# 1

# The Goals and Logic of Crime Prevention



**Learning Objectives**

*Upon finishing this chapter, students should be able to:*

- Understand the goals and logic of crime prevention
- Identify the personal and social costs of crime
- Distinguish between criminal behavior and other types of antisocial behavior
- Understand how crimes are classified
- Identify the primary measures of crime and how they differ
- Understand the objectives of prevention science.

## Introduction

Consider the following three scenarios:

**Scenario 1** *On January 5, 2012 in Chicago, a woman was awakened late at night and saw a man going through the jewelry box on her bedroom dresser. She screamed. Startled, the man attacked her: covering her mouth, tying her up and raping her. When he left shortly before daybreak, he took all of her expensive jewelry.*

If this violent crime happened to your mother or sister, you would almost certainly want this man found, arrested, convicted, and sent to prison for a long time. You would want justice. But wouldn't it be better, for your mother or sister, for yourself and for the whole community, if this crime never happened in the first place? If the personal, social, or environmental factors that led this man to commit this violent crime had been recognized earlier in his life and some action taken that would

*The Prevention of Crime*, First Edition. Delbert Elliott and Abigail Fagan.

Companion website: www.wiley.com/go/elliott/prevention_of_crime

change his and the victim's future? If this event could have been *prevented*, and this victim never assaulted, wouldn't it be even better than having to seek justice after the fact?

**Scenario 2** *The young man who committed the rape and burglary was caught two weeks following this event, was convicted and sentenced to 12 years in prison. After serving 8 years, he was released back into the community on parole. Twenty days after being released, he was involved in a car-jacking which left the car owner with a serious head injury requiring hospitalization. The perpetrator was apprehended by police, convicted and sentenced back to the same state prison that previously hosted him.*

When the victim of the first crime found out that her attacker was released from prison and committed another serious violent crime, she was outraged. Do you agree with her? Wasn't justice served, given that the man was caught and punished for the first crime and served eight years in prison? Would you be satisfied with his punishment if you knew that there were treatment options available in his prison that had been shown to rehabilitate nearly half of their participants so that they did not re-offend once out of prison, but that he never received such programming? Wouldn't requiring that the offender receive treatment be a better option than releasing him back to the community with no help in addressing the problems and conditions that led him to commit another crime?

**Scenario 3** *In 1967, the manager of public safety in Denver, Colorado was reviewing a report of yet another robbery of a city bus driver that happened the night before. She was angry about how many similar robberies had occurred in the past several years and the recent increase in such crimes in the past year. Bus drivers were often targets for robbery, as they carried relatively large sums of money towards the end of their shift, after cash fares had accumulated. Not only was the city losing a significant amount of money, but in an increasing number of cases, bus drivers were injured in these robberies.*

Although the city manager did not realize it at the time, a relatively simple prevention strategy was available that had been shown to greatly reduce bus and transportation robberies. In the late 1960s, locked bus fare boxes, similar to safes in homes, were introduced in order to reduce bus drivers' and would-be offenders' access to cash. As a result of this innovation, opportunities for successful bus robberies were significantly lowered. Moreover, these reductions resulted in savings that far exceeded the cost of installing the boxes. Unlike crime prevention strategies that try to change an individual's behavior, which can be difficult, this and other types of situational crime prevention efforts try to affect the circumstances or opportunities that make it easier or less risky to commit a crime.

As these examples show, criminal behavior, no matter what form it takes, can result in significant financial costs to society and much pain and suffering for victims and their families. One of the first questions asked after events like those described above is: *Why did this happen?* This question is often followed by another: *How could we have stopped this from happening?* Then we might ask: *What was going on in these offenders' minds? What happened to them at school, work, or in their homes that led them to even consider, let alone carry out, these crimes? Why was this particular person or place targeted? How can we make places and persons less vulnerable to crime?*

The implication is that if we knew more about what caused a crime, we could do something to prevent it from ever happening. *The goal of crime prevention is to reduce the number of persons or groups committing criminal acts in society, to reduce the number of offenses they commit, and to reduce the overall number of criminal acts committed in a school, community, or society.*

> *Intellectuals solve problems. Geniuses prevent them.*
>
> Albert Einstein

It is generally accepted that the causes which lead a person or group to initially engage in a crime might be psychological or biological (e.g., a mental health disorder, genetic predisposition, or some type of physical illness); found in the offender's childhood upbringing; or related to the conditions, situations, or experiences the person or group encountered while at school, in their family, at work, or in their neighborhood. While it may not be possible to change or fix some of these factors, others can be successfully modified using carefully designed and well-implemented prevention programs. As we will emphasize throughout this book, *the key to crime prevention is successfully identifying the cause(s) of crime*. The logic of crime prevention is to then do something about these causes. Doing so may involve changing the conditions, situations, personal characteristics, and experiences which influence offending by individuals or groups.

Different types of crimes may require different types of crime prevention programs or policies. Recall the scenarios discussed at the beginning of this chapter. To prevent the rape and burglary described in the first example, we would use what is called a **universal** or **selective** prevention program. This type of intervention involves working with an individual or group *before* any criminal behavior has occurred; the goal is to reduce the likelihood of future criminal behavior. The type of prevention program that would address the crimes of the offender in the second scenario is called an **indicated** prevention program. This type of intervention is aimed at individuals who have already committed an illegal offense; the goal is to end or at least reduce their further involvement in criminal activity. The third scenario described an **environmental** or **situational** prevention strategy to reduce bus robberies. Rather than trying to change individuals, these types of prevention try to alter social or physical environments that facilitate or provide opportunities for crime, making it harder to carry out crimes and/or increasing the likelihood offenders will be caught. In some cases, they might involve creating legal statutes and policies to deter criminal activity among the general population.

We will provide more details about these and other types of strategies that can be used to prevent crime in the following chapters. The goal of this textbook is to share with you exactly what criminologists know about crime prevention, including the types of actions highlighted above as well as many other crime prevention strategies. Even if you do not think you have been directly affected by crime, it is likely that you have felt its impact in some way. For example, have you ever been afraid to walk down a dark alley or gone back to your car or house to make sure it is locked? If so, you have been affected by crime. The main point to realize right now, and what we will emphasize throughout this book, is that *crime can be prevented*. This is very good news!

Also encouraging is that, in the past 30 years, major advances have been made in crime prevention. Since the mid-1990s, the national crime rate in the United States (USA) has declined and it is generally believed that the development of better crime prevention programs played a role in facilitating this decline. We now know a lot more than we used to about the many causes of crime, how to change many of these factors and conditions, and how to design and test different types of preventive interventions. We have also learned a lot about what works and what does not work to prevent crime, how to increase the use of effective prevention strategies, and how to ensure that these programs and practices are well implemented. This body of knowledge is what the emerging

field of study called **prevention science**, which is described in more detail in Chapter 3, is all about, and our textbook will show how this information is being used in crime prevention efforts today.

> *New York City paid $167,732 to feed, house and guard each inmate in its jails in 2012.*
>
> Marc Santora (2013), reporter, *The New York Times*

So that you can properly appreciate the need for crime prevention, we will first describe the financial and emotional impact that crime has on society. We then discuss how crime is measured, an important component of prevention given that successful crime prevention efforts must show that crime has actually been reduced. While this seems obvious, prevention strategies may claim to be effective but may not actually measure or have any impact on rates of crime. For example, various prevention strategies may increase citizen satisfaction with police or reduce fear of crime, but if rates of illegal behavior are not affected, we would not classify them as effective crime prevention strategies.

## The Financial Costs of Crime

Estimating the costs of crime is a complex task and different economists include different figures in their estimations, making it difficult to precisely determine the cost of illegal behavior (for a discussion, see: McCollister, French, and Fang, 2010). For example, in the early 1990s, the total costs of crime in the USA were estimated to range from $425 billion (Mandel and Magnusson, 1993) to $1.7 trillion per year (Anderson, 1999). The trillion dollar figure included $603 billion in losses to the economy from fraud and unpaid taxes; $450 billion in medical bills, lost earnings, and lost quality of life; $45 billion in insurance payments to crime victims; and $15 billion in stolen property. Overall, the average cost per person in the USA was estimated to be $4,118. More recent estimates indicate a cost of $312 billion for the most serious index offenses alone, representing about 2% of the US Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012. The majority of this cost, $250 billion, was for violent offenses, primarily murder and aggravated assault (Chalfin, 2015). In the United Kingdom (UK), violent crime was estimated to cost £124 billion in 2012, an amount which equates to €4,700 per household and 7.7% of the country's GDP (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2013).

Although there is variation in how costs are estimated, most studies will consider: (i) costs associated with the operation of the criminal justice system, such as costs of police, courts, and prisons; (ii) costs experienced by victims including medical expenses, lost productivity, and loss of property; (iii) costs that occur because individuals have chosen to commit crimes rather than work in legitimate occupations; and (iv) intangible costs such as those related to the pain and suffering of victims or the fear of crime experienced by the public when crimes occur (McCollister *et al.*, 2010). You will not be surprised to learn that the costs included under the first category are staggering. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5049), it cost the USA $270 billion dollars in 2010 to operate correctional facilities such as jails, prisons, and detention centers. The Pew Charitable Trusts (2008) estimates that states spend roughly about the same amount of money on corrections as they do on higher education. In addition, the amount of money spent on corrections is increasing rapidly, in part due to the escalating costs of providing health care to a

growing population of elderly prisoners (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013). With limited budgets, spending more on offenders means spending less on education and other public services.

