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The Fear Drop

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Abstract

Although many countries have shown a distinct drop in crime over the last decades, the criminological literature suggests that fear of crime in those countries remained relatively stable. Research on this issue is sparse however, mostly confined to a single country, a few indicators and/or a relatively short timeframe. For this chapter 1,100 data series on fear of crime related items from (supra)national surveys were collected, covering 121 countries and more than 25 years (1989-2015). Using these data, a first prototype for an International Fear of Crime Trend Index was developed. Used on the five UN-regions with the highest average amount of data series per country, the index shows a pronounced fear drop in four of the five regions: all of them in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon countries. Explanations for these fear drops are hypothesized and directions for further research are formulated.

1. Introduction

Both in the social debate and in discussions among criminologists, a popular narrative maintains that while crime has fallen in many countries, citizens nevertheless continue to feel unsafe. Hope (2003) observes, for example, that the international reductions in crime ‘have had little impact upon the fear of crime’ (Hope, 2003, p. 14). Dittmann, (2005) observes that between 1996 and 2000, while crime actually fell in that period, fear of crime increased in the majority of EU countries. Innes & Fielding (2002) note that in the United Kingdom ‘the fall in crime has not been matched by a corresponding decline in reported fear of crime’, which implies the existence of a *reassurance gap* (ACPO, 2001) in the UK. Previously, Warr (1993) had already discussed a relative stability in the fear of crime based on observations made in the United States. However, the authors also made similar observations relatively recently. For example, Davis & Dossetor (2010) believe that the concern with some crime types among the Australian population has increased, ‘despite an actual decline in crime rates for the offences in question.’ (p 1). Renauer (2009) notes that the population of Oregon (US) has apparently not noticed that they are dealing with a drop of crime. Zimring indicates that such phenomena do not surprise him, as he says ‘*it's typical for people to ignore drops in crime*’ (Zimring, in Beam, 2011 p. 1). Seen from that perspective, it is not inconceivable that Ditton, Farrall, Bannister & Gilchrist propose ‘as a “criminological maxim” that fear of crime climbs when crime rates climb, but fails to fall when crime falls’ (Ditton, Farrall, Bannister & Gilchrist, 2000, quoted in Skogan, 2011 p. 102).

But is that actually the case? Do perceptions of security actually fail to improve when the crime rate drops substantially? Can populations in so many different countries really be so systematically blind to what's going on? And, moreover, if that was the case at the beginning of this century, is that still the situation currently?

Anyone wishing to form an impression of this soon encounters a gap in the scientific literature. The number of studies of trends in crime is numerous, but studies of trends in fear of crime or security perceptions are scarce¹. Studies into the ‘crime drop’ are in abundance (e.g. Barker, 2010; Jan van Dijk, 2014; Farrell & Brantingham, 2013; Farrell & Brown, 2016; Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni & Mailley, 2008; Hopkins, 2016; Lehti, 2014; Marlow, 2014; Rosenfeld & Messner, 2009; Skogan, 2011; J Van Dijk, Tseloni & Farrell, 2012; von Hofer, 2014), but in those studies any attention to the development of a fear of crime is more the exception than the rule. This is also noted by Skogan (2011) in one of the few studies which examines both the development of crime and security perceptions. He points out that the material available at the time did not go much beyond a few trends such as those described by pollsters, meaning that very little is known about the over-time dynamics of the fear of crime. While an insight into those dynamics is extremely important, also given the far-reaching political and policy consequences often associated with a low perception of security (see, for example, the development of reassurance policing in the UK (ACPO, 2001; Innes and Fielding, 2002; Millie and Herrington, 2005). Based on his study, Skogan questions the prevailing view ‘that fear of crime inevitably ratchets up; it also can go down, and dramatically so’ (Skogan, 2011, p. 120). Eysink Smeets & Vollaard (2015), followed later by Eysink Smeets (2015), come to the same conclusion. Using a number of victim surveys and opinion polls from north-western Europe, the US, Canada and Australia from the past 20 years, they formed an impression of the dominant trend in the development of security perception. Contrary to the dominant view, they found significant drops in risk perception, worry and fear of crime. Even to the extent that they, in an analogy of a crime drop, speak of a fear drop (Eysink Smeets & Vollaard, 2015, p. 238).

Towards a Fear of Crime Trend Index

This chapter expands on the work of Eysink Smeets & Vollaard (2015) and Eysink Smeets (2015). Where that work was still based on a relatively limited number of sources and indicators in a relatively limited number of countries, in this chapter the number of sources, indicators and countries has been greatly expanded and the analysis further systematised. Almost 1,100 data series were collected, covering 121 countries (paragraph 3) and a first Fear of Crime Trend Index – with the character of a prototype - was developed (paragraph 4). This Index can provide insight into the development of fear of crime in a large number of countries, regions and several continents. This first Trend Index will show clearly that, contrary to the prevailing view, there has indeed been a fear drop in (parts of) the last two decades in at least a great part of the western world (paragraphs 5 and 6).

The logical follow-up question is of course how to explain this fear drop. This requires further research, but several hypotheses are formulated. One of these is that there is not only a fear drop, but also a fear change. A change of the substance of the security perception which the traditional measuring tools are not (yet) able to detect (paragraph 7). However, this chapter will of course begin with an operationalisation of the terms used and a justification of the methods used (paragraph 2).

¹ For example: Web of Science, 17 October 2016: trend* + crime: more than 1,600 hits. Trend* + fear of crime: 80

2. Measuring the fear of crime

The previous chapters have already devoted ample attention to fear of crime as a multi-faceted term. As an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of sub-constructs. With cognitive, affective and conative dimensions (editors to cross reference here). With large differences between perceptions of risks, worries, concerns, anxieties and fears (editors to cross reference). With the different aggregation levels to which they apply (from personal to societal) and the various extent of both the geographical and psychological proximity that play a role².

Measuring fear of crime: no easy task

Much has already been written about the difficulties surrounding any valid and reliable measurement of fear of crime (see, for example, A. Barker & Crawford, 2006; Ferraro & Grange, 1987; Gabriel & Greve, 2003; E. Gray, Jackson & Farrall, 2008; Emily Gray, Jackson & Farrall, 2011; Jackson & Kuha, 2014; Pauwels, 2005; Vanderveen, 2006). The conceptualisation and measurement of the complex concept of fear of crime are far from being crystallised, regarding which Ditton et al (2000, p. 154) state that ‘the so-called fear of crime is – to an unknown degree – a function of the types of questions that are asked, and the way they are posed’.³ Van der Veen (2006) indicates two ways in which to improve this. The first is to continue with the traditional indicators and research items but with an increased awareness of the fact that they only measure a single sub-aspect of the umbrella concept fear of crime. Consequently, valid and reliable results only become available if there is a well-thought-through combination of multiple indicators. The second is the development of an entirely new set of research instruments that is more firmly rooted in theory than was previously the case. Others (see, for example, (Bug, Kraus & Walenda, 2015; Gray, Jackson & Farrall, 2009; Pleysier, 2008) point to the importance of experiences from other research disciplines, such as those from general survey investigations, the psychology of the survey response and the study of everyday emotions. Still others, including Gray, Farrall and Jackson (see, for example, Farrall, Gray & Jackson, 2006; Gray, Jackson & Farrall, 2008b; Gray et al., 2011) or Riccardo (2016) developed and test(ed) new sets of research tools. Their insights, largely from the UK, while gradually filtering through in to tools used elsewhere, have not yet become generally accepted.

