

RACE AND CRIME: INTERNATIONAL DATA FOR 1989-1990 ¹

J. PHILIPPE RUSHTON

The University of Western Ontario

Summary.—The rate of murder, rape, and serious assault per 100,000 members of the population was tabulated for 76 countries from the 1989-1990 *International Crime Statistics* published by INTERPOL. Following previous research the countries were grouped into the three major populations of Asian, Caucasian, and African. Consistent with previous evidence the results showed that crime rates are highest for countries with predominantly African populations, lowest for those with predominantly Asian populations, and in-between for those with predominantly Caucasian populations. The 23 countries with predominantly African populations reported twice as high a rate for each type of crime as the 41 countries with predominantly Caucasian populations and over three times as high a rate as the 12 countries with predominantly Asian populations. Summing the crimes gives figures, respectively, of 240, 75, and 32 violent crimes per 100,000 population.

A debate has arisen over whether the disproportionate racial differences in U.S. criminal statistics are generalizable internationally, i.e., Asians have fewer crimes than Europeans who in turn have fewer than Africans. Building on earlier work, Rushton (1990) collated data from the 1984 and 1986 INTERPOL yearbooks and noted that African and Caribbean countries reported twice the rate of violent crime (an aggregate of murder, rape, and serious assault) as European countries and three times the rate of Pacific Rim countries. Summing the crimes and averaging the years gave significant differences per 100,000 population of, respectively, 143, 74, and 44 total crimes.

These results have been contested. The main empirical reasons given for rejecting them have been that (a) the category of race is too poorly defined to allow reliable classification, (b) the data in the source books contain too many errors to be reliable or representative, and (c) the predicted direction of the results does not always occur (Cernovsky & Litman, 1993a, 1993b; Gabor & Roberts, 1990; Roberts & Gabor, 1990; Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993; Zuckerman, 1990). For example, Cernovsky and Litman (1993a) selected a subset of countries from the 1984 and 1986 INTERPOL yearbooks, extended the crime base to include breaking and entering and theft of motor cars, and showed that some African countries had lower crime rates than some European countries.

These critiques have been replied to (Rushton, 1994, 1995) and this paper analyses new data based on the most recent (1990) INTERPOL year-

¹Address correspondence to J. P. Rushton, Department of Psychology, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario N6A 5C2 Canada.

book. It is necessary to assess whether there is a replicable pattern in violent crime worth discussing. There is no dispute over whether rates vary with type of crime, compiling source, jurisdiction, and time period. Crime is multifariously determined and numerous sources of bias operate in any official compilation.

METHOD

The International Crime Statistics for 1989-1990 collated and published by INTERPOL (1990) were consulted. These provide data on 85 countries for 14 categories of crime. Because the figures for some crimes are highly dependent on a particular country's laws, e.g., "Sex Offences," or on the availability of goods to be stolen, e.g., "Theft of Motor Cars," in this paper I used the same methods as Rushton (1990) and focussed on the three most serious and unambiguous crimes which are given definitional limits in the preface: *Murder*, "Any act performed with the purpose of taking human life, in whatever circumstances. This definition *excludes abortion but includes infanticide*"; *Rape* (separate from other "Sex Offences"); and *Serious Assault*, "An injury whereby life could be endangered, including cases of injury involving the use of a dangerous instrument. Cases where instruments are used merely to threaten people without causing injury are to be excluded" (INTERPOL, 1990, front matter).

The most recent figure per 100,000 members of the population for each of the three crimes as well as their sum were tabulated for each country (Table 1). Sixty-six of the entries (87%) were for 1990, nine (12%) were for 1989, and one (1%) was for 1988. In the case of the United Kingdom, the separate entries for (a) England and Wales, (b) Scotland, and (c) Northern Ireland were averaged. Countries for which data could not be found in all three categories were dropped. Countries were then grouped by primary racial composition with only the Pacific island countries of Fiji, Kiribati, and Papua New Guinea being eliminated due to uncertainty about their racial status. Altogether, complete data were available for 76 countries of which 12 were classified as Asian, 41 as Caucasian, and 23 as African (Table 1).

