

COUNTRY SURVEY

Switzerland

Manuel Eisner

Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, UK

Martin Killias

*School of Forensic Science and Criminology, University of Lausanne,
Switzerland*

ABSTRACT

Over many years, crime in Switzerland has been a subject of controversy. For some observers, Switzerland was almost a 'crime-free' society, others saw it as a society with the usual crime rates but with better ways of concealing them, and many more saw it as a safe haven for economic and financial crime. Research conducted over the past 20 years has clarified many issues. Switzerland's crime levels are probably below the European average, although not unusually low, but have seen the usual increase over recent decades. Available indicators of economic crime show a rather low rate of untaxed incomes and corruption. Swiss criminology has been associated with several European innovations, such as the international crime surveys, the *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics*, and generally violence research, particularly in connection with urban violence, school violence and a large cohort study of 21,000 young men. Of particular interest are several evaluations, including a few randomized experiments and large-scale trials with heroin prescription to drug addicts.

KEY WORDS

Switzerland / Crime / Police / Prisons / Drugs Policy.

Introduction

In 1978, Marshall B. Clinard published a well-known study on crime in Switzerland entitled *Cities with little crime: The case of Switzerland* (Clinard 1978). In the introduction Clinard summarized his main empirical finding: 'Switzerland represents an exception to the general rule that a high crime rate accompanies a high degree of affluence, industrialization, and

urbanization'. He thus consolidated the pre-existing image of a country that, in striking contrast to similar western countries, has very little crime and where there is hardly any public concern about crime, despite the wide availability of firearms among its male population. Based on his analyses, Clinard highlighted various causes such as the high degree of political decentralization, the widespread sense of civic responsibility, the intensive integration and conformity of Swiss youth as well as slow urbanization. A few years later, Freda Adler reiterated the theme in her book *Nations not obsessed with crime* (Adler 1983). Primarily based on the material gathered by Clinard, the chapter on Switzerland argued that this small country had maintained – through political decentralization, slow urbanization and high informal social control – characteristics of a communitarian society that help to keep crime rates down. In 1987, however, the Danish criminologist Flemming Balvig published a short book that was to be a sweeping critique of Clinard and Adler. In *The snow-white image: The hidden reality of crime in Switzerland*, Balvig argued that crime in Switzerland was not particularly low and that Clinard's arguments did not withstand closer scrutiny (Balvig 1987, 1990). Rather, he maintained, Clinard had fallen prey to a self-indulgent image of Swiss society. Deeply rooted in history, it promotes the notion that Switzerland is different from other countries in its combination of independence, diligence, thriftiness, integration, cleanness and low crime. Furthermore, political and judicial authorities, the police and the mass media work together in maintaining and promoting this stereotype. And not surprisingly, Balvig concluded, Swiss criminology is kept in an embryonic state precisely in order to maintain the snow-white image of a country devoid of crime problems. But Balvig agreed with Clinard on the very high level of white-collar crime associated with the extensive banking sector. Probably influenced by Jean Ziegler's best-seller *Switzerland exposed* (Ziegler 1978), both argued that Swiss bankers' secrecy combined with the dubious role of Swiss banks during the Third Reich and in developing countries created an environment in which crime committed by the powerful was flourishing.

Yet by the late 1980s Switzerland made its way into international headlines for yet another crime-related reason. If nothing else, the pictures of the 'needle park' behind the main train station in Zurich showing thousands of drug addicts in deplorable conditions forcefully destroyed the idyllic stereotype of an Alpine paradise. It probably came as a surprise to many that a country thought to be highly conservative chose to implement heroin prescription programmes as a way out of the evident crisis and would later consider the legalization of cannabis products.

We are thus faced with an interesting yet contradictory picture. Switzerland, as seen from the outside, is a country where drugs are freely

available and prescribed to people; where banks routinely indulge in money laundering and provide a safe haven to dubious money; where people walk around wearing guns and rifles; and where almost no crime is to be found. In what follows we will try to address some of the issues raised by these stereotypes and examine the ways in which Swiss criminology has, or has failed to, shed light on them.

Background and context

Switzerland is a small country of 41,288 km² in the middle of Europe. It has a population of 7.1 million divided among four national languages, namely German (64.0 percent), French (21.0 percent), Italian (6.5 percent) and Rhaeto-Romansh (0.5 percent).¹ It is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, with an average per capita income at purchasing power parities of US\$31,000. The unemployment rate was 3.7 percent in September 2003, which is relatively high in a country that for decades had been used to no unemployment at all, but lower than corresponding rates in most other European countries. Of the workforce, 71 percent are employed in the service sector – of these, about 7 percent work in banking and financial services – and 4 percent work in the agricultural sector. Traditionally, large international companies dominate in financial services and the chemical and pharmaceutical industry. Generally, however, the Swiss economy is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises. Switzerland is also a highly urbanized country, with Zurich, Basle and Geneva being the largest cities. The city of Zurich has a population of 350,000, but the population of Greater Zurich is approximately 1 million. Since the 1950s, Switzerland has experienced substantial immigration. In 2003 about 20 percent of the resident Swiss population were foreign nationals, a comparatively high proportion among European countries. In 2001, people from former Yugoslavian countries were the largest immigrant minority, followed by Italian, Portuguese, German, Spanish and Turkish minorities. With the exception of German nationals, these immigrant groups are over-represented in less-qualified occupations and above-average proportions live in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the cities.

Politically, Switzerland is a direct democracy with a high degree of decentralization. Accordingly, the 26 cantons and 2,880 communes traditionally enjoy a very high level of political autonomy: their responsibilities

¹ The remaining 8 percent of the population are immigrants who speak various languages, including, for example, Serbian (1.4 percent), Albanian (1.3 percent), Portuguese (1.2 percent), and Spanish (1.1 percent).

include taxation, policing, schools, social welfare provision, and infrastructure such as streets. Switzerland has a relatively small public sector in comparison with other European countries: the state sector accounted for 39.8 percent of GDP in 1997, which is considerably less than public spending in neighbouring France (54.4 percent) or Italy (50.6 percent), but more than in the United States (31.6 percent).²

As a result of the great degree of autonomy of the cantons and the communes, the criminal justice system in Switzerland is more highly fragmented than that in probably any other European country. A unified Swiss Penal Code was introduced only in 1942 (Trechsel and Killias, forthcoming). Also, criminal procedure has remained the prerogative of the cantons. Hence, Switzerland presently has 29 different procedural regulations in respect of criminal law, including differences in the court system.³ However, triggered by concern about cross-national white-collar crime during the 1990s, the Swiss government is presently developing a unified code of criminal procedure. Besides the Swiss Penal Code, three major laws contribute to penal convictions. First, by far the largest total number of convictions comes from the Swiss Road Traffic Act. Second, drug offences are covered by the Swiss Narcotics Act. Third, a specific federal law exists to regulate offences related to immigration and the residence of aliens and asylum-seekers.

The autonomy of the cantons is also reflected in the fact that Switzerland has no national police force. The only national organization is the so-called Federal Police Office, which coordinates local and cantonal activities and which has limited competencies in areas such as state security, organized crime, drug trafficking and money laundering. Beyond this limited mission, however, internal security and policing are tasks of the cantons and communes, which maintain their own police forces (Federal Office of Justice 2002). As a result, Switzerland has 26 cantonal police forces and over 100 local police forces, many of which include no more than 10 police officers. The absence of a national police force and the autonomy of the cantons as regards policing also mean that standards of professional training, armament and uniforms vary widely between cantons.

According to the national census data, the number of police officers in Switzerland rose from 10,600 in 1970 to 15,900 in 2000.⁴ Per capita rates

² Swiss Federal Finances Administration, at <http://www.efv.admin.ch/d/wirtschaft/studien/pdf/kennziff.pdf> (accessed 17 October 2003).

³ Represented by 26 codes of criminal procedure in the cantons plus three codes of criminal procedure at the federal level.

⁴ Data supplied by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics.

of police officers primarily increased between 1970 and 1980. The rate has remained fairly stable, at about 220 police officers per 100,000, ever since. Cross-national comparisons based on Kangaspunta et al. (1998), as well as the *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics* (1999, 2003), reveal that the Swiss rate is similar to that in Norway (231), Finland (232) and Denmark (238) but considerably lower than that in Germany (320), France (346) and England (347).⁵ Although the private security sector has grown considerably over the past 30 years, in line with developments in other western societies (De Waard 1999; Eisner 2001), the Swiss rate of about 110 private security personnel per 100,000 is still lower than corresponding rates in other West European countries (Kangaspunta et al. 1998).