Cross-cultural and longitudinal measurements of fear of crime: the measurement invariance issue

Another question that is relevant to the study of international trends in the development of fear of crime has remained relatively underexposed in the criminology literature up to now. This concerns measurement invariance, both from a cross-national and temporal perspective. Simply expressed, does the same question in the same circumstances produce the same answer in different countries at different periods in time? Pleysier (2008) emphasises that measurement invariance in much research into fear of crime is indeed – often implicitly – assumed, but only actually assessed in exceptional cases. Without such an assessment,

² we propose to rewrite this part in the definitive version to permit references to previous chapters.

³ See previous footnote: here too we propose drawing up the definitive version so that it is clear about what was handled in the previous chapters and references can be made to submitted proposals.

however, comparing groups, countries, times is a dicey undertaking: is the same thing actually being measured? Pleysier, 2008, Pauwels & Pleysier, 2003, 2005)?

Pleysier (2008) researches the extent to which there was measurement invariance in the items used in the Belgian Security Monitor to measure fear of crime. From a cross-cultural perspective (through an analysis of the results of the Security Monitor in the French-speaking and Flemish communities in Belgium) and temporal perspective (through an analysis of the measurements taken in 1998 to 2000 and 2002). For this he uses a combination of factor correspondence analysis and confirmatory factor analysis via structural equation modelling. From a cross-cultural perspective, the constructs used to measure the fear of crime turned out to indeed be invariant. From a temporal perspective, however, that was not the case: in two of the four indicators used, for example, he observed a parameter drift in the still relatively limited period between 1998 and 2002 (Pleysier, 2008). Pauwels (2014) later conducted a similar exercise when measuring avoidance behaviour among citizens with divergent demographic characteristics. He found that at least one of the constructs used can only be viewed as partially invariant.

3. In search of the trends: research question, working method and data used

Central to this chapter is a question of what the international trends are in the development of (the level of) fear of crime among the population. Has there indeed been very little visible change over time, as Warr (1993) asserts? Or are there, as suggested by Skogan (2011), certainly large visible changes, even to the extent that we can refer to a fear drop (Eysink Smeets, 2015; Eysink Smeets and Vollaard, 2015)?

Identifying – and especially interpreting – the international trends in fear of crime is a tricky affair. First, only the existing sources can be used: mostly national and supranational surveys that use (at most) a few traditional indicators (such as the classic question about 'feeling safe when walking alone on the street in your neighbourhood at night'). The folly of deriving the development of fear of crime from just a single indicator has since been sufficiently emphasised. In line with the suggestions of VanderVeen (2006), this study therefore uses data of at least three different indicators to form an impression of the development of the fear of crime.

Second, the point regarding the frequent lack of measurement invariance assessments bodes caution regarding comparisons between countries and different moments in time. This applies to the various national but also to the various supranational studies (cf. the International Crime and Victimization Survey ICVS or the World Value Survey). The latter do suggest a certain measure of comparability between countries owing to their uniform research questions and working method, but there can be no certainty whatsoever owing to the frequent lack of measurement invariance assessments. With respect to the differences in time – i.e. the trends that are key to this study – we will show in this study the trends in the various data series, but will explicitly have to leave open the possibility of measurement variance to explain these trends; an issue that certainly requires further research.

Procedure

Bearing in mind the limitations described above, we first collected the literature that contains some information about trends in fear of crime. As stated before, the result of this literature study was limited. We subsequently searched databases and Internet search engines for longitudinal surveys⁴ that included one or more questions concerning the concept of fear of crime. For practical reasons, the search focused primarily on English-language sources⁵ (or at least those with an English-language summary, such as the Swedish Crime Survey (The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå), 2016)). Unfortunately, language barriers sometimes form an obstacle, as Gerber, Hirtenlehner & Jackson (2010) also point out.

The surveys examined can be generally categorised into two types: dedicated crime and victim surveys (such as the British Crime Survey), and surveys that cover a broader range of social issues but which also focus on (at least a sub-aspect of) fear of crime. The surveys relate to various aggregation levels: supranational, national, regional/local, and sectors. Combining these two dimensions results in the classification as provided in table 3.1.

Aggregation Level	Crime & Victim Surveys	Broader Social Surveys ⁶
<i>Supranational</i>	• International Crime Victim Survey	• World Value Survey • Gallup World Poll • European Social Survey • Eurobarometer • Afrobarometer • Latinobarómetro
<i>National</i>	• British Crime Survey (UK) • Cadre de vie et sécurité (F) • Crime Survey for England & Wales • Gallup Poll Social Series: Crime • Garda Public Attitudes Survey (IRL) • New Zealand Crime & Safety Survey • Northern Ireland Crime Survey • Schweizerische Sicherheitsbefragung • Scottish Crime and Justice Survey • Swedish Crime Survey • Veiligheidsmonitor (B) • Veiligheidsmonitor (and predecessors⁷) NL • Victims of Crime Survey (SA) • Voldsofferundersøgelsen (DK)	• Baromètre IRSN (F) • Focus Canada • Gallup Canada • National Household Survey (IRL) • General Social Survey (CAN, AUS)
<i>Regional/local</i>	• <i>Not included</i>	• <i>Not included</i>
<i>Neighbourhood/sectors</i>	• <i>Not included</i>	• <i>Not included</i>

Table 3.1. Surveys with fear of crime indicators as collected in this study.

The supranational studies cover many countries, but contain few items about fear of crime. Some have been carried out on an annual or semi-annual basis for some time now (such as the

⁴ Surveys that only have a single edition, such as the German Viktimisierungssurvey 2012, were also ignored.

⁵ As well as in the Dutch or German languages.

⁶ Asia now also has a barometer, though there are as yet no long series available.

⁷ Integrale Veiligheidsmonitor – Veiligheidsmonitor Rijk – Politieonderzoek Bevolking - Enquête Slachtoffers Misdrijven - Enquête Rechtsbescherming en Veiligheid - Permanent Onderzoek Leefsituatie

Eurobarometer, since 2003); others have existed for longer but have larger intervals between the measurements. The national studies, certainly the dedicated crime and victim surveys, cover far fewer countries in total, but contain more items concerning the fear of crime.

The various studies are characterised by large differences in research method, research question, size of samples and timeframe. For example, in Belgium the most recent Security Monitor was conducted in 2008 (VanDenBogaerde, VandenSteen and DeBie, 2009). Some countries have a series of more or less comparable and successive surveys, such as the United Kingdom with the British Crime Survey and its successors, the Netherlands with the Police Population Monitor (1993 to 2005), the Central Government Security Monitor (until 2008), the Integrated Security Monitor (until 2011) and the Security Monitor (since 2012). Not only has the name changed but so have the research questions and methodology, which complicates the formation of time series. Comparable differences are discernible with respect to the random samples used. For example, where Gallup in its polls in the US only questions around 1,000 people (with large reliability margins as a result), we note that surveys in other countries sometimes question tens of thousands of respondents. Finally, not all studies are conducted with the same frequency. The dedicated national studies are often conducted annually, but other studies occur once every 4 to 5 years. The International Crime and Victim Survey (ICVS) and the World Value Survey, for example, have long intervals like this between measurements.

