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REGISTERED AND NON-REGISTERED CRIME

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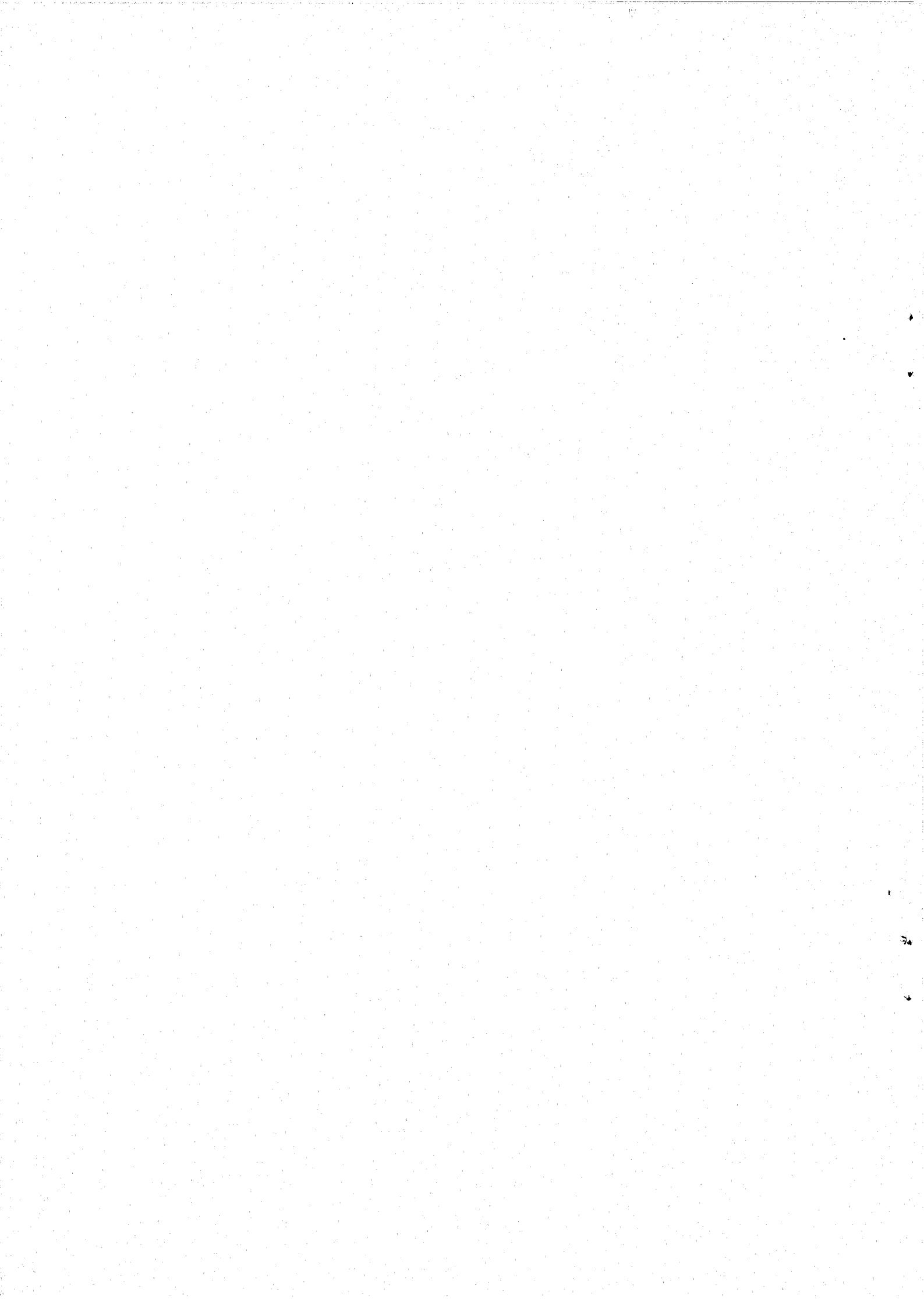
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ACQUISITIONS

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CRIME DATA OF THE C.B.S.: THE INFORMATION OF SUPPLEMENTARY STUDIES.

INTRODUCTION

Every year the C.B.S. compiles a number of statistics in the criminal files. Well-known publications are the "Monthly Statistics of the Police and Judicial Authorities," "Criminal Statistics," "Judicial Statistic" and such publications as "Administration of the Laws of Juvenile delinquents," and "Administration of the Traffic Laws."