Like policing, prison administration and non-custodial punishment are run by the cantons. Switzerland has a total of 170 institutions where penal sentences are being served. However, most of these are local institutions for pre-trial detention or people sentenced to short sentences. About 25 institutions admit people serving longer sentences. The majority have fewer than 100 places and only two Swiss prisons have a maximum capacity of more than 300 prisoners.

Academic institutions and infrastructure

Despite undeniable progress over the past 20 years, the statement made by Killias in 1983 that criminology in Switzerland lacks adequate institutionalization still holds today (Killias 1983: 574). In part, this may be illustrated by the comparatively marginal role of criminology within Swiss universities. At present, there exists only one full-time chair in criminology, namely at the School of Forensic Science and Criminology (École des sciences criminelles, ESC; formerly the Institut de police scientifique et de criminologie, IPSC) at the University of Lausanne. It was set up in 1909 as the world's first university programme in forensic science. It remained primarily a forensic science institute during the first 70 years of its existence, but with the arrival of Martin Killias in 1982 it was transformed into by far the most important Swiss criminological research centre – while also retaining a strong forensic science department. Over the past two decades, the Institute of Criminology in Lausanne has acquired a very strong reputation as a research institution at an international and national level with a regular flow of externally funded research projects. Martin Killias was involved in the launch of the International Crime Victim Survey

⁵ Kangaspunta et al. (1998) arrived at a somewhat higher estimate for Switzerland of about 265 police officers per 100,000 in 1994. The higher number may be due to some inclusion of administrative personnel.

(ICVS) in 1989 (with J. J. M. van Dijk and P. Mathew; see Van Dijk et al. 1991); he participated in the first International Self-Reported Delinquency Study directed by Josine Junger-Tas (Junger-Tas et al. 1994); he was one of the initiators of the *European Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics* (Killias and Rau 2000); and he is one of the main researchers involved in evaluating the heroin prescription trials (Killias et al. 2000a; Killias and Uchtenhagen 1996). The school's criminology staff currently also includes three part-time posts at the associate and assistant professor level (held by André Kuhn, Henriette Haas and Patrice Villettaz) as well as several part-time teachers and 10 researchers. As a result, publications by staff of the Institute of Criminology in Lausanne accounted for more than 60 percent of all references to Swiss criminological research in the *Criminal Justice Abstracts*. On the teaching side, the Institute of Criminology in Lausanne runs a full master's and postgraduate programme for approximately 30 students annually. Finally, in 1999 the Institute started publishing a highly successful newsletter called *Crimiscope*, which publishes research findings in a way that is accessible to a wider public of criminal justice practitioners and non-researchers in general.

The Institute of Criminology in Lausanne is hence unique within Switzerland in terms of size, research potential and interdisciplinary collaboration. Other criminological research institutions in Switzerland follow the German or French model of being associated with law faculties, with chairs primarily directed towards criminal law and criminal policy rather than criminology. Besides the Institute of Criminology in Lausanne, three Swiss universities have part-time chairs in criminology, all being simultaneously chairs in criminal law associated with law faculties. At the University of Berne, the Institute of Penal Law and Criminology has three chairs, two of which are exclusively oriented towards criminal law and policy. The Institute of Criminology at the University of Zurich was initiated by Professor Kaiser during the early 1970s. Its chair is currently held by Christian Schwarzenegger, whose past criminological research was primarily focused on fear of crime (Schwarzenegger 1991, 1992). In Fribourg, a chair of criminology was established during the 1970s.⁶ The university now has two chairs related to criminology. Marcel Niggli has held a chair in penal law and legal philosophy since 1996 and is primarily interested in penal theory and theoretical issues (Niggli 1994, 1997; Niggli and Pfister 1997). Nicolas Queloz, whose main criminological interests focus on corruption, white-collar crime and juvenile criminal justice, holds

⁶ Held by Jörg Schuh, the co-founder of the Swiss Criminological Working Group.

the other chair (Queloz 2002a, 2002b; Queloz et al. 2000; Queloz and Repond 2002).

The professional association for criminologists in Switzerland is the Swiss Criminological Working Group (Schweizerische Arbeitsgruppe für Kriminologie / Association Suisse de Criminologie), which has about 300 members. In part, the association brings together academics interested in research related to criminology. Most members, however, are criminal justice practitioners with a law, psychology or social work background. The resulting mixture of practice-oriented issues and research is rather uncommon for a professional association, but it reflects a specifically Swiss tradition of close interaction between academia and practitioners' needs.

The Swiss Criminological Working Group has two main activities. On the one hand, it has published an academic journal since 1975. Until 2002, it was called the *Criminological Bulletin* (*Kriminologisches Bulletin / Bulletin de Criminologie*) and was edited by Martin Killias as a peer-reviewed academic journal from 1992 to 2002. In September 2002 the *Swiss Journal of Criminology* replaced the Bulletin. Rather than being an academic journal based on submitted articles, the new journal is a high-quality academic magazine with invited contributions on featured topics. The Working Group's other main activity is an annual conference in Interlaken. Striving to bring practitioners and researchers together, these conferences are organized around clearly delimited topical issues, with plenary talks given by invited speakers from either a practical or an academic background. Recent topics that have resulted in conference proceedings are: 'More security – less freedom? Scrutinizing modern investigative techniques' (Cassani et al. 2003); 'Between restorative justice and life imprisonment: New ways of fighting against crime' (Dittmann et al. 2002); 'Media, crime and justice' (Cassani et al. 2001); 'High-risk offenders' (Bauhofer et al. 2000); 'Economic crime' (Bauhofer et al. 1999); 'Youth and penal law' (1998), 'Drug policy – change or persistence' (1997); 'Sects and occultist movements – criminological aspects' (1996). Rather than being driven by the logic of academic research, the topics chosen for the conferences reflect criminal justice debates believed to be particularly important.

In respect of collecting and disseminating criminal justice data, the most important Swiss institution is the Law and Justice section of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. Over the past 10 years, the section has made great progress in extending, improving and homogenizing statistical information relevant to criminological and criminal justice research. One important outcome is the planned implementation of a computerized system of maintaining statistics that will make it possible to analyse the flow of cases through the whole criminal justice system, from the initial police record to

sentencing. Implementation is expected to start in 2005. Furthermore, by regularly publishing analytical reviews of relevant criminal justice statistics, the Law and Justice section plays an active role in disseminating information to politicians and the mass media.

Criminological research

One way of gaining an approximate numerical impression of the cross-national relevance of criminological research on Switzerland is by retrieving information from large-scale databases such as *Criminal Justice Abstracts* (*Criminal Justice Abstracts (Electronic)* 2003). *Criminal Justice Abstracts* is the most widely used electronic index to articles and documents dealing with all aspects of criminology and is based on a wide array of the major journals in criminology and related disciplines, as well as books and reports from the government and non-governmental agencies. *Criminal Justice Abstracts* heavily overrepresents English-speaking publications. For this reason, it reflects a presence in the English-speaking world rather than overall academic output. Nevertheless it is probably the best possible indicator of the extent of academic coverage of a topic or geographical area within criminological research.

Table 1 compares the number of hits produced for various European countries of a size similar to Switzerland. The table classifies publications according to the countries they refer to and not according to the scholars' academic locations. The data suggest that Sweden, Finland, the Nether-

Table 1 Number of publications in *Criminal Justice Abstracts* referring to each country name, 1970–2003

	Number of publications		Publications per year, 1970–2003	Publications per million inhabitants per year, 1970–2003
	1970–1989	1990–2003		
Sweden	310	273	18.2	2.04
Finland	130	201	10.3	1.98
Netherlands	303	550	26.7	1.67
Denmark	153	114	8.3	1.54
Norway	98	111	6.5	1.44
Switzerland	86	128	6.7	0.92
Belgium	82	132	6.7	0.65
Austria	55	87	4.4	0.54

Note: Search was performed on the "abstract" and "keywords" fields of the electronic database "Criminal Justice Abstracts" with the respective country names as keywords.

lands, Denmark and Norway are considerably more frequently the objects of criminological publications than are Switzerland, Belgium and Austria. Indeed, the number of publications per year per million inhabitants implies that the *Criminal Justice Abstracts* contain more than twice as many publications on Sweden and Finland – controlling for population size – as on Switzerland. In part this may reflect a higher tendency of academics in Scandinavian countries to publish in English-speaking journals.⁷ We believe, however, that it also reflects a longer, broader and more established tradition of criminological research.