Indicators

The analysis of different surveys, mostly from different countries and regions, resulted in a large list of items. Most studies contain one or more of the traditional (VanderVeen, 2006) items for measuring (aspects of) fear of crime. Because of differences in question wording some items may look the same at first glance, but on close reading turn out to be quite different. For example, Gallup Poll asked respondents in the US: is there any area near where you live – that is, within a mile - where you would be afraid to walk alone at night? At the same time the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey asked respondents in Scotland: how safe do you feel walking alone in your local area after dark? The wording of these questions may look similar, but the exact meaning is different - for instance geographically or psychologically - (Ferraro, 1995; VanderVeen, 2006; Aebi, 2010; Eysink Smeets, 2015), they should therefore be treated as different items. Secondly, some items are culturally/country determined and are even asked in one single country only. For example, the Victimization and Crime Survey of South Africa asks respondents: does the fear of crime prevent you from keeping livestock/poultry outside in the kraal? Or does it prevent you from walking to fetch wood/water? This question may be important to reflect on the development of fear of crime in South Africa, but probably not in Western Europe.

Overall, the collected items relate to a cognitive, affective and conative dimension of fear of crime (Ferraro, 1995, VanderVeen, 2006), to judgements, values and emotions (Ferraro, 1995), to perceptions of criminality in general or of specific crimes (Van der Wurff, 1990) and to various levels of geographical and psychological proximity (Ferraro, 1995; VanderVeen,

2006; Aebi, 2010; Eysink Smeets, 2015). In line with these classifications, the items encountered could all be grouped into five main clusters⁸:

Cluster A: perceptions of (the level or) development of crime

This first cluster is comprised of items on the perception of the development of crime in general, in the country or in the neighborhood. Respondents are asked to compare the level of crime to one year ago (US), or to two (cf. England & Wales) or even three years ago (South Africa). This cluster also holds questions about how common certain type of (violent and property) crimes are in the local area. The items in this cluster amount to 12.6 per cent of the total amount of collected items (n=829).

Cluster B: perceptions of victimisation risk

The second cluster encompasses the perceptions of being a victim of crime, with items that reflect the likelihood that respondents (themselves, or family members) would be a victim of (a certain type of) crime, but also on the perceptions of victimization risks in general.

Cluster C: crime as a problem

Crime as a problem, the third main group, consists of items that reflect on the degree in which the public considers crime to be an important problem. As a problem for the country, for respondents personally, or in their neighborhood. Items that reflect to what amount respondents consider crime to have effect on the quality of live are positioned in this cluster as well⁹.

Cluster D: feelings of safety

This cluster is comprised of items that reflect on *worries* about specific type of crimes, including worry about becoming a victim (self, but again also worries about your family member or friend becoming a victim of crime (as asked by the GARDA Public Attitudes Survey in Ireland for instance). In this cluster are also the items on anxiety or *fear* in the broadest sense; fear when walking alone (in the dark) in your local area, fear in general, fear when home alone at night, fear when going out and fear when using public transport.

Cluster E: avoidance behavior

⁸ A sixth cluster of items that are used in some surveys, i.e. preventive behaviour, was not included in this first inventory. After all, these items cannot be seen not just as a reflection of risk perception or feelings of unsafety, but also as a reflection of the means or possibility to act upon these.

⁹ It can be debated whether items in which respondents are asked about the degree to which they view criminality as a problem for the country or for themselves as individuals is a reliable enough indicator. Frequently (see, for example, the Eurobarometer), respondents are asked to indicate the most serious problems (e.g. the two most serious). In such a case, the answers provided have a *relative* character: the degree to which crime is viewed as one of the most important problems after all depends then on what other problems society is facing as well. If these are experienced as more of a problem, crime drops on the ranking, although this does not mean that the perceived problematic character of crime itself has diminished. Preliminary analyses of the trends in this cluster were fairly consistent with the trends in other main groups, so it was decided to include the items in this first Trend Index. Further on in this chapter it will be shown that in some regions the trends in this cluster are more pronounced than the trends in the other clusters, therefore these trends will be shown separately as well.

The fifth and last cluster, avoidance behavior, is comprised of different kinds of behavior people claim to do to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime or because of fear of crime. The question in the South African survey (mentioned above) whether fear of crime prevents respondents from fetching water or wood for instance. Or items on the avoidance of certain places like malls, shops, public transportation or using a taxi/car instead of walking., sometimes combined with the question whether this stops people from going out (alone) at night.

Collection of data

After the relevant items have been identified in each study, the data were collected. The data from many supranational studies (such as the barometers, the ESS and WVS) are available via an online analysis tool. Data from other studies were obtained via the various reports or via online available datasets in Excel-format (c.f. CSEW, NICS and SCJS). This complicated both data collection and analysis because, for example, the reports did not always contain the full data or answer categories. More than 1,100 data series were collected, after a first selection 829 data series regarding the development of (at least one sub-aspect of) the fear of crime were considered valid and reliable enough to be included. All collected data were entered in an Excel file and the items coded. A distinction was made between continent, region, country, type of research, type of item and year to which the item relates. The countries were arranged according to the geographical classification of the United Nations.¹⁰

Coverage of the data: clusters

The items and data series do not evenly cover the five clusters described earlier. A few items were found much more often than others: variants of the question about ‘feeling safe when walking alone at night’ comprised for instance 15 per cent of the total of items. The amount of available series per cluster:

A: perceptions of (the level or) development of crime	:	104 series (12.5 per cent)
B: perceptions of victimisation risk	:	51 series (6.2 per cent)
C: crime as a problem	:	263 series (31.7 per cent)
D: feelings of safety	:	363 series (43.8 per cent)
E: avoidance behavior	:	48 series (5.8 per cent)
Total	:	829 series (100.0 per cent)

Coverage of the data: geographical

The collected studies cover 121 countries, spread across 19 regions and six continents. However, the spread is not balanced. A majority of that series relate to countries in Europe (56 per cent n= 829),; Africa (20 per cent); North America¹¹ (4 per cent); South America (12 per cent); Asia (5 per cent) and, finally, Oceania (3 per cent). The top five regions with the highest average number of available data series per country:

1. Western Europe (23.9)

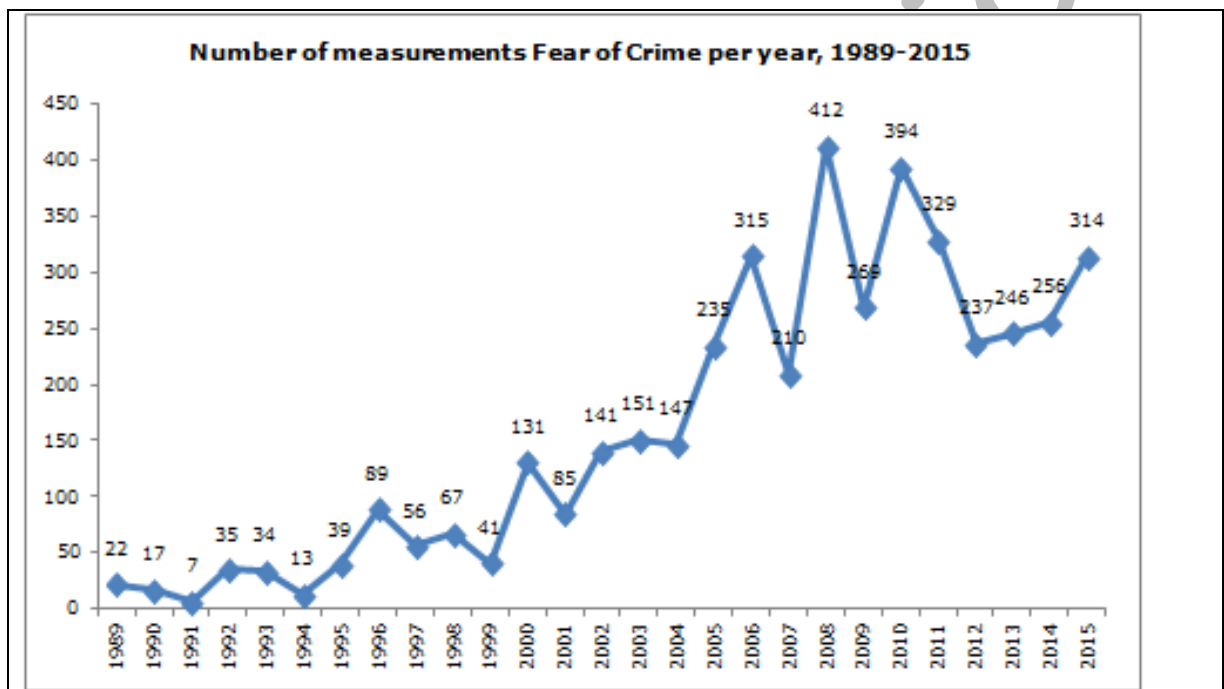
¹⁰ Consulted via <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#europe> on 8 August 2016. Some countries which regularly participate in European studies are geographically classified as being in Asia, such as Cyprus, Turkey and Israel.

