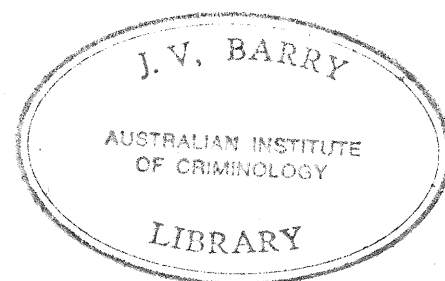# Trends in violence and crime prevention strategies in the world

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Trends in violence and crime prevention strategies in the world

Violence concerns citizens of every country in the world. In recent years such concerns have transformed into fear in many countries partly because of the occurrence of major violent incidents in places least expected. Violence in a family restaurant (McDonalds in California), place of work and child care centre (Oklahoma Federal building bombing), school setting (Dunblane massacre), and in a tranquil tourist centre (Port Arthur massacre) are just a few incidents that made headlines in the news media across the world in the last few years. If one cannot feel safe in such places not only the quality of life of people is adversely affected but also the interpersonal relationships are disturbed. Although many more people loose their lives in wars and other internecine conflicts, incidents of mass homicides remain as the most fearful event in the minds of ordinary citizens.

Violence manifests in various forms, ranging from child abuse to violence in homes and schools, at work place, on the street and play fields and in the mass media and entertainment. Violence can be verbal, by gestures and of course physical, and violence can have psychological, emotional and sexual connotations. Violence may be individual or group and planned or spontaneous. Violence can be against minority and disadvantaged groups as well as against overprivileged. Violence can occur between nation states and within a state between tribal groups.

Violence, thus has many facets and it is impossible to deal with all the facets in this short presentation. The scope of this paper is to describe violence in relation to violent crimes as defined in the legal systems of various countries. The criminal laws of nations include a large number of violent crimes such as assault, robbery, rape, sexual assault, murder, homicide etc., and particularly since the second World War a large number of countries have developed statistical systems that produce statistics on the incidence of various types of crimes. A large number of countries contribute to the Surveys of Crime Trends and the Operations of the Criminal Justice Systems, conducted by the United Nations every five years. Although statistics on crime and violence are now available from a large number of countries there exist serious problems in interpreting official data compiled in different countries. These problems relate not only to the differences in definitions of crime but also to attitudes

toward reporting incidents and the procedures and practices of law enforcement agencies in recording these incidents. Such problems may be encountered in relation to the most serious offence of homicide as well as other offences. For example, some countries include only intentional homicides in the statistics whereas others may include attempted homicide as well. The reportability of rape is very low in traditional societies, and even in highly industrialised societies rapes are not reported as frequently as other violent offences.

The offence of homicide is widely recognised as the extreme form of violence and the number of homicides in a country can reflect a true level of violence. The reason for this recognition is that there is no significant difference in definition of a completed homicide across countries, the reportability rate of homicide is usually close to 100 per cent, and homicide trends can be accepted as a measure of change in social behaviour. Trends in homicide, therefore, will constitute the main evidence for this paper and will be supplemented by data on assault and robbery on occasions.

Early Studies

The description of homicide trend in this paper is based on official crime statistics produced by countries. The paper recognises the many and valid criticisms of official crime statistics. The crime victims surveys in many countries show that attitudes and concerns of people can influence the reported incidence of crime. However, experts agree that it is possible to overcome the limitations of official crime statistics if the trend being examined relates to a serious offence that is not subject to unnecessary fluctuations due to attitudinal changes, changes in counting rules and law enforcement practices. Also a trend analysis, including several years of data, can to a great extent neutralise some of the minor causes of fluctuation. Furthermore, data from more than one stage of the criminal justice system, and for a number of other offences can be used to describe trends.

A number of research studies have examined the level of homicides and other violent crimes in the United Kingdom, the United States and Western Europe which tend to show that the levels of these crimes were higher in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than

in the twentieth.[1] However, many of the countries have been experiencing increasing levels of violent crimes particularly since the 1960s. Brenner (1976) produced a major work for the Joint Economic Committee of the Congress of the United States in which he considered unemployment as an index of cyclic changes in the economy.[2] One of Brenner's major findings was that "unemployment and inflation were both significantly associated with increased homicide mortality."[3] These studies appear to show that economic condition, including inflation, unemployment and the business cycle may affect crime rates.

Others have examined effects of police strikes, blackouts, and wars on the level of crime. Archer and Gartner (1976), using homicide data from 110 countries since 1900, examined the effects of wars on the levels of homicide.[4] Their study revealed that homicide rates in combatant countries increased substantially in the postwar years but not in noncombatant nations. Archer and Gartner concluded that of the seven theoretical models that have been used to explain effects of war on violence within a country the one which applies to their findings is the legitimation model. They suggest that postwar increases in homicide rates in combatant countries can be explained by "the presence of authorised or sanctioned killing during war has a residual effect on the level of homicide in peacetime society."[5] Mukherjee (1981) in his research on crime trends observed significant increases in the levels of violent crimes and crimes against good order in Australia following both the world wars.[6] His conclusions were that while Archer and Gartner's explanations were entirely valid, it is important to note that interpersonal violence is a young male phenomenon. Most soldiers used to fight war are young males. When they are away fighting wars violent crimes in their country of origin decline; when they return from the war they bring with them the additional 'sanctioned killing' experience.

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[1] For an excellent summary see Gurr, T. R. "Historical Trends in Violent Crimes: A Critical Review of the Evidence." in Tonry, M. and Morris, N. (Eds) Crime and Justice: An annual review of research, Vol. 3. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.
[2] Brenner, M. Harvey, *Estimating the Social Costs of National Economic Policy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health, and Criminal Aggression,* study prepared for the use of the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Paper No. 5, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.
[3] Ibid, p.70
[4] Archer, D. and Gartner, R. "Violent Acts and Violent Times: A Comparative Approach to Postwar Homicide Rates", American Sociological Review, Vol 41, No. 6, December 1976, pp 937-963.
[5] Ibid p. 961.
[6] Mukherjee, S.K. Crime Trends in Twentieth Century Australia, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981.