TABLE 1
INTERNATIONAL CRIME RATES (PER 100,000) FOR 76 COUNTRIES GROUPED BY MACROPOPULATION

Country	Year	Homicides	Rape	Serious Assault	Total
Asian					
Brunei	1989	2.0	3.2	0.8	6.0
China	1990	1.9	4.3	4.1	10.3
Hong Kong	1990	2.6	1.9	129.9	134.4
Indonesia	1990	0.9	0.9	6.2	7.9
Japan	1990	1.0	1.3	15.7	18.0

(continued on next page)

TABLE 1 (CONT'D)
INTERNATIONAL CRIME RATES (PER 100,000) FOR 76 COUNTRIES GROUPED BY MACROPOPULATION

Country	Year	Homicides	Rape	Serious Assault	Total
Korea	1990	1.5	5.0	42.5	49.0
Macao	1990	1.2	1.0	45.4	47.6
Malaysia	1989	1.9	3.3	14.3	19.4
Myanmar	1989	5.3	2.1	37.6	45.0
Nepal	1990	2.2	0.5	1.1	3.7
Singapore	1990	1.5	3.7	4.7	9.9
Thailand	1990	9.5	4.5	21.8	35.8
Caucasian					
Argentina	1990	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.8
Austria	1990	2.3	7.0	1.8	11.1
Bangladesh	1990	2.0	0.5	2.1	4.7
Belgium	1990	2.2	6.1	120.7	129.0
Bulgaria	1990	4.0	6.0	1.9	11.9
Chile	1990	5.8	9.6	107.0	122.4
Cyprus	1990	3.2	0.4	12.3	15.9
Costa Rica	1989	5.3	7.8	11.1	24.1
Czechoslovakia	1990	2.0	8.1	89.4	99.5
Denmark	1990	4.6	9.5	163.4	177.4
Egypt	1990	1.6	0.0	0.7	2.3
Finland	1990	0.6	7.6	47.2	55.4
France	1990	4.5	8.1	86.5	99.1
Germany	1990	3.9	8.2	107.0	119.1
Greece	1990	2.0	1.9	66.1	70.0
Guatemala	1990	27.4	4.1	77.1	108.6
Hungary	1990	3.1	4.5	66.0	73.6
Ireland	1990	0.8	2.5	2.1	5.4
Israel	1990	2.2	5.4	202.5	210.1
Jordan	1989	1.9	1.2	13.6	16.7
Luxemburg	1990	2.1	7.5	84.1	93.8
Maldives	1990	1.9	8.9	3.2	14.1
Malta	1990	10.4	1.7	50.6	62.7
Mauritius	1990	2.5	2.9	15.1	20.5
Netherlands	1990	14.8	8.9	148.3	171.9
Norway	1990	2.6	9.0	44.1	55.7
Paraguay	1990	10.0	2.6	111.6	124.3
Peru	1990	12.0	8.9	29.5	50.4
Poland	1990	2.8	5.9	50.5	59.2
Portugal	1990	2.8	1.1	6.9	10.8
Qatar	1990	3.0	5.9	54.7	63.6
Romania	1990	3.4	4.1	3.0	10.5
Saudi Arabia	1990	0.6	0.6	19.2	20.4
Spain	1990	2.4	4.5	26.2	33.2
Sri Lanka	1990	11.6	2.1	40.3	54.0
Sweden	1990	7.0	16.4	36.2	59.6
Switzerland	1990	3.2	6.3	50.0	59.5

(continued on next page)

TABLE 1 (CONT'D)
INTERNATIONAL CRIME RATES (PER 100,000) FOR 76 COUNTRIES GROUPED BY MACROPOPULATION

Country	Year	Homicides	Rape	Serious Assault	Total
Syria	1990	1.6	0.9	5.5	7.9
UK	1990	10.3	8.1	208.5	227.0
USA	1990	9.4	41.2	424.1	474.7
USSR	1990	8.7	7.8	9.0	25.5
African					
Bahamas	1990	52.6	45.5	115.8	214.0
Barbados	1990	11.7	27.6	109.0	148.3
Botswana	1989	19.5	61.6	442.6	523.7
Burundi	1990	3.3	4.5	7.4	15.2
Cayman Islands	1990	10.7	24.9	619.2	654.8
Central African Republic	1989	1.6	2.0	22.8	26.4
Congo	1990	1.5	0.4	4.7	6.6
Cote D'Ivoire	1990	2.8	1.0	22.1	25.8
Djibuti	1990	4.8	0.8	67.0	72.6
Gabon	1990	2.2	1.8	25.3	29.3
Ghana	1990	2.0	2.7	95.9	100.6
Grenada	1989	10.0	19.0	880.0	909.0
Guinea	1990	1.0	0.8	3.7	5.5
Jamaica	1990	20.9	27.9	476.0	524.7
Kenya	1990	4.2	2.1	57.3	63.6
Malawi	1988	2.6	1.8	96.5	100.9
Rwanda	1990	6.1	7.5	58.9	72.5
Saint Lucia	1989	6.8	30.4	686.3	723.4
Senegal	1990	1.0	0.5	13.5	15.1
Swaziland	1990	87.8	69.0	542.0	698.8
Trinidad & Tobago	1990	8.4	17.9	164.5	190.9
Turks & Caicos	1990	15.4	7.7	200.0	223.1
Zimbabwe	1990	17.9	26.4	192.9	237.2
Other					
Fiji	1990	4.3	13.2	31.6	49.1
Kiribati	1990	12.4	5.5	36.0	53.9
Papua New Guinea	1990	7.9	28.1	43.7	79.6