In addition to estimating the total costs of crime, some studies have reported costs associated with particular offenses and/or particular types of offenders. Figure 1.1 displays the costs of various violent and property offenses committed in the USA. Again, these figures show that violent crimes result in the largest costs to society, with the average, estimated cost of each murder being nearly $9 million (in 2008 dollars), each rape or sexual assault costing $241,000, each aggravated assault costing over $100,000, and each robbery costing about $42,000 (McCollister *et al.*, 2010). The **tangible costs** included in these figures are those that we commonly think about: the costs to victims related to medical bills and lost productivity at work, costs for police and court processing, and the expenses of incarcerating offenders in jails, prisons, and detention centers. **Intangible costs** may be less familiar, but these make up the majority of the total costs of violent crimes. Intangible costs are related the physical and emotional pain and suffering of victims and, although this type of cost can be difficult to quantify, they are often estimated by considering how juries might award compensation to victims.

A study based on following individuals from Philadelphia, PA from birth to age 26 also found that serious, violent offenses accounted for most of the total costs of crime (Cohen, Piquero, and Jennings, 2010). This study reported that a small proportion of individuals, those committing the most serious crimes, generate substantial costs to society. More specifically, the authors found that about 3% of all

Total (tangible plus intangible) per-offense cost for different crimes in 2008 dollars.

| Type of offense | Tangible cost | Intangible cost | Total cost[a] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Murder | $1,285,146 | $8,442,000 | $8,982,907 |
| Rape/sexual assault | $41,252 | $199,642 | $240,776 |
| Aggravated assault | $19,472 | $95,023 | $107,020 |
| Robbery | $21,373 | $22,575 | $42,310 |
| Arson | $16,429 | $5,133 | $21,103 |
| Motor vehicle theft | $10,534 | $262 | $10,772 |
| Stolen property | $7,974 | N/A | $7,974 |
| Household burglary | $6,169 | $321 | $6,462 |
| Embezzlement | $5,480 | N/A | $5,480 |
| Forgery and counterfeiting | $5,265 | N/A | $5,265 |
| Fraud | $5,032 | N/A | $5,032 |
| Vandalism | $4,860 | N/A | $4,860 |
| Larceny/theft | $3,523 | $10 | $3,532 |

N/A: not available or not applicable.

[a] Total per-offense cost calculated as the sum of tangible cost (excluding the uncorrected risk-of-homicide cost from crime victim cost, when applicable) and intangible cost.

**Figure 1.1** Costs of crime in the United States. Source: McCollister *et al.*, 2010. Reproduced with permission of Elsevier.

individuals followed in the study were "high-rate, chronic offenders" who steadily committed crimes from adolescence to early adulthood. As a whole, this group accounted for 40% of all estimated costs, and each individual in the group was estimated to cost society about $1 million!

Recent research has begun to focus on the costs of **cyber crime**, or crimes committed via the Internet such as theft of intellectual property; virus attacks that insert malicious code into computers to disrupt work and destroy documents; theft of funds from bank accounts; and posting of fraudulent information. Based on reports from 56 companies across the USA, the Ponemon Institute (2012) estimated that cyber crimes cost companies an average of almost $9 million per year. Such crimes are becoming commonplace, with businesses reporting an average of 94 successful attacks per year in 2012. In December, 2013, a particularly devastating notable cyber crime occurred in the USA, with "malware" leading to a security breach that compromised the credit cards of over 110 million shoppers at the Target and Neiman Marcus stores.

Some international research indicates that US companies may be victimized more often, suffer more costly forms of attacks, and lose more money overall to cyber crime compared to other countries. The overall costs of cyber crime in the USA and in six other industrialized countries are shown in Figure 1.2. Costs in the USA are about double those in Germany, Japan, and the UK, at over 15 million dollars, four times higher than those in Brazil and Australia, and seven times as large as Russia's (Ponemon Institute, 2015).

It is important to be aware that drug use and abuse also have significant financial costs to society, especially when taking into account the number of crimes committed by those under the influence of both legal and illegal substances. One report estimated that drug use and drug-related crimes cost American taxpayers $193 billion in 2007 due to lost productivity, health care and criminal justice

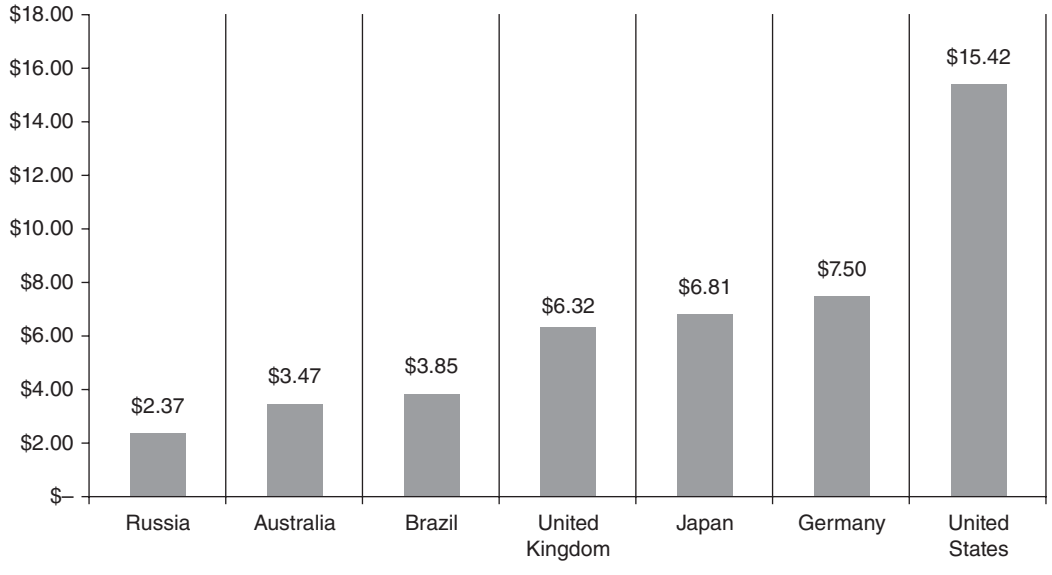


**Figure 1.2** Costs of cyber crime in seven countries, in millions of US dollars. Source: Ponemon Institute, 2015. Reproduced with permission of Ponemon Institute.

costs (https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/04/10/president-s-fy-2014-budget-supporting-21st-century-drug-policy).

It is obvious from this information that even a modest reduction in the level of crime can have a significant effect on the public's health and welfare and strongly benefit the economy. As we will show in later chapters, prevention science has demonstrated that prevention programs can be effective, can achieve significant reductions in criminal behavior, and can reduce the costs of crime.

## Fear of Crime

As we mentioned earlier, in addition to economic costs, there are intangible and difficult to quantify costs associated with crime. For example, the **fear of crime** is a psychological and emotional cost brought about when you worry that you or someone you care about might become a victim of crime. Many criminological studies have investigated fear of crime, including who is most likely to fear crime, how fear relates to the chances of actually being victimized, and the consequences of being fearful on one's lifestyle and activities, physical health and emotional well-being. We summarize this research in this section of the chapter and discuss how fear of crime is related to crime prevention.

> *Lethal violence is the most frightening threat in every modern industrial nation.*
>
> Zimring and Hawkins, 1997: 9

How widespread is fear of crime? Such fears likely affect most people in society in some way or another. Just consider the number of times you may have experienced some fear or anxiety about potential victimization, such as worrying about being attacked, that your new smart phone might be stolen, or that your car or home might be broken into. Surveys of the public have shown that, when specifically asked to report their fear of crime, about 40% to 50% of individuals express a general worry that they may be victimized in some way. On average, about 40% of participants in such surveys indicate that there are neighborhoods or places near their homes where they would be afraid to walk at night (Saad, 2010). In some countries, rates are even higher. Over 50% of respondents in 31 of 135 countries polled by Gallup in 2012 and about 75% of adult residents in Venezuela and South Africa reported being afraid to walk alone at night (Crabtree, 2013). This particular concern represents a significant impact of crime on people's lifestyle choices and behavior patterns.

Although we might think that violent crimes generate the most fear, in fact, property crimes may produce more worry. The greatest worry, reported by two-thirds of respondents in a 2009 Gallup poll (Saad, 2009), was being a victim of identity theft, while slightly less than half worried about auto theft and burglary (see Figure 1.3). Of the violent crimes, being the victim of terrorism was the most feared, reported by 35% of the sample. Less than one in five people worried about being sexually assaulted, murdered, or being the target of a hate crime.

