in Ireland. It is also timely in that it puts recent headline crimes in the Republic in perspective. The comparison between North and South offers many useful insights and the ethnographic study breaks new ground. It also draws attention to un-reported crime and repeat victimisation. Their paper is a welcome addition to the rather sparse literature on Irish crime.

The paper is wide in scope and my short comments cannot hope to do full justice to it. I can only concentrate on a number of points, and refer in particular to experiences in the Republic.

A principal focus of the analysis is *long-term trends* and *comparisons between the two jurisdictions*, based mainly on official figures of indictable crimes. These show very similar overall patterns in both parts of the island which suggest similar processes at work in influencing the overall levels of crime. The indictable crime rate grew by almost five fold in the Republic between 1945 and 1993 and by almost ten

fold, from a lower base, in Northern Ireland. This rate of increase is not out of keeping with rises in crime rates elsewhere in Europe although the paper makes the interesting point that the take-off in crime occurred almost a decade later than in England and Wales, reflecting Ireland's later social and economic development.

Of particular note is the fact that crime rates per 100,000 of the population are typically between 50 per cent and 66 per cent higher in the North than in the South, at least based on official records. It is worth pointing out that this is in the context of the 1988 International Victimisation Survey which showed Northern Ireland as having the lowest crime rate of the fifteen countries surveyed. The authors later challenge this picture of comparative low crime rates.

The analysis presents a different *picture of crime* than might be suggested by recent high-profile crimes and media coverage in the Republic. It reminds us, for example, that the 1993 total for non-indictable crimes in the Republic is still less than the peak figure of 1983 (and so is the 1994 figure). More importantly, perhaps, it shows that offences against the person are a tiny proportion of serious crime overall - 1.3 per cent in 1993, of which 78 per cent were detected within the reference period. Theft, burglary and fraud between them account for by far the major part of indictable crime - 95.6 per cent in 1994. A similar picture emerges in the North based on figures for persons proceeded against, albeit with a figure of 8 per cent for offences against the person. On a minor point, the paper regrets that the category of "other" broken down more in the Annual Report of the Garda Síochána, given that it accounts for over 40 per cent of Group 3 crimes. This has been brought to the attention of those who prepare the report.

The paper goes on to examine what *victimisation surveys* can tell us about crime. These are accepted as a valuable complement to official figures, particularly because they reveal unreported and unrecorded crime. But while the authors warn of the theoretical and methodological difficulties that victimisation surveys suffer in their turn, they may nevertheless err on the side of giving them too much emphasis in their conclusions.

Breen and Rottman estimated in 1982/83 that the Gardaí recorded 46.5 per cent of burglaries, 67 per cent of thefts from vehicles and 70.6 per cent of car thefts, but acknowledged that these were subject to sampling error and the possibility of recording by the Gardaí under other categories. They then used their figures to compare with crime rates from the British Crime Survey and these are quoted in the paper. They found much higher levels of burglary, vehicle theft and vandalism compared to England and Wales. The paper suggests that this was because crime rates at the time were at an all-time high in 1983, and contrasts it with Murphy and Whelan's finding of an overall victimisation rate of just 14 per cent in 1994. However it is worth pointing out that the 1994 crime figures were almost as high as in 1983 (99 per cent).

There is a need for further study of *unreported crime*. The available evidence is confusing. O'Connell and Whelan (1994) found that 19 per cent of Dublin crimes were not reported to the Gardaí while Murphy and Whelan (1995) found a rate of unreported crime of 9 per cent nationally, which respondents said represented crime of a less serious nature - they said they reported 98 per cent of burglaries, for example. This is reassuring on the face of it, especially when Murphy and Whelan also found evidence of very favourable public attitudes towards the Gardaí. For example, 83 per cent of respondents regarded their local Gardaí as approachable and only 3 per cent as unapproachable.

Yet, O'Connell and Whelan estimated that, on the basis of crime per 1000 of the population, Garda figures still only represented 63 per cent of crime reported by respondents and 51 per cent of total survey crime (I have adjusted their Garda estimates for the higher 1993 figures and for inclusion of non-indictable crime). Part of the explanation is the recording by the Gardaí of non-indictable crimes of assault, criminal damage and unauthorised takings of vehicles only where proceedings are actually initiated. I note that the Northern Ireland 1995 victimisation survey and the authors' ethnographic study point to significant under-statement of crime in official figures in that jurisdiction.

Further victimisation surveys would be informative. A forthcoming national victims survey by the Garda Research Unit, in conjunction with the ESRI, will help throw some light on the issue, but this will be limited by the fact that the sample is drawn from Garda crime records.

Breen and Rottman suggested *understatement of the level of offences* in Irish official statistics relative to England and Scotland because, according to the current paper, they are based on an updating procedure that shifts main offence category in line with court proceedings and because only the most serious crime is recorded in respect of a particular incident. In fact, I understand that re-categorisation occurs in only a very small percentage of cases, informally estimated at 1-2 per cent, and, in respect of England and Wales at least, Home Office counting rules likewise specify that only the most serious crime is recorded for statistical purposes.

The current analysis also shows up *geographical differences*. South of the border, Dublin stands out with crime incidence far in excess of its share of population, typically running at around 50-60 per cent of total crime. Smoothed trends for Dublin and the rest of the country have followed much the same pattern, but it is interesting that over the ten year period from 1985, increases or decreases on a year to year basis have coincided on only three occasions. Looking at other urban areas, the paper supports the view that crime is largely an urban phenomenon.

Repeat victimisation is another area worthy of further study in Ireland. The paper refers to revictimisation in its discussion of the 1995 Northern Ireland crime survey. The victimisation rate was 27 per cent but victims experienced an average of 1.5

crimes each, illustrating that a small number of persons experience a disproportionately high level of crime. This phenomenon is well documented in the UK, where the British Crime Surveys revealed that 4 per cent of victims accounted for a staggering 44 per cent of crime. This has obvious implications for crime reduction and prevention strategies. There is nothing to suggest as dramatic a picture here but not much attention has yet been given to its examination.

The paper is a substantial piece of work and rich in material. It might usefully have included an analysis of trends in detection rates and policing resources as another contribution to understanding crime since the Second World War, but this was clearly outside the remit of the authors on this occasion.

The paper is one more sign of a growing interest in research in crime and criminology in Ireland and I look forward to the rest of the report.

It gives me great pleasure to second the vote of thanks to Dr Lockhart.