These statistics give surveys of data concerning crime, the criminal procedure and the ways of administration of certain laws - In particular the "Monthly Statistics of the Police and Judicial Authorities" is very popular. The basic numbers presented there are usually published in the newspapers, and it is not uncommon that they evoke more or less vehement discussions about crime and the way it develops.

Parliament, too, usually pays attention to these data. True, this happens as a rule in connection with the Exploratory Memorandum, (note of translator; of the annual budgets; - such an explanatory memorandum is also presented with introduction of every specific bill in parliament) but even then the data produced by C.B.S. are the basic figures.

Often the manner in which crime develops is the main subject of debate (in parliament) the given figures may, as in 1974, give rise to far-reaching requests to the authorities concerned, such as for a research in depth concerning the background or reasons for the rise of crime, or no less drastic propositions such as expansion of the police force. Therefore it is certainly worthwhile to go deeply into the meaning of these data. This has already been done from the point of view of several fields. Notably, scientific circles have occupied themselves in recent years with the question: what is the value of the existing crime statistics? Several criminologists have pointed out that these figures are not reliable; and therefore it is not right to use them as an index to the development of crime. Are these "criminal statistics" indeed "criminal"? "Criminal" in the sense of the word, used in Amsterdam (i.e. magnificant) they are certainly not. (NOTE: the word "Krimineel in Amsterdam slang means "splendid")

* We refer the interested reader to R. Hood and R. Sparks: Key issues in criminology, World University Library, London 1970

The question if, and if so to what extent they are unreliable, and in which respects, can not be answered easily, however. It is nevertheless sufficiently important to warrant discussion. Therefore we want to do so here. We shall restrict ourselves here to crime figures.

How are the Crime Statistics assembled?

He who wants to answer the question which value may be given to certain statistics, will have to investigate how these figures are assembled. This means that he will have to turn back to the basic facts in order to follow the trail (pulling it in the farface of the Criminal Investigation Department) further from theron. Let us start with the "Monthly Statistics of the Police and the Judicial Authorities." This publication contains, as is well-known, figures about the extent and development of registered crime (among other things) or, put differently, the violations come to knowledge of the police. How does the C.B.S. get these figures? It gets its basic material from the police. Every police force in the Netherlands sends monthly surveys to C.B.S., which indicate the number of violations come to the knowledge of the police during the past month., grouped accordingly to the kinds of violations, or categories thereof.

How does the police, in its turn, get this information? Violations basically can come to the knowledge of the police in two ways: one possibility in that somebody (for instance the victim or a witness) notifies the police of a certain offense; the other possibility is that the police itself registers certain violations without any notification by somebody else.

Can one say that both sources in combination give a good picture of the criminal which has occurred? Generally speaking this is certainly not the case. Between Commission of the crime and registration at C.B.S. all sorts of critical moments may occur, which can make offenses disappear statistically. He can compare this process with feeling of an onion: with every successive step another layer disappears.

We can discern the following critical moments.

1. The victims have to realize that a violations has occurred*)
2. The victims have to be willing to notify the police. As will become apparent in the following, this is not by any means the case with every victim.
3. The information must be actually registered. Studies such as the one by Fijnant reveal that this by no means happens in every case**)
4. The registered information has to be passed on to C.B.S.

As we already mentioned, it may be that in every one of these stages a portion of the committed crime "is lost". We cannot name the precise amount. This will vary with different offenses. We can conclude, though, that the registered crime mirrors only partially the total crime committed in reality.

With some offenses the registered part will come very close to the total (such as in the car theft or bank holdups). Besides these, we can of course name offenses in which big discrepancies occur between the registered and the actual amount. We can name as examples here: Drinking under the influence, and shoplifting.

The importance of registered crime.

In what measure we have to recognize this discrepancy between registered and actual crime as a difficulty?

* This is not in many cases. Sometimes the victims do not realize that the action is an offense (a penalized act). Here the victim falls short-so to speak) in technical knowledge. It may also be that the offense is not noticed. For instance: a theft has occurred but the victim has not noticed anything is missing; a wallet may have been pickpocketed, but the victim thinks he lost it; a child's bicycle is missing, but the owner does not know whether it is stolen or has been left somewhere.

** A poll, conducted by Dumig en Van Dijk among victims of aggression shows that no registration had taken place in one fourth of the notified cases. It is interesting to note here, that, according to the authors, the registered cases were hardly different from the not registered ones with respect to the assembled data (by the authors) regarding the victims. (See: Actions and Reactions of Victims of Aggression, Neth. Journal of Criminology, April 1975). For Fijnant see: "The Selectivity of the Judicial Action of the Police" (thesis). Leuven, School of Criminology, 1971.