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for the three racial groups for each of the three types of crime, as well as their sum, are shown in Table 2. With each country taken as an independent entry, the results of one-way analyses of variance showed significant differences among the races in each of the crime categories (Homicide, $F_{2,73}=4.41$, $p<.05$; Rape, $F_{2,73}=7.42$, $p<.001$; Serious assault, $F_{2,73}=8.70$, $p<.0001$; Sum of the three crimes, $F_{2,73}=9.43$, $p<.0001$). In each category the predicted significant linear trend indicated Asians < Caucasians < Africans ($F_{1,72}=0.00$, $p<.05$). For readers objecting to the parametric analysis of these ratio figures, the exact probability of getting this particular ranking three times in a row is $1/6 \times 1/6 \times 1/6 = .001$.

TABLE 2
MEAN RATES PER 100,000 BY MACROPOPULATION

Crime	Asian (n=12)		Caucasian (n=41)		African (n=23)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Murder	2.6	2.5	4.9	5.1	12.8	19.8
Rape	2.6	1.6	6.2	6.7	16.7	20.1
Serious Assault	27.0	36.2	63.4	80.0	213.2	257.7
Combined	32.3	36.4	74.6	86.7	242.7	278.8

These results are not due to the particular selection of countries. If racially more homogeneous sets are selected, for example, by choosing from northeast Asia, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa, the proportions remain similar. Selecting in this way and aggregating across the three crimes, the rate per 100,000 members of the population for five Asian countries is 52, for 21 European countries 75, and for 14 African countries 142. The pattern does not alter with other combinations of countries, for example, from Central and South America. Thus the eight mainly black Caribbean countries averaged 449 violent crimes per 100,000 people whereas the six mainly white/Amerindian Latin American countries averaged 72 per 100,000.

DISCUSSION

Several qualifications need to be stated. First, the racial groupings obviously do not represent "pure types" and enormous racial and ethnic variation exists within almost every country. Second, each country differs in the procedures used to collect and disseminate the figures on crime. Third, great variability exists in these figures *within* each racial grouping. Senegal, for example, a West African country, reported one of the lowest crime rates, with 1.0 murders, 0.5 rapes, and 13.5 serious assaults per 100,000 people. Hong Kong, an East Asian country, reported higher rates in each of these categories, 2.6, 1.9, and 129.9, respectively. The United Kingdom, a European country, had rates which were higher still, with 10.3, 8.1, and 208.5 per 100,000 people. Nonetheless, despite substantial overlap, the mean racial differences were as predicted from previous research.

In sum, the data are consistent with the evidence from Rushton (1990, 1994) and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) that people of Asian descent commit relatively fewer acts of violent crime than do those of European or African descent. The pattern found in the present study is similar to those observed in earlier studies both within the USA and internationally. Explanations include socioeconomic factors influencing socialization, and gene-based factors of temperament and intelligence (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Following research in behavioral genetics, Rushton (1995) advanced a 50%/50% gene-culture coevolutionary perspective in preference to the 100% alternatives.

Evolutionary hypotheses for why Asian populations have the least crime

are based on the view that the farther north humans migrated out of Africa about 100,000 years ago, the more they encountered the cognitively demanding problems of gathering and storing food, gaining shelter, making clothes, and raising children successfully during prolonged winters. As the original African populations evolved into Caucasoids and Mongoloids, they did so in the direction of larger brains and lower levels of sex hormones, with concomitant reductions in aggression and sexual potency and increases in forward planning and family stability (Rushton, 1995).

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