United Nations Surveys

The United Nations, since its founding, have been concerned with the problem of crime and delinquency. In April 1948 the Social Commission, and later the Economic and Social Council, requested the Secretary-General to undertake a study of crime. A questionnaire, containing items relating to criminal statistics for the period 1937 to 1946, was sent to member states. The ten year period was selected to collect data for the most recent time and also to assess the impact of World War II. A large number of member states responded to the questionnaire. These responses lacked uniformity both in terms of quantity of data and the manner of presentation. Because of variations in the data it was not possible to draw a specific conclusions or to compare the situation between countries. However, the general conclusion was that "In most of the countries and notably in the belligerent or occupied countries for which suitable material has been made available, crime rates increased during the ten year period under investigation. Of the countries reported on, approximately one-half experienced some increase in the number of offences known to the police, persons convicted, persons charged, prisoners, etc."[7]

The post second World War reconstruction was characterised by significant economic development, population growth, and urbanisation. By the 1960s, however, the countries that showed economic prosperity also demonstrated increases in the levels of crime and delinquency. Cognisant of this negative development the United Nations embarked on a systematic collection of criminal statistics from countries. A detailed questionnaire, incorporating items on crime, criminals, criminal justice resources and crime prevention methods, was sent to Member States in December 1976. The questionnaire requested data and information for the years 1970 - 1975, and became known as the first United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and Crime Prevention Strategies. Three more surveys, bringing the collection of criminal statistics upto 1990, have been completed and the fifth survey, currently underway, brings the data collection upto 1994. These surveys collect statistics on four violent crimes of homicide, assault, rape and robbery.

The first United Nations survey showed that crimes against the person or violent crimes constituted about 20 per cent of all crimes in

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[7] United Nations, Statistical Report on the State of Crime, 1937 - 1946. Economic and Social Council, E/CN.5/204, 23 February 1950.

the world, and homicide accounted for only 0.3 per cent of all crimes. During the years 1970-75, on an average there were less than 4 homicides (including attempted homicide) per 100,000 population. The survey also observed that during this six-year period homicides increased by about 20 per cent. The homicide rate for developing countries was higher than that for developed countries, but the increase in homicide rate during the six-year period was much higher in developed countries than in developing countries. Developing countries also displayed higher rates of assaults and robbery than developed countries. Comparative analysis by regions of the world, however, does not display such a consistent pattern. Countries of Latin America presented highest average homicide rate among all regions but the lowest assault rate. Homicide rates in the regions varied between a low of 0.7 in countries of former Eastern Europe and a high of 8.2 in Latin America, per 100,000 population.

Not all countries that responded to the first survey completed the questionnaire for the second survey. The United Nations, based on the experience of the first survey, revised the questionnaire for the second survey. Minor changes were also introduced in subsequent surveys. There were 27 countries from various regions of the world which submitted data for the second to fourth surveys. An examination of data reveals that homicide rates in most of these countries have increased between 1975 and 1990, see Table 1. The average homicide rate for all these countries in 1975 was 3 per 100,000 population and in 1990 the rate was 4.1, an increase of over 36 per cent over the 16 year period. Increases in homicide rates in these countries during the three United Nations survey periods indicate an escalation of violence and the data on assault, rape and robbery from the same countries also show a significant increase in violence, see Figures 1 & 2. Between 1975 and 1990 the increases in rates of assault, rape and robbery in these countries have been in the order of 88, 73, and 620 per cent respectively; by any standard these increases are matters of serious concern. The preliminary results of the fifth United Nations survey from a limited number of countries display a continuation of these increasing trends.

Table 1: Homicide rates per 100,000 population 1975-1990, in countries responding to the second, third and fourth Unites Nations surveys.

	number of Homicides				rate per 100,000 population			
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1975	1980	1985	1990
AUSTRALIA	397	455	308	329	2.9	3.1	2.0	1.9
AUSTRIA	200	164	175	236	2.7	2.2	2.3	3.1
CANADA	634	496	657	1561	2.8	2.1	2.6	5.9
COSTA RICA	n/a	134	138	447	n/a	5.9	5.3	14.9
CYPRUS	n/a	12	6	12	n/a	1.9	0.9	1.7
DENMARK	84	237	290	242	1.7	4.6	5.7	4.7
FINLAND	259	254	117	429	5.5	5.3	2.4	8.6
FED. REP. GERMANY	2957	2733	2796	2995	4.8	4.4	4.6	4.8
GREECE	93	117	143	260	1.0	1.2	1.4	2.6
ITALY	1639	1977	2474	4179	2.9	3.5	4.3	7.2
JORDAN	40	59	81	102	1.5	2.0	2.3	2.5
JAPAN	2098	1684	1780	1885	1.9	1.4	1.5	1.5
KUWAIT	25	41	23	n/a	2.5	3.0	1.3	n/a
NEPAL	211	287	311	484	1.6	2.0	1.9	2.6
NETHERLANDS	998	1501	1796	2206	7.2	10.6	12.4	14.8
NORWAY	24	32	37	128	0.6	0.8	0.9	3.0
PORTUGAL	n/a	358	429	725	n/a	3.6	4.2	7.3
QATAR	2	5	6	12	1.2	2.2	1.9	2.5
REP. OF KOREA	472	558	541	633	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.5
SINGAPORE	50	62	70	48	2.2	2.6	2.7	1.8
SPAIN	167	31	754	636	0.5	0.1	2.0	1.6
SRI LANKA	969	893	2069	2353	7.1	6.0	12.8	13.8
SWEDEN	294	394	126	676	3.6	4.7	1.5	7.9
SYRIA	381	401	263	273	5.1	4.6	2.5	2.3
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	60	46	122	94	5.9	4.2	10.3	7.7
ENGLAND & WALES	1014	775	771	669	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.4
SCOTLAND	189	338	56	87	3.6	6.6	1.1	1.8

Figure 1: Rate per 100,000 population, Homicide & Rape, 1975 -1990
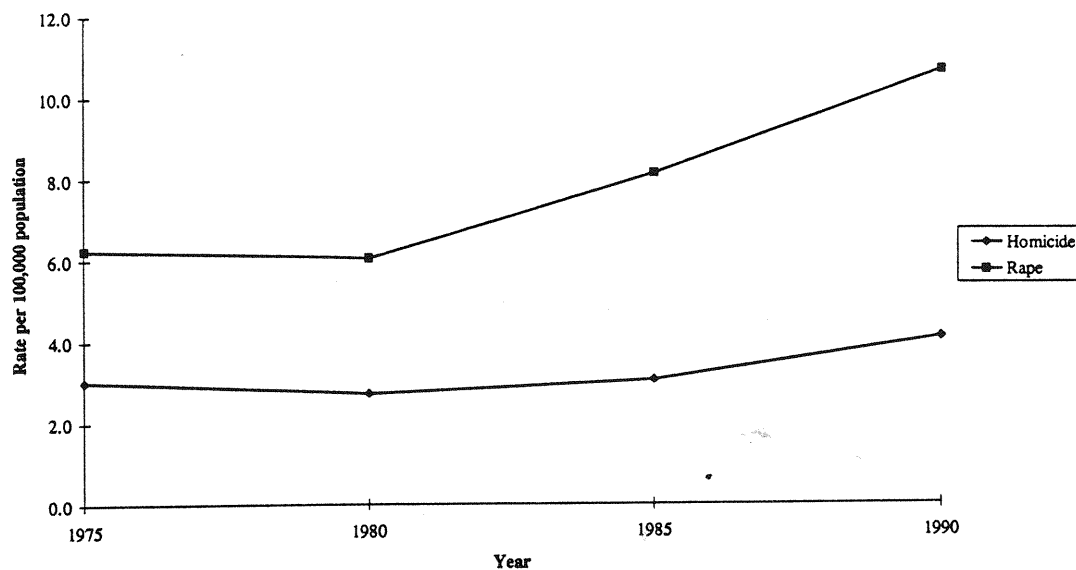