The answer to this question is to a certain amount dependent on the aim toward which these crime figures are used. To what purpose do we want to use them? Basically there are different possibilities, namely:

- I. The figures are used as an indication of the extent of the crime;
- II. They are used for indicating the development of crime;
- III. They are the basis for determination of the workload of the police (Criminal Investigation Department);
- IV. The figures are used in order to get an insight in the level of police-activities, and in the priorities of the detective force.

In the following we shall investigate in which measure the figures of registered crime are to be considered a reliable starting point as to each of these four points.

As for I The importance of registered crime for determination of the extent of crime

In the criminological literature we frequently can find statements that registered crime gives an untrue picture of the real extent of crime. Although such statements are basically correct, we do better to review this problem of incompleteness of the official statistics separately as to the different violations. The "dark number" - the amount of hidden crime - is in point of fact not equally large in different violations - Some people say that registered and real crime will approach each other more closely according to the seriousness of the offense. Although we certainly can discern such a tendency, it would not be too difficult, on the other hand, to cite examples of exceptions to this "rule". We will come back to this later.

We can get an insight into the extent of the difference between registered crime and the number of offenses which took place in reality by analysis of the information of the police.

Since it holds true that for many violations the notification is the main source of information for the police.* W.O.D.C. is investigating this subject as the moment. It conducted a poll among more than 3000 persons of age 18 or over, spaced over the entire country. They were questioned whether they had ever been victims to offenses like burglary, car-theft, etc., and, if so, whether the police were notified. In the survey below we have stated for each of these offenses how big a percentage of the victims has notified the police.

Table I. Percentage of the victims to specific offenses who have notified the police (1973)

	notified	not notified	unknown
Car Theft	92	7	2
Theft of motorized bicycle	89	8	2
Burglary	83	17	0
Bicycle theft	66	34	0
Pickpockets	61	36	4
Theft of articles from car	57	31	11
Collision	53	44	3
Hit-and-Run	41	41	18
Aggression of the Street (Violence against a person or threatening thereof)	34	64	2

Table I leaves little to the imagination: for most offenses it holds true that relatively many victims do not notify the police. Thus criminality experienced by them cannot be registered and therefore does not enter the official statistics. As a result, we may conclude that the figures concerned produced by C.B.S. indeed do not give a good insight into the real extent of crime.

* This reasoning does not hold for all offenses. Certain violations (of, for instance, the opium laws, gun laws, driving under the influence) it is true that the extent of registered crime is determined mainly by the detective activities of the police.

In reality more crime occurs. The amount of this portion of hidden crime is different for the diverse offenses (as Table I also shows us). In theft of motorized cycles, car theft and burglary it is relatively small. Bicycle theft and pickpocketing are considerably less frequently reported. Here we are already more at a loss for aggression (or threat) in the streets the "dark number" is largest.

What elements do define this "dark number"?

Above we already mentioned the assumption of a link between the seriousness of an offense and the extent of hidden crime. We then already pointed out that it is easy to state a number of exceptions to this rule. Table I supports this last statement: theft of motorized cycles, the most highly notified offense, can certainly not be qualified as the most serious offense. On the other hand, aggressiveness on the streets, which has the highest dark number, cannot be said to be the least serious of the cited offenses.

Background of the Trend in Notification

Relatively many people do not notify the police of a committed crime. Why not? Of course, some assumptions are obvious: One could say, for instance, that in case of non-information, the crime can not be serious. Of course, it is also possible that victims don't bother anymore to notify the police, because that doesn't help matters, or because victims are afraid of retaliation. In the poll, organized by W.O.D.C. in cooperation with N.I.P.O. (Neth. Just for Public Opinion), this point has also been considered. Victims who had not notified the police were asked for their reasons. The answers most frequently mentioned the (small amount of) damages or the circumstance that the victim had few expectations from a notification of the police. In Table II we have put down the most frequently named motives, and how often these occurred*) for the combined offenses of burglary, thefts from cars, bicycle thefts, thefts of motorized cycles, and pickpocketing.

Table II. Motives for not notifying the police (in percentages) in case of theft*)

The stolen articles were only of small value	27%
A notification of the police doesn't help matters	26%

* i.e. burglary, theft of articles from cars, pickpocketing, bicycle theft and theft of motorized cycles.