Generally, the Swiss National Science Foundation is by far the most important public funding agency for academic research at a national level. National research programmes are an important instrument for stimulating specific research areas deemed to be of particular interest. Of the 53 research programmes initiated since 1975, only one directly bears on criminological issues, namely the programme on ‘Everyday Violence and Organized Crime’, which is now complemented by an ongoing supplementary programme on the ‘Causes and Consequences of Right-wing Extremism’. The programme on ‘Everyday Violence and Organized Crime’ funded a total of 29 research projects. Only three were directed by members of one of the criminological institutes in Switzerland, and two of these were hosted by the Institute of Criminology in Lausanne.

However, a large proportion of empirical criminological research is funded by two other types of public agencies.⁸ First, various departments of the national administration offer grants for applied research on crime and criminal justice issues. The Substance Abuse Unit of the Swiss Health Authorities, for example, has funded a considerable proportion of the research on criminal involvement by addicts treated in the heroin prescription trials, and it is now co-funding the first longitudinal study on delinquency among primary school children as well as on changes in cannabis use and sales. In a similar vein, the Ministry of Justice commissions applied research, for example on the effectiveness of victim support schemes (Fiechter et al. 2000). Secondly, political decentralization has its effects on academic research. Thus local political agencies, as a result of their active role in the criminal justice system, have an interest in supporting local research. Hence the governments of the larger cantons and of the major cities tend to disburse certain sums to finance applied academic

⁷ At least the more important German and French criminological journals are included in the *Criminal Justice Abstracts*. Nevertheless, a bias against non-English publications is likely.

⁸ Private foundations play only a minor role in funding criminological research in Switzerland.

research, often related to evaluations of innovations in policing or criminal justice. Over recent years, for example, the public authorities in the canton of Zurich have financially supported a major study on self-reported violence among juveniles (Eisner et al. 2000a); a survey on fear of crime and the perception of police work among the public (Eisner et al. 2000b); an evaluation study on the preliminary introduction of restorative justice procedures (Schwarzenegger and Zanolini 2002); and a pilot study for implementing a major experimental longitudinal project involving early interventions at parent and child levels (Eisner et al. 2003b). Only occasionally do these locally funded studies result in findings published in international criminology journals. Yet they contribute significantly to shaping Swiss criminology as an academic field that has close ties to the political system.

Trends in crime and punishment

There are two major sources of quantitative information on long-term trends in Swiss crime since the 19th century: conviction statistics, which are produced by the judicial authorities in some larger cantons; and causes of death statistics, which include data on the frequency of homicides. Long-term trends in judicial statistics have been examined by Meyer (1895), Hacker (1939), Graf (1978), Eisner (1987) and Killias (1991). These works suggest a consistently declining trend in overall convictions per head of population from the 1830s to the middle of the twentieth century, which is similar to trends in some other West European countries such as England (Gatrell 1980) and Sweden (Gurr et al. 1977). Since then, levels of convictions have followed a slight upward trend, corroborating the notion of a U-shaped long-term pattern stipulated by Gurr et al. (1977). However, the recent increase in crime started somewhat later than that in most other countries, that is, around 1970 rather than in the 1950s. Homicide rates calculated on the basis of Swiss death statistics confirm this broad pattern (Bieri 1998; Eisner 1997; Killias 1991). Rates stood at approximately 3–4 per 100,000 during the late nineteenth century and declined to a low of about 0.7 in the 1950s and 1960s (see Figure 1). Despite progress in medical emergency technology (Harris et al. 2002), homicide rates have since almost doubled, and are currently at about 1.2 per 100,000. However, not unlike Sweden (Von Hofer 1990) and other countries, Switzerland's decrease in homicide trends related mostly to infants and adult men, whereas homicide of females remained fairly stable until the recent increase. Recently, the Lausanne Institute has, in collaboration with coroners, started to establish a database including successful as well as attempted

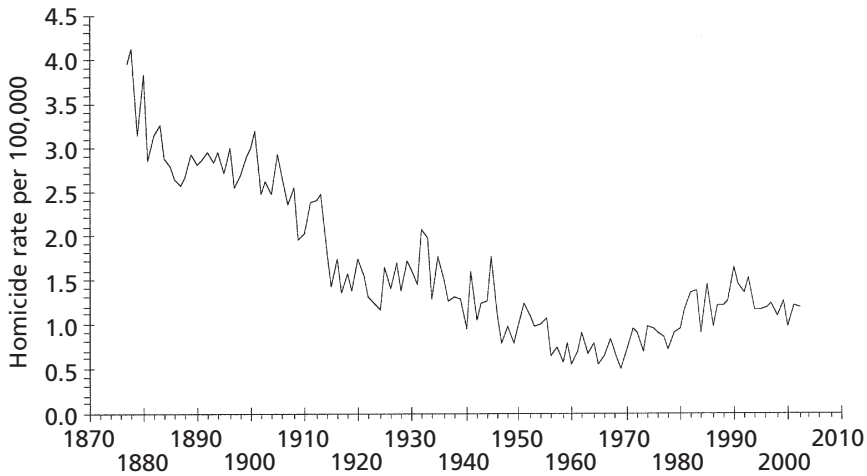


Figure 1 Homicide rate in Switzerland, 1877–2003 (per 100,000)

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, Causes of Death statistics, unpublished tables.

homicides and suicides over the past two decades (Villetaz et al. 2003). According to these data, homicide is related to family and private conflicts in roughly 60 percent of cases, which is similar to the rate in Finland (Kivivuori and Lehti 2003) but much higher than that in the USA (Massonnet et al. 1990) or even in the Netherlands (Leistra and Nieuwbeerta 2003). This suggests that varying trends or rates of homicide may reflect changes in homicide constellations rather than point to different overall levels of ‘violence’ in society.

Police statistics in most West European countries show a sharply increasing trend in crime levels from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. Owing to political fragmentation Switzerland has no national police statistics on recorded crime before the early 1980s. However, some local urban police forces started recording the number of reported crimes during the late 1950s. Killias (1991) has examined reported crime data gathered by local police forces in various major Swiss cities. He found evidence of a massive increase in burglary, assault and robbery rates starting during the 1970s. The trends appear to be very much in line with findings in most other European countries.

Police statistics

In Switzerland, there are currently two major national statistical publications on police recorded crime (besides, as one would expect in a politically fragmented country, a series of publications in the cantons). The first

(*Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik / Statistique policière de la criminalité*) presents data on 21 selected Penal Code offences and hence represents crime in the narrow sense. The other collects data on police-recorded offences under the Swiss Narcotics Act (*Betäubungsmittelstatistik / Statistique des infractions contre la loi des stupéfiants*), that is, illegal use of drugs and trafficking in drugs.

National statistics on police-recorded crime start in 1982 (Bundesamt für Polizei – Zentralpolizeibüro 1982–). They are based on aggregated data supplied by 26 police administrations in the cantons and two major cities. In addition to the limitations that characterize police statistics everywhere in the world (related to the reporting and recording of offences and data-processing practices), Swiss police statistics are characterized by several more specific limitations. First, they are incomplete in the sense that, similarly to the FBI Index, data on only 21 selected offences are included, and more than 90 percent of recorded offences in these categories consist of theft (Killias 2001, 2002). Secondly, data on offenders and victims are limited to the most basic information. For example, data on the age of offenders do not include more detailed age brackets but report only the total number of either adult (i.e. > 18 years) or juvenile offenders (< 18 years). Thirdly, since the national statistics are based on aggregate data supplied by regional units, they are influenced by local specificities in the ways the data are gathered and processed.

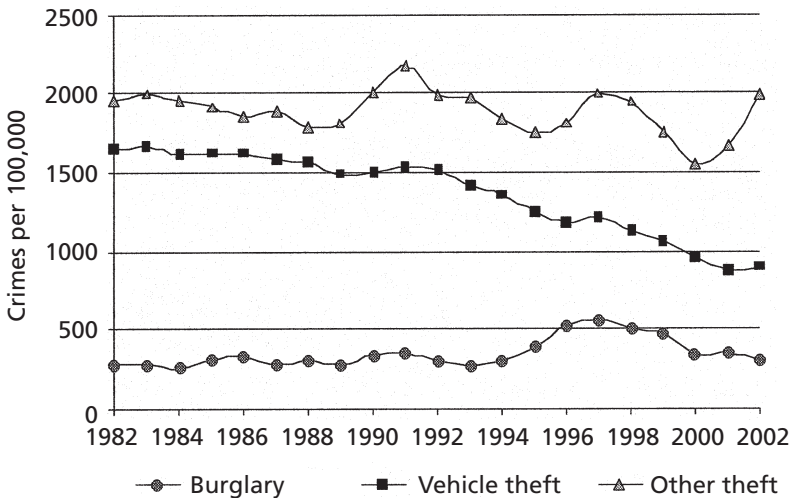


Figure 2 Police-recorded property crime, 1982–2002 (per 100,000)

Source: Bundesamt für Polizei – Zentralpolizeibüro (1982–).