Crimes are likely to generate fear and anger among victims, but such feelings can extend to victims' family members and acquaintances, as well as to neighborhood residents and even the larger community (Brunton-Smith and Jackson, 2012). Research shows that even those who do not know a victim but hear about a crime perpetrated against someone else will often experience some personal

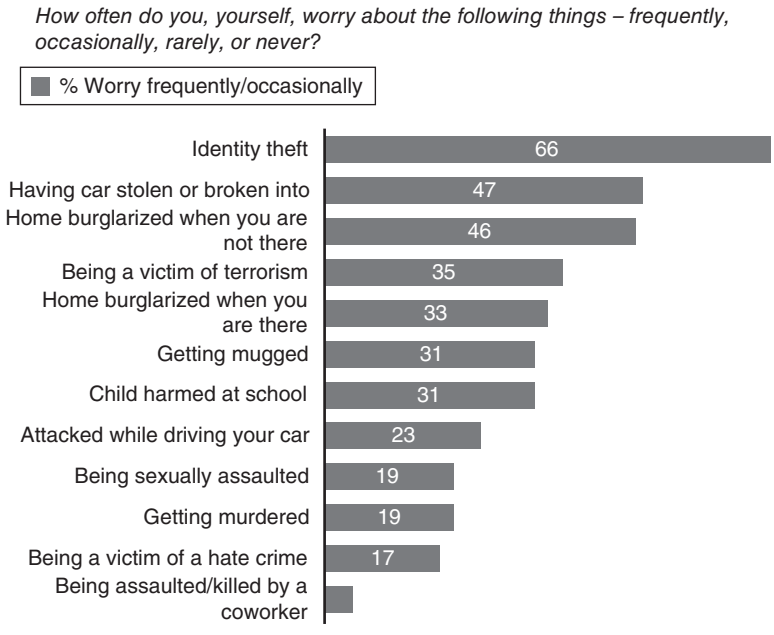


**Figure 1.3** Fear of crime in the United States. Source: Saad, 2009.

fear that it could happen to them or those they care about (Brunton-Smith and Jackson, 2012; Hough, 1995). Local crime events can even spark national and international anxiety and fear. For example, in a 2006 Gallup poll conducted shortly after an attack in the USA at a one-room Amish schoolhouse that killed six people including the shooter, 35% of parents reported they feared for their child's safety at school, an increase from 25% reported in the prior year (Jones, 2006). Likewise, following the murder of 20 children and six adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, in 2012, which dominated the news for weeks, parents across the nation worried about sending their children to school. Over half (52%) of American adults surveyed in a Gallup poll following this incident reported fearing that similar events could happen where they lived (Saad, 2012). This crime also sparked a contentious national debate over gun control, demands for better identification and services for the mentally ill (given that the shooter was known to have such problems), and calls for the placement of armed police officers and/or teachers in schools. Many schools reported lockdowns in response to reports of suspicious persons around their schools, and many brought in counselors to meet with children and staff to help them deal with their emotional responses to this event.

While some events can inspire widespread anxiety, it is also true that fear of crime varies by gender, age, income, race/ethnicity, and neighborhood/city. In a 2003 Gallup poll (Saad, 2003), women were eight times as likely as men to report anxiety over being a sexual assault victim (39% vs 5%). Women were also more likely than men to report worrying about other violent crimes such as muggings and terrorism and were much more likely to report being afraid to walk alone at night. This gender difference is found globally. Women around the world are nearly twice as likely as men to report being afraid to walk alone (Saad, 2010). Polls also show that fear of crime, specifically the

fear of walking alone at night, is more common among those over age 65 compared to younger individuals and is twice as likely among those earning low incomes compared to higher income earners (Saad, 2003). Fear of crime has also been shown to be higher among ethnic minorities than non-Hispanic Caucasians (Chiricos, Hogan, and Gertz, 1997). Finally, those who live in urban areas have been shown to be twice as likely as those living in rural areas to worry about safety in their neighborhoods (Chiricos *et al.*, 1997; Saad, 2003).

## The relationship between fear of crime and rates of crime

Presumably, a major benefit of preventing or reducing crime is to lessen the public's fear of crime. But how closely connected are fear of crime and crime rates? Lab (2010: 17) claims that "… it would be naïve to claim that changes in the crime rate have no influence on reported fear." While this seems reasonable, the bulk of research indicates that fear of crime is not closely related to the actual probability of being a victim of crime. Instead, the relationship between levels of fear and officially reported levels of crime is weak and inconsistent (Rountree, 1998; Saad, 2003). For example, American's fear of crime remained fairly stable between 1989 and 2003, while violent and property crime rates reported by the FBI dropped by about 50% (Saad, 2003). As another example, elderly women have very low risks of victimization but studies show that they report very high levels of fear (LaGrange and Ferraro, 1989; Warr, 1984).

A number of explanations for the discrepancy between actual rates of crime and individuals' reported fear of crime have been proposed. *First*, as already mentioned, one does not have to actually experience a criminal event to fear the possibility of becoming a victim (Hough, 1995). The fact that a single crime can generate fear among a larger network of acquaintances, friends, and family members suggests that actual crime rates can be low, but fear of crime high. Relatedly, perceptions of the risk of victimization, and resulting fear of crime, are likely to be influenced by the mass media and its coverage of violent crimes (Williams and Dickinson, 1993). The news slogan "*if it bleeds, it leads*" indicates the priority given by the media to crime, and this attention may well distort perceptions about the actual levels of crime occurring locally or in other parts of the country (Warr, 2000). With the explosion of social media, such stories can easily "go viral," with images and stories spreading quickly across the world. Surveys have shown that levels of fear typically spike after major, dramatic events that are highly publicized, like the Columbine school shooting in 1999, the Washington DC-area sniper shootings in 2002 and the more recent Amish and Newtown Sandy Hook school shootings (Jones, 2006; Saad, 2006). It is also true, however, that research has not shown a consistent relationship between fear of crime and exposure to media reports of crime (Warr, 2000).

*Second*, as already noted, some groups are more likely to report fear of crime even if they do not have a strong likelihood of being victimized, which can also lead to a discrepancy between rates of fear and rates of crime. The perceived risk of victimization is influenced both by the anticipated level of harm associated with victimization and with the level of control over the conditions and situations that are related to victimization (Warr, 1984). For example, the elderly and many females are likely to face a physical disadvantage in violent encounters, which are often committed by young males, and this knowledge could cause these groups to fear the possibility of these interactions even if their actual risk of victimization is low (Bennett and Flavin, 1994; Smith and Torstensson, 1997).

For property crimes, the economic impact of burglary or theft is greater for the poor and for many elderly living on fixed incomes, which can affect their anticipated fear of crime (Warr, 1984). All in all, differences in reported fears may be due more to differences in one's vulnerability to potential victimization than to the actual chances of becoming a victim.

*Third*, there is evidence that fear is linked to one's neighborhood. Anxiety and worry about crime tends to be highest in areas with high levels of social disorder or incivilities such as public drunkenness, panhandling/begging, homelessness, gangs, and drug sales, and in areas with physical disorder and deterioration like trash, graffiti, and rundown and abandoned buildings (LaGrange, Ferraro, and Supancic, 1992; McGarrell, Giacomazzi, and Thurman, 1997; Skogan, 1986). These neighborhood conditions are relatively stable over time and slower to change compared to actual crime rates. Such patterns account for at least some of the discrepancy between levels of fear and official levels of crime.

### The personal consequences of fear of crime

Whether or not it is a true reflection of crime rates and the actual risk of victimization, fear of crime can have serious effects on personal well-being, health, and lifestyles. High levels of fear can restrict the number of places one is willing to travel to, the times of day one feels comfortable outside, and the number of people one trusts (Stafford, Chandola, and Marmot, 2007). The end result is often social isolation. Studies have also shown a relationship between fear of crime and poor mental health, reduced physical functioning and a lower quality of life (Jackson and Stafford, 2009; Stafford *et al.*, 2007). For example, a long-term study of British men and women (Stafford *et al.*, 2007) showed that those reporting greater fear were, on average, nearly twice as likely to be depressed and had worse mental health than respondents reporting lower levels of fear. Fear of crime was also related to exercising less frequently, visiting friends less often, and being involved in fewer social activities.

Although the exact relationship between fear of crime and rates of crime is difficult to determine, the prevention of property and violent crimes should result in numerous positive effects for society. If rates are reduced, fewer individuals will be victimized, neighborhoods should feel and look safer, and the financial burdens of crime will be lessened. In turn, fear of crime could be reduced. Of course, these benefits can only be realized if effective prevention programs are widely implemented. To that end, the goal of this text is to increase knowledge regarding effective crime prevention efforts and to greatly expand the use of these strategies.

## Measuring Crime

The goal of crime prevention is to reduce crime rates, and documenting success in reaching this goal requires good measures of crime. Thus, good measurement is critical when planning and evaluating prevention programs. As we will discuss in this section, prevention researchers have a range of options for measuring crime. The three types of measures used most often to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention efforts are: (i) arrest records obtained from law enforcement agencies; (ii) victimization reports obtained from individuals; and (iii) offender reports obtained from individuals.[1] The first type of measure is referred to as an **official** measure, while the last two are often referred to as **self-report** measures of crime. Each of the three measures has advantages and limitations, and the preferred measure for assessing rates of crime

depends on the type of intervention being tested and the specific criminal behaviors of interest to the researcher. In this section, we will describe each of these types, summarize their accuracy and validity in measuring crime and provide some recommendations for appropriately using each type of measure. But first, let us actually define what we mean by **crime** and describe how particular offenses are typically categorized and classified by criminologists.

> *From the fight against polio to fixing education, what's missing is often good measurement and a commitment to follow the data.*
>
> Bill Gates (2013), Developer and CEO of Microsoft

What makes a crime a crime? This may seem like a lead-in to a bad joke, but determining what actually "counts" as a crime is very important … and rather challenging. For example, is smoking marijuana a criminal behavior? The answer to this question is not straightforward because whether or not marijuana use is illegal varies by country, state/region and, in some cases, according to an individual's medical history. In addition, not all harmful, immoral, or scandalous behaviors are crimes. Lying to your spouse or friend, cheating on an exam, and committing adultery may be "wrong," but they are not crimes. The most basic, and hopefully most simplistic, definition of a crime is *behavior that violates the criminal law*. In the USA, a criminal statute is a law passed by Congress, a state or a local legislative body. Statutes describe a specific behavior or class of behaviors that are prohibited, prescribe a specific punishment for the perpetration of these behaviors, and allow law enforcement to enforce these statutes and apply these penalties. In the USA we also make a distinction between **crime** and **delinquency**, the latter being behavior committed by minors (those less than age 18) that violates the law. For simplicity, in this textbook we will generally refer to illegal behaviors by adults and minors/juveniles as crime.