The value of the stolen article(s) plays indeed an important part. The strength of the relationship is demonstrated again clearly when we consider the offense "burglary" more deeply. We see then that the percentage of victims rises according to the notifying value of the stolen property. When the damage is over 500 guilders, practically all the victims do notify the police. Similar trends were noted regarding offenses such as pickpocketing and theft of articles from cars. Table III illustrates this once again. In order to restrict the number of tables we have confined ourselves to burglary.

Table III. The relation between the value of the stolen article and the willingness to notify the police.

Value of the Stolen Goods (in burglary)

	nothing stolen** N=37	less than f.100.- N=27	f.100.- f.500.- N=44	f.500.- f.1500.- N=23	more than f.1500.- N=15
Notified	76%	81%	86%	96%	100%
Not Notified	24%	19%	14%	4%	--

Apart from the value of the stolen articles the image of the police with the public also plays a part, as we have seen. One fourth of the victims who do not notify the police, omits this procedure because they think it doesn't help. The percentage of resolved cases for these kind of offenses show that we don't deal here with subjective (mis)-perceptions. The existing C.B.S. statistics show that the chance of retrieving the lost articles is indeed small. Therefore, we are dealing here with a symptom which certainly merits more attention in formulating policy.

** f.- or fl is the indication of Dutch Guilder (such as U.S. Dollar = \$).

Another reason for not informing the police could be fear for retaliation. This motive could notably play a part with victims of aggression. In the aforementioned study of the W.O.D.C. this point has also been considered. It became apparent here, that fear for revenge does not play an important part, at least with "our" victims this motive was only mentioned in 2% of the cases questioned.

As for II Importance of Registered Crime for Determination of the Crime Development

One of the things the monthly statistics of the police and Judicial Authorities is constantly used (or, as others say: misused) for, is statements about the development of crime. Above we already showed that these statistics definitely do not give a complete picture of the extent of crime. Does this also mean that one could not get, on the basis of these data, a true insight in the way crime develops? In the following we shall go more deeply into categories of offenses according to the way in which the Monthly Statistics of the police and Judicial Authorities are assembled. The first category consists of the group of violations which came to the knowledge of the police primarily through its own detective activities. Examples: Violations of the opium laws, the gunlaw, violations of certain rules from the traffic safety act etc. Apart from these, we can discern a group of violations which comes to the knowledge of the police primarily because the victim or witness gives information (such as theft, aggression, hit-and-run, etc.). Thus, we deal here with two categories of offenses, which come to the knowledge of the police in different ways. As will become clear, this is of importance for what we have to say. Therefore, we shall trace for both categories separately the measure of dependability of the C.B.S. data as a starting point for determination of the development of crime.

We shall begin with the first category.

Violations which came to the knowledge of the police primarily via its own investigative activities.

In Table III we have, on the basis of data from the "Monthly Statistics..." illustrated for three offenses how many of these came to the knowledge of the police in the period from 1972 through 1975. The three offenses are: Violations of the gun laws, driving under the influence and violations of the opium law.

Table IIIb. Development of crime in three kinds of offenses**

	violation gun law	driving under influence	violation opium law
1972	12	76	10
1973	12	84	10
1974	21	91	11
1975	16	124	19

Table IIIb shows clearly that the number of cases of driving under the influence and the number of violations of the opium law have mounted considerably in 1975. Does this mean that these forms of crime in recent times have increased much? The conclusion would only be justified if the investigation-activities of the police had remained constant over this period. This does not seem to have been the case at all. Since the effectuation of the new alcohol legislation there certainly has been a larger intensified investigation in this field. This, in turn, has led to a larger number of successful arrests, and therefore to an increase in the number of registered cases of driving under the influence. As these figures form the basis for the "Monthly Statistics," these will again show an increase in registered violations of article 26 of the Traffic Safety Act. This increase mirrors not primarily the development of driving under the influence in the Netherlands, but the intensified investigative activities of the police. A similar reasoning could be followed for the amount of violations of the Opium Act.

* The figures give the number per 100.00 inhabitants.

Hence this conclusion: The above-mentioned C.B.S. figures may only be used as an indication for the development of a particular type of crime if and when the investigation-activity of the police has remained constant over the period of research, quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

The first aspect hardly needs any explanation. The registered crime has to be linked to data such as: the size of the police force, the priority given to the investigation of a certain violation, etc. All this has eventually to come to light in a sort of index which shows the amount of man-hours spent in investigation once a year's period. If this amount should increase, the index should be corrected accordingly. But that is not the end of it.