¹¹ The continent of North America and the region of North America are not the same. The continent also includes Central America and the Caribbean.

2. North America (17)
3. Northern Europe (13.7)
4. Australia and New Zealand (13.5)
5. South America (5.7)

Coverage of the data: temporal

The graph 3.1 below shows the number of measurements of fear of crime has risen steadily in the past decades. Data for 1989-1994 are scarce. After 1994, the number of measurements slowly rises so that in later years, certainly in the period 2005-2015, there is much more data available. The waves in the graph can be explained by the supranational studies (such as ICBVS, World Value Survey), which were conducted with an interval of multiple years in a large number of countries simultaneously.



Graph 3.1. Temporal coverage of the data. Amount of measurements (= measurement of 1 item in 1 country) per year, period 1989-2015 (n=829).

4. Towards a Fear of Crime Trend Index

The limited number of studies that examine the trends in fear of crime often focus on one or, at most, a few cities or countries (Alemika and Chukuma, 2005; Louw, 2007; Gerber, Hirtenlehner and Jackson, 2010; Skogan, 2011; Vaughn, 2012), a relatively limited number of years (Jansson, 2006; Mistry, 2004; Weinrath, Clarke and Forde, 2007; Yirmibesoglu and Ergun, 2013) or are based on one or a few indicators (Mistry, 2004; Van Dijk, Van Kesteren and Smit, 2005; Barker and Crawford, 2006)). Some authors (Hope, 2003; Roberst and Indermauer, 2007; Renauer, 2009) note that while criminality falls, a large portion of the public nevertheless believe that crime has recently been on the rise. The trend through the

years in the proportion of the population that has this opinion has not been the focus of much attention, although Oppelaar & Wittebrood (2006) have shown that the trend here can carry a message in itself. It is therefore the trends that can be telling. However, we are unfamiliar with studies in which the trend has been identified based upon multiple sources in multiple countries across a longer period.

Owing to differences in research question formulation and research methods in the various surveys, it is risky to compare the findings from those surveys regarding the scale of perceptions of security/insecurity. While it is true that this limitation applies less to supranational studies because of their use of a standardised working method, these often contain, as referred to above, just a few indicators, of which it is unclear whether they are invariant across different countries.

A Fear of Crime Trend Index, which purely expresses the multi-year development of the various indicators concerning fear of crime, could counter a portion of the limitations referred to above. Some, such as (#ref), have argued for the development of such an index, but we have not come across any such index yet, either nationally or internationally. A few international indices in other areas, such as the OECD Better Life Index, (OECD, 2016) have a component relating to fear of crime, but these are based on a single indicator. At the local level there are several examples of fear of crime indices based on one or more indicators, such as the one-off index Weinrath, Clarke, & Forde (2007) created for Winnipeg for the years 1984, 1994 and 2004. In 2002, the Dutch city of Rotterdam introduced the 'Safety Index', in which a large number of indicators concerning safety in the city were systematically condensed to produce a single figure each year (and later every two years). Fear of crime is a subset in the index based on four indicators: satisfaction with the neighbourhood, perceived probability of the respondent becoming a victim, perceived probability of a member of the respondent's household becoming a victim and avoidance behaviour¹². The Rotterdam approach was later copied, though with some alterations, in an annual index issued by the city of Amsterdam from 2003.

Developing a Fear of Crime Trend Index

For the first test of a Fear of Crime Index, the 829 collected data series were grouped in the five clusters described above and according to the countries to which they related. Data series with multiple-year intervals between measurements were provided with imputed values for the intervening years, on the assumption that the development between two measurements would be linear. The data series were then indexed. Because the number of available data series between 1990 and 2015 continues to increase, it was decided to reverse-index the series, thus beginning with the year for which the most recent measurement was available (usually 2015 = 100). Still working according to the reverse-index method, where new data series that started in years prior to 2015, the average index figure for the country concerned for that year was used to begin these data series.

¹² Eysink Smeets (2016) shows that such an index is not without risk: for fear of being accused of manipulation, no corrections were carried out to correct method errors in the survey on which the index is at least partially based. Consequently, the fear of crime index worsened in the years of the method error, while this could be traced exclusively to changes in the surveys.

The availability of at least three usable data series, divided across at least two clusters, was applied as the minimum requirement for determining a Fear of Crime Trend Index figure for a country in a specific year. Subsequently an index was developed per UN region, based on the data for the countries in that region. This began by calculating an index per cluster based on all available data series per cluster in the region, with the criterion that an index figure would apply for a specific year if at least 50 per cent of the countries from the region concerned had a value available. An overall index figure was then calculated for the region concerned, based on the weighted average of the various clusters¹³. Finally, a check was made to see whether the extent to which the development of the regional indexes reflects the development in trends in the majority of the countries in the region concerned. Advanced statistical processing of this first test of a Fear of Crime Index has not yet been applied.

5. Findings

In this paragraph, we first present the findings across the five regions for which we could obtain the most data series.

5.1. Western Europe

According to the UN, Western Europe includes the countries of Belgium, Germany, France, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein and Monaco¹⁴. The literature makes frequent mention of a lack of a drop in the perception of insecurity, or even an increase of it, in the countries concerned in the past few decades (Dittmann, 2005; Barker and Crawford, 2006). This is often based on the development of one or several indicators over a relatively short period of time. However, the three clusters for which we were able to generate an index and which satisfy the minimum criteria set out above show a fall over a longer period (see Table 5.1.1.)

Cluster	series	countries	Index					
			1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
A. Perception of the development of crime (increasing)	22	2		261	146	120	111	100
B. Perception of the victimization risk (high)	17	6	167	158	128	113	95	100
C. Criminality as a problem (important problem)	28	7	224	168	171	183	146	100
D. Feelings of unsafety	69	7	131	123	126	125	112	100
E. Avoidance behaviour	30	3		181	136	138	120	100
Index overall	166	7	174	178	142	136	117	100