Figure 2: Rate per 100,000 population, Assault & Robbery, 1975 to 1990

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Violence against women

While discussing violence it is important to delineate some recent debates in many countries concerning the nature of violence. The violent offences noted above have been in the statute books in countries for a long time. Since the early 1980s three aspects of violence that have concerned many societies are domestic violence (and violence against women), the use of firearm in violence, and violence perpetrated in the process of illicit drug traffic and trade. An overwhelmingly large portion of rapes are against women and girls yet the stigma associated with this offence prevented many victims to report the incident to the authorities. A number of countries in the West abolished the offence of rape and created the offence of sexual assault instead. The International Victim Surveys show that one-year victimisation rates among women for sexual assaults varied between 0.3 and 2.4 per cent in the countries surveyed.[8] But sexual assaults against women do not include physical assaults.

Surveys conducted in a number of countries show the existence of a substantial amount of both sexual and physical violence against women. A 1992 survey showed that 29 per cent of ever married women in Canada had experienced either physical or sexual violence by a current or previous marital/common-law partner.[9] A Women's Safety Survey in Australia revealed that 23 per cent of the women experienced violence by a partner during the relationship.[10] Quite often the victims of such violence are children.

Firearm and Violence

Use of firearms to commit crime has been a vexing issue for many governments and with a series of mass murders in a number of countries in recent years the debate on gun control has become intense and polarised. The recent study by the United Nations provides a disturbing scenarios concerning the regulation, availability and ownership of firearms in a number of countries.[11]

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[8] del Frate, A.A., Zvekic, U. and van Dijk, J.J.M. (eds) *Understanding Crime Experiences of Crime and Crime Control.* UNICRI, Rome Publication No. 49, 1993.
[9] Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Family Violence in Canada.* Statistics Canada, 1994
[10] McLennan, W. *Women's Safety Australia 1996.* Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue No. 4128.0, 1996.
[11] Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division, *Draft United Nations International Study on Firearm Regulation.* United Nations Office at Vienna, E/CN.15/1997/CRP.6, 25 April 1997.

The study shows millions of firearms under civilian ownership in a few countries that responded to the ownership question. Firearms cause enormous harm. Firearms are used in crimes such as homicide, attempted murder, armed robbery, assaults, kidnappings and abductions. Besides, guns are used in a large number of suicides. Data gathered as part of the study show that by and large countries which have high homicide rates also have high firearm related homicide rate. Indeed, well over half the homicides in Northern Ireland, the United States, Mexico and Brazil were committed by firearms.
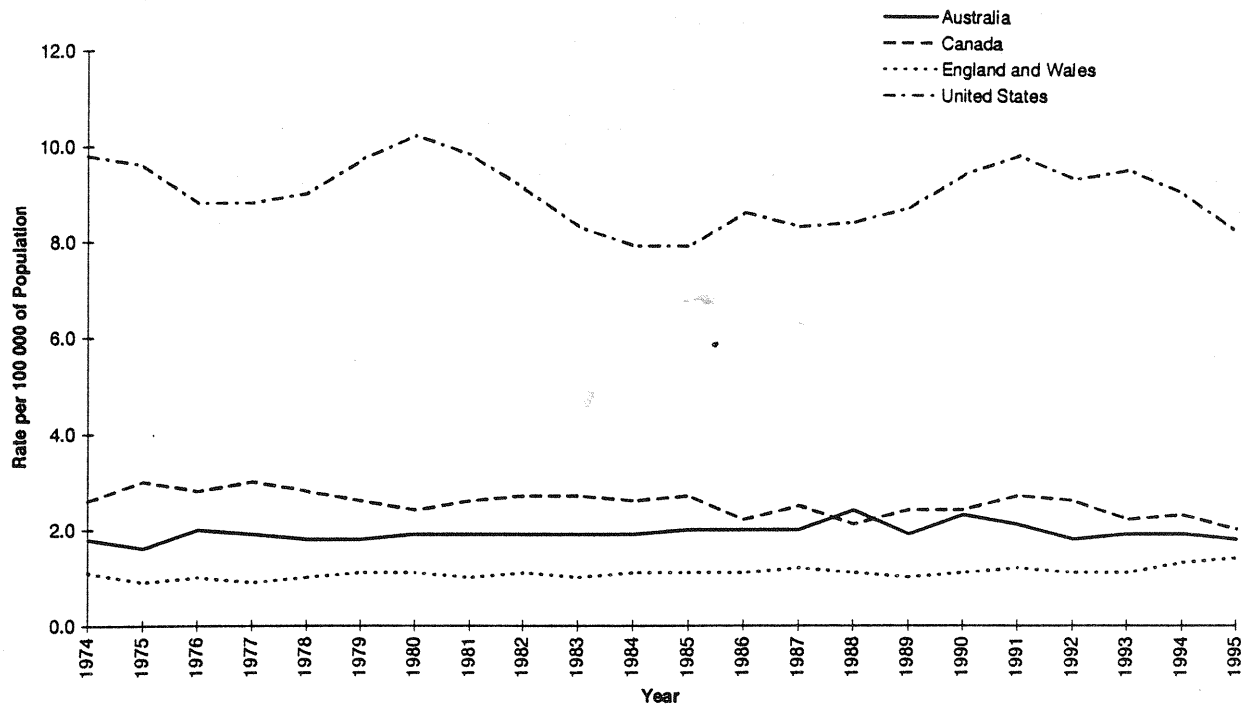
Figure 3
Total and Firearm Related Homicide
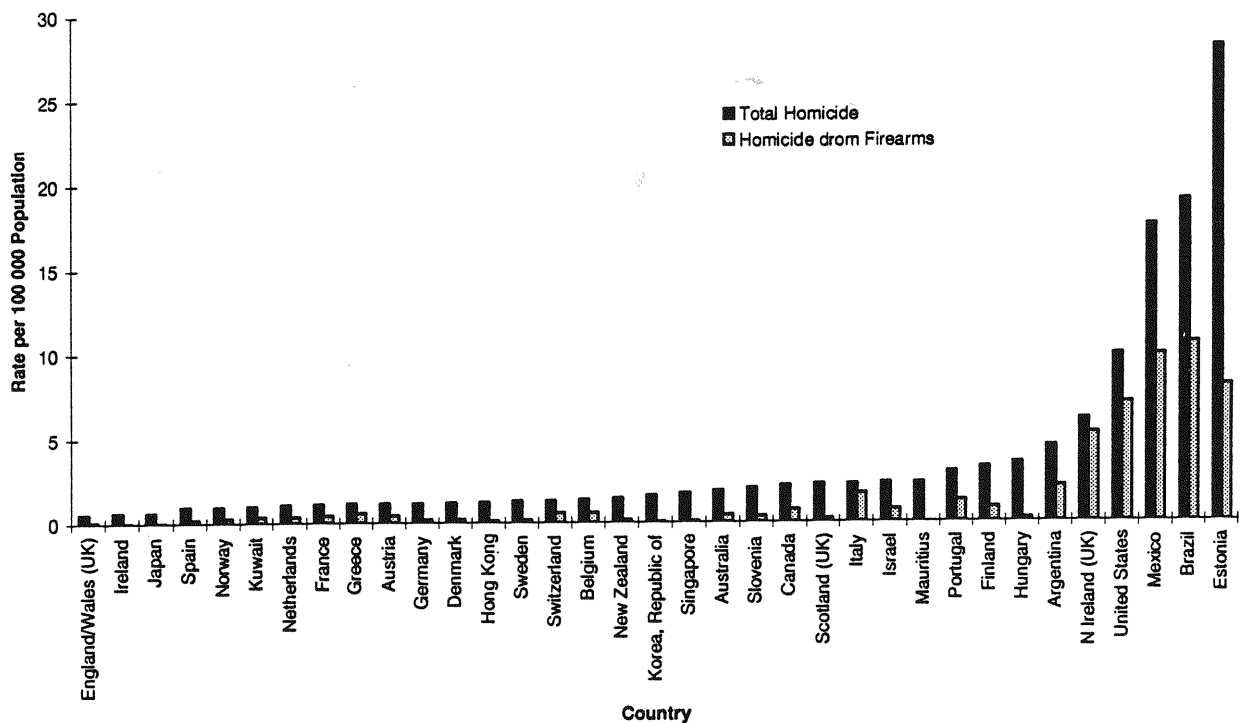
Homicide data for more than two decades from four Western democracies (Australia, Canada, England and Wales, and the United States) suggest that firearm related homicide is the one variable that distinguishes high homicide rate in the United States from the other three countries. It is important to note that among these four countries the United States represents the country with the most laxed gun control legislation and England and Wales the most strict laws; Australia and Canada fall in between. As the data in Figures 4 and 5 show, that once the firearm related homicides are excluded, the homicide rates of all the four countries not only converge but the