There is also a qualitative aspect to this matter. When the police get more experience in tracing specific violations, the tracing will be more successful. Apart from this, newly developed techniques or new powers can lead to better results in the investigation. Change in legislation also can result in facilitation of the tracing. (the "November 1 legislature) (i.e. the new acts on driving under the influence)

This should also be taken into account. We must determine how many man-hours are needed (on an average) to trace one case. Only when the index to be assembled on the basis of these data, has remained constant during those several years, the figures concerning registered crime may be used as a basis for the determination of the development of crime in the field concerned.

Drafting of such an index is not an easy matter. One could even wonder whether it even would be practically feasible. Anyhow, we have to investigate this. Without such a means it is really impossible to use the existing C.B.S. figures as an indicator for the development of the here mentioned types of crime. So far, such an index has not yet been attempted.

This means that it is not right to use the C.B.S. statistics on a certain matter to this end. These statistics are - we repeat again - absolutely unfit without the above-mentioned supplementary information as a basis for statements about the development of the type of crime which concerns us here (See Footnote*)

Offenses Coming to the Knowledge of the Police mainly via Notification by Victims Or Witnesses.

We have shown above that the data in the "Monthly Statistics of the Police and Judicial Authorities" do not give a correct picture of the crime which has occurred during a certain year. Should we say that therefore these figures are also unfit as a basis for statements about the development of crime? This in itself does not have to be true. The question here is whether the portion of unregistered crime can be considered a more or less constant quantity. To put it differently; Can we assume that the unregistered crime in each consecutive year forms a certain constant percentage of the total crime in that year? Let us be somewhat more concrete. If it would be true that every year 20% of the committed burglaries is not registered, then the data from the mentioned statistics could be used without objection as indicators for the development of this type of crime. True, they would only mirror part of the total of committed burglaries, but as this part would always amount to 80% of the total, the registered figures would mirror the development of this crime perfectly well.

Unfortunately, in reality such a constant ratio does not exist by any means. The willingness to notify the police of a violation - probably the most important factor for determination of registered crime - differs, not only for different crimes; it appears to vary also for consecutive years. For instance, the above-mentioned W.O.D.C. project seems to indicate that the willingness to give information to the police has decreased in case of bicycle thefts, while on the contrary this willingness has increased with victims of aggression. If these observed figures are correct, this would mean, for instance, that certainly part of the increase of the C.B.S. figures attributed to a greater willingness to report these crimes to the police.

This point has a certain importance for our statistics about violations of the opium act especially as there are plans to intensify the tracing of drug trade and the use of drugs having a more than acceptable risk, we may expect that the number of reported cases will increase.

Without the above-mentioned corrections we are not justified to conclude (on the basis of this increase) that the use of drugs in the Netherlands has grown.

However this may be; it will be clear that it is meaningless to base statements about the development of crime on data in the "Monthly Statistics...", without supplementary information about the pattern of information by victims.

Therefore, a further search concerning the factors influencing this willingness of notification is urgent. Such an investigation may show us not only why certain victims don't bother anymore to report, it may enable us as well to correct the C.B.S. figures in such a way that we can get a better insight in the total extent and therefore in the development of crime. When, for instance (such as happened in 1973), 17% of the victims of burglary state that they have not reported the burglary to the police, this means that the C.B.S. number of burglaries in that particular year has to be corrected by a factor (at least) $\frac{100}{83}$. For bicycle theft this factor is $\frac{100}{63}$, based on our data.

The previous paragraphs illustrate clearly the importance of willingness to report for the indication of extent and development of crime. Therefore, we shall have to trace accurately any factors which influence this willingness.*). W.O.D.C. is at the moment preparing such a study.

*The series of advertisements which recently appeared in many papers, and which urged the public to report (among other) thefts to the police, however small the damage, has to be considered such a factor. It will be clear that, if this campaign proves successful, it will result in more notifications than in the past. The result of this will again be an increase in registered crime. We shall have to take this into account in our interpretation of the official crime statistics.

Determination of the extent and development of crime.