Note: Official figures for burglary include all types of theft involving breakage. We estimate rates of domestic burglary on the basis of completed domestic burglaries as a proportion of all burglaries recorded annually in the canton of Zurich.

Given the incomplete nature of this data collection and the dominant role of theft, looking at overall trends for the aggregate of the selected 21 offences over time is not very meaningful. Trends for specific offences are more informative. Figures 2 and 3 show trends in selected crimes, and then declined. The reduction in vehicle theft, mostly thefts of scooters and motorbikes, was more consistent. As far as cars are concerned, improved technical crime prevention measures (electronic locking devices, etc.) are largely responsible for this reduction, although thefts of motorbikes also decreased after the introduction of compulsory crash-helmet legislation (Dell'Ambrogio, in Killias 2001, 2002). Other forms of theft showed a less consistent trend, probably also as a result of diminished insurance coverage and changing practices in recording minor theft (of values of less than €200).

Violent offences show a very different trend over the past 20 years (see Figure 3). Increasing trends predominate here, particularly in respect of serious assault, blackmail and threat, as well as violence and threat against public officials. But recorded rates of murder and manslaughter and of robbery were also significantly higher in the first years of the twenty-first

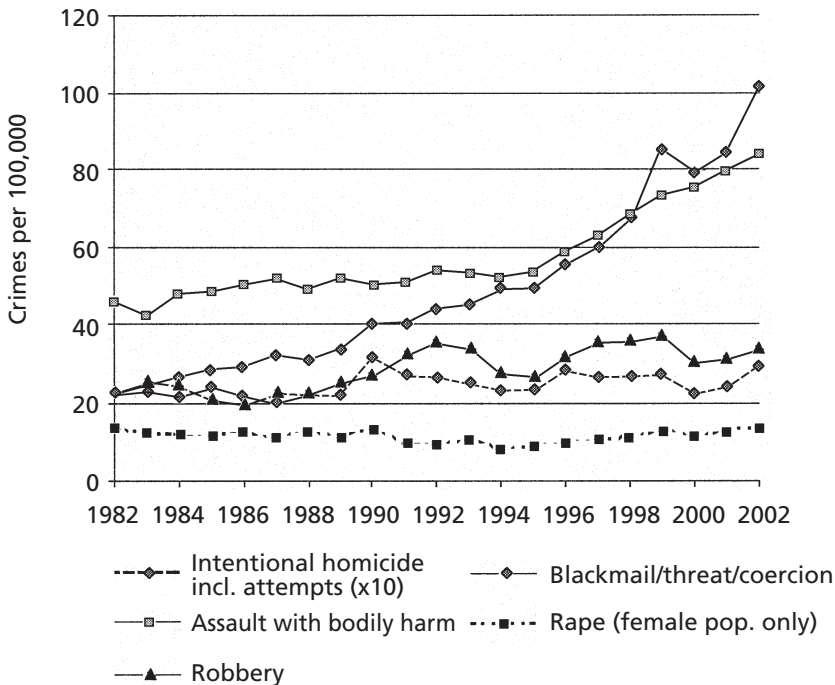


Figure 3 Police-recorded violent crime, 1982–2002 (per 100,000)

Source: Bundesamt für Polizei – Zentralpolizeibüro (1982–).

century in comparison with the early 1980s. Rates of recorded rape, however, decreased up to the mid-1990s and then increased again in the following decade. Furthermore, rates of police-recorded youth violence have increased about threefold since the mid-1980s. Despite much speculation, the causes of increasing levels of police-recorded violence and the extent to which they reflect real underlying change remain controversial (for a discussion, see, for example, Eisner 1998). Changing drug policies (and especially heroin prescription) may also have affected street robbery and muggings (Killias et al., forthcoming).

Statistics on police-recorded drug offences show a long-term trend that differs significantly from the overall stability of the crime statistics discussed above. Indeed, statistics suggest a basically unbroken trend towards more people being reported for drug offences each year since the beginning of statistics in 1968 (see Figure 4). The increase was particularly steep during the early 1990s, probably owing to attempts to curb the open drug scene in Swiss cities, and has levelled off since.

Police-recorded data on drug offences obviously reflect underlying changes in drug use and trafficking to only a very limited degree. Alternative sources suggest change in two opposing directions. As regards seriously marginalized consumers of hard drugs there is evidence of some improvement since the early 1990s. More specifically, whereas the number of drug-related deaths swelled to over 400 between 1990 and 1993 – during which period Switzerland was probably the country with the highest per capita rate of drug-related deaths in the Western world (see, for example, EMCDDA 1998) – figures show a continuous drop over the past ten years and following the introduction of the heroin prescription programmes. These data suggest a significant improvement in the health status of long-term drug addicts. On the other hand, the overall consumption of

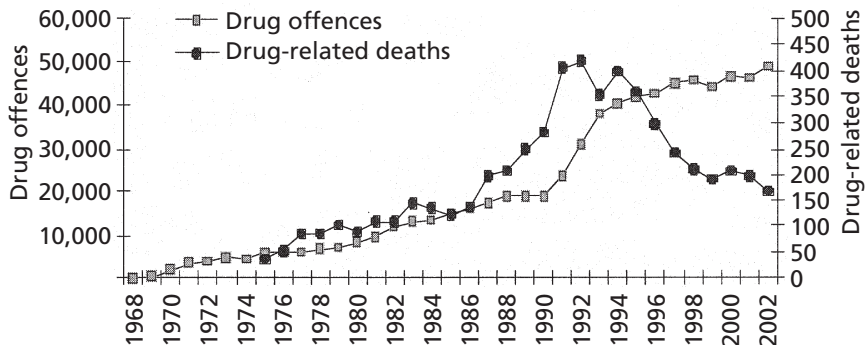


Figure 4 Police-recorded drug offences and number of drug-related deaths, 1968–2002

Source: Data supplied by the Federal Office of Statistics.

illicit drugs has risen constantly over the past 10 years, particularly of the most popular drug, namely cannabis. Regular surveys carried out by the Swiss Institute for the Prevention of Alcoholism and other Drug Problems indicate, for example, that cannabis consumption among 15-year-olds has risen fourfold over the past 12 years (Schmid et al. 2003). In 2000, the life-time prevalence rate of cannabis consumption among young adults aged 20–24 was 59 percent, with about 27 percent admitting they currently consumed cannabis products. Within Europe, Switzerland hence belongs to the group of countries – including the UK, the Netherlands and Germany – with the highest rates of juvenile consumers of illicit drugs in Europe (for comparative figures see, for example, EMCDDA 2002).

National crime victim surveys

Over the past 20 years, a series of national crime victim surveys have yielded additional information on Swiss crime trends, similar to comparable instruments in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. All surveys were conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) and directed by Martin Killias. Data exist for the years 1984, 1987, 1989, 1996, 1998 and 2000. A recent comprehensive analysis of all available sweeps of the Swiss victim surveys and a comparison with comparable police data yield some important findings (Killias et al., forthcoming; Killias et al. 2000d; Lamon 2002) that put trends in police-reported crime in a wider perspective. In three important respects, national victim surveys unconditionally support trends found in police data: vehicle theft has declined considerably over the past 20 years; burglary increased up to 1997 and decreased thereafter; and incidents of interpersonal violence have become noticeably more frequent over this period. These opposite trends corroborate the impression gained from police data, namely that Switzerland has seen a major shift from property crime to violent crime.

Possibly the most reliable data for cross-national comparison of crime levels come from the International Crime Victim Survey (Aebi et al. 2002). Switzerland has been associated from the outset with this project (whose methodology borrowed many features from the Swiss national crime surveys), and it has participated in every sweep since 1989 apart from the one in 1992. The most recent round of surveys was in 2000 and comprised 17 random national samples in affluent industrialized countries. According to these findings, Switzerland ranked 10th for rates of burglary (including attempted burglary), 11th for robbery rates, and 14th for assaults.

Data on police-recorded crime suggest a very similar picture. The most comprehensive data here are those collected by the *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics* (1999, 2003). The first

edition, published in 1999 by the Council of Europe, included data on up to 36 countries in western and eastern Europe, and the second edition (2003) had data on 39 nations. Within western countries, Switzerland again emerges as having low rates of violent crime and medium levels of property crime.