proportionate ratio between these also decrease. It is clear that non-firearm related homicide rates of Australia, Canada and England and Wales are much closer to each other and to the US rates than total homicide rates.

Figure 4
Homicide Rates

Figure 5
Homicide Rates Excluding Homicide by Firearm
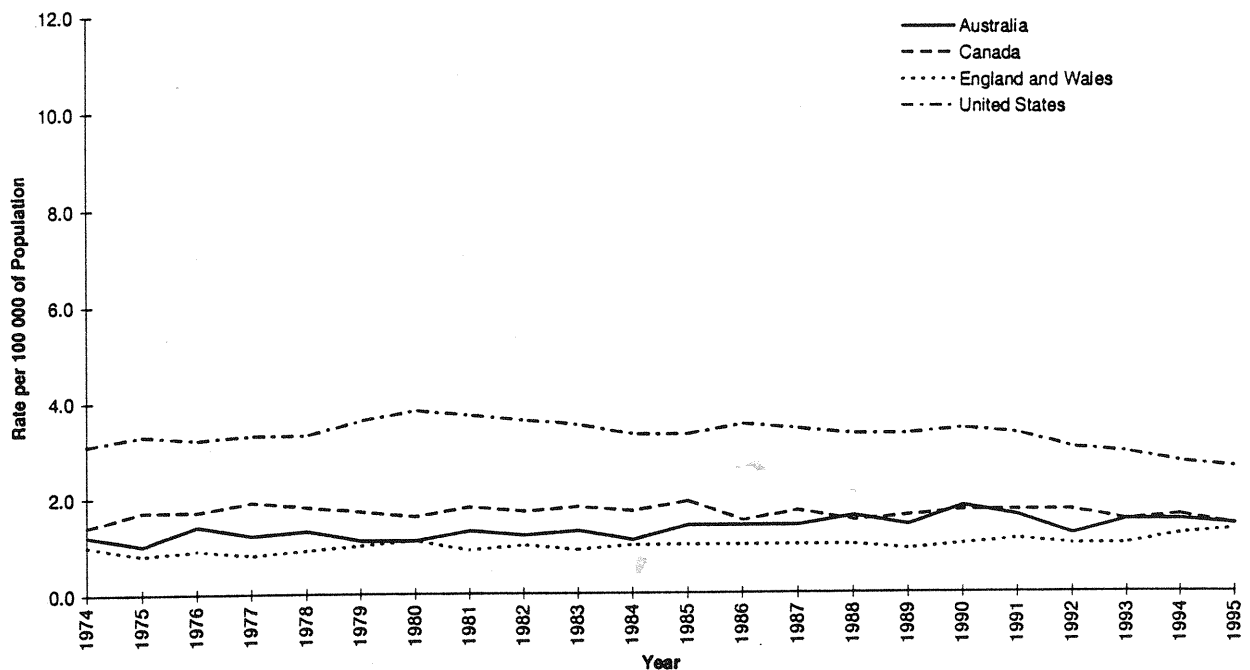
The significance of firearms in homicide can be displayed in another way. Data in Table 2 (normalised on England and Wales because its homicide rate represents a level that can be expected with fairly strict gun laws) show that when firearm related homicides are excluded the homicide rates in Australia, Canada and England and Wales become very close indeed. In 1995, the ratio between homicide rates (excluding firearm related homicides) of England and Wales and Australia, and England and Wales and Canada was 1: 1.08. The ratio of total homicide rate between England and Wales and the United States was 1: 5.86 and for non-firearm homicides was 1: 2. It should be noted, however, that even after removing the effect of firearms on homicide, the United States' homicide rate is twice that of England and Wales. As a number of studies have shown, the data presented above appear persuasive that restricting the availability of and access to firearms can have significant impact on the rate of homicide.