In the preceding pages we have shown that the C.B.S. figures do not give a correct picture of the extent of crime in our country. In addition, these statistics fall short as indicators of the way crime develops. How then do we get a better insight in the extent and development of crime? For this, we shall have to return to the basic source. In this case this is the (potential) victim. Seen from a research - technical standpoint this means that we shall have to poll people and ask them whether they ever have been victims to certain types of crime. It will be clearly impossible to ask this question to all inhabitants of the Netherlands. Therefore we shall have to work with random tests. Such a research project with NIPQ. What was this so-called victim-study line? A country-wide representative sample of Netherlands inhabitants aged 18 and older was polled. They were asked the question whether they had been victims to certain crimes in the year of the poll and the previous year. The crimes were; burglary, car theft, theft of motorized cycles, bicycle theft, pickpocketing, aggression on the streets or threats thereof, and hit-and-run. They were also questioned as to the extent of the damage (if any), and whether the police had been notified. If this had not been the case, the reason was asked. Finally, for each person data was kept as to what kind of crime they were victims, and general data such as sex, age, social status and domicile. These polls have started in the Spring of 1973, and since 1974 they are held twice yearly (in spring and fall). It is intended that they will be repeated every year.

What is the use of such victim-studies? Let us start with the perspectives in development on the basis of these polls we can determine every year again which percentage of the polled people has been victim to a certain crime during the year of the poll, or the previous year.

If we may assume that the polled group is representative of the Netherlands population, this means that the found percentages also indicate how large a percentage of "Netherlanders" has been victim to that special offense during that certain period. By comparing these annual figures one gets a better insight in the way that special type of crime develops in the Netherlands.

We are clearly in possession of such figures for a number of special crimes, namely burglary, car theft, theft of motorized cycles, bicycle thefts, aggression on the streets, pickpocketing and theft of articles from cars.

In Table IV we have illustrated the percentages of the polled people who have been victims to one of these crimes during the period 1972-74. We have omitted here the date concerning theft of motorized cycles: because it became obligatory on February 1, 1975, for drivers of these vehicles to wear a helmet, we observed another polling period. This enabled us to answer the question whether this requirement influenced the number of thefts of these cycles. This proved indeed to be the case; In the period from January - September 1974, 8% of the polled drivers of these vehicles had been victim to theft, while over the same period of 1975 this percentage went down to 5%. This indicated that we may expect the number of thefts of these vehicles to have diminished by more than one third.

Table IV. Percentage of polled people indicating that they have been victims to a special crime. (the samples varied from 3000 to 45000 persons)

	1972	1973	1974
Burglary	1½	1	1
Car Theft	***)	***)	***)
Thefts of articles from cars	-	2	2
Bicycle Theft	3	3	2
Pick- pocketing	-	1	1
Aggression on the streets	-	1	1

*) A dash (-) indicates that this date was not yet available for 1972.

**) An * indicates that the percentage here is smaller than 1.

Table IV is quite clear. If we may assume that our sample of polled people is representative for the Netherlands population, this would mean that these specific offenses have not increased during the period 1972-1974. - This because the percentage of polled people indicating that they have been victimized has remained practically constant.

In this respect our results then are vastly different from the conclusions justified by the C.B.S. figures, which do indicate an increase. We cannot give a good explanation of these differences, as we find no basis for them in the momentarily available data. The cause may be found in a change in willingness of victims to report, a change in the policies of registration by the police, a change of the way of reporting to the C.B.S. by the police, but of course also in flaws in our polls. Although the quality of these can certainly be improved *) we think that with the help of the above-mentioned victims we can get a better insight in the way crime develops. The collected data will even gain more importance when we do not only look at the percentage of yearly victims (the quantitative aspect) but also take into account the damages (i.e. the seriousness of the offense). This qualitative aspect is unjustly reflected in the existing C.B.S. statistics. Crime, however, can develop for the worse in different ways; the number of offenses can increase, but even with a constant rate of violations there may occur an alarming shift in seriousness - or the contrary, of course. We therefore will have to take both these facets into account in discussing the development of crime.

The extent of Crime.

On the basis of our "victim-project" we concluded in the last paragraph that there has been no increase in crime as far as the investigated types of crime were concerned.

*) A small task force within W.O.D.C. is momentarily devoting itself to this problem.

To those policies for figuring crime this is a happy result, but not to them above. This same research project enables us also to make more concrete statements concerning the extent of crime. It is now certainly well-known that registered crime usually does not give a correct picture of the real extent of crime. For the policy - makers it is, however, important to know which portion of crime remains under water, and what kind of offenses these are. Here, too, the country-wide victim polls initiated by W.O.D.C. can help us. Two data resulting from those polls are of special importance. The first is the willingness of notification by victims of some special type of crime. The second is information about the in-reported cases. We should not only know which portion of the often-mentioned iceberg remains under water, but also what kind of cases are concerned here. Only after we know more about this last aspect we can determine whether the problem of hidden crime is indeed as large as is assumed in diverse criminological publications. In the preceding pages we have already shown in what way basically the existing C.B.S. figures can be corrected, basing ourselves on the figures of notifications.