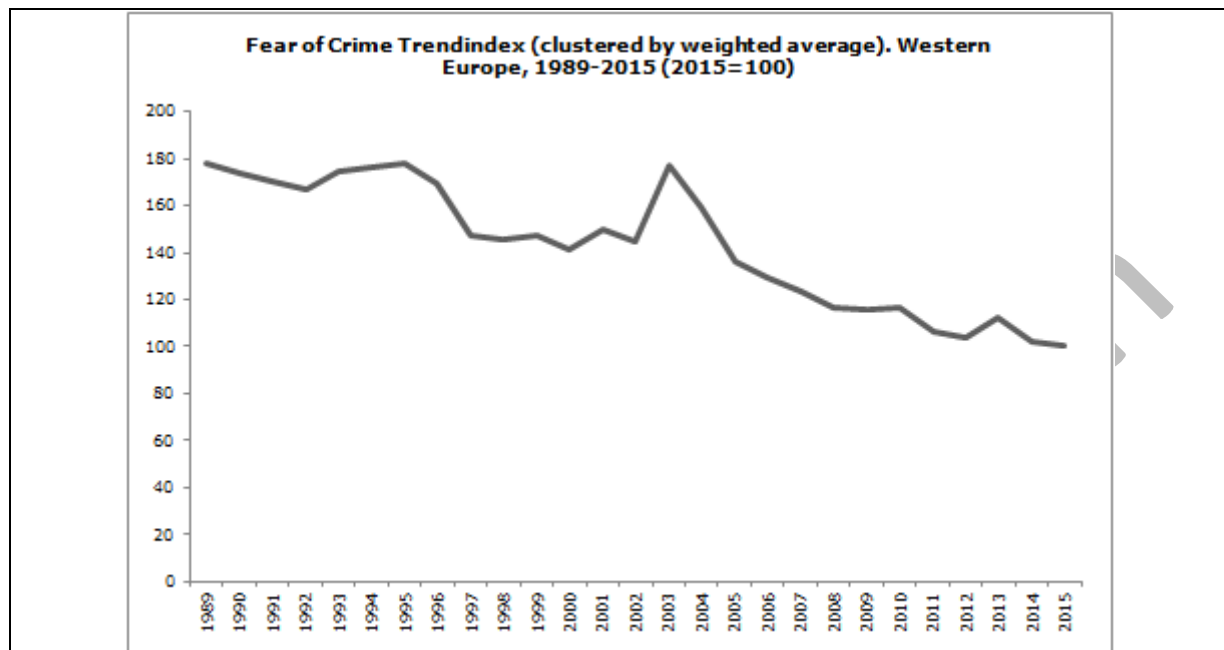
Table 5.1.1. Fear of Crime Trend Index for western Europa, including index figures for the five sub-clusters. Greyed-out figures are indicative index figures, based on multiple data series from multiple countries without compliance with all the minimum criteria set out in Section 4.

Most clusters show a more or less steady decline. Between 1995 and 2005 the indicators in cluster D show a fairly stable index figure, the indicators in cluster C even result in a rising index figure. From 2005 onwards an improvement is visible however in the index for Western

¹³ In a next step, weighing will be done as well for population size of the countries included in the index.

¹⁴ The latter two countries, Liechtenstein and Monaco, were not included in the assessment owing to their small size.

Europe in all clusters (see graph below 5.1.1.).



Graph 5.1.1 Fear of Crime Trend Index 1989-2015, Western Europe, based on weighed average of all clusters.

5.2. Northern Europe

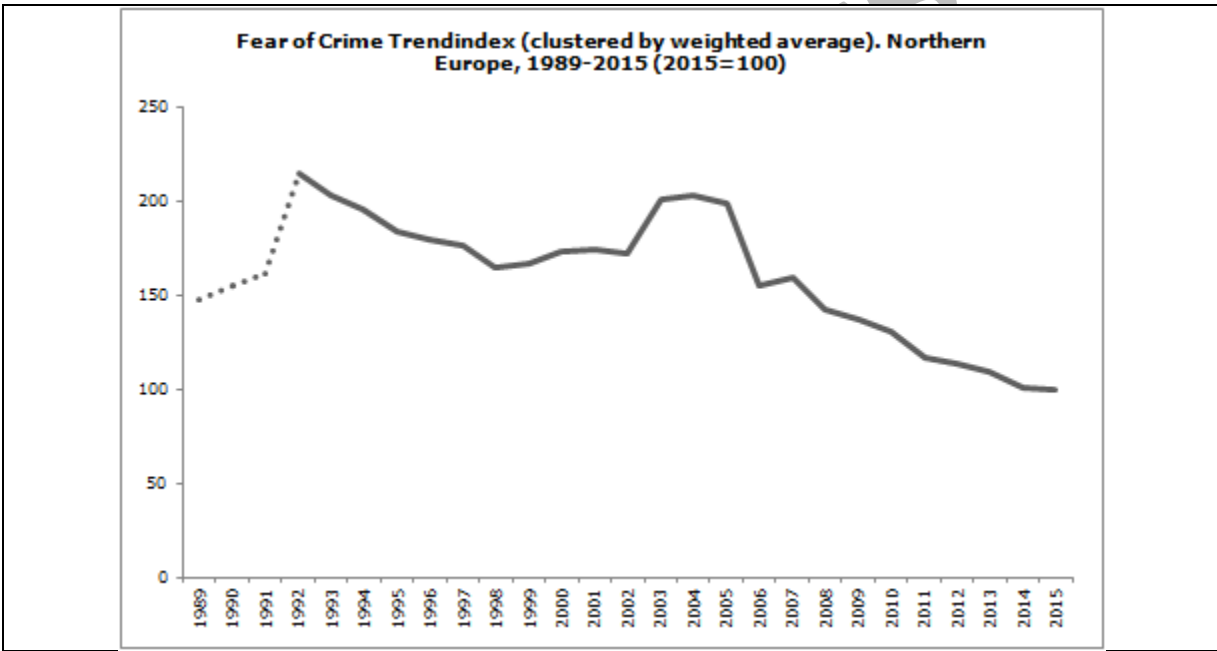
According to the UN classification, Northern Europe includes the countries of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, United Kingdom and Sweden. After correcting for the available data per country¹⁵, the index for Northern Europe includes a total of 11 countries. Table 5.2.1. again, gives the index figures for Northern Europe for each of the five clusters and for the overall index, in five-year steps.

Cluster	series	countries (n=11)	Index					
			1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
A. Perception of the development of crime (increasing)	22	6		237	179	148	127	100
B. Perception of the victimization risk (high)	24	9	155	167	164	149	145	100
C. Criminality as a problem (important problem)	49	9			210	367	156	100
D. Feelings of unsafety Unsafe feelings	72	11		150	142	133	115	100
E. Avoidance behaviour	6	2					110	100
Index overall	173	11	155	185	174	199	131	100

¹⁵ Iceland and Latvia did not meet the requirements for available data; The United Kingdom has partially separated data series for the countries that make up this kingdom (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), so that these countries have been counted as separate entities.

Table 5.121 Fear of Table 5.2.1. Crime Trend Index for Northern Europa, including index figures for the five sub-clusters. Greyed-out figures are indicative index figures, based on multiple data series from multiple countries without compliance with all the minimum criteria as set out in Section 4.

The Trend Index for Northern Europe shows a mixed picture between 1995 and 2005. While the index in one cluster is falling (perception of the victimization risk), the index is rising in the other cluster (criminality as a problem) or remains relatively stable after the first drop (feelings of insecurity). However, the index shows a considerable fall in all clusters after 2005. It should not come as a surprise therefore that the overall index between 1995 and 2005 is fairly stable, followed by a considerable drop between 2010 and 2015. The index is therefore fairly consistent with the finding, made mostly in the English-speaking part of this region at the beginning of the millennium, that the perception of safety had not improved (while criminality had fallen, e.g. Hope, 2003; Innes & Fielding, 2002). The drop only becomes visible later (see Figure 5.2.1). Do we exclude cluster C (crime as a problem), a somewhat different picture becomes visible: a peak in perceived salience of crime around 2004-2005, followed by a sharp drop, the trend in the combined other clusters is that of a steady decline.