In a classic illustration of the problems of defining crime, the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas resulted in a "Texas standoff" between the US Secret Service and the Dallas police over who had jurisdiction over the murder. In 1963, there was no federal law prohibiting the killing of a US president. As a result, the murder of President Kennedy was not a federal crime. There was a Texas state law prohibiting murder, and this technically gave the Dallas police, not the Federal government, jurisdiction over the investigation of the assassination of the president.

So, only specific behaviors prohibited by the criminal law can be considered crimes. It is the prevention of these behaviors that concern us in this book. The prevention of other problem behaviors – for example, dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy, adult tobacco or alcohol use, obesity, chronic unemployment, depression and other mental health disorders – is worthwhile but outside the scope of this text. However, keep in mind that some crime prevention strategies have been shown to reduce some of these negative outcomes as well as illegal behavior, making crime prevention efforts all the more noteworthy.

## Offense classifications

*Felonies, misdemeanors, and infractions*

Criminal law categorizes crimes into three general types depending on their seriousness: felonies, misdemeanors, and infractions. **Felonies** are the most serious crimes and carry a punishment of confinement for more than a year in a state or federal prison. Homicide, robbery, rape, burglary, and auto theft are examples of felony crimes. **Misdemeanors** are less serious and typically involve

sentences of up to a year in a county jail and/or monetary fines or community service. Examples include shoplifting, minor assault, and possession of an illicit drug. **Infractions** are less serious than misdemeanors and typically involve monetary fines. Violations of traffic laws are an example of an infraction. Those charged with infractions are not entitled to a jury trial or a public defender, while those charged with felonies and misdemeanors are entitled to both.

There is one other type of crime that may be familiar to you. **Ordinances** are laws passed by a particular city or county and identify behaviors that are illegal in that particular location; that is, these laws are limited in jurisdiction to the local area. Examples are laws prohibiting overnight parking or parking in a red zone, smoking in public buildings, and failing to have a leash on your dog. Like infractions, violation of an ordinance usually results in a monetary fine, and those charged with ordinance violations are not entitled to a jury trial or public defender.

*Personal and property offenses*

Criminal offenses are further classified as personal or property crimes. **Personal crimes** are offenses that involve physical or mental harm to an individual. Examples include homicide, assault, kidnapping, and sexual assault. **Property crimes** are those that interfere with another person's right to use or enjoy their property. They typically involve the theft, destruction or damage of another's property. More specific examples include larceny, burglary, and vandalism. Some personal and property offenses are felonies and others are misdemeanors, depending on their seriousness.

## Official (law enforcement) measures

**Official measures** of crime, sometimes referred to as **law enforcement measures**, include crimes known to police, arrests, court convictions, and crimes that are cleared or "closed," either because an arrest has been made or some other event has occurred, such as the death of the suspect. Official measures also include court filings and dispositions, but such records are rarely used in evaluations of prevention programs and policies. National and state law enforcement agencies usually report statistics about crime as "rates" of the number of crimes per 100,000 persons in the population. Local city and county agencies may report the actual numbers of offenses committed or crime rates for different populations (e.g., for males and females).

The **Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)** is the best-known and most comprehensive official measure of crime in the USA (see: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr). The UCR provide a count of crimes known to the police, crimes cleared (i.e., closed by arrest or other means), and arrest rates. Information on crime is provided voluntarily every year by over 18,000 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. As such, UCR statistics do not capture crimes that go unreported to the police and thus represent a lesser number of crimes than are actually committed. These data are reported as counts of the total number of offenses reported or as rates of crime per 100,000 persons in the nation. Crime rates can also be reported for smaller areas, like regions of the country, states, counties, cities, universities and colleges, and tribal areas.

Each year, UCR rates are made available in the publication: *Crime in the United States* (http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr-publications#Crime). The most comprehensive descriptions are reported for **Part I offenses** representing certain serious person and property offenses. For these

**Table 1.1** Part I and Part II offenses in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Part I Offenses** | |
| 1. Criminal Homicide | 5. Burglary |
| 2. Forcible Rape | 6. Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft) |
| 3. Robbery | 7. Motor vehicle Theft |
| 4. Aggravated Assault | 8. Arson |
| **Part II Offenses** | |
| 9. Other Assaults | 20. Offenses Against the Family and Children |
| 10. Forgery and Counterfeiting | 21. Driving Under the Influence |
| 11. Fraud | 22. Liquor Laws |
| 12. Embezzlement | 23. Drunkenness |
| 13. Buying or Receiving Stolen Property | 24. Disorderly Conduct |
| 14. Vandalism | 25. Vagrancy (e.g. Homelessness) |
| 15. Weapons Carrying or Possession | 26. All Other Offenses |
| 16. Prostitution and Commercialized Vice | 27. Suspicion |
| 17. Sex Offenses | 28. Curfew and Loitering (for persons under 18) |
| 18. Drug Abuse Violations | 29. Runaways (persons under 18) |
| 19. Gambling | |

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigations (2004), Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, US Department of Justice.

crimes, the FBI reports the number and rates of crimes known to the police, number of arrests and number of crimes that are cleared. In addition, information may be provided regarding the location of the offense, the time the crime occurred, whether or not and what type of weapon was used during the offense, and the type of value or property stolen if applicable. For homicide only, the age, sex and race/ethnicity of the victim and offender, the type of weapon used, the relationship between the offender and victim and information about the circumstances of the offense are all reported. **Part II** crimes include less serious crimes. Only arrest data are reported for these crimes. The types of offenses classified as Part I and Part II offenses are shown in Table 1.1.

A second official measure of crime associated with the UCR and reported by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies is the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**. This is an incident-based reporting system, meaning that detailed information is recorded for every crime incident known to police, as well as on arrests for these incidents. Data are reported for 22 offense categories encompassing 46 specific crimes. For each offense, law enforcement agencies provide information about where and when the offense occurred, the type of weapon or force used, property lost, characteristics of the victim(s) like age, sex, race, injury, and relationship to offender as well as offender characteristics like age, sex, and race. Information about arrests only is reported for an additional 10 offenses. In 2012, 6,115 law enforcement agencies voluntarily submitted NIBRS data.

NIBRS differs from the UCR data reported in *Crime in the United States* in many ways. First, it provides information on *all* the offenses (up to 10) occurring during or related to a single criminal event, as well as details on the offenders and victims involved in those offenses. The UCR reports information only on the single most serious offense that occurred. For example, if during the commission of a bank robbery, the offenders also murdered the bank manager, stole property from three

bank customers, and kidnapped a family during the getaway, only detailed information regarding the murder would be published in the UCR, whereas details of the other offenses would be included in NIBRS. A second difference is that NIBRS provides added information about more crimes than the UCR. Third, NIBRS differentiates between crimes that were only attempted and those that were completed, while the UCR describes only the latter. Fourth, NIBRS involves an expanded definition of rape which includes male victims; in the UCR, sexual attacks on males are counted as aggravated assaults or sex offenses, not as rapes.

In addition to the NIBRS and *Crime in the United States* publications, as part of the UCR, the FBI publishes two other annual reports on crimes in the United States: *Law Enforcement Officers Killed or Assaulted* and *Hate Crime Statistics*. Data from these reports are rarely used in evaluations of crime prevention programs or policies. However, the data would be appropriate if one were evaluating an intervention designed to prevent these specific types of crimes; for example, programs designed to reduce violent crimes targeting police officers or hate crimes motivated by bias towards certain groups.

Official measures of crimes occurring in other countries, especially those in the United Nations, are also available. For example, the United Nations reports on crimes known to the police for selected years and offenses, primarily offenses similar to the UCR's Part I offenses (Harrendorf, Heiskanen, and Malby, 2010). The *European Crime Prevention Monitor* publishes a report on crime rates and trends for selected years for most of the UCR Part I offenses, with a special focus on the 27 European Union member states (Klima and Wijckmans, 2012). This is a new series and also includes rates of self-reported victimization and self-reported offending for selected years. These data sources could be useful when evaluating the effectiveness of interventions taking place outside of the USA.

Of the official measures described, arrest is the most frequently used to document the effectiveness of prevention programs. Evaluations of very large-scale programs or policies intended to affect large numbers of people could rely on annual arrest rates when determining the success of the intervention. For example, research investigating the impact of a new law restricting gun sales could assess the degree to which arrests for certain violent offenses were reduced following the legislation. Or, if all law enforcement agencies in a particular county began using **hot spots policing** to reduce crime (see Chapter 6 for more detail on this prevention practice), county-level arrest rates could be used to evaluate effectiveness. For smaller, more localized interventions, the UCR database could be searched to determine the arrest rates for individuals participating in evaluations. Since most local police agencies collect information on arrests for Part I and II offenses, evaluators can also request arrest data of adult participants from these agencies, rather than searching the UCR data. Individual arrest records of juveniles are confidential and require special permission to obtain, usually a court order or parent/guardian permission, but many local police departments provide anonymous information on numbers or rates of juvenile arrests upon request.