Prisons

We examine three main indicators of trends in prison statistics, namely the number of persons referred to prisons, the average number of prisoners and the average length of prison stay among people released from prison. Figure 5 shows the number of people, per 100,000 inhabitants, sent to prison during a year as well as the average number of prisoners per 100,000 over the period 1982–2002. It thus combines flow and stock statistics. Prison referral statistics indicate that the number of persons sent to prison reached a peak in 1989, when almost 12,000 persons were admitted to prison. Over the next 13 years, data show an unbroken trend towards fewer people being sent to prison; in 2001, only 5500 people were referred to prison. In contrast, the average total number of sentenced prisoners remained relatively stable over the 20 years. In 2001, it was about 3700, compared with 2500 in 1982. The total number of sentenced and non-sentenced prisoners was 4987 on 4 September 2002, which corresponds to a rate of 69 per 100,000 (Council of Europe 2003), that is,



Figure 5 Number of referrals to prison and size of prison population (sentenced prisoners), 1982–2002

Source: Bundesamt für Statistik (2003).

substantially lower than 20 years earlier (Kuhn 2000, 2001). This is one of the lowest rates in Europe and comparable to rates in Sweden and Finland (Kuhn 2003).

Data on the average length of time actually served in prison show different developments. The number of people serving short sentences (i.e. less than 12 months) has dropped continuously since a peak during the late 1980s, and particularly since 1995. In 2001, for example, only 1000 persons served prison sentences of up to 3 months, compared with almost 2700 persons in 1989. The overall drop in the numbers sent to prison primarily results from the massive decline in people serving short-term sentences. This is due, first, to the increasing use of community service as an alternative to prison. Community service was introduced in 1990, when it could be used in lieu of sentences of up to one month. Since 1996, prison sentences of up to three months could be replaced by community service. As a consequence, the number of immediate custodial sentences transformed into community work rose continuously from 866 cases in 1996 to over 4000 in 2002. From 2006 onwards, the Swiss Penal Code will introduce community service as an independent type of punishment (instead of an alternative to prison). The second major factor contributing to the decline in short-term custodial sentences is the increasing use of electronic monitoring as an alternative measure. This type of sanction was first introduced on an experimental basis in 1997 in the cantons of Basle, Ticino, Geneva, Vaud and Berne.

Both community service and electronic monitoring have been evaluated through randomized controlled experiments. The results were generally encouraging for community service in place of imprisonment (Killias et al. 2000a), although some net-widening effects could be identified (Killias et al. 2000c). The experiment comparing community service and electronic monitoring is still ongoing (Killias et al. 2000b).

National origins, ethnicity and crime

Beyond the change in the composition of crime over the past 20 years, the change in the ethnic composition of offenders also needs to be briefly addressed here, not least because of its ramifications in public debate, criminal justice policy and prevention. Research carried out in the 1970s and 1980 on immigrants and crime unambiguously failed to show any overrepresentation, and sometimes found migrants to be even more conforming than the Swiss – despite their low average social status within Swiss society (Bauhofer 1993; Gillioz 1967; Killias 1988, 1997; Neumann 1963). Yet, starting in the mid-1980s, police data as well as conviction and prison statistics record a considerable shift. Figure 6 shows the proportion

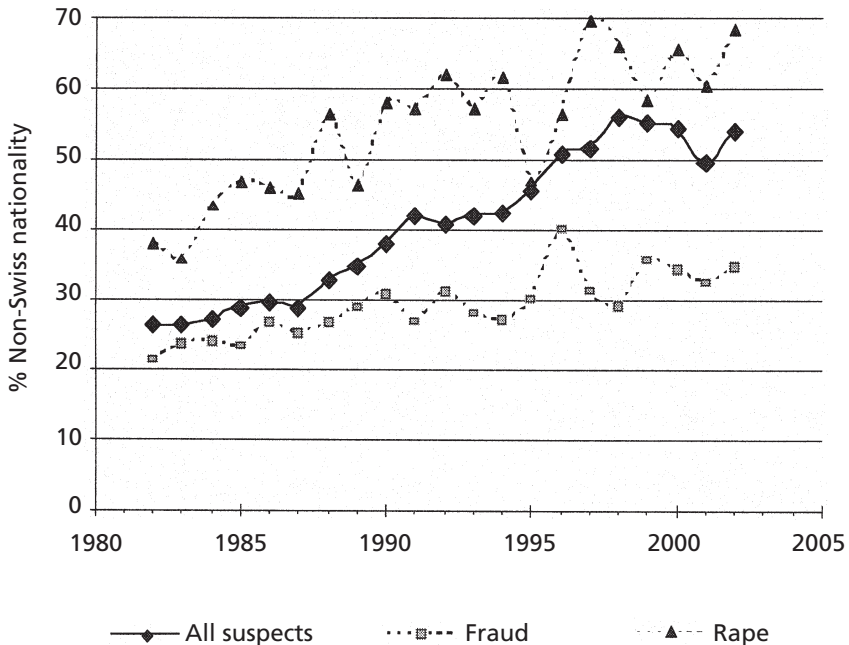


Figure 6 Police-recorded suspects: Proportion of non-Swiss nationals, 1982–2002

Source: Bundesamt für Polizei – Zentralpolizeibüro (1982–).

of non-Swiss nationals among all police-recorded suspects from 1982 to 2002. For illustrative purposes, we include two specific crime categories in addition to the overall proportion in order to illustrate the offence-specific variation in the ethnic composition of crime. During this period, the proportion of non-Swiss nationals among the resident population rose from about 16 to about 21 percent. Meanwhile the proportion of non-Swiss suspects according to police statistics doubled from about 26 percent in 1982 to over 53 percent in 2002. However, the proportion of foreigners varied systematically between crime categories at each point in time: economic crimes were more often committed by Swiss nationals, whereas the proportion of non-Swiss nationals was particularly high for violent crimes.

Among the convicted prison population the shift was even more dramatic. In 2002, 64 percent of sentenced prisoners were non-Swiss (Bundesamt für Statistik 2003); 20 years earlier the figure had been 28 percent (Killias 1997: 395). In the mid-1990s, Killias (1997) examined whether the over-representation of foreigners could be attributed to judicial discrimination. Based on a comparison of sentence length and time served between Swiss nationals, resident foreigners and non-resident foreigners, he

concluded that there was little indication of sentencing disparities on grounds of nationality. Instead, the large proportion of non-Swiss inmates appeared to reflect primarily their overrepresentation among offences that attract harsher punishments. Victim surveys have also shown that offender characteristics as identified by victims, including national origin, matched police statistics by and large, and that the pattern of increase in the proportion of personal crime attributed to immigrant offenders was about the same according to both victims' reports and police statistics (Killias et al. 2000d).

Political debate

Since 1949, the Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv has maintained a large press archive, storing and classifying about 30,000 articles each year. The hierarchical classification system comprises several hundred topics under which articles are stored. The vast majority of the items that are routinely screened are from Swiss newspapers in German, although the archive occasionally includes articles that appeared in Swiss newspapers in French. Several studies have shown that the number of articles archived in any one year by the Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv on a specific issue provides a good estimate of the actual trend in Swiss media coverage (Eisner et al. 2003a). We have hence used this archive to examine trends in the intensity of the media discourse on crime and related issues. We investigated a total of 19 categories found in the archive and counted the annual number of articles archived in the respective boxes. These included topics related to drugs, drugs policy, organized crime and youth violence. It should be noted, however, that the archive does not collect short reports on individual criminal incidences. Rather, most of the articles are comments, policy discussions, editorials or reports on research findings. The analysis examined the period from 1970 to 2002.