Graph 5.2.1 Fear of Crime Trend Index 1989-2015, Northern Europe, based on weighed average of all clusters. Where the amount of data do not meet the set minimum criteria for a full index the trend in the available data is shown in dotted line.

5.3. North America

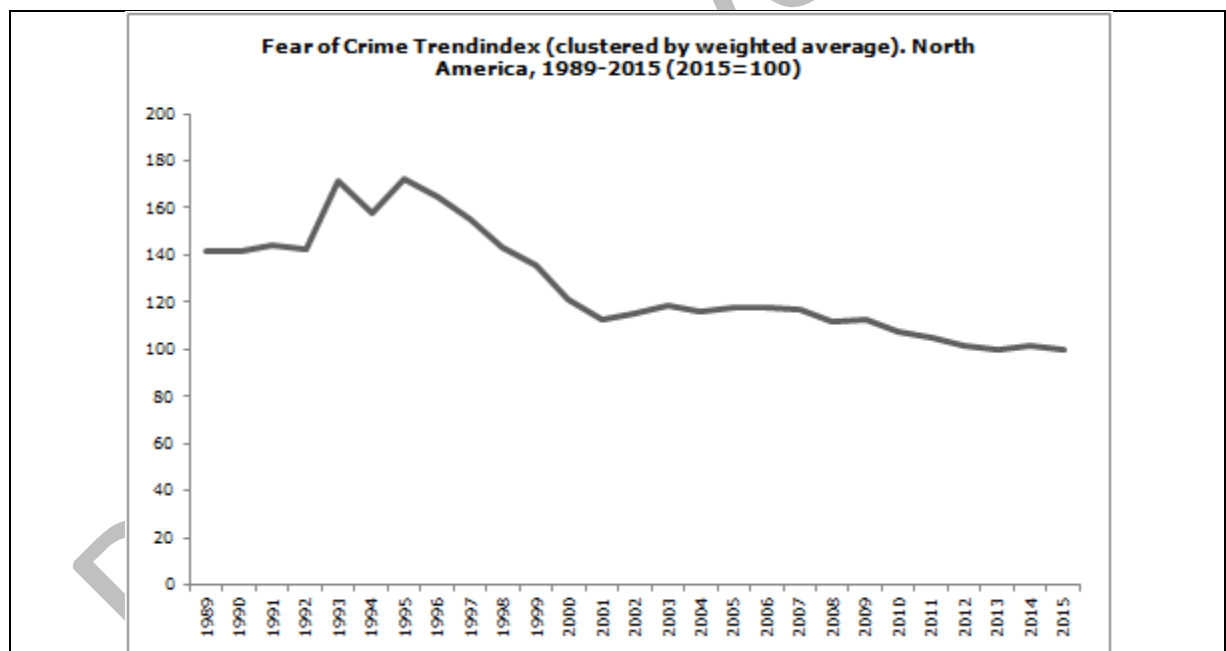
The UN includes five countries in the North American region: Bermuda, Canada, Greenland, Saint-Pierre & Miquelon and the United States. The survey produced sufficient usable data series for just the two largest countries, also in terms of population: Canada and the United States. The index therefore only relates to these two largest countries.

Cluster	series	countries (n=2)	Index					
			1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015

A. Perception of the development of crime (increasing)	5	2	115	120	98	116	105	100
B. Perception of the victimization risk (high)	2 ¹⁶	2	188	162	127	118		
C. Criminality as a problem (important problem)	5	2		302	140	136	117	100
D. Feelings of unsafety	19	2	121	119	104	103	101	100
E. Avoidance behaviour	3	2		160	137	115		
Index overall	34	2	142	172	121	118	108	100

Table 5.3.1. Fear of Crime Trend Index for North America, including index figures for the five sub-clusters. Greyed-out figures are indicative index figures, based on multiple data series from multiple countries without compliance with all the minimum criteria set out in Section 4.

Also for North America the trend index shows various developments. Between 1995 and 2000 there was an improvement on all fronts: the index shows a significant improvement in all clusters. After that period, the affective component remained relatively stable, while (after 2005) the perceived victimization risk and the extent to which the public views criminality as a problem improve considerably. The overall index shows roughly three periods: an period of increase (1991-1995), a period of substantial improvement (1995-2001), followed by a period of relative stability (2001 to 2015).



Graph 5.3.1 Fear of Crime Trend Index 1989-2015, North America, based on weighed average of all clusters.

5.4. Australia and New Zealand

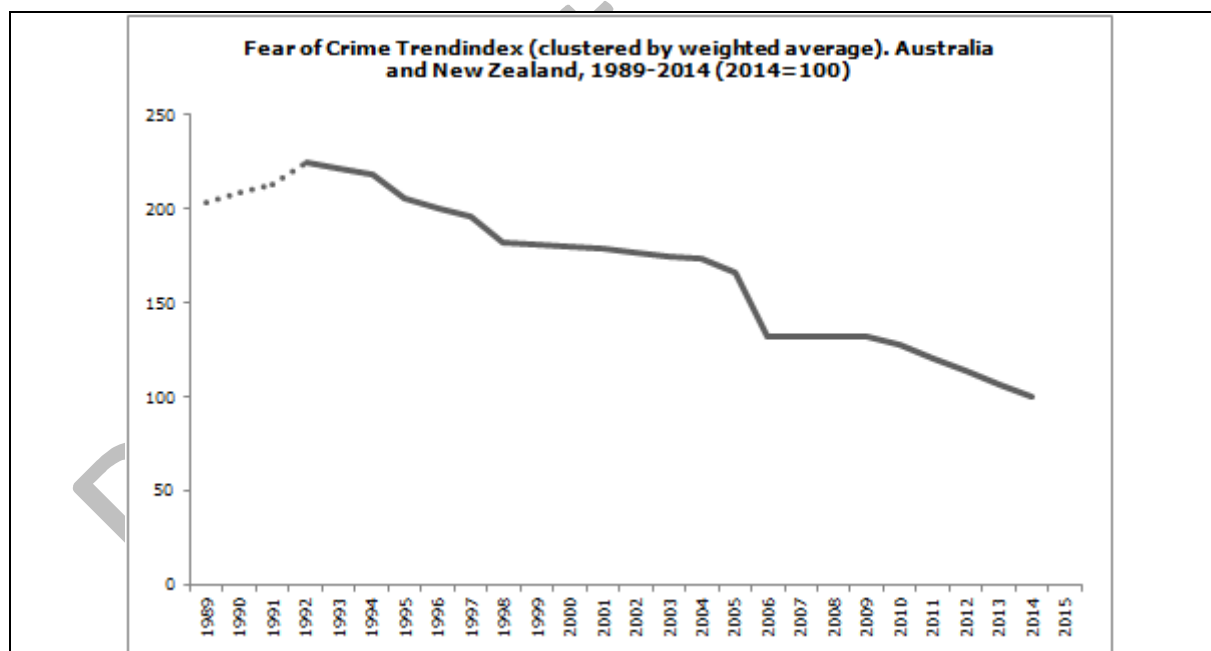
It should come as no surprise that the UN region 'Australia and New Zealand' consists of exactly those two countries: Australia and New Zealand. The 27 dataseriees that are available

for these countries are, like in most other regions, (unequally) divided across four clusters (see table below 5.4.1.)