## Self-reported victimization measures

Another crime measure involves asking persons in a written survey or in-person interview if they have been victims of specific crimes. These **self-reported measures** provide a more complete assessment of criminal behavior compared to arrest data, since not all crimes are detected by or

reported to the police, and not all crimes known to the police result in an arrest. Self-reports also avoid the potential **bias** associated with official arrest data. We know that particular types of crimes, like sexual assaults and child abuse, are under-reported to law enforcement, and that certain types of individuals may be subject to increased surveillance by law enforcement. For example, police officers may more closely monitor the behavior of individuals known to have extensive criminal histories and may more frequently patrol neighborhoods with high rates of crime. These practices can bias or distort crime statistics. Self-reported data from victims, or offenders, as discussed in the next section, should be subject to less bias, particularly when survey participants understand that the information they provide will be confidential and anonymous.

There are a number of sources for obtaining self-reported measures of criminal victimization. The **National Crime Victimization Survey** (http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245) is the largest and probably best-known victimization survey in the USA. This survey has been administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and US Census Bureau every six months since 1973. These agencies collect data from over 100,000 individuals aged 10 and older living in 50,000 to 90,000 households across the USA. Even individuals living in dormitories and on cargo ships are included to ensure the sample represents American citizens as a whole. Participants are asked to report on most of the UCR Part I offenses, including assault, domestic violence, robbery, rape, burglary, auto theft, personal larceny (e.g., pickpocketing and purse snatching), and theft. Homicides are obviously excluded as it would be hard for the victim to report them.

NCVS surveys are conducted in-person and over the telephone. After collecting demographic characteristics of the participants such as sex, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, level of education, and income, trained interviewers ask a series of questions about crimes the respondent might have experienced in the past six months. For example, to measure violent assaults, the interviewer asks: "*Has anyone attacked or threatened you in any of these ways*"

1. *With any weapon, for instance, a gun or knife*
2. *By something thrown, such as a rock or bottle*
3. *With anything like a baseball bat, frying pan, scissors, or stick*
4. *By anything thrown, such as a rock or bottle*
5. *Any rape, attempted rape or other type of sexual attack*
6. *Any face-to-face threats*
7. *Any attack or threat or use of force by anyone at all*?

If the answer is yes to any of these crimes, respondents are asked, "*How many times*?" They are also asked to provide details of each incident, including the date and location of the event, damage or loss of property, injury from the assault, weapon used, characteristics of the offender, their relationship to the offender, and whether or not the crime was reported to the police. This information is then compiled to produce national, regional, and urban/suburban/rural rates of each of the specific crimes included in the survey.

The NCVS is the only regularly occurring, comprehensive and national victimization survey. The **Monitoring the Future (MTF)** study (www.monitoringthefuture.org) provides annual victimization data on a limited number of offenses (theft, assault, and property damage) reported by

8th, 10th, and 12th grade students, but it does not ask detailed information about each incident. A few other national-level victimization surveys provide data for specific years and specific age groups. For example, the **National Youth Survey** (Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard, 1989) asks adolescent and young adult participants to describe whether or not they experienced certain UCR Part I offenses and to provide detailed information about each victimization. The **National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence** (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2014) has been conducted in the USA in 2008 and 2011 to measure the degree to which youth aged 0–17 were violently victimized in their homes, schools, and/or neighborhoods in the past year and in their lifetime. It also asked respondents to provide some details about the offender, use of weapon, and injuries sustained. It is unclear if this survey will be repeated in future years. There are also many smaller scale victimization surveys that ask particular groups to report on their experiences as victims of crime.

Some international victimization surveys also use self-reported methodology for measuring crime. They include the **British Crime Survey** in the UK and the annual **Crime Victimization Survey** in Australia. Reports for countries in the European Union are also available for selected years between 1989 and 2010 from the European Crime Prevention Network (Klima and Wijckmans, 2012).

## Self-reported offending measures

The other common self-reported measure asks respondents about criminal offending; that is, whether or not and how often they have committed certain criminal acts during the past year or some other designated period of time. As with victimization measures, **self-reported measures** of offending are intended to capture crimes unknown to the police as well as those that have been reported or detected. Because individuals are asked to incriminate themselves by admitting to illegal behaviors, respondents are almost always guaranteed anonymity and/or confidentiality when asked to participate in these types of surveys. Self-reported offending measures have been available for many decades, pre-dating victimization surveys, but early examples tended to focus heavily on the least serious types of criminal behaviors (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis, 1979; Thornberry and Krohn, 2000). More recent measures assess a wider range of crimes and typically include most of the serious Part I and Part II offenses (Elliott and Ageton, 1980).

There is no ongoing, comprehensive, national effort to measure offending in the USA using self-reports comparable to the NCVS measure of victimization. Also, unlike the NCVS, most self-reported sources of offending behavior focus on youth populations; offender surveys of adults are relatively rare. One well-known youth survey is the **Youth Risk Behavior Survey** (**YRBS**) (https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/overview.htm), which has been conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) every two years since 1991. Students in Grades 9–12 in public and private schools across the USA are asked to report their participation in two types of offenses, carrying a gun or other weapon and participating in a physical fight, and to report use of various illegal substances.

The **Monitoring the Future (MTF)** study (www.monitoringthefuture.org) also provides ongoing, national self-reported offender rates, with a broader range of offenses than the YRBS. However, only high school seniors report on the full range of crimes, whereas 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students report on use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. The YRBS and MTF studies are

the best available measures to assess the effectiveness of large-scale national crime prevention programs or policies. The **National Youth Survey** (NYS, www.colorado.edu/ibs/NYSFS) has collected self-reported offending information from a group of adolescents aged 11–17 in 1976 and followed until middle adulthood, aged 38–44 (Elliott and Huizinga, 1985; Knight, Menard, and Simmons, 2014). However, because the last data collection effort for the NYS was in 2004, its usefulness for evaluating newly developed crime prevention efforts is limited. Similarly, the **National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health** (www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth) has tracked delinquent behaviors among a group of individuals followed over time, but data are currently available at only four time points, from 1994 to 2008.

The **International Self Report Delinquency Study (ISRD)** (Junger-Tas and Marshall, 2012) has used the self-report methodology to collect national-level information on adolescent offending in the USA and other countries. The study has been repeated twice, in 1992 and 2007, with the second survey conducted across 31 countries with students aged 12–15 years. They were asked to report the involvement in Part I offenses and some less serious illegal behaviors.

Many smaller scale criminological studies have used self-reported measures to assess rates of offending among adolescents or adults. As we will describe later, the self-report methodology is viewed as a valid method for measuring the extent of illegal behaviors. As a result, evaluators are likely to utilize self-reported offending measures to investigate the impact of particular crime prevention programs. In most cases, they will collect data directly from study participants, rather than trying to utilize publically available rates of offending which are not likely to correspond to their population of interest or match the timeline of the study.

## Comparison of crime measures

Of the three measures of crime we have discussed, arrests and self-reported criminal behavior measures are used more frequently than self-reported victimization measures to evaluate crime prevention programs, practices, and policies. Nonetheless, all three can be selected with confidence, so long as the evaluator understands that they capture different dimensions of crime and that they have different strengths and weaknesses. The type of measure that is chosen should depend on the particular criminal behavior(s) the preventive intervention is trying to change, how well that behavior is assessed with the crime measure and the degree to which the strengths of the measure outweigh its limitations. Throughout this section, we will provide some recommendations for which measures should be selected to evaluate particular prevention strategies. We also review the extensive body of research assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the measures. These strengths and limitations are summarized in Table 1.2. Because the strengths and limitations of self-reported victimization and self-reported offending measures are very similar, we combine them in the table.

An obvious but important point to keep in mind is that official crime measures capture *law enforcement responses to crimes* reported to the police by victims and other citizens, or, in a relatively small number of cases, directly observed by police. As a result, official measures are largely an indirect rather than direct (observed or experienced) measure of criminal behavior. These measures are heavily influenced by the specific policies, attitudes, and biases of individual law enforcement agencies. Even when crimes are reported to police, agencies can decide whether or not to file

**Table 1.2** Strengths and limitations of crime measures.

| | *Official measures* | *Self-reported measures (victimization and offending)* |
|---|---|---|
| Strengths | Provides national, regional, and local estimates of crimes known to police, primarily arrests | Provides a more complete count of criminal behavior, as it includes crimes committed but not known to law enforcement as well as those known to police |
| | Easily accessible | Can provide details about the offenses, victims, and offenders |
| | Provides information on trends over time | Direct measure of crime |
| Limitations | Under-estimates crime levels, as it does not measure crimes that are unknown to police | May over- or under-estimate crime due to reluctance to report an offense or an inability to recall criminal behaviors |
| | Measurement error related to discrepancies and bias in how different agencies respond to and record crime | Few large-scale, national or ongoing studies |
| | For most offenses, does not provide much detail about the crime, victim, or offender | |
| | Rates may depend as much on law enforcement practices as on actual criminal behavior | |
| | Indirect measure of crime | |

charges and which charges should be filed. At different times and for different reasons, law enforcement can decide to "crack down" on certain crimes or be more lenient. For example, political pressures, economic circumstances and the attitudes or characteristics of particular officers can affect how law enforcement agencies respond to and record crime. As a result, changes in arrest and clearance rates may reflect changes in law enforcement practices rather than changes in criminal behavior. This discrepancy can reduce the **validity** of official measures of crime, or their ability to accurately estimate the number of crimes that are actually committed. Their **reliability** can also be questioned, given that the same behavior may not be recorded as a crime by all law enforcement agencies or even in the same agency at different points in time.