Table 2
Homicide Rates per 100 000 of Population
Ratios Normalised on England and Wales

Year	Australia Including Firearm	Australia Excluding Firearm	Canada Including Firearm	Canada Excluding Firearm	United States Including Firearm	United States Excluding Firearm
1974	1.64	1.20	2.36	1.40	8.91	3.10
1975	1.78	1.25	3.33	2.13	10.67	4.13
1976	2.00	1.56	2.80	1.89	8.80	3.56
1977	2.11	1.50	3.33	2.38	9.78	4.13
1978	1.80	1.44	2.80	2.00	9.00	3.67
1979	1.64	1.10	2.36	1.70	8.82	3.60
1980	1.73	1.00	2.18	1.45	9.27	3.45
1981	1.90	1.44	2.60	2.00	9.80	4.11
1982	1.73	1.20	2.45	1.70	8.27	3.60
1983	1.90	1.44	2.70	2.00	8.30	3.89
1984	1.73	1.10	2.36	1.70	7.18	3.30
1985	1.82	1.40	2.45	1.90	7.18	3.30
1986	1.82	1.40	2.00	1.50	7.82	3.50
1987	1.67	1.40	2.08	1.70	6.92	3.40
1988	2.18	1.60	1.91	1.50	7.64	3.30
1989	1.90	1.56	2.40	1.78	8.70	3.67
1990	2.09	1.80	2.18	1.70	8.55	3.40
1991	1.75	1.45	2.25	1.55	8.17	3.00
1992	1.64	1.20	2.36	1.70	8.45	3.00
1993	1.73	1.50	2.00	1.50	8.64	2.90
1994	1.46	1.25	1.77	1.33	6.92	2.25
1995	1.29	1.08	1.43	1.08	5.86	2.00
Mean	1.79	1.36	2.37	1.71	8.35	3.37
S.D.	0.206	0.201	0.453	0.293	1.105	0.535

Traffic in illicit drugs and violence

The relationship between drugs and suicide, drugs and homicide, and drugs and crime have often bee raised but never been fully explored. Very often the focus is on consumers/users of illicit drugs and how to reduce drug use through prosecution or legalisation or controlled distribution of drugs. Different law enforcement agencies have estimated the dollar value of illicit drug traffic. But rarely have attention been focussed on the lethal violence by people directly or indirectly involved with drug trafficking or on communities of ordinary citizens who engage in cultivating drugs for syndicates just to improve their quality life.

Large scale criminal violence often occur when turf war emerges between drug syndicates, traffickers and smugglers. Such wars are

widespread in countries where people are economically less well-off. It is difficult to estimate how many government soldiers, innocent citizens, and farmers who assist in illicit cultivation have died when drug wars erupted in Latin America and Asia. Even in the recently published World Drug Report[12] the broader socio-political dimensions of drug wars, narco-terrorism, and drugs-for-guns transaction was noted but could not be explored.

Need for Crime prevention strategies

The trends in violence presented above is a general description of the situation, both in relation to types of violent crimes and countries. Although such a description in itself may not be very useful in developing violence prevention strategies, the data do reflect the increasing trend in violence. It is a good starting point for identifying the problem. In other words, it is important to understand where violence occurs: urban vs rural, large cities vs small towns, by type of violent crime. It is equally important to know the characteristics of offenders and victims and their relationships.

Major cities in particular and urban areas in general around the world encounter increasing crime and violence. The Fourth UN Survey (1986-90) shows sharp increase in robbery (63 per cent over the survey period), a 23 per cent increase in homicide and 18 per cent in assault. According to the same survey homicide rates in major cities were much higher than national rates. Crime statistics also show that young males in the age group 15-34 are disproportionately represented in both offender and victim populations. Also data now reveal that a substantial portion of violent offences not only take place where the offender and victim are known to each other but also occur in private dwelling. The Australian National Crime Statistics show that in 1995 two-thirds of all homicides and sexual assaults and more than a third of all assaults occurred inside private dwellings. And finally, the Australian data reveal that well over 40 per cent of the victims of sexual assaults were children under the age of 15 years. These data inform us that homes are fairly dangerous places.

It is clear that crime prevention strategies must be designed according to the problem of crime; one particular strategy cannot be applicable to all situations. Until the early 1970s crime prevention was achieved through criminal law and by responding or reacting to

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[12] United Nations International Drug Control Programme, *World Drug Report,* Oxford University Press, 1997.

crime, there was not much in the way of neutralising criminogenic factors so that crime is prevented from occurring. The deterrent effects of criminal law apparently could not stem the escalating crime and violence since the 1960s, and the criminal justice systems did not appear to be performing effectively in the major urban centres facing increasing migration, unemployment, changes in the family, poor housing, and conflicts of different kinds.

The Advent of Crime Prevention

The sharp increases in crime in the 1960s, particularly in the industrialised world also coincided with post-war economic development. Thus, crime increased with prosperity. Criminological research highlighted mass migration to major cities to take advantage of employment opportunities and the accompanying social disorganisation. This served as a catalyst for governments to consider new initiatives to contain crime and violence. The 1970s saw national governments in many countries establishing crime prevention councils and the concept of safer cities emerged. Research, evaluation and training also received increased support. A description of these initiatives are available in the UNCJIN Crime and Justice Letter.[13]

Literature on crime prevention and crime prevention programs has grown rapidly in recent years.[14] Numerous activities by government and non-government agencies and community groups from many countries have been cited in the literature, and many of these activities have been proven to be successful in preventing specific crimes in defined locations. It should be noted that since property crimes such as burglary, larceny, vandalism, motor vehicle theft, etc. constitute an overwhelming majority of crimes in any country, a large number of crime prevention strategies are designed to prevent property crimes.

Situations and locations in which crimes such as homicide, assaults, rapes and robberies occur are quite similar from one country to

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[13] United Nations Office at Vienna, Trends:UNCJIN Crime and Justice Letter. Vienna 1994/1995.
[14] See for example, International Centre for the Prevention of Crime. International Trends in Crime Prevention: An Annotated Bibliography. Montreal 1995; Graham, J. and Bennett, T. Crime Prevention Strategies in Europe and North America. European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, Helsinki 1995; Grabosky, P. and James, M. The Promise of Crime Prevention: Leading crime prevention programs. Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra 1995; National Crime Prevention Council (US), 350 Tested Strategies to Prevent Crime: A Resource for Municipal Agencies and Community Groups. Washington, D.C. 1995.

another irrespective of the stage of development or social, cultural and legal systems; the differences, if any, lie in degrees rather than in motive. It is likely, therefore, that successful strategies to prevent violent crime in one country may be adapted to prevent similar crime in another. In the remaining part of this paper a number of successful strategies used in a number of countries to prevent violent crime, including domestic violence and gun related crimes, will be described. But before this is done, it is useful to narrate some of the groundwork carried out in a number of countries before specific crime prevention strategies became popular.