Figure 7 shows the trend in media reporting on drug-related issues. Overall, the data suggest massive fluctuations in the extent of media reporting. Also, fluctuations appear to move along largely parallel trajectories when different categories are compared. In earlier publications, Eisner (Eisner 1991, 1999) interpreted these fluctuations as evidence of three major issue cycles. A first wave – barely visible in these data – started in the late 1960s and was related to the then new topic of illicit drugs in connection with the hippie and '68 youth movements. A second wave of public debate culminated during the early 1980s. It reacted to the upsurge in the consumption of both cannabis and hard drugs associated with the Swiss autonomous youth movement and the concomitant open drugs scene

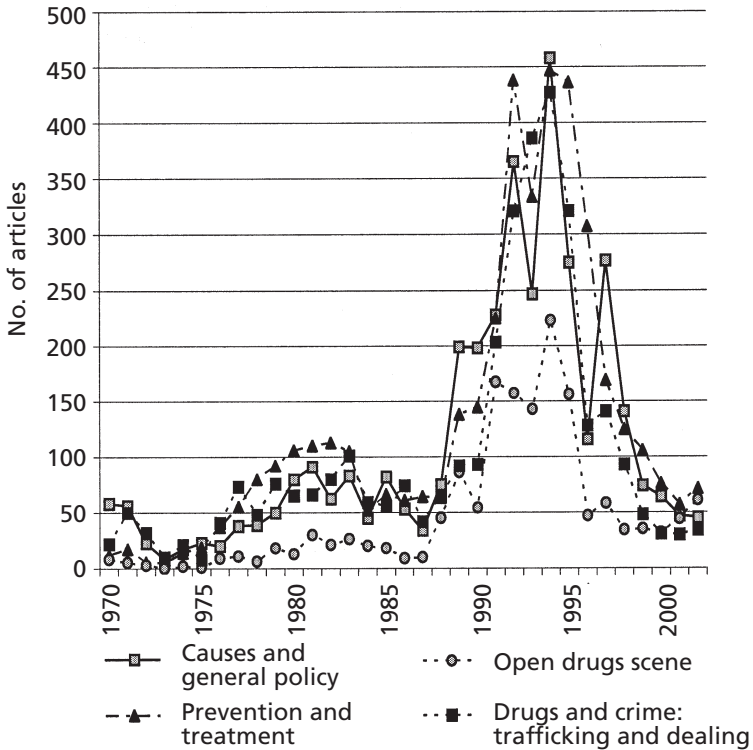


Figure 7 Media coverage of drug issues in Switzerland, 1970–2002

Source: Count of articles per year archived in the Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv.

in several Swiss cities. The third, and by far the most intensive, wave began in 1988 and culminated around 1994. The various boxes on drug-related issues contain more than 1500 lengthier articles per year during this period. The spectacular rise in media coverage is closely related to the manifest crisis in Swiss drugs policy during those years. The large open drugs scene associated with massive drug-dealing, violence and property crime had established itself in various Swiss cities, in particular Zurich (Eisner 1994). At the same time, the spread of HIV among marginalized heroin and cocaine users exacerbated health problems among this population, fomenting fears of HIV spreading to the general population through prostitution. During these years, starting in 1992, the Swiss federal health authorities, in conjunction with a group of experts, started to consider experimenting with prescribing heroin to a limited number of long-term addicts. The experiments actually started in 1994, in the midst of the most intensive public and political debate, which has left its trace in the media indicators.

Figure 8 shows the extent of media coverage of issues related to crime. Again, the data suggest several waves of public concern, although

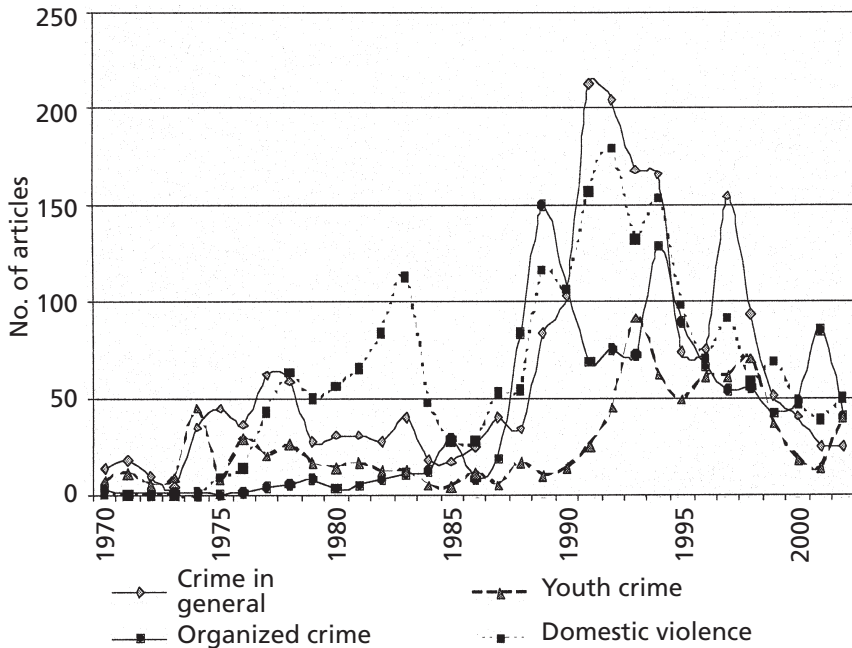


Figure 8 Media coverage of crime issues in Switzerland, 1970–2002

Source: Count of articles per year archived in the Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv.

there appears to be more divergence between concerns about different specific issues. A first minor wave can be seen in the mid-1970s, primarily related to youth crime and crime in general. This wave of public debate was probably partly related to the poorly documented increase in crime levels since the 1960s, but it also reflects discussions about the revision of the Penal Code and its consequences in 1971. Domestic violence emerged as an important object of media discourse for a couple of years during the early 1980s, echoing the first Swiss publications on domestic violence as well as a rise in concern about this issue across many countries (see, for example, Sherman and Berk 1984).

The most significant wave of public attention, however, started around 1988/9 and kept crime on the media agenda for almost 10 years. The interaction of three factors appears to have been decisive. First, it is apparent that the wave in crime concern roughly corresponds to the sudden rise in attention to drug problems, mentioned above. Indeed, the acute crisis in the drug situation during the late 1980s was widely perceived as posing a massive threat to public security, especially in the inner-city areas surrounding the open drugs scene. Secondly, the years following the opening of the Iron Curtain resulted in a steep rise in applications for

asylum, peaking in 1991 (Bundesamt für Flüchtlinge, *Asylstatistik*). Arguably some groups of asylum-seekers soon became heavily involved in drug trafficking as well as in various types of theft, sometimes connected to the expanding black markets in some East European countries (Eisner et al. 1999). By the early 1990s, therefore, asylum-seekers accounted for about 9 percent of police-recorded suspects for burglary and 14 percent for drug trafficking in the canton of Zurich. The triangle of drug trafficking, abuse of the asylum law and crime appreciably contributed to spiralling public concern in the early 1990s. Thirdly, in October 1993 a long-term prisoner on release for a weekend killed a teenage girl in a forest close to Zurich. The case prompted an extraordinary reaction in the media and within politics, similar to the Bulger case that same year in the United Kingdom. The importance of the case was most probably amplified by the already existing climate of public concern. However, it shifted the debate – whose details we cannot pursue further here – into topics related to heightened security measures in prisons, generally increased punitiveness and risk assessment for highly dangerous offenders. Studies showed that more careful review procedures before furloughs and parole substantially decreased re-offending by (former) inmates (Rindlisbacher 2002; Haas and Rindlisbacher 2000).

The effect of these events in Switzerland over the 10 years from 1988 on later public opinion and criminal justice policy was in interesting contrast to developments in the USA and the UK. According to regular large population surveys conducted since 1997, the public in Switzerland became only slightly more punitive, although rehabilitation lost some of its former popularity, particularly among leftist respondents (Obst et al. 2001). More particularly, although elements of the American-led punitive discourse were swept into the Swiss debate during these years, this discourse did not become part of the rhetorical repertoire of the largest parties and it apparently failed to attract a majority of the electorate. Still more important, there is no evidence of a general shift towards increased punitiveness within the criminal justice system; for example, the number of police officers and the size of the prison population remained stable.

Review of key publications

As the analyses presented so far show, the public and political crime debate during the past 20 years primarily revolved around three main topics: violence in its various manifestations; the rise in substance abuse and its association with other types of crime; and the extent and manifestations of white-collar crime in a country with a large financial sector that has

recurrently been subject to massive internal and external criticism. In what follows we discuss selected publications that give an overview of core issues addressed in recent research.

Violence research

Interpersonal violence is one of the few areas in which a critical mass of research with contributions from psychology, sociology, political science, history and criminology promises a certain degree of continuity. Research over the past 15 years has covered a wide range of specific aspects, including child bullying, youth violence, domestic violence, political violence (including extremism) and police violence.