We start with the percentage of the victims which has not reported to the police this percentage has to be incorporated in the existing C.B.S. statistics. When for instance our investigation shows that 8% of the victims of theft of their motorized cycle does not report this fact. We can assume that the number of stolen vehicles of this kind in the Netherlands is higher by at least 100/92 than the C.B.S. figures show. We have, on the basis of this reasoning, illustrated in Table V the estimated extent of the born number for certain kinds of offenses.*)

*) These, too, are conservative estimates, as we learned under the assumption notified cases were also reported to C.B.S.. We may assume that in reality this will not always be the case.

Table V - Estimated extent of the dorn number and the number of unresolved crime for 6 types of violations*)

	Not Notified(I)	No. of cases according to CBS figures (II)	Estimated dorn number (III)	Total of II & III resolved (IV)	Not**) Estimated in % of IV (V)	chance of being caught (VI)
Burglary	17%	70262	14391	84653	65059=76,9%	23,1%
Car Theft	2%	8150	166	8316	6200=74,6%	25,4%
Theft of Motorized Cycles	8%	42797	3721	46518	40227=86,5%	13,5%
Bicycle Theft	34%	54846	28254	83100	81144=97,6%	2,4%
Pickpocketing	36%	2372	1334	3706	3539=95,5%	4,5%
Hit and Run	41%	10341	7184	17425	11469=65,4%	34,6%

Table V again illustrates that the dorn number differs for diverse violations, and is sometimes certainly not negligible. More than 28000 bicycles change owner unnoticed by the statistics. More than 14000 burglaries did not enter the official crime statistics in 1973. It is necessary to know more of the character of the unreported cases, in order to interprete these figures correctly. A first analysis of the mentioned date reveals that the victims relatively often judge the non-reported offenses as not so important (see also Table II), and that a relation exists between the value of the stolen goods and willingness to notify the police (see page 7). Supplementary analysis of these data and further study of behavior in reporting is desirable. But the above-mentioned results are important, even lacking these studies, as they tell us approximately how many offenses escape the attention of the police. By linking these figures to the percentage of resolved cases in the different types of crime the extent of the unresolved crime emerges.

By comparing these figures from year to year we can see the development of the amount of unresolved crime.

*) The figures are those of 1973

**) These figures were assembled thus: on the basis of the percentages of resolved cases, produced by C.B.S. we first determined how many of the cases registered by the police are not getting resolved. To this number we added the not-reported cases (the estimated dorn number).

About the extent: the next-to-last column of Table V shows that in many cases the offenders could commit their crimes without any reaction of society.

For burglaries these cases number more than 65,000, for theft of motorized bicycles more than 40,000. It is important for the government to be informed about this. Thus, it can have a better realization of the numbers in question, and plan its policies accordingly. In doing this, there are some main question points: How large can the "level of tolerance" and in what sort of way (campaigns for informing the public, furthering of measures helping prevention of crime*) intensification of the detective force, enhancing the quality of the tracing, changes in priority in the tracing, etc.) Data derived from polls of victims thus can lead, in combination with the figures produced by C.B.S., to a more purposeful policy concerning the fight against crime.

Finally Table V mentioned resolved cases in percentages. There, too, we find some sort of dark number. Not reported crimes cannot be resolved in principle. The last column of Table V shows for six types of offenses the amount of the percentages of non-resolved crimes. These figures are definitely not reassuring. For some kinds of crimes the percentage is so high that we in fact already have a "depenalizing" here.

III

IV · The meaning of registered crime for the determination of workload and level OF ACTIVITIES OF THE POLICE.

Up to the present we have pointed out that on the basis of the figures derived from "Monthly Statistics...". We cannot make justified statements about the extent and the development of crime. This is in itself not a new sound. Similar remarks have been altered repeatedly by others, allert without much success: the habit to make statements about crime on the basis of C.B.S. figures is strangely established.

*) W.O.D.C. is working on a report about the possibilities in this field.

This is in itself understandable, as it concerns a social problem (crime) which strongly attracts attention. There is a strong temptation to reason as follows: In complete figures are better than no figures are better than no figures at all. This viewpoint is a frequently occurring misapprehension. Are then the mentioned C.B.S. figures meaningless? Can we first as well stop assembling them?