Since the early 1970s all levels of governments, national/state/local, in many industrialised countries recognised that crime and violence was becoming a major problem and that traditional means to deal with it, e.g. enhancing resources to criminal law and to the criminal justice system, could not produce desirable results. In this process various types of mechanisms were established by governments. Sweden, for example, was the frontrunner in creating the first National Crime Prevention Council, a government agency of 30 individuals reporting to the Ministry of Justice. Other Scandinavian countries created non-government National Crime Prevention Council.

Following the recommendations of the Commission of Mayors, the French Government created in 1983 the National Council for the Prevention of Crime under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The main emphasis of this Council was that the policy to fight crime should be flexible and adapted to local conditions. The Council considered it essential to bring together local partners, including parts of the local administration such as the police, judiciary, social service, public health, education, youth and sports, culture, and housing, as well as representatives of local business, trade unions and non-profit organisation. The Council also ensured that crime prevention activities of agencies were adequately coordinated.

The United Kingdom and the Netherlands have been the leaders in designing innovative approaches to crime prevention. The Crime Prevention unit in the British Home Office over the years has encouraged, supported and researched initiatives with success. The Dutch Ministry of Justice has supported numerous initiatives in crime prevention and victim assistance.

New Zealand has established a safer community and crime prevention unit in the Prime Minister's office. Australia created within the federal Attorney-General's department a Safer Australia unit in 1995. This was later re-named as the National Campaign

Campaign against Violence and Crime and launched by the Prime Minister early 1997.

Some European countries, and Australia and New Zealand, have also chosen another major initiative in promoting Restorative Justice. This initiative is effectively replacing the need for criminal justice intervention by introducing conferencing and mediation in a substantial number of cases.

In the United States the National Crime Prevention Council, a private non-profit organisation, has made significant contribution in enabling people to prevent crime and build safer communities. It has been an important source of knowledge, information, and research on crime prevention. There also exists a President's Crime Prevention Council.

In Canada, the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, in its twelfth report in 1993 made, among others, a recommendation "that the federal government allocate 1% a year of the current federal budget for police, courts and corrections to crime prevention over a five year period. At the end of five years, Canada should spend 5% of the current federal criminal justice budget on crime prevention."[15] In July 1994, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General of Canada created the National Crime Prevention Council with the aim of assisting governments of Canada and local communities in establishing crime prevention measures.

Among other initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s are the community policing, including beat patrol of Edmonton, Canada, and 'Koban' (or police box) of Japan, These approaches have brought the police closer to the community it serves and helped developed a constructive partnership between the two. Similarly, many countries have amended criminal laws with a view to deter people from committing crime and to provide for appropriate sentences for crime.

The role of government inquires

A description of interest in crime prevention would be incomplete without reference to the works of commissions and inquiries by governments in response to specific incidents. The reports and recommendations of such adhoc bodies have, over the years, contributed much to the understanding of violence. Two blue ribbon

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[15] Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General. *Crime Prevention in Canada: Toward a National Strategy*. Publishing, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa 1993, p.34.

commissions[16] were appointed in the 1960s by the President of the United States following the assassinations of a President, a Senator and a Civil Rights leader. The reports of these commissions and their recommendations have influenced violence prevention activities.

In recent years a few such inquiries have had significant impact on violence prevention policies. Following two mass firearm killings in Melbourne in early 1987, in which 16 people died and 22 injured, the National Committee on Violence was established by joint agreement between the Prime Minister of Australia and the heads of government of States and the Northern Territory. The creation of the Committee was formally announced by the then Minister of Justice in October 1988. The Committee's report released in 1990 constitutes the most comprehensive review of violence ever undertaken in Australia. The Committee conducted its own research, held a series of community consultations throughout the country from the State capitals to remote settlements of Central Australia, invited written submissions, and solicited specific information from relevant agencies. In its final report the Committee made 132 recommendations. A substantial part of the report and recommendations were allotted to specifying prevention and control of violence.

The report of the National Committee on Violence was also very precise in tailoring recommendations for action by various public sector, non-government, and regulatory agencies. For example, recommendations for ways to reduce and manage violence by government agencies were made for agencies such as health and welfare, education, employment and training, transport, police, courts, etc. Similarly, recommendations were directed at the professions, medical, legal, planners and architects, etc. A large number of the recommendations of the Committee have been implemented and examples will be described in the next section. Before moving to examine the role of another inquiry it is pertinent note another recent and relevant event that will have significant impact on the level of a type of violence. On 28 April 1996 a lone gunman, over a span of few minutes, slaughtered 35 innocent children, women and men in a tranquil tourist site of Port Arthur, Tasmania. In the incident, a number of people were also injured. The incident, following soon after the massacre in Dunblane, shocked Australia and the international community. In less than two weeks of the incident the Prime Minister of Australia invited the

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[16] These are The Presidents Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice and the Presidents Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.

Territory government ministers of police and the Attorney-Generals to discus uniform and stricter firearm legislation. For the first time in Australian history, effective 1 July 1997, Australia has uniform legislation which, many expect, will reduce firearm related violence. In Great Britain, the incident of 13 March 1996 sent a shock wave around the world. A person who was known to the school community and trusted with the responsibility of training pupils at Dunblane gunned down 16 children and an adult. Again, the impact of the incident on further tightening of an already strict firearm control in Britain is visible with the announcement by the government. Numerous other examples of government inquiries, that have influenced violence prevention policies are available. The Christopher Commission, established by the California State government, to inquire into the Rodney King beating incident, is an example which has led to changes in the procedures used by the police in California.

Promising violence prevention strategies

These approaches and initiatives, with active participation and support by governments, have encouraged community groups and academics and researchers to assist in crime prevention. Such collaborations can only result in a more open and accountable criminal justice system, a greater emphasis on preventing crime rather than reacting to it, and applied research that informs governments and the community about the effectiveness of crime prevention measures. In a sense organisations and agencies have been involved in crime prevention for a long time but the 1980s and the 1990s have been different. A clear and effective partnership between criminal justice and crime prevention agencies and the academic and research community has emerged. Many of the crime prevention programs are being systematically evaluated. In the remaining part of this paper a number of violence prevention measures, that have been shown to be successful through evaluation, will be described.