When compared to self-reported victimization or self-reported offending measures, *arrests capture a relatively small proportion of all crimes committed*, which also reduces their validity in measuring crime. According to the NCVS, nearly half of all self-reported violent victimizations, including rapes, sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults, are not reported to law enforcement agencies, and only about one-third of property crimes are reported (Langton *et al.*, 2012; Truman, Langton, and Planty, 2013). Interviews with victims indicate that many fail to report offenses to the police because they consider the event to be a personal matter and may feel embarrassed, ashamed, or responsible; they do not feel the offense is important enough to report; they do not believe the police would or could help them; they are afraid of the offender; and/or they do not want to get the offender in

trouble (Langton *et al.*, 2012). Obviously, crimes that are never reported or detected have no chance of ending up in official statistics. Many offenses go undetected for other reasons; for example, because there are no victims or no witnesses to the crime. As a result, many offenders do not come into contact with the police and are never arrested for their crimes. Self-reported offending studies have indicated that less than 10% of self-reported UCR Part I offenses result in an arrest and only about 1% of more minor offenses end in an arrest (Elliott, 1995; Farrington *et al.*, 2003). For all of these reasons, arrest measures capture a very small proportion of crimes committed. Although UCR statistics documenting **crimes known to the police** capture a larger proportion of crimes compared to arrests, neither measure captures the majority of crimes reported by victims or offenders.

While the severe under-reporting of crime is the most frequently cited and serious limitation of official measures, there are other sources of error. For example, a proportion of arrests eventually end up being unjustified or unwarranted, and the criminal charges are later modified or dropped. However, police departments rarely report this information to the FBI or correct their own official records to reflect these changes, which results in measurement error (Elliott, 1995).

A second problem, mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter, is that of **bias**, meaning that the types of offenses and characteristics of offenders who come to the attention of law enforcement are not truly representative of all offenses that occur or of all individuals who break the law. Instead, reported crimes and arrest rates are influenced by: (i) offense type, with serious offenses more likely to be reported than minor offenses; (ii) characteristics of the offender, with those from racial and ethnic minorities more likely to be reported to the police and formally arrested compared to non-Hispanic Caucasians; (iii) sex, with males more likely than females to be arrested for most offenses; and (iv) residence, with persons living in high-poverty, high-crime neighborhoods more likely to be reported, apprehended, and arrested than persons from more affluent neighborhoods (Krohn *et al.*, 2010).

Although you may automatically assume that bias in reporting crimes is related to discrimination of certain groups, this is not true in all cases. Victims are likely to report the perpetration of more serious crimes, no matter who commits them, because they want help and justice for these offenses; they believe the police are more likely to take action on these offenses; and they more often involve other parties or organizations, such as paramedics or insurance agencies, who require that a report be made to the police. The higher risk of arrest for minorities, males, and those living in disadvantaged neighborhoods is a result of several factors. Minority offenders, especially those from high-risk neighborhoods, typically have fewer resources than those from more affluent backgrounds and thus are less able to avoid detection and capture by police. Victims may perceive such offenders, especially if they are male, as more dangerous and more likely to break the law, and will then be more likely to report them to the police; such actions would be a form of reporting discrimination. Finally, offenders from minority racial/ethnic groups may be disrespectful to police when apprehended, which will increase their probability of arrest. All of these factors mean that the characteristics of offenses and persons captured in arrest data are substantially different from those reflected in self-reported victimization and offending studies.

While most criminologists would agree that official measures do not provide "true," valid, and reliable estimates of the number of illegal activities committed, arrests could be a valid measure of *change* in criminal behavior over time if levels of under-reporting and bias remained steady over time. However, the evidence suggests that the factors influencing under-reporting and bias can

change abruptly. For example, a new police chief determined to "get tough on crime" may be hired to replace an administrator more concerned with giving the impression that his/her city is a safe place to live. An upswing in arrest rates would be expected to follow. Similarly, new policies can be implemented following dramatic crime events, such as increased surveillance of citizens following 9/11 and **zero-tolerance policies** adopted in response to heavily publicized school shootings that apply severe and certain penalties for offenses. Implementation of these new practices could cause crime rates to increase or decrease.

Given their limitations, our view is that arrest rates are *not* the preferred measure to use in evaluations of prevention programs or policies designed to change rates of criminal behavior. However, arrest rates are preferable when evaluating prevention efforts that try to change law enforcement practices. For example, a crime prevention program designed to increase police efficiency in clearing reported burglaries or a new policy designed to increase the use of arrest in domestic disputes should be evaluated using arrest statistics. The NCVS could also be used to assess changes in domestic violence victimization following the new law. Installing and publicizing the use of surveillance cameras in shopping malls should reduce shoplifting, as individuals will be reluctant to risk being caught. At the same time, cameras could increase the likelihood that shoplifters are apprehended and arrested, leading to an increase in arrest rates. In this case, self-reported offending rates would be a better choice than arrest rates to determine if shoplifting behaviors drop following use of cameras.

In contrast to official measures, self-reported measures more directly measure criminal behavior and capture more of those crimes actually committed. However, they also have limitations and potential biases. When first introduced, there was much skepticism that an individual would willingly, honestly, and fully disclose his/her own victimization or involvement in criminal behavior, particularly when surveying individuals known to lie, cheat, and steal. In fact, there is some evidence that respondents may deliberately fail to report their victimization or criminal behavior. This may be because they are ashamed or because they fear retaliation from those they harmed or who harmed them. They may also be afraid of damage to their reputation or possible legal action if their answers to the survey were to become known to police (Langton *et al.*, 2012). It is also true that some respondents may not remember their victimization or involvement in a crime, especially if the event(s) happened in the distant past. Studies indicate significant under-reporting of criminal events when participants are asked to recall events that happened over a year prior to the survey (Bachman, Johnston, and O'Malley, 1996; Elliott and Huizinga, 1989). Finally, participants may not correctly understand the type of behavior described in the question, which could lead them to under-estimate its occurrence. All of these biases would lead to under-reporting of crime. When using self-reports to evaluate crime prevention programs, this bias could result in the perception that individuals committed fewer offenses than actually occurred.

Comparisons of self-reported offending with known arrest records of the same individuals have shown that levels of under-reporting range from 5% to 20% (Huizinga and Elliott, 1986). While some early studies indicated that under-reporting varied by race/ethnicity, with African American males more likely to under-estimate crimes compared to Caucasian males (Elliott and Huizinga, 1989; Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis, 1981), more recent research has not shown consistent evidence for this claim (Krohn *et al.*, 2010).[2] Surprisingly, research has also indicated that levels of over-reporting can be as great as under-reporting (Gibbons, 1976; Gold and Reimer, 1974). Over-reporting is most likely due to individuals admitting offenses that would be considered trivial by the police, such as

smoking or stealing a pack of gum, and so not subject to official intervention (Elliott and Huizinga, 1989; Gold and Reimer, 1974). Overall, it is likely that the problems of over- and under-reporting balance each other out (Maxfield, Weiler, and Widom, 2000), or, if anything, that self-reports slightly overstate actual levels of criminal behavior (Elliott and Huizinga, 1989).

Given these concerns, researchers have identified and implemented many strategies to improve the reliability and validity of self-report measures of offending and victimization. For example, the quality of data can be improved by asking for detailed information about each offense reported, ensuring that a range of less and more serious offenses is included and excluding reports of trivial offenses (Elliott and Ageton, 1980; Thornberry and Krohn, 2000). It may also be important to assure participants that their responses will be confidential and anonymous (Bachman, Johnston, and O'Malley, 1996); for example, by physically separating multiple respondents in a home or classroom or using web-based or computer-assisted data collection techniques (Krohn *et al.*, 2010). Advanced statistical techniques can also be used to test the reliability and validity of self-reported data (Krohn *et al.*, 2010; Osgood, McMorris, and Potenza, 2002; Raudenbush, Johnson, and Sampson, 2003). If careful procedures are used, self-reported measures are more likely to live up to the conclusion reached by Hindelang and colleagues (1981: 212):

> The self-report method easily demonstrates that people will report crimes, that they will report crimes not known to officials, that they are highly likely to report those crimes known to officials, and that their reports of crimes are internally consistent.

Given the limitations of official measures and improvements in the validity and reliability of self-reported measures, the latter have become a core foundation of criminology and are commonly used in evaluations of crime prevention programs and policies. As they provide more direct measures of individual offending compared to arrest rates, self-reported offending measures are most appropriate for evaluations of prevention programs and practices targeting changes in individuals' criminal behavior. Self-reported victimization measures are rarely used in evaluations and would not be appropriate when trying to determine changes in individuals' criminal behavior given that victims do not identify offenders by name. However, they could be used to assess the effectiveness of some environmental and situational prevention programs and policies. For example, the degree to which installing more street lighting or increasing police patrols in certain areas of a city reduces crime could be assessed using victimization surveys. In Table 1.3, we provide some additional examples of the types of measures that are appropriate for evaluating different types of crime prevention programs and practices.

## Summary

The goal of this textbook is to describe what works to reduce crime. We will describe what is currently known about what works to prevent persons or groups from first becoming involved in crime; what works to reduce offending among those actively engaging in crime; and how to change features of our social and physical environments, law enforcement practices and government policies to successfully deter crime and reduce levels or rates of criminal activity.