Cluster	series	countries (n=2)	Index					
			1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
A. Perception of the development of crime (increasing)	1	1					143	100 ¹⁴
B. Perception of the victimization risk (high)	2	2	209	213	182	167		
C. Criminality as a problem (important problem)	12	2		189	146	152	102	100 ¹⁴
D. Feelings of unsafety	12	2		217	214	181	139	100 ¹⁷
E. Avoidance behaviour	27	2	209	206	181	167	128	100
Index overall								

Table 5.4.1. Fear of Crime Trend Index for Australia and New Zealand, including index figures for the five sub-clusters. Greyed-out figures are indicative index figures, based on multiple data series from multiple countries without compliance with all the minimum criteria set out in Section 4.

In terms of measured feelings of insecurity, the index, especially after 2000 and certainly after 2005, shows a substantial improvement. The degree to which criminality is perceived as a problem improves after 2005 as well. Earlier on the perceived victimization risk already diminished. The overall index shows a steady decline over the whole period.



Graph 5.4.1 Fear of Crime Trend Index 1989-2015, Australia and New Zealand, based on weighed average of all clusters. Where the amount of data do not meet the set minimum criteria for a full index the trend in the available data is shown in dotted line.

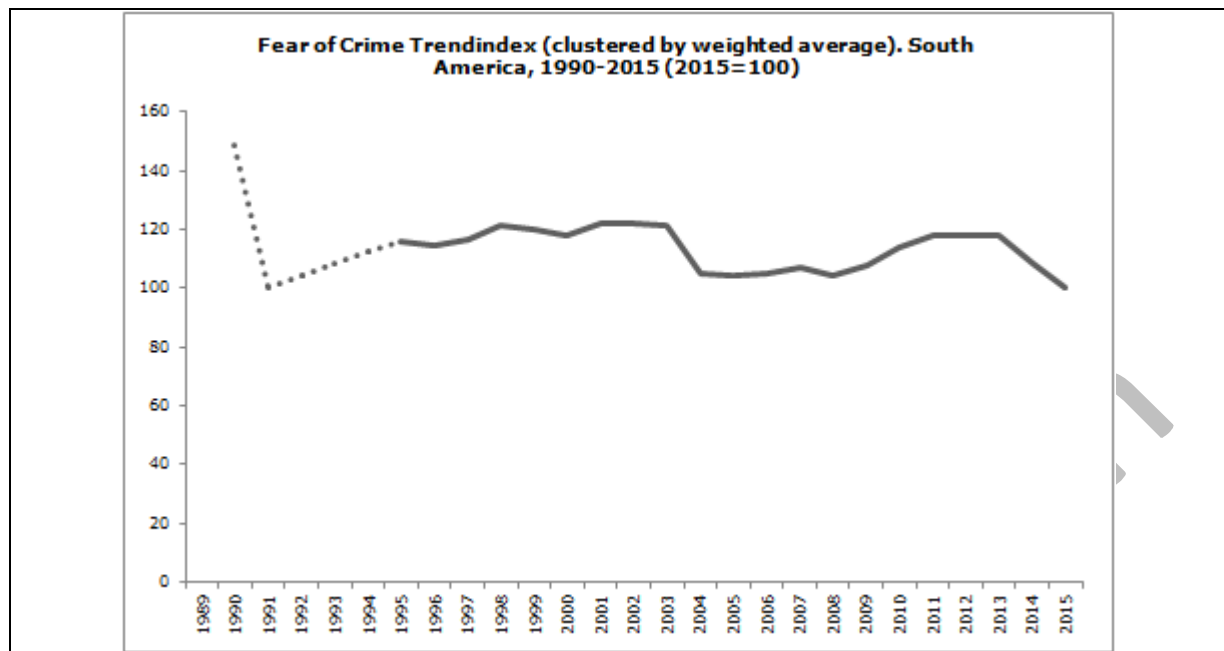
5.5. South America

According to the United Nations classification, the South America region consists of 14 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Surinam, the Falkland Islands, French Guyana and Guyana. In our search, we did not come across any usable data series from the final four – smaller – countries; consequently, the Trend Index is based on 10 countries. We obtained 57 data series from these 10 countries, divided across three clusters for each country. The data series mostly originate from supranational studies such as the Latinobarómetro and the World Value Survey. A majority of the data series relate to the period 2003-2015.

Cluster	series	countries	Index					
			1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
A. Perception of the development of crime (increasing)	10	10		116	127	119	118	
B. Perception of the victimization risk (high)								
C. Criminality as a problem (important problem)	17	10	149	117	109	84	127	100
D. Feelings of unsafety	30	10				111	97	100
E. Avoidance behaviour								
Index overall	57	10	149	116	118	104	114	100

Table 5.5.1. Fear of Crime Trend Index for South America, including index figures for the five sub-clusters. Greyed-out figures are indicative index figures, based on multiple data series from multiple countries without compliance with all the minimum criteria set out in Section 4.

Table 5.5.1 above shows that the data series for South America precludes an index figure for all years and all clusters. The index figures which can be determined do not result in a consistent pattern, as was the case for the regions discussed earlier. Though the overall index figure is relatively stable, it seems that this can be explained in part by large differences visible in the trends at the country level. The Fear of Crime Index for Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay shows a strong rise for the period 2005-2015, while the index for Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela shows a fall. However, this was after the index for the last two countries initially rose strongly, only to drop back later substantially. The index for Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay is relatively stable. Overall, the development of the perception of safety in South American countries does not produce a consistent trend, suggesting that the relative stability of the Fear of Crime Index for this region is merely a result of the calculation method.



Graph 5.5.1 Fear of Crime Trend Index 1989-2015, South America based on weighed average of all clusters. Where the amount of data do not meet the set minimum criteria for a full index the trend in the available data is shown in dotted line.

6. Conclusion and discussion

This chapter describes the first attempt of the construction of a Fear of Crime Trend Index. In this first attempt the emphasis has been on data collection and the construction of a simple prototype for such a Trend Index. This prototype was then used on the available data of the five UN-regions with the highest average amount of available fear of crime indicators and data series per country. The exercise is meant to encourage debate. A debate on the supposed stability of fear of crime on one hand, on the other hand on the methodological challenges that surround the development of an International Fear of Crime (Trend) Index.

If the findings from the exercise described in this chapter are valid, they falsify Ditton et al's (2000) criminological maxim "that fear of crime climbs when crime rates climb, but fails to fall when crime falls". Most regions incorporated in this exercise experience a crime drop for quite some time now (Knepper, 2012; Van Dijk, Tseloni and Farrell, 2012; Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni, 2014). The index now shows that Skogan (2011) rightly doubted the aforementioned criminological maxim. Four out of five of the regions that are incorporated in this index show the fear drop that was already suggested by Eysink Smeets & Vollaard (2015) and Eysink Smeets (2015). The timing differs slightly, where in one region this fear drop is visible earlier and/or more pronounced than in the other. The North American region shows a distinct fear drop between 1995 and 2001. In Northern Europe (which includes the U.K.) a distinct drop is visible only later: from the year 2005 onwards. Western Europe and Australia/New Zealand show a much more gradual decline in perceptions of security: slowly but steadily, from 1995 onwards. All four regions belong to 'the western world' in the operationalization of Huntingdon (1993) and from in fact the largest part of that. Could it be that, if the other European regions are added, it will become visible that the whole western world experiences a

fear drop? The answer to that will come from the next stage in the development of the Fear of Crime Trend Index. Of course, in that next stage the development of fear of crime will be compared as well to the trends in prevalence in crime. Do they correlate?

From a methodological perspective, the Trend Index should be reason for debate as well. Is the combination of (the trends in) so many different indicators from so many different surveys a defensible thing to do indeed? If so, is the chosen mix and clustering of indicators the right one and how can it be improved? Is the index - per cluster and 'overall' - up to scrutiny, or should other methods be preferred? And, finally: does the Trend Index enrich the understanding of the trends in security perceptions, seen over a longer period? Maybe paving way to a better understanding of what influences these perceptions at the macro-level, thus - because of the consequences that perceptions of insecurity can have in society - contributing to *public criminology* as Loader and Sparks (2011) called it?