At the Institute for Developmental Psychology in Berne, for example, Françoise Alsaker and her team have done important research on bullying and aggression among kindergarten children that included the experimental implementation of a prevention programme (Alsaker 2002, 2003; Alsaker and Valkanover 2001). The study was carried out in the city of Berne and included interviews with 347 children aged 5–7 as well as their parents and teachers. They found that about a quarter of the children could be classified as bullies in the sense that they repeatedly behaved aggressively towards other children. Another 25 percent were classified as victims and were generally found to be more fearful and to have low self-esteem and a low sense of self-efficacy. As part of her study, Alsaker developed a prevention programme that was experimentally implemented in eight kindergartens. Participation in the prevention programme was based on self-selection by the teachers. The basic objective of the programme was to enhance teachers' capacity to handle bullying and victimization problems. It involved extended situation-specific consultation with the teachers as well as a classroom programme aimed at increasing empathy. Because of the self-selection procedure, the intervention group had above-average levels of initial aggressive behaviour and teachers' sensitization may have resulted in some bias. Nevertheless, the results are strongly encouraging. According to both teacher ratings and peer nominations performed by children themselves, the researchers found a significant drop in the extent of victimization among the prevention group. It is currently planned to extend the study in order to analyse longer-term effects of the interventions.

Youth violence is another area of research that has considerably expanded over the past 15 years and where a series of cross-sectional studies illuminate a broad variety of research issues. Typically, they are based on school samples of students aged 13–19 (Clémence et al. 2001; Eisner et al. 2000a; Vazsonyi et al. 2001, 2002; Willi and Hornung 2002). So far, only one study has been based on a national random sample of

young people aged 14–21 (Killias et al. 1994). Three of these studies were part of cross-national comparative projects and hence illustrate the degree to which the extent and causes of youth delinquency in Switzerland differ from what is found in other western societies.

The first study was the International Self-Reported Delinquency Study directed by Josine Junger-Tas (Junger-Tas et al. 1994), which encompassed 13 countries. Despite some problems as regards comparability, the study (Killias et al. 1994) found that levels of violence were generally lower but property crime and drug use were rather more frequent among youth in Switzerland than in other affluent countries such as England and Wales or the Netherlands (Junger-Tas et al. 1994: 371). In a deeper cross-sectional analysis, Junger-Tas et al. (2003) found that school failure (i.e. having repeated a class at least once in the course of a full school career) is not associated with later delinquency in north-western Europe (including Switzerland), in contrast to the USA and UK. The authors suggest that, in Switzerland and other countries in north-western continental Europe, intellectually less gifted children, having the chance to leave school honourably and start an apprenticeship aged 15 or 16, may lose less in terms of status than young people in the USA or the UK.

A second major cross-national comparison was done by Vazsonyi and his collaborators as part of the International Study on Adolescent Development (ISAD) and used random samples of 15–19 year olds in Hungary, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States (Vazsonyi and Killias 2001; Vazsonyi et al. 2001, 2002). Again, and somewhat surprisingly in view of the differences in official rates of crime, the study found rates of vandalism, drug use, theft and assault to be highly similar across the two West European countries as well as the United States. Furthermore, more detailed analyses suggested that commonly accepted predictors of crime such as lack of self-control (Vazsonyi et al. 2001) and routine activities (Vazsonyi et al. 2002) accounted in highly similar ways for individual variation in delinquency within all four countries.

In the third study, Eisner et al. (Eisner et al. 2000a) conducted a school-based self-administered survey of 2700 ninth-grade students in 1999 in the canton of Zurich, focusing on violence. It used exactly the same research methodology as several studies carried out in Germany, including a large proportion of identical scales and single items (Wilmers et al. 2002). It hence allowed for cross-national comparison between highly urbanized areas. Prevalence rates for both victimization and self-reported violent offending suggested that juveniles in Zurich were somewhat less often involved in violent acts than were their counterparts in cities in northern Germany such as Hamburg, Bremen and Hanover. Yet rates did not differ

greatly from those found in cities in southern Germany (Munich, Freiburg im Breisgau). Overall, therefore, there is little support for the assumption that delinquency rates in Switzerland are generally lower than those in other countries or that the basic mechanisms leading to crime differ in a fundamental way.

A slightly older age group has been studied by Killias and Haas in a project that makes use of a distinctly Swiss tradition, namely the recruitment of all men into the army (Haas 2001). The study is exceptional in that it covers 21,314 army recruits at age 20. This represents about 70 percent of the age cohort, but obviously excludes young men of foreign nationality. The sheer size of the study permitted analyses of rare and serious crimes that cannot usually be analysed by means of self-report designs. Thus the authors were able to identify 30 men who had committed at least one rape involving the use of weapons or physical force without having been prosecuted for the crime. Analysis of this group provides a critical assessment of findings based on convicted serious sex offenders. Results showed that the unidentified rapists had committed a large number of sexual and non-sexual offences. Two-thirds of them had been severely sexually abused during childhood (compared with 2.7 percent in the total sample) and half of them had been victims of recurrent physical assault by their parents or step-parents. Furthermore, these sexual offenders were much more likely to have experienced anxiety, depression, self-mutilation and suicidal thoughts during childhood and adolescence. Rather surprisingly, however, their occupational career up to age 20 was found to be only marginally less successful than the career of other recruits. This study also discovered a strong correlation between psychiatric symptoms, violent offending and personality disorders, on the one hand, and gun ownership, on the other hand (Killias and Haas 2002). In this respect it echoed research based on the international crime victimization survey, which showed a strong correlation between gun ownership in private households and violent acts occurring usually at home, such as suicides and murders of women (Killias et al. 2001). Contrary to popular myth, guns are an important source of risk in Switzerland; indeed, the weapon used in 71 percent of family killings is a gun, and in 43 percent of these killings it is a military weapon kept at home (Villetta et al. 2003).

Manzoni (2003) has recently studied police violence. His main research question pertains to the degree to which violent events between police officers and citizens are associated with and caused by work-related stress, work satisfaction and burn-out. Other causal factors assumed to account for variation in the frequency with which police officers are involved in violence are organizational factors (e.g. working conditions),

individual characteristics (self-control, age), job profile (i.e. exposure to situations likely to result in conflict such as arrests or identity checks) and the characteristics of the 'others' encountered during police work (e.g. intoxication, aggressiveness). Interestingly, Manzoni does not start from the premise of distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate excessive police violence, a difference that is often liable to highly controversial interpretation. Rather, his main interest is to what degree overall involvement of police officers in violence can be explained as accruing from 'non-professional' factors such as work-related stress. Empirically, Manzoni administered a written self-completion questionnaire to 992 police officers in the city of Zurich.⁹ It included various questions on the incidence of victimization and the use of force in different situational contexts. Descriptive results confirm that police officers are heavily exposed to violence. The overall one-year victimization prevalence rate (including verbal threat, assault, threat with weapon, attack with weapon) in the city of Zurich was 61 percent; 30 percent of police officers had been victims of an assault and 13 percent had been threatened with a weapon. On the other hand, 81 percent of police officers said they had used some kind of force during the past 12 months. This included 57 percent saying they had used actual physical force and 29 percent who had threatened an individual by means of their service weapon. Descriptive findings also showed that exposure to violence is highly skewed. The 5 percent of police officers who were most exposed to violence accounted for 42 percent of all cases of active use of force and 49 percent of victimizations (Manzoni 2003: 103). Initial bivariate analyses showed most assumed predictors to be correlated with self-reported use of force. Police officers who were more exposed to violence also had a more conflict-prone job profile, experienced more job-related stress, more organizational stress, less job satisfaction and higher levels of depersonalization (a sub-dimension of burn-out) (Manzoni 2003: 142). However, simultaneous estimation of the various hypothesized explanatory factors by means of structural equation models led to a refutation of the stress-induced violence hypothesis (Manzoni 2003: 150). Although Manzoni found stress to be associated with a conflict-prone job profile, low job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion, it was not a predictor of the use of force once the job profile was taken into account (Manzoni 2003: 180).

Still ongoing is a study on violence against women (conducted by the Lausanne Institute of Criminology), which is part of the International

⁹ The response rate was 48 percent.

Survey of Violence Against Women (ISVAW). The Swiss study is based on a random sample of 2000 women who were interviewed by CATI. The study included randomized experiments of several versions of the questionnaire in order to test the effect of different wordings and structures of the survey instrument.