Until quite recently, we had no good answers to the basic questions about how to prevent crime. Fortunately, in the past few decades, the discipline of **prevention science**, devoted to studying the

**Table 1.3** Recommended measures for evaluating the effectiveness of crime prevention programs, practices, or policies.

| *Type of crime prevention* | *Recommended measure* |
|---|---|
| Installation of electronic alarm systems by all car manufacturers | National arrest rates for motor vehicle theft (UCR)<br>*OR*<br>Victimization rates of motor vehicle theft (NCVS) |
| Evaluation of "three strikes" laws | State-level victimization rates (NCVS) |
| Therapeutic intervention for juvenile offenders and their families | Self-report of offending<br>*OR*<br>Individual arrest rates from participants (if trying to reduce formal contact with law enforcement) |
| Afterschool mentoring program implemented in one neighborhood in Chicago | Self-report of offending from participants |

prevention of social problems such as crime, has emerged and provided some critical answers to these questions. The result is that we can now identify a number of programs, practices, and policies that have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing crime. We now know a substantial amount about the causes of crime and we have good evidence that crime can be prevented. Unfortunately, despite these improvements, this newfound knowledge has not had much of an impact on current crime prevention efforts. Our knowledge of what works is not consistently informing public decision-making about how to deal with crime and criminals. But we are in a much better position now to make changes that will have an effect. If we can communicate and draw upon the knowledge generated in prevention science, there is a strong potential for significantly reducing crime.

In this chapter, we began to set the stage for thinking about why crime prevention is important and how to evaluate crime prevention efforts. We described the cost of crime in both financial terms and according to how fear of crime can negatively affect lifestyles and behaviors. The implication is that there is a huge payoff associated with preventing crime: we can save potentially billions of dollars, thereby improving the economy; we can reduce the relatively high levels of fear reported by many citizens; and we can ensure more positive, productive, and healthy lifestyles. We also reviewed the basic measures used to determine crime levels and identified those that are most useful when assessing the effectiveness of crime prevention programs. Special attention was given to the two measures most frequently used in evaluation studies: official arrest data and self-reported information on individuals' offending behaviors. The strengths and weaknesses of each type of measure were described. It will be helpful to remember these strengths and limitations when reading about the effectiveness of particular crime prevention programs and policies in Section III of this book.

## Overview of the Textbook

A number of issues related to the study of crime prevention will be reviewed in this text. To provide additional perspective on how the field of crime prevention has developed, **Chapter 2** describes criminologists' earliest attempts to prevent crime. The present success in knowing what works

depends in part on lessons learned in the early attempts to design, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention programs, practices, and policies. This chapter also provides an overview of the major criminological theories that guide the development of crime prevention efforts. In **Chapter 3**, we describe how the disciplines of public health and prevention science have guided the most recent crime prevention programs, practices, and policies based on recent progress in: (i) identifying the major causes of crime, (ii) identifying the causes which are most amenable to change, and (iii) considering how these causes can be used to develop interventions to prevent and reduce crime. We will also describe the criminal career and life-course developmental frameworks that help define and explain criminal behavior and review how contemporary criminological theories have been integrated into these perspectives. **Chapter 4** provides a basic review of the principles of research methodology as they apply to the evaluation of crime prevention programs, practices, and policies. We describe methods for assessing whether or not interventions are effective and determining how large effects need to be to produce meaningful reductions in crime. It should not come as a surprise to know that there are differences of opinion among criminologists about the scientific methods and standards that should be used to make the determination that a program or policy is effective; that it is "evidence-based" or that it "works." These controversies are discussed in **Chapter 5**. The major governmental and private agency lists of effective prevention programs, practices, and policies, and their standards for determining effectiveness, are also identified and compared.

> *We are still standing on the bank of the river, rescuing people who are drowning. We have not gone to the head of the river to keep them from falling in. That is the 21st century task.*
>
> Gloria Steinem

**Chapters 6 through 9** in **Section III** provide the foundation of this textbook and the information you are probably most interested in learning. These chapters describe what has been proven effective in preventing crime: the different types of interventions that "work" and are considered to be "evidence-based." Strategies that have been evaluated and found not to work or to be harmful are also described in these chapters. Yes, sometimes programs designed to prevent crime actually *increase* the likelihood of offending and some of these practices are widely used! It is as important to know what does not work as to know what does, so as not to waste valuable resources, raise false hopes, and avoid doing more harm than good. We will describe the effectiveness of situational and deterrence-based law enforcement prevention approaches (**Chapter 6**); contextual interventions, including programs that try to change the family, school, peer, and community contexts (**Chapter 7**); individual-level programs to prevent the initiation or onset of criminal behavior (**Chapter 8**); and individual-level programs to prevent the continuation of criminal activity of those already involved in crime (**Chapter 9**).

Given a list of effective programs, practices, and policies, how do we ensure their widespread and appropriate use? We discuss these issues in **Section IV**. **Chapter 10** describes methods used by communities to select the "right" prevention program; that is, the intervention that is considered most feasible and cost effective to implement, best able to address local crime needs and most likely to be supported by participants and the larger community. We will also describe factors shown to affect how well interventions are implemented and methods for ensuring high-quality

implementation. In **Chapter 11**, we discuss emerging research on how to implement evidence-based programs on a large scale (i.e., across states and nations) and with the rigor, care, and sustainability required to achieve substantial reductions in criminal behavior. Finally, in **Chapter 12**, we summarize what we currently know about effective crime prevention and what needs further investigation and provide a few more recommendations for advancing crime prevention and increasing our ability to significantly reduce rates of crime.

## Critical Thinking Questions and Practice Activities

1. Re-read Scenario #1 at the start of the chapter. Suppose the offender in this example participated in an effective prevention program while serving his prison term. Based on what you know about prevention at this point, what type of intervention do you think he should receive? What measure of crime should be used to evaluate this program? Explain.
2. Identify the difference between tangible and intangible costs of crime. Which type is typically larger? Which type do you think is more likely to be related to the fear of crime?
3. Talk to someone you know who has been the victim of a crime. Ask them: (a) how this experience changed their perceived risk of being a victim again in the future; (b) what, if anything, they did or are doing now to reduce their risk of future victimization; and (c) whether or not they reported their victimization experience to the police. Be sure to ask why they reported or decided not to report the victimization.
4. Go to the UCR and NCVS websites shown in the Helpful Websites and compare the arrest and victimization rates for 1980, 1990, and 2000 for aggravated assaults, robbery, and burglary offenses. Describe the similarities and differences in the rates of crime across the two sources of information. What do you think accounts for these differences?
5. Imagine that you are asked to participate in a survey that asks you to self-report your involvement as a perpetrator of the UCR Part I and Part II Offenses shown in Table 1.1. To what extent do you think you would answer questions about these offenses honestly? Are there some crimes that you would be more or less likely to report? Why or why not? Is there anything the researcher could do to increase the likelihood that you would provide accurate and honest answers?

## Endnotes

1. There are several other possible measures that can be used to assess rates of crime. For example, researchers may: (i) directly observe and record crimes; (ii) compile detailed "life histories" of offenders, which involves the systematic recording of crimes, usually over an extended period of time, using self-reported and/or official records; or (iii) conduct detailed case studies of offenders based on in-depth interviews of individuals. While these methodologies have some strengths, they are rarely used in prevention research because they tend to be impractical, unsystematic, and limited to small local samples.
2. To briefly summarize some of the research that has examined racial differences in under-reporting, Hindelang and colleagues (1981) found that African American males reported significantly fewer offenses known to the police than did Caucasian males. Hirschi (1969) and Maxfield *et al*. (2000) reported similar

findings, while Elliott and Huizinga (1989) found no race or ethnic differences in the reporting of relatively trivial offenses, but they did find a higher level of under-reporting of known arrests among African American males compared to Caucasian males. Farrington *et al.* (1996), Gold (1970), Rojek (1983), and Hardt and Peterson-Hardt (1977) reported no differences in the under-reporting of arrests by race. Although the evidence is mixed, Hindelang *et al.* (1981) and Huizinga and Elliott (1986) consider the potential for African American males to under-report arrests to be at least partly a result of a higher number of invalid (unfounded) arrests for African American males and confusion about whether or not any encounter with police "counts" as an arrest.

## Helpful Websites (last accessed July 27, 2016)

- Uniform Crime Report: https://ucr.fbi.gov/ucr-publications
- National Crime Victimization Survey: http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245 and www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/NCVS
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/data.htm
- Monitoring the Future: www.monitoringthefuture.org

## Further Reading

- Truman, J. L., Langton, L., and Planty, M. 2013. Criminal Victimization, 2012. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
  *Summarizes findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) on rates and levels of serious crimes in the United States in 2012 and trends in these statistics from 2003 to 2012. It also includes information on the characteristics of victims and offenders.*
- US Department of Health and Human Services. 2001. Youth violence: A report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
  *Chapter 2 ("The Magnitude of Youth Violence") provides a comprehensive review of official and self-reported measures of criminal behavior of adolescents in the United States.*
- Warr, M. 2000. Fear of crime in the United States: Avenues for research and policy. In: D. Duffee, D. McDowall, L. Green Mazerolle, and S. D. Mastrofski (eds), *Measurement and Analysis of Crime and Justice*, pp. 451–489. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
  *Summarizes current research regarding the study of the fear of crime and provides suggestions for how to improve this research.*

## References

Anderson, D. A. 1999. The aggregate burden of crime. *Journal of Law and Economics*, 42(2):611–642.