-The answer to this is, in short, "no", for the following reasons: We can only (and exclusively) get a better insight in the extent of crime through a combination of the C.B.S. figures with the date derived from polls of victims (see Table V for a example of this)

-Although the C.B.S. figures about registered crime do not give us a correct insight in the real extent of crime and the manner in which it develops, they can give us important information about the "workload" of the police. An increase in the number of registered offenses does not always mean that crime is on the rise, but it does mean an increase in the workload of the police. Seen as such, these data can be of importance for the question whether the police force should be expanded. From this viewpoint the crime statistics are certainly an important source of information.

-The C.B.S. figures in the judicial field also contain data about the so-called offenses without victim (illegal possession of weapons, violation of the opium act, certain traffic violations etc.) We cannot get figures about these kinds of crime via polls of victims.*) Here we have to depend on the existing C.B.S. statistics. We already pointed out that the figures presented there cannot inform us about the extent of the offenses with which we are concerned. (See p.9). They are, however, an important indicator for the detective activities of the police in the special field concerned.

*) Here we could use what the Anglo-Saxon countries call "self-reporting studies." (i.e. anonymous, written polls, which ask the respondents to indicate special crimes committed by them during the last year.) We tend to doubt whether this is a sufficiently reliable method. Existing studies in this field reveal that the answers practically exclusively report relatively light offenses. He seldom encounter serious crimes.

These figures can be fruitfully used for further study of this level of activities and in connection with this, also for determination of the followed priorities. They can even be made more by making regional comparisons.

Through the above-mentioned examples we hope to have shown that the C.B.S. figures about crime certainly do not lack significance. Their value, however, does not lie in the field in which they are most widely used (i.e. determination of the extent and development of crime). They are in fact unfit for that purpose. But they can be of importance in questions such as determination of the workload of the police, and deciding on its level of activities in the field of crimes without victim.

Finally, C.B.S. data can give us an insight, if combined with polls of victims, into the extent of hidden crime as to special kinds of offenses. After all, in this manner we can make important corrections in the existing percentages of resolved cases.

SUMMARY

We discussed in this report the figures concerning crime, compiled by C.B.S.: To what end they are useful, and when they are not to be used.

Further, we described the polls of victims, initiated by W.O.D.C., and pointed out the importance of these studies for establishing policies. We came to the following conclusions:

- The existing C.B.S. statistics cannot be used as a basis for statements about the extent and development of crime.
- When the polls of victims are repeated regularly and the samples are representative of the Netherlands population, they can give us a good insight into the way in which crime is developing.
- We can get a better insight into the extent of crime by combination of the C.B.S. data and the victim-polls.

A further analysis of the willingness of victims to notify the police is not important for determination of the extent of hidden crime (quantitatively as well as qualitatively). Such an analysis can show us about the confidence of the citizens in the police.

Furthermore, such an analysis enables us to correct the published percentages of resolved cases. By this we can get better insight into the effectiveness and selectivity of the tracing policies employed by the police.

-The C.B.S. figures concerning registered crime are important for the determination of the workload of the police, and for deciding which level of activities to follow with regard to the so-called crimes without victim.

(Techincal) Epilogue

In the preceding pages we have tried to come to a better estimate of the existing dark number in crime, or the basis of the results of a series of polls of victims.

If there we should realize that in this procedure, too, we can only approximate reality. We may assume that the figures presented here come closer to reality than those of C.B.S. Insiders know, however, that these victim-polls still have technical flaws.

One of the problems to which we will have to devote our attention in the future is: representativity. Researcheers working on these polls always try to work with an optional crossection of the Netherlands population. This method, understandable in itself, is not quite correct, however. It does not take the fact into account that the population of victims will differ according to the different types of offenses. For instance, not everyone has an equal chance of becoming a burglary-victim. The same holds for bicycle theft. We shall have to take this more into account when designing our random tests. The determination of the different universes (realms) to this end is not simple by any means, but it is essential.

Test-technicians therefore will have to devote more attention to this problem in the future.

The problem of defining the offenses to be included in a potential poll-test of victims is equally important.

Offenses such as bicycle theft, car theft and so on present no problems in this project. Every polled person will understand their meaning immediately. Aggression or sex-crimes are much more complicated to define with clear boundaries.

These kinds of offenses especially cause the researcher great technical difficulties.

As it is important that these kind of crimes are included in future victim-polls, victimologists will have to devote particular attention to this problem of definition.

END