7. The fear drop: in search of explanations

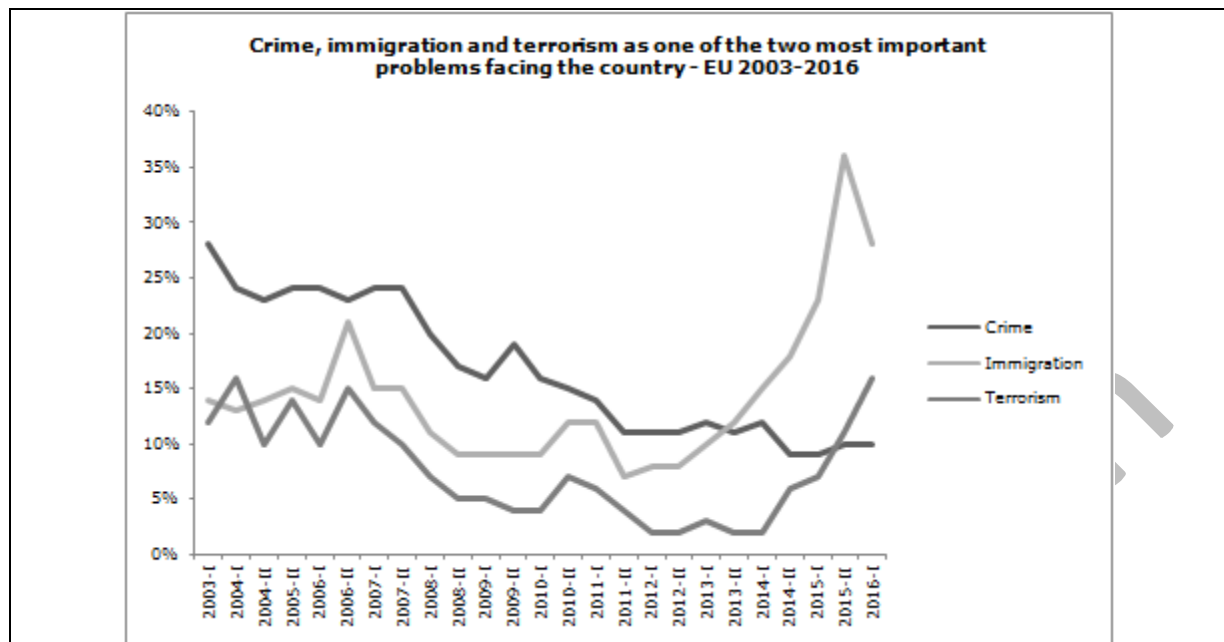
The observation that the surveys in a significant part of the western world show a distinct fear drop raises of course the same questions as have been raised by the so called crime drop (Aebi and Linde, 2010; Van Dijk, Tseloni and Farrell, 2012; Farrell, 2013; Baumer and Wolff, 2014; Farrell, Tilley and Tseloni, 2014). If the observed drop in fear of crime and perceptions of insecurity is not a methodological artefact (caused for instance by temporal measurement variance), how can it then be explained?

A tempting hypothesis is of course that the fear drop is rooted in the crime drop. Or that, at least, that they correlate. Because less crime may lead to less fear of crime (Oppelaar and Wittebrood, 2006; Skogan, 2011). Could it be though, that there is an inverse relation as well? That less fear of crime leads to less crime, because less fear of crime might lead to a strengthened informal social control? Or are both crime drop and fear drop driven by the same driver(s)? The securitization hypothesis passes many tests to explain the crime drop (Farrell, 2013), could it be that the securitisation brings the public an enlarged feeling of control and thus brings down perceptions of insecurity (Eysink Smeets, 2016)? Other possible explanations are to be raised and tested though. Demographic factors (gender, age, education) are known to influence measured perceptions of security (Ferraro & Lagrange, 1989; Vanderveen, 2006; Hicks and Brown, 2013; CBS, 2015). Have changes in the population influenced the perceptions of security as measured at the macro level? The media landscape has changed dramatically in the last decades (Gronke and Cook, 2007; Nielsen, 2013; Ruigrok *et al.*, 2014), that media can influence perceptions of security - albeit in a complex relationship - is well documented (Heath and Gilbert, 1996; Chiricos, Eschholz and Gertz, 1997; Minnebo, 2000; Rogers, 2005; Kort-Butler and Hartshorn, 2011; Kohm *et al.*, 2012). Is it plausible that the changes in security perceptions reflect the changes in the media landscape? The same applies for the changes in our technological and communication infrastructure. What is the influence of internet and the proliferation of smart phones (Wiedemann and Schutz, 2008; Klick, MacDonald and Stratmann, 2012)? Many people in the western world can summon help in times of trouble at almost any place where they are. Could it be that people feel collectively less vulnerable because of that? Changes in (government) policy should not be ruled out as well. The broken window perspective has influenced public security

policy in many western countries (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Did that change public security perceptions as well, just like a more public oriented public policy (like reassurance or neighbourhood policing in the UK?) (Millie and Herrington, 2005; Innes, 2005; Stanko and Bradford, 2009; Peterson, 2010; Mazerolle, 2013). In various countries focus is laid on urban renewal and the quality and maintenance of public spaces (Samara, 2010; Melik and Lawton, 2011; Hyra, 2012). Did that lead to less perceptions of insecurity in those places? And, finally, in the U.S, it is visible that a period of strong reduction of *perceptions of insecurity* came to an end in 2001 – the year of the Twin Towers attack – after which the perceptions of insecurity started to increase again (Saad, 2011). In the Netherlands a steady period of reducing perceptions of insecurity comes to an end in 2008, the year of the credit crisis (Eysink Smeets, 2016). Coincidence? Or could it be that disruptive events cause a drastic change of the trend in security perceptions as well?

Not only a fear drop, but a fear change as well?

Could it be that the observed fear drop merely reflects a shift in attention of the public? Traditional crime shows a significant decline in the statistics. But new forms of crime – or threats that the public associates with crime – have come up. Cybercrime for instance or the renewed threat of terrorism. The influx of immigrants is associated by the public with security as well just like it stirred up public reactions that sometimes lead to crime as well (Eysink Smeets and Boot, 2016)). Eysink Smeets (2016) suggested therefore, that we are not only confronted with a *crime drop*, but with a *crime change* as well. A change, that the traditional ways of measurement and registration are not able to show adequately (Lewis, 2013). Eysink Smeets (2016) suggests that a same change could be taking place in the public perceptions of security. So that there might be a *fear drop*, but a *fear change* as well. And that, here again, the traditional ways of measurement are not able to pick up these changes adequately. They are mostly aimed at the perceptions of (in)security that are traditionally associated with crime and incivilities, while for instance the Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2003-2016) shows that in Europe the notion of what constitutes a problem for the country has changed dramatically in the last almost fifteen years, as graph 7.1. indicates.



graph 7.1. Crime, immigration and terrorism as one of the two most important problems facing the country, in percentage of the population. EU-30. Period 2003-2016. Data from Eurobarometer 59-85.

Work for the future...

In short, the fear drop that is visible in this – first proof of – Fear of Crime Index raises many questions that call for further research. Apart from further research into the methodological issues, an interesting next step would be a test of theories for the fear drop, for instance along the lines that Farrell (2013) formulated for the crime drop.

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