Bachman, J. G., Johnston, L. D., and O'Malley, P. M. 1996. The Monitoring the Future project after twenty-two years: Design and procedures. In: *Monitoring the Future Occasional Paper 38*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

Bennett, R. R., and Flavin, J. M. 1994. Determinants of fear of crime: The effect of cultural setting. *Justice Quarterly*, 11(3):357–382.

Brunton-Smith, I., and Jackson, J. 2012. Urban fear and its roots in place. In: V. Ceccato (ed.), *Urban Fabric of Crime and Fear*, pp. 55–84. New York, NY: Springer.

Chalfin, A. 2015. The economic costs of crime. In: W. G. Jennings (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Chiricos, T., Hogan, M., and Gertz, M. 1997. Racial composition of neighborhood and fear of crime. *Criminology*, 35(1):107–132.

Cohen, M. A., Piquero, A. R., and Jennings, W. G. 2010. Studying the costs of crime across offender trajectories. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 9(2):279–305.

Crabtree, S. 2013. Venezuelans, South Africans least likely to feel safe. In: *Gallop News Service*.

Elliott, D. 1995. Lies, damn lies, and arrest statistics: The Sutherland Award Presentation. Paper read at The American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, at Boston, MA.

Elliott, D. S., and Ageton, S. 1980. Reconciling race and class differences in self-reported and official estimates of delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 45(1):95–110.

Elliott, D. S., and Huizinga, D. 1985. Self-reported incidence and prevalence rates. In: E. F. McGarrell and T. J. Flanagan (eds), *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1984*, pp. 363–379. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office: Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice.

Elliott, D. S., and Huizinga, D. 1989. Improving self-reported measures of delinquency. In: M. W. Klein (ed.), *Cross-National Research in Self-Reported Crime and Delinquency*, pp. 155–186. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Elliott, D. S., Huizinga, D., and Menard, S. 1989. *Multiple Problem Youth*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Farrington, D. P., Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., Hill, K. G., and Kosterman, R. 2003. Comparing delinquency careers in court records and self-reports. *Criminology*, 41:933–958.

Farrington, D. P., Loeber, R., Stouthamer-Loeber, M., Van Kammen, W. B., and Schmidt, L. C. 1996. Self-reported delinquency and a combined delinquency seriousness scale based on boys, mothers, and teachers: Concurrent and predictive validity for African-Americans and Caucasians. *Criminology*, 34(4):493–517.

Finkelhor, D., Shattuck, A., Turner, H. A., and Hamby, S. 2014. Trends in children's exposure to violence, 2003 to 2011. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 168(6):540–546.

Gates, B. 2013. My plan to fix the world's biggest problems – measure them! *The Wall Street Journal*.

Gibbons, D. C. 1976. *Delinquent Behavior,* 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gold, M. 1970. *Delinquent Behavior in an American City*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Gold, M., and Reimer, D. J. 1974. Changing patterns of delinquent behavior among Americans 13 to 16 years old: 1967–1972. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

Hardt, R. H., and Peterson-Hardt, S. 1977. On determining the quality of the delinquency self-report method. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 14:247–259.

Harrendorf, S., Heiskanen, M., and Malby, S. 2010. International Statistics on Crime and Justice. Helsinki, Finland: European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Hindelang, M. J., Hirschi, T., and Weis, J. G. 1979. Correlates of delinquency: The illusion of discrepancy between self-report and official measures. *American Sociological Review*, 44(6):995–1014.

Hindelang, M. J., Hirschi, T., and Weis, J. G. 1981. *Measuring Delinquency*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hirschi, T. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hough, M. 1995. *Anxiety about Crime: Findings from the 1994 British Crime Survey*. London, UK: The Home Office.

Huizinga, D., and Elliott, D. S. 1986. Reassessing the reliability and validity of self-reported delinquent measures. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2(4):293–327.

Institute for Economics and Peace. 2013. UK Peace Index: Exploring the fabric of peace in the UK from 2003 to 2012. New York, NY: Institute for Economics and Peace.

Jackson, J., and Stafford, M. 2009. Public health and fear of crime: A prospective cohort study. *British Journal of Criminology*, 49(6):832–847.

Jones, J. M. 2006. Parent concern about children's safety at school on the rise. *Gallop News Service*; http://www.gallop.com/poll/25021/Parent-Concern-About-Childrens-Safety-School-Rise.aspx (accessed July 14, 2016).

Junger-Tas, J., and Marshall, I. H. 2012. Introduction to the International Self-report Study of Delinquency (ISRD-2). In: J. Junger-Tas, I. H. Marshall, D. Enzmann, *et al*. (eds), *The Many Faces of Youth Crime: Contrasting Theoretical Perspectives on Juvenile Delinquency Across Countries and Cultures*, pp. 3–20. New York, NY: Springer.

Klima, N., and Wijckmans, B. 2012. European cross-country crime statistics, surveys and reports. Brussels, Belgium: European Crime Prevention Network.

Knight, K. E., Menard, S., and Simmons, S. B. 2014. Intergenerational continuity of substance use. *Substance Use and Misuse*, 49:221–233.

Krohn, M. D., Thornberry, T. P., Gibson, C. L., and Baldwin, J. M. 2010. The development and impact of self-report measures of crime and delinquency. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 26:509–525.

Lab, S. P. 2010. *Crime Prevention: Approaches, Practices, and Evaluations*. New Providence, NJ: Anderson Publishing Company.

LaGrange, R. L., and Ferraro, K. F. 1989. Assessing age and gender differences in perceived risk and fear of crime. *Criminology*, 27(4):697–719.

LaGrange, R. L., Ferraro, K. F., and Supancic, M. 1992. Perceived risk and fear of crime: Role of social and physical incivilities. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 29(3):311–334.

Langton, L., Berzofsky, M., Krebs, C., and Smiley-McDonald, H. 2012. Victimizations Not Reported to the Police, 2006–2010. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Mandel, M. J., and Magnusson, P. 1993. The economics of crime. *Business Week*, December 12.

Maxfield, M. G., Weiler, B. L., and Widom, C. S. 2000. Comparing self-reports and official records of arrests. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 16(1):87–110.

McCollister, K. E., French, M. T., and Fang, H. 2010. The cost of crime to society: New crime-specific estimates for policy and program evaluation. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 108(1–2):98–109.

McGarrell, E. F., Giacomazzi, A. L., and Thurman, Q. C. 1997. Neighborhood disorder, integration, and the fear of crime. *Justice Quarterly*, 14(3):479–500.

Osgood, D. W., McMorris, B. J., and Potenza, M. T. 2002. Analyzing multiple-item measures of crime and delinquency I: Item response theory scaling. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 18(3):267–296.

Ponemon Institute. 2012. 2012 Cost of Cyber Crime Study: United States. Traverse City, MI: Ponemon Institute.

Ponemon Institute. 2015. 2015 Cost of Cyber Crime Study: United States. Traverse City, MI: Ponemon Institute.

Raudenbush, S. W., Johnson, C., and Sampson, R. J. 2003. A multivariate, multilevel Rasch model with application to self-reported criminal behavior. *Sociological Methodology*, 33:169–211.

Rojek, D. G. 1983. Social status and delinquency: Do self-reports and official reports match? In: G. P. Waldo (ed.), *Measurement Issues in Criminal Justice*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Rountree, P. W. 1998. A reexamination of the crime-fear linkage. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 35(3):341–372.

Saad, L. 2003. Pessimism about crime is up, despite declining crime rate. *Gallup Poll* [Online], October 23.

Saad, L. 2006. Worry about crime remains at last year's elevated levels. *Gallup Poll* [Online], October 19.

Saad, L. 2009. Two in three Americans worry about identity theft. *Gallup Poll* [Online], October 16.

Saad, L. 2010. Nearly 4 in 10 Americans still fear walking alone at night. *Gallop Poll* [Online], November 5.

Saad, L. 2012. Parent's fear for children's safety at school rises slightly. *Gallop Poll* [Online], December 28.

Santora, M. 2013. City's Annual Cost Per Inmate Is $168,000, Study Finds. *The New York Times*.

Skogan, W. G. 1986. Fear of crime and neighborhood change. In: A. J. Reiss and M. Tonry (eds), *Communities and Crime*, pp. 203–229. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, W. R., and Torstensson, M. 1997. Gender differences in risk perception and neutralizing fear of crime. *British Journal of Criminology*, 37(4):608–634.

Stafford, M., Chandola, T., and Marmot, M. 2007. Association between fear of crime and mental health and physical functioning. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97:2076–2081.

The Pew Charitable Trusts. 2008. One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Pew Charitable Trusts. 2013. Managing Prison Health Care Spending. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Thornberry, T. P., and Krohn, M. D. 2000. The self-report method for measuring delinquency and crime. In: D. Duffee, D. McDowall, L. Green Mazerolle, and S. D. Mastrofski (eds), *Measurement and Analysis of Crime and Justice*, pp. 33–83. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Truman, J. L., Langton, L., and Planty, M. 2013. Criminal victimization, 2012. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Warr, M. 1984. Fear of victimization: Why are women and the elderly more afraid? *Social Science Quarterly*, 65:681–702.

Warr, M. 2000. Fear of crime in the United States: Avenues for research and policy. In: D. Duffee, D. McDowall, L. Green Mazerolle, and S. D. Mastrofski (eds), *Measurement and Analysis of Crime and Justice*, pp. 451–489. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Williams, P., and Dickinson, J. 1993. Fear of crime: Read all about it? *British Journal of Criminology*, 33(1):33–56.

Zimring, F. E., and Hawkins, G. 1997. *Crime is Not the Problem*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.