1. Anti-bullying project, Richardson Primary School, A.C.T. Australia

The school is located in the outer suburbs of Canberra, 60 per cent of its students came from low income families and many children experienced violence in the home. The Project drew up a policy about bullying, put some efforts into raising awareness of the problem, focussed on young children and attempted to use peer pressure on bullies to discourage them.

It estimated that about 10 per cent of children in primary school are commonly bullied and incidents rarely occur when an adult can witness it. Victims usually do not receive much sympathy.

Richardson reported that 23 per cent of children are likely to be physically or verbally harassed by individuals or groups.

The Project began in late 1993 and incorporated a Student Management Policy, a Developmental Playground for disadvantaged children, a program which trained senior students in leadership, communication and mediating skills to be playground mediators and mentors ("Playground Buddies"), and a peer support program. Bullying behaviours were identified by students working in peer support groups, and the behaviours publicised in the school. The school also kept parents informed through its newsletter, which provided advice to parents on what they could do if their child reported an incident of bullying. Incidents are recorded in a "bullying book" and followed up, and bullies are expected to make

restitution to their victims. A graph of numbers of bullying incidents is shown at weekly assemblies.

During the second week of the project the newsletter reported a decline of 33 per cent in bullying incidents. At the end of 1994 the school reported that bullying incidents had dropped dramatically, by 1500 per cent overall, and the children were generally happier at school.

2. *Wunngagatu Patrol, Kalgoorlie-Boulder area, Western Australia*

For months the local newspaper, the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, had featured letters from citizens, critical of the police for failing to address the drunkenness, fighting, violence and disruption. Juvenile substance abuse was rampant, with children as young as 8-years-old abusing and assaulting store staff to obtain substances to inhale. Serious assault had become a form of sport during the hours of darkness. Many groups and families in the area did not interact due to past differences.

The Wunngagatu Patrol, a self-supporting volunteer organisation, began for Aboriginal juveniles but later assisted others also. Originally it tackled the cycle of drinking and fighting among Aboriginal People, and later expanded into domestic violence and other street disturbances. The Patrol commenced operation in December 1993 with only six weeks preparation and with the assistance of the police. Vehicles were borrowed from Aboriginal organisations each evening, a base was set up in the central Aboriginal hostel, and volunteers were recruited.

The project organisers hoped that by taking people home or to their settlements before they became excited by liquor the instances of assaults would decrease. A few weeks into the operation a pattern began to emerge. They found that the groups were happy to purchase their liquor and to wait quietly until the patrol vehicles started work. They would then be conveyed to their destination, where they were more comfortable with the people. Callouts for St. John's Ambulance, hospital emergency cases and complaints to the police were reduced dramatically. Complaints to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* fell to a trickle. For the cost of about $150.00 per week, the Patrol has saved the community and emergency services thousands of dollars.

The Patrol organisers were able to secure funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC) and the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, with which they bought two vehicles, uniforms, radios, and kitchen equipments, and plan for their own office. Business proprietors helped by selling equipment to

them at cost price, and ongoing costs are still met by donations. The patrols were structured to prevent interference from rival family or community groups, and the committee is dedicated to creating full time employment for people to look after their community for as many hours as possible. Plans for a patrol office have been drawn up and negotiations are well advanced for a twenty-one year lease on land for the operation.

In a 12 month period the patrol has transported 3840 adults and 400 children, and 100 to 300 people attract its services in any one night. Police figures show that since the Patrol commenced operation the number of disturbances and reported complaints fell by 11 per cent in less than 12 months, the number of arrests in the same period fell by 28 per cent and the number of detainees lodged in the lockup fell by 64 per cent. Those that are arrested no longer carry injuries inflicted in fighting and there has been a marked reduction in people presenting themselves for treatment at the hospital emergency department.

3. "I know that now" Puppet Theatre: Dympna House Child Sexual Assault Prevention Program, New South Wales, Australia

Four out of ten victims of sexual assaults in Australia are children under the age of 15, and three-fourths of these victims are girls. The project aims to teach protective strategies to children in the 6 - 12 years age group through the medium of puppet theatre to reduce their vulnerability to child sexual assault. The show is used as part of an ongoing child protection curriculum in use in New South Wales government schools. The puppet show was funded by the New South Wales Child Protection Council.

The key messages communicated through the puppet show are that it is hard for children to say "no" to abuse, because they often receive messages that they should do as adults tell them and in the case of sexual abuse, they are often manipulated into situations which make it even more difficult to refuse to comply. The show stresses that it is OK to say "no" to an adult who is touching them in a way they don't like. The main themes are that sexual assault is never the child's fault; that nothing is so awful that you cannot talk about it to someone you trust; and that everyone has a right to feel safe at all the time. Active and assertive strategies for dealing with and avoiding abuse are demonstrated with sensitivity, humour and frankness through the puppet characters.

The project was independently evaluated to assess content, clarity of message, adaptability and the outcomes for the children. Children, parents, school personnel and consultants were involved in the

evaluation. The evaluation concluded that the puppet show was successful in achieving a range of aims:

- raising of awareness of the issue of child sexual abuse and of approaches which may be used by offenders;
- helping children to learn to trust their feelings;
- helping children to begin to explore ways in which they can say no;
- helping children gain confidence to tell a trusted adult if they ever feel threatened;
- helping children who have been abused gain the confidence to tell someone, and to persist until they are heard; and
- providing a non-threatening focus around which children can discuss aspects of child abuse with peers, teachers or parents.

Within the first 18 months of its beginning, the show had been seen by 49,000 children and 5,500 adults in the state. The show has received widespread acclaim from children, teachers and parents alike, for the positive way in which it deals with issues relating to child sexual assault.

4. Teach University Students to Prevent Acquaintance Rape, U.S.A.

Sexual assaults, rape and sexual harassment of women are grossly underreported. Not only a substantial majority of women victims of these crimes know the attacker, two out of three of these occur in residential locations. The main objective of the strategy was that this type of crimes could be prevented by educating male university students about the effects of such violence on the women. Interactive discussions to dispel gender stereotypes, include role-plays, presentation by victims, and student volunteers. A number of universities have used this strategy called Men Against Rape Project in Tulane University, Mentors in Violence Prevention Project in Northeastern University. These projects have been found to be useful in raising awareness, and challenging students to develop strategies for dealing with abusive behaviour by fellow students.

5. Anti-bullying initiative, Norway

Following the suicides of three young boys in 1982 as an apparent consequence of their having been bullied, the Norwegian Ministry of Education launched a national campaign to reduce bullying. The campaign had four main goals: to increase awareness of the problem of bullying, achieve active involvement on the part of teachers and parents, develop clear rules against bullying behaviour, and provide support and protection for victims. A 32 page publication, which

described forms of bullying and suggested means by which schools and teachers could reduce it, was distributed to schools throughout Norway in 1983. In addition, a 25-minute video about bullying was shown to students.