Drugs, the heroin prescription programme and crime

Switzerland's heroin trial, which has been conducted since 1994, has particular relevance to international debates about drugs policy. Within this programme, around 1000 seriously addicted heroin users were given prescribed heroin. At the same time, methadone programmes, which had been operating over several years, were expanded to cover approximately 15,000 out of an estimated total heroin user population of 20,000–25,000. Extensive research was carried out, including randomized controlled experiments at the local level (e.g. in Geneva), which provided a large body of evidence about the effects of a prescription programme. From 1995, this evidence included data about crime victimization and self-reported offending as well as drug use. The results showed a lasting drop in victimization and offending among drug users who received prescribed heroin, a drop that goes well beyond the usual 'ageing out' effect. Because no randomized design was feasible at the national level for practical reasons, the size of the reduction in crime associated with heroin prescription cannot be estimated precisely, but there is convincing evidence that this effect was substantial, varying from 50 percent to 90 percent depending on offence type. Crime trends at the national level to some extent confirm the conclusion that the prescription of drugs to users was associated with a reduction in offending, although this could be connected as much with the prescription of methadone (on a massive scale) as with the prescription of heroin (Killias et al. 2000a; Killias et al., forthcoming).

Some comparisons (including a randomized experiment in Geneva) were also possible with alternative substances such as methadone. In general, the results showed that heroin treatment is more efficient than the alternatives in motivating addicts to participate, to stay in treatment, to comply with the rules and to abandon offending (Killias et al. 2000b, 2002; Killias and Rabasa 1998). It was also possible to match the individual data on self-reported offending, police contacts (from police records) and convictions (from criminal records) for an unusually large sample of nearly 500 subjects (Aebi 1999). The results showed that both self-reports and police data correctly identify offenders and non-offenders, but that self-

report data give a more accurate estimate of the frequency of offending by multiple offenders.

Organized and economic crime

Organized and economic crime is a third area where recent research has considerably added to prior knowledge. Indeed, triggered by the persistent public concern and concomitant political demand for knowledge, the aforementioned National Research Programme 'Everyday Violence and Organized Crime' has financed a total of 14 research projects specifically on subjects related to organized crime. However, owing to the almost complete lack of prior research in the area, several of these studies primarily examined theoretical, methodological and conceptual issues rather than presenting original empirical research. Of these, the analyses by Besozzi (1997, 2001) are now widely regarded as the most comprehensive critical discussion of illegal markets and entrepreneurs in German-speaking areas. Among the empirical studies, researchers examined various illegal markets, including the market for illicit drugs, money laundering, the organized recruitment of East European women into prostitution, and corruption (Braun et al. 2001; Pieth et al. 2002).

In one of the methodologically more sophisticated empirical studies, Braun et al. (2001) examined the functioning of street drug markets in the cities of Basle, Berne and Zurich. Based on interviews with almost 1000 consumers of heroin and cocaine, the authors looked at various aspects such as market networks, the reactions of participants to periods of increased policing, and the price elasticity of consumption. They showed that lack of trust and the risk of fraud within the illegal market lead to structures of interdependency where buyers and sellers know each other. Overall, however, it appears that the drugs market in Switzerland, as in other European countries, is characterized by a multitude of short-lived business structures rather than the dominance of large-scale organizations.

Queloz et al. (2000) conducted an in-depth analysis of about 120 corruption cases based on criminal files or disciplinary records (on civil servants), of which 34 resulted in convictions. Results showed, amongst other things, that the most affected business sector was public construction, which accounted for half of the convictions. Subsequent interviews with selected informants (33 in the public sector and 29 in the private sector) confirmed that the public sector of the construction market is perceived as being particularly susceptible to both illegal practices and processes of corruption. More particularly, direct bribery appears to be only the tip of the iceberg of a system of cronyism and old boy networks between

entrepreneurs and policy-makers (the two very often coming together in local government) together with members of the public administration.

However, one of the interesting comparative questions pertains to whether the impressions shared by external observers such as Clinard (1978) and Balvig (1987), namely that Switzerland has an extraordinarily high level of hidden white-collar crime, actually hold up against empirical evidence. Some empirical data on this subject come from the results from the 1996 ICVS survey, in which 30 countries included questions about active bribery of public officials. According to these data, Switzerland had the lowest rate of corruption, along with Sweden and Northern Ireland (Killias and Ribeaud 1999). This corresponds well with the results of Transparency International, an organization that monitors levels of corruption in 133 countries worldwide. According to the latest report, Switzerland was among the 10 countries least affected by corruption of officials, along with a group of mostly Scandinavian countries together with Singapore, New Zealand and Australia (Transparency International 2003). In this connection, it is also noteworthy that Switzerland has the lowest rate of untaxed incomes (i.e. the smallest 'shadow economy') among all OECD nations (Schneider and Ernste 1999).

Criminal networks in a more literal sense were investigated by Giannakopoulos (2001) in another study that has come out of the national research programme 'Everyday Violence and Organized Crime'. Giannakopoulos derives his hypotheses from rational choice theory. More particularly, he assumes that criminal networks arise where good opportunities (i.e. available targets and high potential monetary gain) and poor formal control create favourable conditions. Empirically, Giannakopoulos first performed a structural analysis of 365 cases collected over a period of eight years (1986–93) and based on questionnaires completed by criminal law officials. These initial analyses suggested that the vast majority of 'criminal networks' (62 percent) consisted of fewer than five actors, and that most of these were occasional structures rather than persisting organizations. Of the 75 cases qualifying as large networks (involving more than 20 actors), all but one had their roots outside Switzerland, with countries such as Italy, Russia, Colombia, Albania and Turkey being strongly represented – countries, of course, where organized crime is endemic. In a second step, Giannakopoulos (2001) presented an in-depth analysis of 10 cases based on detailed analyses of archival material. Here he introduced the methodological tool of network analysis in order to identify the specific structure of criminal organizations. The resulting visual representations of complex networks that sometimes involve layers of production (of illicit goods), money laundering and protection are highly impressive. However, as the

author admitted, they are explorative in the sense that actual tests of causal hypotheses remain impossible.

Conclusions

The image of Switzerland as a crime-free paradise – if there ever was one – definitely does not correspond to current reality. Certainly a variety of indicators suggest that Swiss crime rates are somewhere in the lower third in a comparison of western societies. But they are not lower than those of other small, wealthy European nations and they decidedly do not support the notion of Switzerland as the exceptional case, as suggested by Clinard (1978) and Adler (1983). It may be, however, that the upswing in crime started later in Switzerland than in most other Western nations, and that crime in Switzerland was indeed lower than in most other countries around 1970 when Clinard collected his data. On the other hand, there is no evidence either to support the demonic image of Switzerland as a country controlled by economic and organized crime. Certainly, money laundering, corruption, fraud and drug trafficking do exist. But nothing suggests that their extent is larger than in other West European countries, and some phenomena may even be under better control than elsewhere.

As a result of the wave of public concern about crime and drugs in the early 1990s, academic interest extended beyond the handful of long-term experts in the field, and more resources became available for criminological research. However, it appears that the recent wave of new publications – in part triggered by the national research programme ‘Everyday Violence and Organized Crime’ – has not been matched by a concomitant expansion of more lasting research infrastructures; nor have most of the research projects supported by this programme led to articles in peer-reviewed journals. Hence, the new and increased resources provided to research on crime and criminal justice have given limited support to the development of a broader base of methodological competencies and research skills. It seems likely, for example, that the future development of criminal justice policy – but also youth policy, drugs policy and other areas with direct implications for crime and delinquency – will increasingly demand high-quality criminological research. In part, this includes more reliable and more comprehensive baseline information on, for example, trends in youth crime, domestic violence or economic crime. Beyond descriptive data, however, a better research infrastructure would be desirable to improve our understanding of the effectiveness of prevention and intervention policies. The experiments with the heroin prescription programmes showed the potential of high-quality evaluation research to inform policy-making. In many other

domains, however, very little is known about whether prevention or intervention policies influence chains of cause and effect in the desired direction.

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Manuel Eisner

Manuel Eisner is Reader in Criminology at the University of Cambridge, 7 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DT, UK. He was previously Assistant Professor at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. He has published on a wide range of topics including long-term crime trends, the causes of urban violence, and the social and political processes involved in handling environmental problems such as water pollution and dying forests. He is currently planning a longitudinal study of young people and criminal offending in Zurich.

manuel.eisner@crim.cam.ac.uk

Martin Killias

Martin Killias is Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law at the University of Lausanne, within the School of Criminal Sciences, IPSC-UNIL, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland. He gained his doctoral degree in law and his MA in sociology, both at the University of Zurich. He has served as a postdoc at the School of Criminal Justice, University at Albany, USA, and as a visiting professor or fellow in the USA, Canada, Italy and the Netherlands. He was one of the founders of the the European Society of Criminology, and was closely involved in launching other cross-national initiatives such as the International Crime Victimization Survey and the *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*.

Martin.killias@ipsc.unil.ch