The program encouraged pro-social behaviour and rewarded with generous praise, and consistently applied non-hostile and non-physical sanctions in response to undesirable conduct. Children were encouraged to help their fellow students who were bullied and include in their activities those relatively withdrawn and weaker children who tended to be left out. Counselling was provided for the bullies, victims, and their parents.

An evaluation of the effects of the campaign was conducted, using a quasi-experimental design, in 42 schools in the town of Bergen. In addition to its effect on bullying, the evaluation also measured its effects on the reduction of other undesirable behaviour as truancy, vandalism, fighting, burglary, and theft. The evaluation revealed a marked reduction in the level of bullying and victimisation both in and to a lesser extent outside schools, as well as reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour. More positive attitudes towards school work and school was also observed.

6. *Domestic Abuse Intervention Project , Duluth, USA*

Domestic violence became a major social issue in many countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Surveys on the extent of domestic violence show that between 5 and 10 per cent of women were victims of assault by their partners while they lived together. It is not surprising that substantial efforts are being made to address the problem. One example of such efforts is the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, U.S.A. The project began in 1981 with three main aims: to increase safety and improve the quality of life for victims, to foster a consistent response to domestic violence by all agencies, and to reduce recidivism among known offenders.

The main strategy of the project was to develop a consistent response and intervention of the law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and the probation services. Although domestic violence has been criminalised in many countries, criminal justice agencies appear not to approach the incidents the way other criminal incidents are dealt with. Very often such inconsistencies defeat the purpose of reducing violence in the home. The Duluth team spent a substantial amount of time and energy in convincing criminal justice agencies in the city to work toward reducing the problem. In late 1981 all the agencies agreed that they would participate under the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, they would giveup some of their discretions and

they would give the project workers the authority as a monitoring body to call inter-agency meetings, to sit down and iron out problems, and to make sure that the original mission of the system was carried out.

Another major thrust of the project was that the offenders accept responsibility for their behaviour. The project developed and educational curriculum for dealing with the behaviours of men who batter. The curriculum was designed to assist participating offenders to understand their acts of violence, to help them change their violent behaviour, to make them understand the causes their violent act, and to encourage them to be responsive to those they have hurt.

As part of the project, police and other participating agencies are trained deal with domestic violence cases proactively and consistently.

Results from the evaluation of the project during the first ten years of its operation were most encouraging. During this time there was no domestic homicide and 80 per cent of the women who had used the project were not battered. However, research showed that the recidivism rate during the first five years was about 40 per cent.

7. Rotterdam shopping centre project, the Netherlands

Major cities around the world have been facing problems of crime for some time. While the twentieth century has seen these cities grow and transform into metropolis, current realisation is that their planning and growth have failed to incorporate aspects that can make these cities safer. Two such aspects are architectural design and space for youngsters. The congregation of transport, shopping and entertainment attract people of all ages, shoppers, commuters, students and the trouble maker. With this kind of planning shopping centres around the world are facing quite similar problems. In the late 1980s, two shopping centres in Rotterdam observed that crimes like street robbery, pick-pocketing, theft from cars, and bicycles on the members of the public had reached unusually high levels. Research revealed a link between increasing levels of crime and groups of dissatisfied youth. Rather than resorting to traditional responses to shopping centre crime, i.e., increased police patrols, security guards, store detectives, and electronic surveillance, the authorities decided to integrate potential offenders in their efforts to curb crime.

A crime prevention commission including representatives from the municipality, the police, the public prosecution office, youth organisation, and the shopkeepers association, appointed a detached

street worker to coordinate the project. The police prepared a set of rules of behaviour governing conduct within the confines of the shopping centre. These were distributed to all secondary schools in the vicinity. The police held discussions during which the rules and the consequences of breaking them were explained. The project also organised sports and leisure activities, particularly during week-ends and the holiday period. A few young people were also assisted in obtaining employment in the shopping centre. The initial effect of the project was a noticeable reduction in the level of crime.

8. Firearms and crime, Kansas City, U.S.A.

The involvement of firearms in homicide has been described early in this paper. Although the data leave the reader in very little doubt that restricting the access to and availability of firearms reduce violence by firearms, certain segment in the population does not appear to share this view. Research from Western Europe, Canada, and Australia clearly show significant drop in firearm-related violence following tightening of firearm control legislation. Kansas City Police Department in the early 1990s tested the effects of gun seizures on gun violence.[17] Carrying concealed weapon is a crime in most States of the United States. The experiment in Kansas City wished to measure the impact of stricter enforcement of existing laws against carrying concealed weapons.

Under a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance the Kansas City Police, with federal officials, selected an area (patrol beat No. 144), which had the second highest number of drive by shootings in the City and a homicide rate in 1991 (177 per 100,000 population) 20 times the national average that year. The University of Maryland was also given a grant to evaluate the experiment. The main objective of the experiment was the reduction of gun crime in the area. A quasi-experimental, before-after, design was selected. Beat 144, was a eight by ten block area and for 29 weeks in 1992-93, the City police put extra patrol in hot spots. The gun seizures in the area increased by 65 per cent and gun crimes declined by 49 per cent. The experiment also observed the reduction in gun crime was obtained without and local displacement. That is the decline in gun crime in the target ares did not result in increase in gun-related crime in surrounding patrol areas.

The overwhelming majority of crimes in a country are property related and therefore there are many more strategies to prevent

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[17] Sherman, L.W. and Rogan, D.P. "Effects of Gun Seizures on Gun Violence: "Hot Spots" Patrol, in Kansas City", *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 4, December 1995, pp 673-693.

property crimes than violent crimes. However, the strategies presented above are only a sample of numerous violence prevention strategies that are currently being implemented and experimented. Particularly in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand there are organisations that are engaged in collecting details of such strategies and their effects on the levels of crime and violence.

This paper presents trends in violent crime and what can be done about it. Although crime knows no boundaries, when it comes to developing crime prevention strategies these must take into account local situations, one particular strategy may not be applicable for the entire country or even the city. Development and implementation of crime prevention strategies and their evaluation require specialised skills. Experts and agencies with such skills have been growing at a rapid rate. Within the United Nations context, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Network Institutes, in particular the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control affiliated with the United Nations, the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, and the Australian Institute of Criminology affiliated with the United Nations, have proven capacity in the crime prevention area. The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime has not only collected practical literature, from a number of countries, on workable ways of reducing crime. The Centre has already developed some services to assist countries in acquiring international expertise on crime prevention. Furthermore, the Centre will be able to assist in needs assessment, designing training for crime prevention and advising agencies.